

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 23 December 2024
7.30pm

Composer in Residence is supported by Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne

Dunedin Consort

John Butt director, harpsichord	Rebecca Livermore violin II	Matylda Adamus cello
Matthew Truscott violin I	Kristin Deeken violin II	Christine Sticher double bass
Sarah Bevan-Baker violin I	John Crockatt viola	Toby Carr theorbo
Ellen Bundy violin I	Kay Stephen viola	Aileen Henry harp
Huw Daniel violin II	Jonathan Manson cello	

Rachel Redmond soprano
Joanna Songi soprano
Helen Charlston alto
Samuel Boden tenor
Matthew Brook bass-baritone

Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764)

Concerto grosso in F minor Op. 1 No. 8

Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682)

Ah! troppo è ver (1665)

*Sinfonia • Lucifero • Coro di Furie • Lucifero •
Angelo • Secondo Pastore • Maria Vergine •
Primo Pastore • Sinfonia • San Giuseppe •
Ritornello • Coro*

Interval

Alessandro Stradella

Sonata di viole 'Concerto-concerto grosso' (1665)

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

The Holdfast (2024) *world première*

Co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall

*The Pulse • Round: You • The Resilience of
Lichens in Winter • Round: We • The Plume*

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

Concerto grosso in G minor Op. 6 No. 8 'Fatto per la
Notte di Natale' (pub. 1714)

*I. Vivace No. 8 • I. Grave No. 8 • II. Allegro No. 8
III. Adagio - Allegro - Adagio No. 8
IV. Vivace No. 8 • V. Allegro No. 8
V. Pastorale. Largo No. 8*



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Christmas music isn't all about trumpets, drums, and heavenly hosts. Sometimes it's more about the shepherds, the hillside, and the humanity of it all. It's this thread that runs through tonight's Christmas programme—weaving a web that connects the Italian Baroque, first-century shepherds, **Caroline Shaw**, Thomas Hardy, and a whole series of botanical names for lichens.

It was towards the end of the 17th Century that composers first began to write for a concertino group of two violins and a continuo instrument in dialogue and contrast with a larger group, most often comprising two violins, viola, and bass. In tonight's programme, we hear just how adaptable and influential this *concerto grosso* formation was, not only in the hands of its master **Arcangelo Corelli** but also in those of **Stradella** and **Locatelli** who came before and after.

So strong was Corelli's influence both in musical and publishing terms that those who came after wanted to write themselves into his tradition, using form and numbering to communicate their debt and competitive intent. So it was that **Handel** followed Corelli in publishing an Op. 6 set of *concerti grossi* that aligned strongly in formal structure even as he made his own modifications to the musical form.

Pietro Locatelli may not have followed the opus number, but his Op. 1 set of 1721 is playing a very similar game. The set takes the sequencing of Corelli, with eight *da chiesa* and four *da camera concerti*, and gives the eighth the same Christmas stylings, down to the final pastorale and its last two, separated chords. Locatelli's innovation, if we were to pick only one, is to add a second independent viola part adding a richness and complexity to both the concertino and full group writing.

Next, we come to Alessandro Stradella's Nativity cantata, *Ah! Troppo è ver*, which takes up the story of the shepherds from Luke's Gospel and their journey to Bethlehem to see the Christchild. More unusually, Stradella's anonymous text begins with Lucifer himself interrupting the exuberant third movement of the opening Sinfonia—a narrative and compositional shock. Worried that the birth of Son of God is bad news for his own empire and foreseeing the harrowing of Hell in some three decades time, he rounds up a chorus of furies to investigate and harass this new threat. Normal programming then resumes as the shepherds and then the Virgin Mary herself conjure the prayerful stillness more associated with this holy night. The piece ends with a final madrigal-like chorus that reassures us that the stars and their beauty will carry the day since they cannot be eclipsed or otherwise challenged by Hell's powers.

We begin the second half with another innovation from Stradella, a sonata that uses the same forces

and structure as the cantata but without any voices. While this might scarcely seem to be unusual to a modern audience, this is the earliest extant work that offers the *concerto grosso* as a piece in its own right, independent of any larger vocal work. Without an interrupting Lucifer, variation mainly comes from the contrast in scale and texture between the concertino and the larger group.

Caroline Shaw's *Holdfast* takes the singers and strings of the Stradella cantata and splices them with her own voice, Thomas Hardy, and echoes of Corelli to create a piece that homes in on winter in the natural world and our relation to it. Caroline tells us that, 'In botany, a "holdfast" is a root-like structure that attaches an organism to its substrate for support. For some lichens, it is how they remain attached to a rock, even as they dry up to survive harsh cold temperatures. In the dead of winter, at the beginning of the 20th Century, Thomas Hardy reflected on an aged bird's strangely-timed joy amid the barren landscape, as if the creature bore some secret knowledge that the future was bright. The scene in Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush' feels like a lesson in hope, in holding fast to one's truths and values, even amid frustration and despair. (This piece was written during the 2024 US election.) Winter, and Christmastime in particular, can be hard for many people (including me), but may we remember that the deciduous trees will be green again, and there are dear people in our lives who are there for us through it all. My wish is that this piece acts as a momentary "holdfast" to joy — a reminder of your resilience during times of chaos and uncertainty.'

This deeply human approach connects with the shepherds, in some ways the most relatable characters of the Nativity story, taken out of themselves and their normal lives and unlocked by something beyond their understanding.

We end with the work that became the model. Arcangelo Corelli's stellar reputation was sealed by the publication of just six sets of compositions, the last posthumously. This concerto comes from that final set and is now such a staple of Christmas programmes around the world that it's easy to gloss over its minor key and its potential ambivalence about what the Christmas story might mean.

Listening again, after the Shaw, we might hear the ways in which both capture the quiet, small moments of the season. Whether vouchsafed by constellations of stars above in the 17th Century or hidden networks of lichen below in the present, all these works have something to say about the humanity at the heart of the Christmas story.

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Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764)

Concerto grosso in F minor Op. 1 No. 8

Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682)

Ah! troppo è ver (1665)

Sinfonia

Lucifero

Recit

Ah! Troppo è sempre, ad onta di Satan, s'aggiran gl'astri e con tiranne tempore scuotono a' danni miei fieri disastri!	Ah! It's all too true that forever, in spite of Satan, the stars turn and with tyrant tempers dash fierce disasters down on me!
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Aria

E sarà chi non s'accinga, miei seguaci, alla vendetta e con bellica saetta contro il nemico Ciel l'odio non spinga?	And will there be any who will not ready themselves, my followers, for vengeance and with warlike thunderbolts rush in hate against hostile Heaven?
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Recit

Sa versar nel mio core aspro veleno un insolito suon d'eteree corde: con melodia concorde vibra all'orecchie mie dardi canori, onde tem'io che dal superno regno, del Padre ad obedir l'ostil disegno, non scenda il Figlio a tormentar il seno. Ite pronti a discior del vero l nodi e adoprare a mio pro l'armi e le frodi!	Bitter poison fills my heart, an unfamiliar sound of ethereal chords: with concerted melody assaults my ears with singing arrows, from which I fear that from the supernal kingdom, to follow the hostile plan of the Father, the Son descends to torment my heart. Go quickly to untie truth's knots, and take up weapons and fraud to my advantage!
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Coro di Furie

Al cenno orribile
del re dell'Erebo
corran le Furie
e con terribile
valore intrepido
scagliano fulmini.

At the dreadful nod
of the King of Erebus
tear the Furies,
and with terrible
fearless valour
hurl lightning bolts.

Lucifero

Recit

Ite a spiar del suol gl'antri più chiusi e del Fato i secreti or sian delusi.	Go, seek out the earth's most hidden caves and let Fate's own secrets be deceived
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Angelo

Aria

Su, pastori, alla gioia, al diletto ogni petto disposto si renda e risplenda tra vivi contenti, or che, spenti di Febo gl'ardori fra i rigori d'un tetto gelato, umanato risiede il Sol divino.	Come, shepherds, to joy, to delight, let every heart be willing and bask in lively contentment, now that Phoebus' blaze is out, in the midst of the austerities of a frozen home the Divine Sun made man dwells.
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Recit

Al celeste Bambino, che in albergo brutal scioglie I vagiti, con ossequi graditi tributo d'umiltà porga il mortale e si palesi al mondo il gran Natale.	To the Heavenly Babe, crying in the rough stable, with grateful homage mortals offer humble tribute and the great Birth is unveiled to the world.
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*Please do not turn the page until the song and its
accompaniment have ended.*

Secondo Pastore

Aria

Qual alto concento
D'angelico accento
consiglia a gioir?
Qual face stellante
di fausto semblante
n'invita a seguir

What lofty harmony
of angel voices
tells us to rejoice?
What starry flame
of auspicious bearing
encourages us to follow?

Recit

Andiam là dove il fato
ha dentro un vil tugurio il ciel
traslato
e in rustica magion
cangia
l'Empro
Compagni,
che miro?

Let us go where Fate
has conjured heaven in a
lowly stable
and turned the fiery
heavens into a rustic
stall.
My friends, what do
I see?

Maria Vergine

Aria

Sovrano mio bene,
mia spene, mio cor,
quest'alma ch'in calma
gioisce per te,
dal seno materno
l'interno suo amor
con piogge serene
riversa al tuo piè
e con dovuto omaggio
dell'alba tua beata adora il
raggio.

My supreme good,
my hope, my heart,
this soul that in calmness
rejoices for you,
from this motherly breast
pours at your feet
her inner love
in a serene shower
and with due homage
adores the beams of your
blessed dawn.

Recit

Concedi ai falli
umani ampio
perdono
e sia il mio priego intercessor
del dono.

Grant generous
forgiveness to human
failings
And let my pray intercede
for your gift.

Primo Pastore

Recit

Al riverito piede
del maestoso Infante
offriam d'affetto umil votive
fede,
che dalle sacre piante
del Regnator dell'Etra
supplicante desir mercede
impetra.

At the revered feet
of the majestic Child
we offer humble vows of
faith,
which by the sacred tears
of the King of Heaven
beg to obtain
mercy.

Aria

Deh, ricevi i nostri voti
che devoti
ti portiam, Supremo
Nume.
Né dal tuo provido
lume
si permetta
che negletta
di pastorale
stool sia la
preghiera,
ma la tua benigne
sfera
volge a noi
sempiterno il favor de'giri
suoi.

Ah, receive our vows,
which devotedly
we bring to you, supreme
God.
Under your providential
light,
if allowed
Under your provincial eye
Let the prayers of the
pastoral host not be
ignored
but let your divine
spheres
turn on us
the eternal favor of their
spinning.

Sinfonia

San Giuseppe

Recit

Del nostro amato figlio
la propizie bontà,
l'infinita pièta
alle suppliche vostre inclina il
ciglio
e con prodiga sorte
della clemenza sua v'apre le
porte

Our beloved son's
propitious goodness
and infinite mercy
incline to your
supplications
and with generous gift
opens for you the gates
of his clemency

Ritornello

Coro

Or che luci sì belle
con fulgori suavi
trattan del Ciel le chiavi

e trionfan le stele,

non san coi lampi lor pugnar
gli abissi,
ché soggetti non son gli astir
all'ecclissi.

Now a light so beautiful
sweetly flashing
brings the keys from
heaven
and now the stars
triumph
Hell can no longer cast its
lightning,
since stars are not
subject to eclipses.

Interval

Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682)

Sonata di viole 'Concerto-concerto grosso'

Caroline Shaw (b.1982)

The Holdfast (2024)

Thomas Hardy

Caroline Shaw

The Pulse

from Thomas Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush'

Thomas Hardy / Caroline Shaw

(Fling your Soul with Joy
Upon the Growing Gloom.)

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
(Hold fast.)
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
(Hold fast.)
Had sought their household fires.
The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

Round: You

Caroline Shaw

When all my leaves are gone
And there's grey where green would be
You are the June that
I will see (when)

The Resilience of Lichens in Winter

Caroline Shaw

Evernia prunastri
Lobaria oregana
Cladonia fimbriata
Pleopsidium chlorophanum
Cladonia furcata
Cladonia macilentata
Cladonia pyxidata
Cladonia fimbriata

Peltigera didactyla
Peltigera collina
Ramalina fastigiata
Ramalina cuspidata
Ramalina siliquosa
Ramalina calicaris
Verrucaria macrostoma
Graphis scripta
Buellia aethelea
Hydropunctaria maura
Usnea subfloridana

Round: We

Caroline Shaw

When all your leaves are
Buried under the snow
We will plant a garden
So you will know (when)

The Plume

Thomas Hardy / Caroline Shaw

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

Field Maple, Paperback Maple, Bigleaf Maple, Italian Maple, Striped Maple Sycamore Maple, Red Norway Maple, Cut-leaved Japanese Maple, Vine-leaved Maple, Hornbeam Maple, Dissected Silver Maple, Mountain Maple, Snake Bark Maple, California Buckeye, Ruby Horsechestnut, Yellow Buckeye, Sunrise Horsechestnut, Yellow Horsechestnut, Tree of Heaven, European Alder, Grey Alder, Red Alder, Spaeth's Alder, Spotted Gum, Fireberry Hawthorn, Yellow Birch, Blue Birch, Ermans Birch, Black Birch, Monarch Birch, Paper Birch, Paper Mulberry, American Hornbeam, Bitternut Hickory, Shagbark Hickory, Southern Catalpa, Common Hackberry, Turkish Filbert Hazel, Ironwood, White Poplar, Balsam Poplar, Lombardy Poplar, Quaking Aspen, Wild Cherry, Bitter Berry, Hoptree, Pear, Sawtooth Oak, White Oak, Scarlet Oak, Alder Buckthorn, Goat Willow, Common Osier, American Mountain Ash, Silver Lime, Grey Elm, Purple Fastigate Beech, Copper Beech, Common Fig, Pumpkin Ash, Hardy Rubber Tree, Boxelder, Grey Ironbark, Snow Gum, Silky Oak, Golden Chain, Laurel, Siberian Crab Apple, Black Mulberry

(Hold fast.)

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

Concerto grosso in G minor Op. 6 No. 8
'Fatto per la Notte di Natale' (pub. 1714)

I. Vivace No. 8

I. Grave No. 8

II. Allegro No. 8

III. Adagio - Allegro - Adagio No. 8

IV. Vivace No. 8

V. Allegro No. 8

V. Pastorale. Largo No. 8