

Field Guide

BAROQUE-KU?

from *A Field Guide to North American Haiku*¹

by Charles Trumbull

Of the 215 entries in the Haiku Database tagged “Music: Baroque” fully half have to do with Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750). Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) is in second place in our haiku popularity poll with 20 percent, George Frederick Handel (1685–1759) ranks third with 8 percent, and, on the basis of a single work, Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706) occupies fourth place with just under 2.5 percent. We have only a few haiku about other composers of the period, namely Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), Henry Purcell (ca. 1659–1695), Dietrich Buxtehude (1637–1707), Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), Tomaso Albinoni (1671–1751), and Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767). The discussion in this essay is topical, but haiku and senryu about Bach and Vivaldi predominate. Expect cameo appearances by other musical masters of the Baroque.

Music and sound

Music is organized sound, and many *haikai* poets use sound images as a device to illuminate music. This can be a sound that compliments the music, perhaps in the form of an unfinished metaphor, or else a sound that contrasts or clashes with the music. Here is a verse that views the added sound as a welcome thing:

almost autumn—
crickets join in
as i sing “handel”

Tony Suraci²

but the sounds in these not so much:

playing Bach—
pigeons on the roof
off key

Elizabeth Searle Lamb³

Halloween—
children try to knock
louder than Bach

Bernard Gadd⁴

Sounds such as these seem to neither complement nor conflict
with their juxtaposition with the Venetian master's music:

napping to Vivaldi
the air-conditioner
hums

Terri L. French⁵

undercurrents
surf roar to Vivaldi
on tape

Jane Reichhold⁶

supreming oranges
the contrasting timbres
of Vivaldi's strings

Ce Rosenow⁷

Rain

Far and away the most predominant image used in haiku in
connection with Baroque music is “rain.” Sometimes it is the
intensity of rainfall—a wall of sound—that is remarkable:

Bach on piano
and falling rain
this evening—

Serge Tomé⁸

rain intermittently
hits my windshield—
Bach fugue

Fred Donovan⁹

Bach's D-minor
gusting against the window
rain ...

Betty Drevniok¹⁰

the rain pouring down—
Telemann dead for years
turned up louder

Gary Hotham¹¹

Sometimes the poets express joy at the rain, perhaps after a long
drought:

rain at last!
I ask the piano salesman
to riff a little Bach

Carolyn Hall¹²

the Bach piece ended,
in the trees, a bird singing
in the pouring rain

Albert Ripperger¹³

But the return to reality after enjoying a concert can be jarring:

After the Bach recital—
emerging into evening
of cold spring rain

Herb Barrett¹⁴

inside Bach's harpsichord winter rain

Nola Obee¹⁵

The musicians may find the orderliness of, say, a Bach composition
to be of help in sorting out their own thoughts:

a Bach fugue
hands separately
trying to make sense of
the rainy season

Philip Rowland¹⁶

autumn rain listening again to the Goldberg Variations

Tim Murphy¹⁷

Other weather images

Images of other meteorological events and conditions are commonly used by poets writing about musical compositions, Baroque of course included. As is the case with "rain," the juxtaposition of images such as "snow," "the cold," "wind," and "sunlight" with a musical reference is often an incomplete metaphor serving to add dimension to the haiku.

Vivaldi concerto
through the slow movement
a drift of mist

Diana Webb¹⁸

after Bach
space for snow to fall
deeper

Gary Hotham¹⁹

snowbound—
Handel's Water Music
flowing

Geraldine Clinton Little²⁰

lingering cold ...
through a closed window
The Four Seasons

Stella Pierides²¹

buxtehude wafts
through the chapel ...
dogwood tree blossoms

Charlotte Digregorio²²

Bach on a breeze gone

Alexis Rotella²³

sunrise ... shadow-leaves dancing
across pages of the Gigue

M. M. Nichols²⁴

early morning
to cleanse the atmosphere
Casals plays Bach

Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg²⁵

crisp morning air
on a crowded platform
shuffling to Albinoni

Bill Cooper²⁶

brook
sunlight
Bach

George Swede²⁷

light bouncing off strong voices
the Bach Cantata ends
in German

Gary Hotham²⁸

intermittent light
Vivaldi's Gloria
on the radio

Margaret Dornaus²⁹

Music of the seasons

Traditional haiku contain a reference to a specific season of the year. This is most often accomplished by the use of *kigo*—“season words.” The most basic *kigo* are the names of the seasons themselves. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* would be a natural magnet for *kigo*-conscious haiku poets, viz.:

mid spring
Vivaldi from the earbuds
of a passerby

Claire Everett³⁰

incessant storm
scattered away
Vivaldi's “Summer” sheets

Radostina A. Dragostinova³¹

Vivaldi's Autumn
through a window the scent of
leaves decomposing

Dina E. Cox³²

a violinist
in the warm subway
Vivaldi's Winter

Vessislava Savova³³

Plant and animal images

Names of living plants and animals are also common *kigo* and are used by haiku poets in a quasi-metaphoric fashion as was the case with “rain” above. A sampling:

the first crocus humming Vivaldi

Lesley Anne Swanson³⁴

a geranium ...
and hiding within it
a Bach Sonata

Muriel Ford³⁵

Vivaldi flute music—
everywhere
dandelion parachutes

Diana Webb³⁶

the cold room
the fragrance of dry plums
and Monteverdi's music

Ion Codrescu³⁷

Falling
ginkgo leaves
Air on a G String

Morooka Nobue³⁸

in the city park,
a string trio playing Bach:
cicada

Nick Virgilio³⁹

Corelli concertos
the slow moving
arms of a cricket

M. Kei⁴⁰

Bach fugue—
the ordered flight
of wild geese

Jim Kacian⁴¹

Bach through an open
dawn window—
the birds are silent

Jack Kerouac⁴²

sparrows in the atrium all Vivaldi

Lorin Ford⁴³

Human affairs

Of course, images based on human relationships can also be useful
in illuminating musical works:

fatherhood in utero Bach

Philip Rowland⁴⁴

bach's crescendo
I ignore the argument
in her voice

Megan Arkenberg⁴⁵

NPR
between reports of war
snippets of Bach

Yvonne M. Hardenbrook⁴⁶

There are even a few haiku/senryu that use human senses of smell
and taste:

Segovia: Bach
and the scent of insects
burnt in the lamp

William J. Higginson⁴⁷

A harpsichord might taste
Like an orange
If it was a citrus fruit.

Momus⁴⁸

Performance and technique

Some haiku poets are impressed by the complex skills required in
performing Baroque music, especially forms such as the toccata
and the fugue:

piano fugue—
Glenn Gould's
twenty fingers

Luce Pelletier⁴⁹

Bach's Toccata and Fugue—
fly on the armrest

Martin Lucas⁵⁰

windshield wipers
keeping time with Handel's
"Water Music"

Renger⁵¹

Pachelbel's *Canon in D*, a special case

As we noted at the outset, Johann Pachelbel ranks fourth in popularity among those writing about Baroque music, but his fame, at least among haikuists, is based on a single work. Indeed, his *Canon in D* (ca. 1680) is one of the best-known and most popular works in all of classical music. Recordings of the piece rose to the top of the best-selling classical album lists in the mid-1970s, and the memorable melody and chord progression of the *Canon* were adapted by pop music groups in Europe and North America and used as theme music for films and television shows. Not surprisingly, Pachelbel has attracted a few *haikai* poets as well, and they have used a variety of images to express their appreciation of the *Canon in D*. (That "Pachelbel's *Canon in D*" is exactly five syllables may also be a factor!)

meditating
to the Pachelbel Canon
scent of bayberry

Charles B. Dickson⁵²

Pachelbel's Canon
the harpist plucks
something in me

Barbara Ressler⁵³

Pachelbel's Canon
the sweetness of a room full
of sleeping toddlers

Michael Ketchek⁵⁴

Pachelbel's Canon
through open windows
wild orchids

Kathy Lippard Cobb⁵⁵

Pachelbel ...
I drive on past
my destination

Carole MacRury⁵⁶

Bach's transcendence

Listening to the music, haiku poets are often left in deep reverie, far removed from the performance mechanics of the music. Some examples:

the same Bach piece
the same feelings
I had back then

Anne LB Davidson⁵⁷

cello suite—
taking leave
of the world

Ruth Holzer⁵⁸

first Bach
after his death
the silences

Judson Evans⁵⁹

Bach's *Prelude and Fugue*
fills the sunlit cathedral
unbidden tears

Elizabeth Searle Lamb⁶⁰

after Bach
the bare beauty
of a winter branch

Geraldine Clinton Little⁶¹

black holes a fugue by Bach caught in gravity

Johannes S.H. Bjerg⁶²

There are cases in which haiku poets are moved to describe at length and in poetic terms their reaction to the music. In 1985 *Modern Haiku* featured a poem by Geraldine Clinton Little in the form of a haiku sequence. Little was a very gifted poet in longer forms as well as haiku, served terms as vice president of the Poetry Society of America and president of the Haiku Society of America. She was also a noted singer, performing with leading choral ensembles in Philadelphia and participating in the recording of 20th-century composer Vincent Persichetti's *Winter Cantata*, the text of which is based on classical Japanese haiku. Here is that poem:

Air for the 300th Anniversary of the Birth of Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)⁶³

wandering into
a chapel anchored
in lily-of-the-valley

open window
purple clematis blooms
whispering in wind

a single bellsound
nudges mourning doves
on the roof ridge

“Jesu, Joy
of Man’s Desiring”—the pure line
in a child’s mouth

into a nest wedged
between two wooden beams—
the intricate weave

after, alone
with overtones of a man
and his music

Sagan sent
spinning in space
on a disc,⁶⁴ harmonies

lighting all
black holes beyond
vision

sparking
the quiet passion of lily,
of clematis

It is interesting to compare Little’s lyrical reaction to Bach with Danish haikuist Johannes S.H. Bjerg’s sequence of twelve one-line haiku that was featured online thirty-one years after Little. Corelli’s opus comprises twelve short “church sonatas” that are paralleled by the lines of Bjerg’s poetry:

Toast

straw

sound of snow:

Wassail, Herr Handel!

Raymond Roseliep⁶⁸

The large choral works

The Baroque period was the heyday for large choral works, including Masses, requiems, oratorios, cantatas, and the like. Here are two of the haiku that have been composed in English about such works:

Vivaldi's gloria

on top of the gatepost

the brightness of moss

Diana Webb⁶⁹

That Bach became Bach:

“To God alone the Glory”

inscribed his Passion

James W. Hackett⁷⁰

In the section titled “The Lament” in her remarkable 1965 collection *Haiku*, Canadian poet Claire Pratt made reference to Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, one haiku quoting text from the opening chorus and a second bearing the title of the Bach masterpiece:⁷¹

Out of the depths, grief

rises to my soul's lament:

“Come, ye daughters ...”

Claire Pratt⁷²

St. Matthew Passion

Mists shroud the college
buildings. Swelling threnody
to embrace the earth.

Claire Pratt⁷³

Alas, not everyone shares the passion for Baroque music:

St. Matthew Passion
I'm wakened by the rube
snoring beside me

Carl Brennan⁷⁴

one of Telemann's slower movements
& the candy
wrapper

kjmunro⁷⁵

deep autumn:
father's baroque music
son's rock music

Emiko Miyashita⁷⁶

So, what is the best time for enjoying music of the Baroque?

from Bach to cool jazz—
afternoon becomes evening
at the coffee house

Paul Watsky⁷⁷

early spring sunshine:
a sailor scrapes and paints,
humming a Bach fugue

Sally Moffet⁷⁸

Whistling Bach—
he makes the fish scales
fly

Peggy Willis Lyles⁷⁹

monteverdi madrigals i open and eat mussels

Steve Dalachinsky⁸⁰

shoveling snow—
my headphones filled
with Vivaldi's Spring

Joe McKeon⁸¹

Bone scan
the length
of a Brandenburg Concerto

Ken H. Jones⁸²

headphones
during her surgery—
Bach cello suites

Leslie Montgomery⁸³

Bach in my earphones,
me on the carpet
paper-towel dog pee

William Woodruff⁸⁴

opening move she plays Bach

Jim Westenhaver⁸⁵

Midnight in the chapel:
All alone, the organist
Softly playing Bach

Martin Beresford⁸⁶

Finally, please permit your humble editor to add a haiku of his own naming an otherwise unrepresented in *haikai* Baroque composer, Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757):

tidying up his desk
after a good day's work:
Scarlatti

Charles Trumbull⁸⁷

Notes:

1. A Field Guide to North American Haiku is a long-term project along the lines of a haiku encyclopedia-cum-*saijiki*, a selection of the best haiku in English arranged by topic and illustrating what it is about a given topic that attracts poets to write. When complete, the Field Guide project will comprise multiple thick volumes keyed to the several topics in traditional Japanese *saijiki* (haiku almanacs) and Western counterparts, notably William J. Higginson's *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* (1996). These topics are: Season, Sky & Elements, Landscape, Plants, Animals, Human Affairs, and Observances. The haiku in this essay are taken from my Haiku Database, currently containing more than 548,000 entries and selected from about 1,000 haiku about music and musicians of the Baroque period, in the Human Affairs category. Critique and suggestions of this article or the Field Guide project are warmly invited; please comment by email to cptrumbull@comcast.net.
2. Tony Suraci, in *Old Pond* 2:2 (October 1987).
3. Elizabeth Searle Lamb, in *Wind Chimes* 16 (1985).
4. Bernard Gadd, in *Haiku Canada Newsletter* 18:1 (February 2005).
5. Terri L. French, *A Ladybug on My Words* (2010).
6. Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (1992).
7. Ce Rosenow, in *Kingfisher* 5 (April 2022).
8. Serge Tomé, in *tempslibres—free times* website, 2000. The original French is: *Bach au piano / et la pluie qui tombe / ce soir—*.

9. Fred Donovan, in *Cotyledon* 6 (June 1998).
10. Betty Drevniok in *Inkstone* 1:1 (Summer 1982).
11. Gary Hotham, in *Quadrant* 46:3 (March 2002) 3.
12. Carolyn Hall, in *The Heron's Nest* 16:2 (June 2014).
13. Albert Ripperger, in George Swede, ed., *Canadian Haiku Anthology* (1979).
14. Herb Barrett, *Modern Haiku* 10:2 (Summer 1979).
15. Nola Obee, from a haiga in *A Hundred Gourds* 5:1 (December 2015).
16. Philip Rowland, *Together Still* (2004).
17. Tim Murphy, in *Whiptail* 1:1 (Spring 2021).
18. Diana Webb, in Frank Williams, ed., *That Kind of Blue: The London Haiku Group Anthology* 2019.
19. Gary Hotham, in *Frogpond* 38:2 (Spring–Summer 2015).
20. Geraldine Clinton Little, in *Modern Haiku* 15:1 (Winter–Spring 1984).
21. Stella Pierides, in *Shiki Internet Kukai*, February 2012.
22. Charlotte Digregorio, *Haiku and Senryu: A Simple Guide for All* (2014).
23. Alexis Rotella, *Clouds in My Teacup* (1982).
24. M. M. Nichols, in *Frogpond* 12:2 (May 1989).
25. Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg, from the sequence “After Reading John Howard Griffin’s *The Hermitage Journals*,” *Wind Chimes* 17 (1985).
26. Bill Cooper, from “Ekphrastic Haiku,” Haiku of the Day: *The Haiku Foundation* website, November 1, 2021. “After Tomaso Albinoni’s *Concerto No. 9, Op. 7, 1722*.”
27. George Swede, in *Modern Haiku* 41:2 (Summer 2010). Note: the word for “brook” in German is “Bach.”
28. Gary Hotham, in *R'r [Roadrunner]* 13:2 (August 2013).
29. Margaret Dornaus, in *A Hundred Gourds* 2:2 (March 2013).
30. Claire Everett, in *Acorn* 32 (Spring 2014).
31. Radostina A. Dragostinova, from the sequence “A habit,” *The Zen Space* Summer 2018 Showcase.
32. Dina E. Cox, in Hans Jongman, ed., *On a Summer Breeze* (2007).
33. Vessislava Savova, 16th Mainichi Haiku Contest, 2012.
34. Lesley Anne Swanson, in a haiga by Ron Moss, *A Hundred Gourds* 3:3 (June 2014).
35. Muriel Ford, from the haibun “The Bach Geranium,” *Haiku Canada Review* 6:2 (October 2012).
36. Diana Webb, *Already Along the Stream* (2007).
37. Ion Codrescu, in *Mountain Voices / Vocile muntelui* (2002). The Romanian reads *în camera rece / miroas de prune uscate / și muzică de Monteverdi*.
38. Morooka Nobue, in *HI (Haiku International)* 123 (March 2016).
39. Nick Virgilio, in *Frogpond* 7:3 (1984).

40. M. Kei, *A Hundred Gourds* 3:1 (December 2013).
41. Jim Kacian, *In Concert* (2000).
42. Jack Kerouac, *Beat Generation Haikus* (1958).
43. Lorin Ford, in *Otata* 8 (August 2016). Note that this haiku was also published in *Otata* 9 (September 2016) and attributed to Chris Poundwhite.
44. Philip Rowland, *Before Music* (2012).
45. Megan Arkenberg, in *Riverbed*, Autumn 2008.
46. Yvonne M. Hardenbrook, in *Frogpond* 25:1 (2002).
47. William J. Higginson, in Marlène Buitelaar, ed., *The Scent of Music* (2013).
48. Momus, *Off the Beaten Track: A Year in Haiku* (2016).
49. Luce Pelletier, in Michael Dylan Welch and William Hart, eds., *Close to the Wind* (Haiku North America 2013 conference anthology).
50. Martin Lucas, in *Blithe Spirit* 8:2 (June 1998).
51. Renger, in *Frogpond* 20:1 (May 1997), 13.
52. Charles B. Dickson, in *Woodnotes* 7 (Autumn 1990).
53. Barbara Ressler, HPNC San Francisco Haiku Contest, 1992.
54. Michael Ketchek, in *Haiku Headlines* 146 (13:2, May 2000).
55. Kathy Lippard Cobb, in *Haiku Harvest* 2:2 (Summer 2001).
56. Carole MacRury, in Christopher Patchel, ed., “Sehnsucht,” *Per Diem Archive* (*The Haiku Foundation* website), April 2013.
57. Anne LB Davidson, in *Frogpond* 32:2 (Spring/Summer 2009).
58. Ruth Holzer, in *Notes from the Gean* 2:4 (March 2011).
59. Judson Evans, in *The Heron’s Nest* 16:3 (September 2014).
60. Elizabeth Searle Lamb, *Across the Windharp* (1999).
61. Geraldine Clinton Little, *Stilled Wind* (1977).
62. Johannes S.H. Bjerg, in *Monostich*, September 29, 2011.
63. Geraldine Clinton Little, in *Modern Haiku* 16:3 (Autumn 1985).
64. Little’s reference here is apparently to the Golden Record, a collection of recorded sounds and music representing a wide range of cultures and eras on Earth that was sent into deep space aboard *Voyager 1* and *2* in 1977. The twenty-seven pieces included excerpts from Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*, *Partita No. 3 for Violin*, and *The Well-Tempered Clavier* but not, apparently, “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.” See the *Jet Propulsion Laboratory: Voyager* website: <https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>
65. Johannes S.H. Bjerg, in *Failed Haiku*, May 2016.
66. Raymond Roseliep, in *Cicada* (Toronto) 1:1 (1977).
67. Raymond Roseliep, in *Wind Chimes* 7 (Winter 1983).
68. Raymond Roseliep, in *Listen to Light* (1980).
69. Diana Webb, in *Blithe Spirit* 26:1 (March 2016).

70. James W. Hackett, in Haiku Poems: Potpourri of Haiku [section], *The Haiku and Zen World of James W. Hackett* website (posted Autumn 2004). Bach often added an inscription at the end of his scores, “S.D.G.,” *Solo Dei Gloria*, “To God Alone the Glory.”
71. Claire Pratt, *Haiku* (1965).
72. Ibid. The first line of the chorus is “Come, ye daughters, help me lament” (*Kommt ihr Töchter, Helft Mir Klagen*).
73. Ibid.
74. Carl Brennan, verse from a rengay with Lewis Sanders, “Shadowboy On His Bike,” *Winter Withering* 1:2 [1997?]. (I wish I could find a haiku making reference to Bach’s cantata, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* to insert here!—ed.)
75. kjmunro, in *Kingfisher* 4 (October 2021).
76. Emiko Miyashita, in *Simply Haiku* 3:3 (Autumn 2005).
77. Paul Watsky, in *Brussels Sprout* 12:3 (September 1995).
78. Sally Moffet, in *Modern Haiku* 6:3 (1975).
79. Peggy Willis Lyles, in *Brussels Sprout* 2:4 (1982).
80. Steve Dalachinsky, in *Wind Chimes* 7 (Winter 1983).
81. Joe McKeon, in *Acorn* 36 (Spring 2016).
82. Ken H. Jones, from the haibun “The Spirit Level” in Jim Kacian, et al., eds., *Summer Dreams: American Haibun & Haiga* 4 (2002).
83. Leslie Montgomery, in *Shiki Internet Kukai*, May 2010.
84. William Woodruff, in *Frogpond* 20:1 (May 1997).
85. Jim Westenhaver, in *Modern Haiku* 41:3 (Autumn 2010).
86. Martin Beresford, *Riding on the Wind* (2004).
87. Charles Trumbull, from an unpublished sequence, “Chromatic Notes,” 1998.