

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 15 February 2025  
1.00pm

## Folio

Tabea Debus recorder  
Tom Foster harpsichord

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Flute Sonata in B minor BWV1030  
*I. Andante • II. Largo e dolce • III. Presto*

Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)

Violin Sonata in A minor Op. 6 No. 6

Johann Sebastian Bach

French Suite No. 2 in C minor BWV813 (c.1722-5)  
*arranged by Tabea Debus*  
*I. Allemande • II. Courante • III. Sarabande*  
*IV. Air • V. Menuet I - VI. Menuet II •*  
*VII. Gigue*

Alex Nante (b.1992)

Luz de otoño

Johann Sebastian Bach

Concerto in B flat BWV982 *based on Johann*  
*Ernst of Saxe-Weimar*  
*I. Allegro • II. Adagio. Allegro • III. Allegro*



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What kind of teacher was **Johann Sebastian Bach**? Certainly, he was one of the most prolific and influential teachers in music history, and many of his students kept his pedagogical philosophies alive in their own writings and activities. Their reports, along with the surviving music that Bach composed for teaching purposes, indicate that he favoured practical instruction over purely theoretical study, and utilised high-quality materials to inspire (as his son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote) 'those who...desire original thought and its special, unusual elaboration'. From 1723, as musical director of the St Thomas School in Leipzig, Bach was responsible for teaching music to all the school's students and providing weekly sacred cantatas for the city's main churches. In 1729, he found an additional creative opportunity, through his appointment as director of Leipzig's 'Collegium musicum', a secular ensemble founded by Telemann that consisted mostly of university students, and which gave weekly performances at the local coffee house.

Much of Bach's Leipzig chamber music, including his Flute Sonata in B minor BWV1030, was performed by the Collegium musicum. An earlier version of BWV1030 also survives, in the form of a harpsichord part in G minor, although the intended solo instrument for this version is not known. By far the greatest and most ambitious of Bach's flute sonatas, this work opens with a thematically varied Andante, notable for its contrapuntal ingenuity as well as the freedom given to the keyboard part. In the beautiful Largo e dolce that follows, however, the melody is found almost entirely in the flute. The last movement begins with a Presto fugue, which then – unusually – gives way to a concluding gigue.

During his lifetime, Bach amassed an impressive library of music by other composers of his time, much of which he used in teaching. We know, for example, that Bach owned a copy of **Tomaso Albinoni's** Violin Sonata in A minor, Op. 6 No. 6, because it survives in a manuscript copy made by his pupil Heinrich Nikolaus Gerber (1702–1775), with corrections in Bach's hand. This source presents a realisation of the figured bass in the *continuo*, without the violin part, showing it served a pedagogical purpose. Bach would also have no doubt regarded Albinoni's composition as a classic model of the Italian Baroque sonata, with its distinctive four-movement (slow-fast-slow-fast) form.

The dance suite was another hugely important genre of instrumental music in the early 18th Century. Among the most well-known of those written by Bach are his six French Suites (BWV812–817), composed between 1722 and 1725. They may have originally been intended for his wife Anna Magdalena, as the first five suites, including the French Suite No. 2 in C minor BWV813, appear in early versions in the first *Clavierbüchlein* (keyboard notebook) that Bach wrote for her in 1722. An incomplete version of the C minor suite is also found in Anna Magdalena's second, more famous *Clavierbüchlein* from 1725.

Like the so-called 'English Suites', the collective title of these suites dates from after Bach's death, and is a

misnomer: there is little that is particularly French about them, and many of the movements are very Italian in style. The second suite, which in today's concert is arranged for solo recorder and transposed into G minor, opens with an elegant Allemande, followed by a sprightly Italianate Courante and an aria-like Sarabande. After this come two 'galanteries', extra movements that were optionally added to the basic suite structure: first, a lively Air (a term that was generally used to denote an instrumental piece rather than a specific dance), and then a pair of graceful Menuets. The suite concludes with a gigue in the style of the French *canarie*, a dance that originated in the Canary Islands, featuring sharply dotted rhythms.

Composed in 2022, exactly 300 years after the creation of Anna Magdalena's first *Clavierbüchlein*, **Alex Nante's** haunting, two-movement *Luz de otoño* ('Autumn's light') was loosely inspired by the solo recorder version of BWV 813. According to Nante, listening to this arrangement gave him a 'noble and inspiring autumnesque feeling'. He explains that *Luz de otoño* has since become 'part of a cycle of pieces inspired by light. This cycle contains a sub-cycle, which explores the light element as perceived in different seasons. This piece for recorder is included in this sub-cycle. Written during Buenos Aires' autumn, it is a homage to the city's subtle luminosity, colour, and inspiring atmosphere'.

Bach first encountered the modern Italian concerto style, as exemplified by the works of Antonio Vivaldi, the Marcello brothers, and others, around the years 1713–1714, when he was working at the court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst in Weimar. It was here that he transcribed around 20 concertos by other composers for solo keyboard. He accessed many of these works via the collection of the Duke's nephew Prince Johann Ernst, who was deeply musical and studied keyboard and composition with the noted Weimar organist Johann Gottfried Walther. Although Johann Ernst tragically died in 1715 at the age of only 18, Bach transcribed four of the prince's own compositions for organ and harpsichord, including the Violin Concerto in B-flat major Op. 1 No. 1, which became BWV982.

Following the standard Italian concerto model, this work is in three movements, opening with a sprightly Allegro. The middle movement is unusual because it changes its tempo and texture halfway through, from a *dense ornamental* Adagio to an Allegro that is by turns imitative and improvisatory, while the brief last movement, a gigue, embodies the spirit of the dance that is so intrinsic to Bach's own music. Indeed, the impact of studying and transcribing these concertos on the development of Bach's compositional style was profound: as his first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, put it in 1802, they 'taught him how to think musically' – a skill he surely passed on to his students.

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