

WIGMORE HALL 125

Friday 12 December 2025
7.30pm

A Night in London

Zoltán Daragó countertenor
Pulcinella

Ophélie Gaillard cello, director
Thibault Noally violin
Nicolas Mazzoleni violin
Lucie Uzzeni alto

Joseph Carver double bass
Daniel de Morais theorbo
Brice Saily harpsichord

Charles Avison (1709-1770)
George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
James Oswald (1710-1769)
Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762)
Johann Adolf Hasse (1699-1783)
George Frideric Handel

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Giovanni Battista Cirri (1724-1808)

Largo from Concerto grosso No. 5 in D minor (1774)
Cara sposa from *Rinaldo* HWV7 (1711, rev. 1717-31)
The Murrays March and other Scottish tunes (pub. 1760)
The night her silent sable wore (1749)
Fuga e Grave in G minor (c.1740)
Sinfonia from *Serse* HWV40 (1737-8)
Kind Heav'n if virtue be thy care from *Theodora* HWV68 (1749)
Sovente il sole from *Andromeda Liberata* (1726)
Cello Concerto No. 2 in G Op. 14
I. Allegro spiritoso • II. Largo assai • III. Rondo. Allegro

Interval

Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)
George Frideric Handel
Johann Adolf Hasse
Francesco Geminiani
George Frideric Handel

Adagio from Cello Concerto in G
Dull delay, in piercing anguish from *Jephtha* HWV70 (1751)
Pallido il sole from *Artaserse* (1730)
Concerto grosso in D minor after Corelli's 'La Folia' Op. 5 No. 12 (pub. 1729)
Where'er you walk from *Semele* HWV58 (1744)
Up the dreadful steep ascending from *Jephtha* HWV70



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Musical London

The public concert as a phenomenon seems to have emerged and flourished in late 17th-century London. The combination of an impecunious court under Charles II (whose finances were tightly controlled by parliament as part of the deal for his return to England), English musicians who had been forced to become resourceful during the interregnum, an influx of visiting musicians with the restoration of the monarchy, and a flourishing trading economy, made London ripe for musical development. John Bannister, a court violinist tired of waiting to be paid, was perhaps the first to set up a formal concert series in 1672 at a tavern in Whitefriars, though musical gatherings in taverns had long preceded this date. Also surprisingly successful was Thomas Britton, a coal merchant, who established a public concert venue above his warehouse in Clerkenwell in 1678. Both achieved success that they moved to larger and more salubrious premises.

London's rapid expansion in the 18th Century, with the population doubling from 550,000 to 1.1 million between 1700 and 1800, encouraged the proliferation of musical societies and innovative venues for performance, such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh pleasure gardens. These venues catered for varied public taste: the Academy of Ancient Music, established in 1726, focussed initially on vocal music of the 16th and 17th centuries; the men's catch clubs that sprang up throughout the mid and later 18th Century combined drinking with a mix of bawdy, bibulous and often surprisingly elegiac unaccompanied vocal rounds; the famous Bach and Abel concerts of the late century particularly featured fashionable instrumental music; subscription series, encompassing particularly fashionable music or performers, catered for higher-class patrons who could afford to pay for a full season of concerts in advance, and wanted the guarantee that they would not have to rub shoulders with coal merchants!

London's lively concert culture in turn encouraged the development of concert life in other centres. A musician such as the Newcastle native **Charles Avison** was a particular beneficiary of this culture: having reputedly studied with the celebrated violinist, Geminiani, Avison's first public performance (or at least the earliest known reference) was a benefit concert in 1734 in Hickford's Room, London. The following year, Avison began directing a series of subscription concerts in Newcastle. He was formally appointed musical director of the concerts in 1738, and remained director of the Newcastle Musical Society until his death in 1770. Avison's *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), an important early piece of aesthetic criticism, praised Geminiani (whom Avison thought better than Handel) and gave particular attention to the concerto. Not surprisingly, Avison's own *concerti grossi* were modelled on Geminiani's, who in turn modelled his *concerti grossi* on those of his teacher, Corelli. Leaving personal taste aside, this was a sensible move, as Corelli's late 17th-century works were hugely popular and much performed by concert societies throughout Britain in the 18th Century.

The musical conservatism such popularity suggests was also expressed in the emergence of a taste for

folksong in the course of the century. **Geminiani**, ever the smart businessman, capitalised on this trend in 1754 with his *Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*, which featured several song arrangements. 'The night her silent sable wore' was one such, derived from a simple strophic Scottish song. The lowland Scots musician, **James Oswald**, also capitalised on this fashion, with successful publications such as his Edinburgh collection the *Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (1740), and the series *The Caledonian Pocket Companion* (starting in 1745), a cheap collection of one-line instrumental tunes, aimed at the male amateur performer, sealing his reputation. Oswald moved to London in 1741, and in 1747 both gained a royal licence to print his own music and established the concertising Society of the Temple of Apollo.

London's flourishing musical life encouraged numerous Continental musicians to move there in search of opportunity. Cellist **Giovanni Battista Cirri** was one such, settling in London in 1764. Cirri mixed public concert performance as a soloist and accompanist (including to the eight-year-old Mozart in 1764-5) with private service as a chamber musician to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. He contributed to the Bach-Abel concerts, and performed interval concertos in operas and oratorios; and this period in the public eye also saw publication of several sets of sonatas and quartets, the dedications to which testified to his extensive patronage network.

Undoubtedly, the most important composer to feature in 18th-century London's concert programmes was **Handel**. Arriving in London in 1710, naturalising in 1727, and remaining until his death in 1759, Handel not only came to dominate first the operatic scene (in the 1720s-30s) and then that for his distinctive brand of oratorio (in the 1730s-50s), he shrewdly took advantage of the demand for concert repertoire, both publishing his opera and oratorio overtures as separate instrumental works, and putting out 'favourite song' aria collections. The organ concerti that he added to oratorio intervals in the 1730s to 1740s were also separately published. Some instrumental pieces – particularly overture minuets – had English text added to them, and became popular songs in their own right. Ostensibly simple, affective arias like 'Cara sposa' from *Rinaldo* (1711) and 'Where'er you walk' from *Semele* (1744) could also become particularly popular with amateur singers. The affective style was cultivated by Handel in his later oratorios, such as *Theodora* and *Jephtha*, partly as a matter of his and his audience's taste and partly in response to the capabilities of his relatively untrained English theatre singers. Italian composers also had to pay heed to singer limitations, however: 'Pallido il sole' in **Hasse's** *Artaserse* (1730) was written for the aged castrato, Nicolini, whose voice was a shadow of what it had been at its peak in London, in the 1710s, though his acting talents were undiminished. Though Hasse himself did not visit London (despite his wishes), his music certainly made its appearance, with Handel using 49 arias from 15 different operas by Hasse in his pasticcios of 1730-34, a mark of the variety of music to which London audiences had access.

Charles Avison (1709-1770)

Largo from Concerto grosso No. 5 in D minor (1774)

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Cara sposa from My dear betrothed
Rinaldo HWV7 (1711, rev. 1717-31)
Giacomo Rossi, after Aaron Hill

Cara sposa, amante cara, Dove sei? Deh! ritorna a' pianti miei!	My dear betrothed, my dear love, where are you? Ah! return at my tears!
Del vostro Erebo sull'ara Colla face dello sdegno Io vi sfido, o spirti rei!	On your altar of Erebus, with blazing scorn I defy you, offending spirits!

James Oswald (1710-1769)

The Murrays March and other Scottish tunes (pub. 1760)

Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762)

The night her silent sable wore (1749)
Thomas D'Urfey

The night her silent sable wore
And gloomy were the skies
Of glitt'ring stars appear'd no more
Than those in Nelly's eyes.
When at her father's gate I knock'd
Where I had often been,
Arose and let me in.

Fast lock'd within her close embrace,
She trembling lay asham'd;
Her swelling breast and glowing face,
And ev'ry touch inflamed:
My eager passion I obey'd,
Resolv'd the fort to win;
And her fond heart was soon betray'd,
To yield and let me in.

Then! then! beyond expressing,
Immortal was the joy;
I knew no greater blessing,
So great a god was I:
And she, all ravish'd with delight,
Oft pray'd me come again;
And kindly vow'd that ev'ry night
She'd rise and let me in.
But ah! at last she prov'd with bairn,
And sighing sat, and dull;

And I, that was as much concern'd,
Look'd then just like a fool:
Her lovely eyes with tears ran o'er,
Repenting her rash sin;
She sigh'd and curs'd the fatal hour
That e'er she let me in.

But who could cruelly deceive
Or from such beauty part?
I lov'd her so, I could not leave
The charmer of my heart,
But wedded and conceal'd the crime:
Thus all was well again;
And now she thanks the happy time
That e'er she let me in.

Johann Adolf Hasse (1699-1783)

Fuga e Grave in G minor (c.1740)

George Frideric Handel

Sinfonia from *Serse* HWV40 (1737-8)

Kind Heav'n if virtue be thy care from *Theodora*
HWV68 (1749)
Thomas Morell

Didymus
Kind Heav'n, if virtue be thy care,
With courage fire me,
Or art inspire me,
To free the captive fair.
On the wings of the wind will I fly,
With this princess to live, or this Christian to die.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Sovente il sole from Often the sun
Andromeda Liberata
(1726)
Vincenzo Cassani

Sovente, il sole Risplende in cielo, Più bello e vago Se oscura nube Già l'offuscò.	Often the sun shines in the sky, more beautiful and elusive if a dark cloud has first class its shadow.
E il mar, tranquillo, Quasi senza onda Talor si scorge, Si ria procella Pria lo turbò.	And a quiet sea, barely rippling, is sometimes witnessed after a raging storm has broken its peace.

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Giovanni Battista Cirri (1724-1808)

Cello Concerto No. 2 in G Op. 14

- I. Allegro spiritoso
- II. Largo assai
- III. Rondo. Allegro

Interval

Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)

Adagio from Cello Concerto in G

George Frideric Handel

Dull delay, in piercing anguish from *Jephtha*
HWV70 (1751)
Thomas Morell

Hamor
Dull delay, in piercing anguish,
Bids the faithful lover languish,
While he pants for bliss in vain.
Oh, with gentle smiles relieve me.
Let no more false hopes deceive me,
Nor vain fears inflict a pain.

Johann Adolf Hasse

Pallido il sole from <i>Artaserse</i> (1730) Pietro Metastasio	The pallid sun
Pallido il sole, torbido il cielo, Pena minaccia, morte prepara, Tutto mi spira rimorso e orror.	The pallid sun and stormy sky threaten sorrow and herald death: I am beset by horror and remorse.
Timor mi cinge di freddo gelo, Dolor mi rende la vita amara, Io stesso fremo contro il mio cor.	Fear holds me in its icy grasp, grief fills my life with bitterness: I quail at what lies within my own heart.

Francesco Geminiani

Concerto grosso in D minor after Corelli's 'La
Folia' Op. 5 No. 12 (pub. 1729)

George Frideric Handel

Where'er you walk from *Semele* HWV58 (1744)
William Congreve

Where'er you walk,
Cool gales shall fan the glade;
Trees, where you sit,
Shall crowd into a shade;
Where'er you tread,
The blushing flow'rs shall rise;
And all things flourish
Where'er you turn your eyes.

Up the dreadful steep ascending from *Jephtha*
HWV70

Hamor
Up the dreadful steep ascending,
While for frame and love contending,
Sought I thee, my glorious prize.
And now, happy in the blessing,
Thee, my sweetest joy possessing,
Other honours I despise.
Up the dreadful steep.