

WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 19 January 2023
7.30pm

Un'alma innamorata Handel's Italian cantatas

Carolyn Sampson soprano
Finnish Baroque Orchestra

Pauliina Fred flute, recorder
Anthony Marini violin
Dora Asterstad violin
Jussi Seppänen cello

Louna Hosia viola da gamba
Marianna Henriksson harpsichord
Eero Palviainen lute, theorbo
Hanna Haapamäki recorder, flute

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) Andante from Trio Sonata in C minor HWV386a (?c.1717-9)
Alpestre monte HWV81 (c.1707-9)

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) Sonata in A for 2 flutes, 2 violins and continuo
I. Grave • II. Allegro • III. Minuet

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) Sonata in A Kk208

George Frideric Handel Un'alma innamorata HWV173 (1707)
Interval

Alessandro Scarlatti Sonata nona in A minor for traverso, strings and continuo
(pub. c.1725)
*I. Allegro • II. Largo • III. Fuga •
IV. Largo e piano • V. Allegro*

George Frideric Handel Tra le fiamme HWV170 (c.1707-8)

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George Frideric Handel was 21 when he left Germany for Italy to train as a composer of Italian opera. Five years later in 1710 he brought his skills to Great Britain. A German composed Italian operas for an English audience. It should never have worked, but the combination was the most fashionable night out in London!

During his first years here Handel worked for the Duke of Chandos, residing at His Grace's palatial residence 'Cannons' at Edgware and commuting to the city to teach music to the granddaughters of his former employer, George Elector of Hanover, who had turned up in London in 1714 as the King. The Duke of Chandos retained an orchestra whose musicians played the Trio Sonata in C minor, which Handel composed at Cannons. It is scored for recorder, violin and bass with a keyboard improvising harmonies from figures written over the bassline. This continues at the keyboardist's discretion and together with the bass is called the continuo. Thus three lines of music are played by four musicians. The *Andante* is the opening movement; recorder and violin are as playful lovers, echoing each other, cooing in thirds, sighing in parallel.

To learn his operatic trade in Rome, Handel composed cantatas - sketch-like dramatic scenes comprising two or three recitatives and arias. In an evening's entertainment, an audience might hear five or six of these mini-operas. *Alpestre monte* was written around 1707 for a singer, two violins and continuo. Save for two recitatives and arias, the cantata is lost, but the remnant *Io so ben* ('I know well') is a lament of such bitter beauty that it has acquired a life of its own. It is the lament of a young man whose heart has been snared by a 'gentle nymph'. He heads off to 'Alpine mountain and solitary forest' where he plans to die.

Opera became popular entertainment at Naples, a city whose musical life in Handel's day was dominated by the composer **Alessandro Scarlatti**. The latter wrote music in all forms, though purely instrumental music appeared only in his later years. The Sonata in A has three movements, beginning with a rich, slow *Grave* with the soloists in pairs over a steady walking bass. It continues with a spirited quick *Allegro* with comic echo effects and punchy continuo and concludes with an elegant *Minuet*, a three-time dance comprising two phrases of 12 bars' length, each repeated four times to create a mathematical square of 96 bars.

Alessandro Scarlatti's son **Domenico** was a keyboard genius and Handel's contemporary. Mutual respect characterised their relationship. At a fancy dress ball, Handel, masked, was playing the harpsichord. Scarlatti, arriving, identified the mystery virtuoso as 'either Handel or the devil himself'. They

competed in Rome in 1708 when judges awarded first prize to both players, Handel for organ and Scarlatti for harpsichord. The latter was not all flashy virtuosity as his Sonata in A shows. Marked *Andante e cantabile*, it is a gentle piece of wistful contemplation. It was probably written during his later years in Spain when he had escaped his father's dominating personality and found a patron at the royal court in Madrid.

Handel composed the cantata *Un'alma innamorata* ('A soul in enamoured') in 1707 for the Italian Prince Ruspoli for performance at his villa at Vignanello, near Rome. Resident at the villa then was the soprano Vittoria Tarquini who probably performed it - she was at the time in a relationship with Prince Ferdinand de Medici so rumours of her two-timing with the composer made juicy gossip. The first aria twists and turns with chromatic angularity. The text is possibly by Abbé Francesco Mazziotti, tutor of Ruspoli's children. The heart is hurt whether faithful in love or otherwise. But the singer is happy because the heart is capable of loving more than one. The work comprises three recitatives and arias, two of which are *da capo* arias which repeat with embellishments to the first section 'from the top' (*da capo*).

The Sonata nona in A minor by Alessandro Scarlatti is scored for recorder, strings and continuo. It has five movements in symmetrical arrangement - an *Allegro* either end, a *Largo* at II and IV and a fugue in the middle on a rising chromatic theme. The sonata was published around 1725, the manuscript held in the library of the San Pietro a Majella Conservatory in Naples.

Handel composed *Tra le fiamme* ('Among the flames') circa 1707 in Rome for Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili who wrote the libretto. Its alternative title is *Consiglio* ('The advice') and in three arias and recitatives it warns against the foolish arrogance of Icarus who flew too near the sun and melted the wax glue of his wings. It is for voice, two recorders, two violins, continuo and viola da gamba, a cello-like instrument held between the legs (*gamba*). Pamphili's text in the first of three arias alludes also to the phoenix which is not only unharmed by the flames but actually rises from them. The following recitative introduces the wing-maker Daedalus, father of Icarus, who also flew but sensibly kept away from the sun. The second aria focuses on the boy darting and soaring in playful runs on a single syllable while its recitative compares the reasonable parent with the phoenix. The third aria and recitative, in descriptive rising and falling runs, advise that flight is better reserved for dreaming, before the cantata repeats the first aria as a flighty conclusion.

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George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Andante from Trio Sonata in C minor

HWV386a (?c.1717-9)

Alpestre monte

HWV81 (c.1707-9)

Anonymous

Recitativo accompagnato

Alpestre monte e solitaria
selva,

Triste albergo d'orror,
Nido di fere,

Fra l'ombre cupe e
nere

Del vostro sen, celate
Quest'infelice e disperato
amante

Ch'a voi, pieno di
duol, move le
piante.

Aria

Io so ben ch'il vostro
orrore

È un'imgo del mio core,
È un'idea del mio pensiero.

Come in questo altro
soggiorno

Così stanno al core attorno
ombre,

Larve orride e fiere.

Io so ben ...

Recitativo

Quindi men vengo a voi

Per cercar morte,

Ch'il mio duol è sì forte

Da non trovar mai pace

Altro ch'in lei.

Amo ninfa gentile, e l'amo
tanto

Che per soverchio amore

Al fin perdei me stesso,

E il cor perdei

Dalla gran fiamma
oppresso.

Ahi Nice! Ahi di mia morte
aspra cagione,

Non per tua colpa,

Ma per mio destino;

Se l'amarti è delitto,

Vuò morendo punire

Di mie pupille il temerario
ardire.

Alpine mountain

Accompanied recitative

Alpine mountain and
solitary forest,

sad refuge of fear,
lair of wild beasts,

in the gloomy black
shadows

of your bosom, you hide
this unhappy and
desperate lover

who, stricken with pain,
drags his footsteps to
you.

Aria

I know well that the horror
you inspire

is a reflection of my heart,
and the state of my mind.

As in this surrounding
gloom,

so my heart is surrounded
by shadows,

horrible and fierce ghosts.

I know well ...

Recitative

Thus I go to you

searching for death,

for my pain is so strong

that I can find

no peace elsewhere.

I love a gentle nymph,
and love her so deeply

that through a fierce love

I ended up losing myself

and losing my heart,

oppressed by great
passion.

Ah, Nice! Ah, bitter cause
of my death

through no fault of yours,

but by my fate;

if it is a crime to love you,

I want, in dying, to punish

the reckless temerity of
my eyes.

Aria

Almen dopo il fato
mio,

Vieni a dar l'estremo
addio

Alla fredda spoglia esangue.

Per temprar il mio gran
duolo,

S'io t'offersi il pianto
solo,

Ecc'or t'offro ancora il
sangue.

Almen dopo il fato mio ...

Aria

I only ask that, after my
fate is accomplished,
you come and bid a final
farewell

to my cold, bloodless body.

To temper my great
agony,

where I only offered you
weeping;

here, now I also offer you
my blood.

I only ask ...

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)

Sonata in A for 2 flutes, 2 violins and continuo

I. Grave

II. Allegro

III. Minuet

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

Sonata in A Kk208

George Frideric Handel

Un'alma innamorata

HWV173 (1707)

?*Abbé Francesco Mazziotti*

Recitativo

Un'alma innamorata,

Prigioniera d'amore,

Vive troppo infelice.

Divien sempre maggiore

Il mal, che non
intende,

Allor che nell'amar schiava si
rende.

Aria

Quel povero core,

Ferito d'amore

Sospira se adira,

Se vive fedel.

Sia il solo dolore

Geloso timore,

Le pene e catene,

Martire crudel.

A soul enamoured

Recitativo

A soul enamoured,

imprisoned by love,

lives in a wretched state.

It does not understand

that the pain becomes
ever greater

as by loving it is rendered
a slave.

Aria

That poor heart

wounded by love

sighs whether it is incensed

or remains faithful.

For it there is only

jealous fear,

pains, chains,

cruel torments.

Recitativo
E pur benché egli veda
Morta del suo servir
La speme istessa
Vuole col suo languir
Viver con essa.

Recitative
And yet, although it sees
hope itself perish
in this servitude,
it wants that hope to
suffer alongside it.

Aria
Io godo, rido e spero,
Ed amo più d'un
core,
E so ridir perché.
Se segue il mio pensiero
Un vagabondo amore
Cercate voi
dov'è.

Aria
I rejoice, laugh and hope,
and love more than one
heart,
and I can tell you why.
If my thoughts follow
a wandering love,
you will have to go
looking for it.

Recitativo
In quanto a me ritrovo
Del riso ogni diletto,
Se sprezzo dell'amore
Le sue severe leggi, ed il rigore.

Recitative
As for me, I find
all delight in laughing,
if I spurn the harsh laws
and rigours of love.

Aria
Ben impare come
s'ama
In amor chi vuol goder.
Non ha pari alla mia
brama
Il rigor del nume arcier.

Aria
May he who wishes to be
happy in love
learn how to love.
The strictures of armed
Cupid
are no match for my desire.

Interval

Alessandro Scarlatti

Sonata nona in A minor for recorder,
strings and continuo (pub. c.1725)

- I. Allegro
- II. Largo
- III. Fuga
- IV. Largo e piano
- V. Allegro

George Frideric Handel

Tra le fiamme HWV170 Among the flames
(c.1707-8)
Benedetto Pamphili

Aria
Tra le fiamme tu scherzi per
gioco,
O mio core, per farti
felice,

Aria
Among the flames you
playfully dart,
O my heart, to make
yourself happy,

E t'inganna una vaga
beltà.
Cadon mille farfalle nel
foco,
E si trova una sola
fenice,
Che risorge se a morte sen va.

and are deceived by a
fine beauty.
A thousand butterflies fall
into the fire,
and there is only one
phoenix,
which rises from death.

Recitativo
Dedalo già le fortunate
penne
Tessea con mano ardità
E con tenera cera
Piuma a piuma aggiungea.
Icaro, il fanciulletto
Sovente confondea
L'ingegnoso lavoro;
Ah, così mai trattato non
avesse
E cera e piume:
Per chi non nacque augello
Il volare è portento,
Il cader è costume.

Recitative
Daedalus once wove
lucky wings
with crafty hands
and with supple wax,
adding feather after feather.
Icarus, the young child
often hampered
this ingenious work;
ah, if only he had never
treated
wax and feathers like this:
for those not born a bird,
flying is a miracle,
falling a habit.

Aria
Pien di nuovo e bel diletto
Sciolse l'ali il
giovinetto,
E con l'aure già
scherzando.
Ma del volo si gradito
Troppo ardito
L'onda ancor va mormorando.

Aria
Full of new and fair delight,
the young boy unfurled
the wings,
and played games with
the breezes.
But of the flight so enjoyed
but too daring
the waves still whisper.

Recitativo
Sì, sì purtroppo è
vero:
Nel temerario volo
Molti gl'Icari son,
Dedalo un solo.

Recitative
Yes, yes it is
unfortunately true:
of those flying recklessly
there are many like Icarus,
but only one Daedalus.

Aria
Voli per l'aria chi può
volare
Scorra veloce la terra il
mare
Parta, ritorni né fermi il
piè.
Voli ancor l'uomo ma coi
pensieri
Che delle piume ben più
leggeri
E più sublimi il ciel gli
diè.

Aria
Let those that can fly, fly
through the air,
swiftly skimming the land
and the sea,
coming and going without
touching the ground.
And man may fly too, but
in his thoughts,
which, heaven sent, are
far lighter
and more sublime than
feathers.

Text continues overleaf

Recitativo

L'uomo che nacque per
salire al cielo,
Ferma il pensier nel
suolo
E poi dispone il
volo
Con ali che si finge, e in sé
non ha.

Aria

Tra le fiamme ...

Recitative

The man born to ascend
to heaven
fixes his thoughts upon
the ground,
and then sets about his flight
with wings he has created,
that are not innate to
him.

Aria

Among the flames ...