

# WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 23 October 2024  
7.30pm

## Vivaldi Cantatas

Raffaele Pe countertenor

La Lira di Orfeo

Elisa Citterio violin I  
Heriberto Delgado violin II  
Krishna Nagaraja viola  
Francesco Galligioni cello  
Gianluca Geremia archlute  
Chiara Granata arpa doppia  
Jacopo Raffaele harpsichord, organ

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Amor, hai vinto RV683 (after 1726)

Violin Sonata in A minor RV32 (pub. 1709)

*I. Preludio. Largo • II. Capriccio. Presto • III. Grave •  
IV. Allemanda. Allegro*

Care selve, amici prati RV671

Qual per ignoto calle RV677

*Interval*

Concerto for strings in D minor RV129 'Madrigalesco' (?1720s)

*I. Adagio - Allegro • II. Adagio • III. [Allegro]*

Alla caccia dell'alme e de' cori RV670

Cello Sonata in E flat RV39 (?1720s)

*I. Larghetto • II. Allegro • III. Andante • IV. Allegro*

Cessate, omai cessate RV684



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Of the five main musical domains to which Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) made substantial contributions – concerto, sonata, opera, sacred music, chamber cantata – the last is still by far the least well known. Vivaldi's production in it was reasonably large – 37 works in total, comprising 28 surviving cantatas for soprano (five of which employ instruments additional to the ones playing the continuo) and nine for alto (four of which use additional instruments). Alto rather than contralto, since in Vivaldi's day their singers were more likely to be male – whether countertenors, high tenors or alto castrati – and the imaginary protagonist whose persona the singer adopted was accordingly most often a man thwarted in love. This was the period when the Arcadian movement was booming and the characters in the minidrama became imaginary shepherds and shepherdesses (or nymphs) surrounded by natural beauty but constantly beset by amorous aspirations and rebuffs. The five cantatas for alto in this programme, all mature works written in the 1720s or 1730s, offer a conspectus of Vivaldi's achievement in the genre.

Most cantatas comprised three or four movements, generally configured recitative-aria-recitative-aria or aria-recitative-aria. An apt metaphor has it that a recitative 'loads the gun' – that is, sets the scene and moves the action forward – while the aria 'fires it', lingering over a particular emotion, thought or event. Recitatives normally avoid repetition, but arias of Vivaldi's period are customarily cast in *da capo* form, where the first two vocal sections and their surrounding instrumental material are repeated as they stand (or with improvised ornamentation) after a central vocal section typically mingling contrast and continuity.

The programme opens with one of Vivaldi's greatest and most complex cantatas, *Amor, hai vinto*, which uses a full string accompaniment. Two lines from Pietro Metastasio's libretto for the opera *Siroe* (1726) are smuggled rather adroitly into the text of the opening recitative. This fact both establishes an earliest possible date and illustrates the often casual nature of cantata texts, whose authors rarely risked criticism by identifying themselves. The first aria introduces the common simile of a boat imperiled by a storm to describe a lovelorn but unsuccessful suitor. Vivaldi here introduces many 'anguished' melodic and harmonic effects (especially in illustration of the word *pena*, 'pain'), and for the only time in his cantatas adopts a fugal texture to add depth. By the time the second aria arrives the air has cleared, the mood becoming one of optimism and confidence.

*Care selve, amici prati* is a lighter kind of cantata with simple continuo accompaniment. A disappointed lover seeks peace in the woods, where he has returned after his rejection in foreign parts. There, a murmuring brook, effectively conjured up with undulating figures, restores his spirits.

*Qual per ignoto calle*, similarly scored, is a perfect specimen of Vivaldi's late style: ornate, expansive and rhythmically sophisticated. Here, the pursuit of love is

likened to wandering in confusion along a dark, unfamiliar path. The first aria rebukes the singer's lady-love for her coldness, while the second recitative pleads with her to become more responsive. The final aria brings hope of a dawn arriving to banish both the real and the metaphorical darkness. An active bass part in this cantata is a delight, demonstrating a contrapuntal acumen for which Vivaldi is not always given due credit.

*Alla caccia dell'alme e de' cori* warns other men against the huntress Clori, who ensnares her male prey in her traps. In its arias Vivaldi uses small rhythmic cells to create vivid images. The first introduces 'tum-tiddy' figures suggestive of hunting calls, while the second employs a limping figure, perhaps mocking the singer's own ignominious captivity despite his admonitions to others.

*Cessate, omai cessate*, returning to a full string orchestra, is a worthy pendant to *Amor, hai vinto*. Its miniature plot is unusual in ending with a wish for the 'pitiless' (that is, uninterested) Dorilla to die and suffer torments in the underworld. Impotent rage and self-pity inhabit each movement. The first aria is a master class in imaginative orchestration where bowed and pizzicato articulations are artfully combined. In the second aria, the composer rises to the challenge of depicting the unremitting horror of Hell, full of lashings and groans.

As intermissions between the cantatas we hear works from the instrumental side of Vivaldi's creativity. The first is a violin sonata from his Op. 2 set, published in 1709. This collection has an unusual history. It was originally conceived as a series of duets for violin and cello alone, which explains why the bass line is sometimes unusually prominent. When the Danish crown prince visited Venice during the preceding winter, Vivaldi conceived the idea of dedicating the sonatas to him, but to do so he had to make them more conventional, which entailed redefining the bass part as one for continuo, therefore including harpsichord. The movements of the A minor sonata, last in the set, follow the sequence *Preludio-Capriccio-Grave-Allemanda*, the second movement being a *moto perpetuo*.

Vivaldi's four-movement concerto without soloist in D minor for strings (RV129) is subtitled 'Madrigalesco'. The meaning is not literally 'madrigal-like', but rather 'in the contrapuntal style of traditional church music'. The precision of this description is revealed by the fact that the concerto's material is mostly a wordless transcription of material found in two sacred compositions: the *Kyrie* RV587 and the *Magnificat* RV610. Vivaldi excelled at *jeux d'esprit* of this kind.

His special affinity with bass-register instruments emerges in the Cello Sonata in E flat RV39, probably dating from the early 1720s. Its four-movement design resembles that of the A minor violin sonata, but the rhythms are more varied and the cantabile quality more marked. The bounciness of its last movement will raise a smile.

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## Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

### Amor, hai vinto RV683 Love, you have won

(after 1726)

*Anonymous, Pietro*

*Metastasio*

#### *Recitativo*

Amor, hai vinto. Ecco il mio  
seno  
Da' tuoi strali trafitto. Or chi  
sostiene  
L'alma mia dal dolore  
abbandonata?  
Gelido in ogni vena  
Scorrer mi sento il  
sangue,  
E sol mi serba in vita affanno  
e pena.  
Mi palpita nel  
petto  
Con nuove scosse il  
core.  
Clori, crudel, e quanto  
Ha da durar quest'aspro  
tuo rigore?

#### *Aria*

Passo di pena in pena  
Come la navicella  
Ch'in quest'in  
quell'altr'onda  
Urtando v`a.

Il ciel tuona e  
balena  
Il mar tutt'è in tempesta.  
Porto non vede `o  
sponda  
Dove approdar non  
sa.

#### *Recitativo*

In che strano  
e confuso  
Vortice di pensieri  
La mia mente s'aggira?  
Or è in calma, or  
s'adira,  
E dove ancor si fermi, non  
risolve.  
Or in sasso, or in polve  
Vorria cangiarsi. Oh Dio! M`a  
di che mai,  
M`a di che ti querelli  
Cor incredulo, infido?  
Di che ti lagni?  
Ahime! Forse non  
sai  
Che nel seno di Clori hai  
porto, hai lido?

#### *Recitative*

Love, you have won.  
Behold my breast  
pierced by your arrows.  
Who will now provide  
for my soul, abandoned in  
its grief?  
Through every vein  
my blood runs cold as ice,  
and only grief and pain  
keep me alive.  
My heart beats in my  
breast  
with unwonted  
palpitations.  
Clori, cruel girl, how long  
will this harshness of  
yours endure?

#### *Aria*

I pass from grief to grief  
like a little boat  
that from one wavecrest  
to the next  
is tossed upon its way.

The thunder booms, the  
lightning flashes,  
the ocean is in turmoil.  
It sees no haven, sees no  
shore,  
knows not where it may  
land.

#### *Recitative*

In what strange and  
troubled  
whirlpool of impressions  
is my mind spinning?  
One moment calm, then  
angry,  
it cannot decide where to  
rest.  
Now into rock, now dust  
would it transform itself.  
Oh God! But who,  
who are you blaming,  
incredulous, fickle heart?  
Of whom do you  
complain? Alas! Have  
you forgotten  
that you have a haven, a  
shore in Clori's breast?

#### *Aria*

Se a me rivolge il ciglio,  
L'amato mio  
tesoro,  
Non sento pi`u  
martoro  
Ma torno a  
respirar.

Non teme pi`u periglio,  
Non sente affanno e pena,  
L'alma si  
rasserena  
Come la calma in mar.

#### *Aria*

If she turns to look at me,  
my beloved, my precious  
one,  
I am no longer tormented,  
but breathe again in  
peace.  
No longer fearing danger,  
feeling no grief and pain,  
the spirit becomes as  
tranquil  
as the ocean in a calm.

## Violin Sonata in A minor RV32 (pub. 1709)

### I. Preludio. Largo

### II. Capriccio. Presto

### III. Grave

### IV. Allemanda. Allegro

#### Care selve, amici prati RV671

*Anonymous*

#### *Aria*

Care selve, amici  
prati  
A cercar ritorno in  
voi  
La perdita, amabil  
pace.  
Quella pace che  
spietati  
Mi rapir coi pensier  
suoi  
Speme infida, amor  
fallace.

#### Dear woods, friendly meadows

#### *Aria*

Dear woods, friendly  
meadows,  
I come back to seek in  
you  
the sweetest peace I have  
lost –  
that peace which  
treacherous  
hope and false love  
pitilessly  
snatched from me with  
thoughts of her.

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

*Recitativo*  
 Ben mal accorto e folle all'or  
 io fui  
 Che vaghezza mi prese  
 Di migliorar mia sorte e  
 per tal fine  
 Lunge dal natio bosco  
 il piè portai.  
 Infelice mi  
 rese  
 Una speme sì ardita; ove  
 sperai  
 Grandezze ritrovar, trovai  
 rovine.  
 Tu, insano d'arricchir cieco  
 desio  
 Tu ingannasti il cor mio  
 E pace e libertà per  
 te perdei.  
 Or scoperto  
 l'inganno  
 Riedo a viver in quiete i  
 giorni miei  
 E a reparar dal  
 tempo corso il  
 danno.

*Recitative*  
 Quite foolishly and  
 stupidly  
 I was taken with the idea  
 of improving my lot, and  
 to this end  
 I travelled far from my  
 native woods.  
 I have been made  
 unhappy  
 by such a rash hope.  
 Where I hoped  
 to find greatness, I found  
 ruin.  
 You, crazy to fulfil blind  
 passion,  
 you betrayed my heart,  
 and through you I lost my  
 peace and liberty.  
 Now that the betrayal is  
 revealed  
 I return to live my days in  
 peace,  
 and to make good the  
 damage done by times  
 past.

*Aria*  
 Placido in letto ombroso  
 Là dove scorre il rio  
 Steso sul margo ombroso  
 De l'onda al  
 mormorio,  
 Il canto accorderò.  
 Condur il gregge amato  
 Sola mia cura  
 fia,  
 Dalla capanna al prato  
 E in onta a sorte ria  
 Contento viverò,  
 Contento  
 goderò.

*Aria*  
 Serene in a shady bower  
 where the brook runs by,  
 lying on the shady bank  
 to the murmur of the  
 waves,  
 I shall tune my song.  
 To lead my beloved flock  
 from the moors into the  
 meadow  
 shall be my only care,  
 and despite my dire fate  
 contented I shall live,  
 and contented I shall  
 enjoy life.

**Qual per ignoto calle  
 RV677**

*Anonymous*

*Recitativo*  
 Qual per ignoto  
 calle  
 Move dubbioso pellegrino il  
 piede,  
 Desio l'incalza e  
 reo timor  
 l'arresta.  
 Nel profondo di tetra  
 orrida valle,  
 Senza raggio di  
 stella,

**As through  
 unknown streets**

*Recitative*  
 As through unknown  
 streets  
 the hesitant pilgrim  
 makes his way,  
 desire pursues him, and  
 guilt and fear hold him  
 back.  
 In the depths of the dark  
 ravine,  
 without a single ray of  
 starlight,

Caliginosa notte  
 Il preme e lo  
 circonda.  
 Terribile tempesta  
 Di spessi tuoni e  
 lampi  
 Lo sbigottito cor preme e  
 flagella;  
 Pur vinto dal desio prende  
 coraggio,  
 Timor non prova e segue il  
 suo viaggio.  
 Tal misero son io  
 Che nel sentier d'amore,  
 Benché d'aspro  
 rigore  
 Provi armata colei che mi  
 vuol morto,  
 Pur con occulta  
 forza  
 Non manca e non si  
 smorza  
 In me la fiamma e spero alfin  
 conforto.

gloomy night  
 oppresses and envelops  
 him.  
 A dreadful storm  
 with much thunder and  
 lightning  
 scourges and oppresses  
 the horrified heart;  
 though overcome by  
 desire, take courage,  
 do not give in to fear, and  
 go on your way.  
 I am so far gone  
 that on the path of love,  
 though filled with harsh  
 trials  
 laid by the one who  
 wishes me dead,  
 through some arcane  
 force  
 my flame neither wavers  
 nor is extinguished  
 and I hope at last for  
 solace.

*Aria*  
 Quel passagier son io  
 Che vò cercando in te,  
 Mia bella, amore e  
 fé,  
 E sol ritrovo, oh Dio,  
 Rigore e crudeltà.  
 E pur costante  
 Irene,  
 Bella nemica mia,  
 Men orgogliosa e ria  
 Spero che di mie pene  
 Un giorno avrai  
 pietà.

*Aria*  
 I am that traveller  
 who seeks out in you,  
 my darling, love and  
 faithfulness,  
 and finds only, oh God,  
 harshness and cruelty.  
 And yet unwavering  
 Irene,  
 my lovely enemy,  
 I hope that one day,  
 less haughty and wicked,  
 you will have pity on my  
 suffering.

*Recitativo*  
 Deh più non regni nel tuo  
 gentil petto  
 Una sì fiera  
 voglia  
 Che mal conviensi a  
 delicato viso  
 Di voler la mia morte  
 Dopo tanti tormenti e tante  
 pene.  
 Cangia dunque, ben mio,  
 cangia consiglio,  
 Volgi sereno il ciglio  
 A me che t'amo d'un amor  
 sì forte  
 Che mai per tempo  
 o variar di  
 loco  
 S'estinguerà sì  
 caro e gentil  
 foco.

*Recitative*  
 Ah! That no longer in your  
 gentle breast  
 should reign such a  
 proud desire -  
 so ill-suited to such a  
 delicate face -  
 wishing for my death  
 after such torments and  
 suffering.  
 So change, my beloved,  
 change your counsel,  
 calmly turn your gaze  
 on me, who loves you  
 with a love so strong  
 that this sweet and  
 cherished flame will  
 never go out,  
 neither with time nor a  
 change in  
 circumstance.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Qual doppio lampi e turbini	As after lightning and squalls
Appar l'aurora fulgida	the bright dawn appears,
A dissipar le tenebre	banishing the shadows
D'oscura notte	of a dark and dreadful
orribile,	night,
E il pellegrino timido	and returning to console
Ritorna a consolar.	the timid pilgrim,
Così men fiero e	so, less hostile and
rigido,	unyielding,
Se volgi a me	should the gracious eyes
l'amabile	of my beloved
Ciglio ridente	turn towards me, happy
e placio,	and calm,
Pieno d'amor, di giubilo,	full of love and rejoicing,
Scordato di mie lacrime	forgetting all my tears,
Benedirò il penar.	I will bless my suffering.

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## Interval

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**Antonio Vivaldi** (1678-1741)

**Concerto for strings in D minor RV129**

'Madrigalesco' (?1720s)

**I. Adagio - Allegro**

**II. Adagio**

**III. [Allegro]**

**Alla caccia dell'alme e  
de' cori RV670**

*Anonymous*

*Aria*  
Alla caccia dell'alme e  
de' cori  
La barbara Clori  
Amanti sen vâ.  
Già i lacci  
dispone,  
Le reti già stende  
Al varco  
v'attende  
Quell'empia beltà.

*Recitativo*  
Ma sia crudele o  
infida, oh Dio, mi  
piace.  
E se ben sia spietato

**In pursuit of souls  
and hearts**

*Aria*  
In pursuit of souls and  
hearts,  
you lovers, the barbarous  
Cloris is setting out.  
Already she is deploying  
her snares  
and laying out her nets,  
and waits for you on the  
threshold,  
that impious beauty.

*Recitative*  
But cruel or treacherous,  
oh God, she pleases  
me.  
And even if she is pitiless,

Da quel bel volto,  
o cor, tu sei  
legato.

*Aria*  
Preso sei mio cor  
piagato  
Non sperar, non sperar più  
Dalla bella servitù  
Di poter spiegar  
il volo.  
Consolar bensì tu puoi  
Che a provare i  
lacci suoi  
Non sei primo e non sei solo.

by that beautiful face, O  
heart, you are captured.

*Aria*  
You are taken, my  
wounded heart;  
give up any hope  
of being able to flee  
from such happy  
enslavement.  
But you can take comfort  
that you are neither the  
first nor the only one  
to fall into her clutches.

**Cello Sonata in E flat RV39** (?1720s)

**I. Larghetto**

**II. Allegro**

**III. Andante**

**IV. Allegro**

**Cessate, omai cessate  
RV684**

*Anonymous*

*Recitativo*  
Cessate, omai cessate,  
Rimembranze crudeli d'un  
affetto tiranno;  
Già barbare e spietate  
Mi cangiaste i contenti in un  
immenso affanno.

Cessate, omai cessate,  
Di lacerarmi il petto,  
Di trafiggermi l'alma,  
Di toglier al mio cor riposo,  
e calma.  
Povero core afflitto e  
abbandonato,  
Se ti toglie la pace un affetto  
tiranno,  
Perché un volto spietato, un  
alma infida  
La sola crudeltà pasce  
ed annida.

**Cease, now cease**

*Recitative*  
Cease, now cease,  
cruel memories of a  
ruthless love;  
brutal and callous,  
you have turned my joy  
into immense sorrow.

Cease, now cease  
wounding my breast,  
piercing my soul,  
divesting my heart of rest  
and calm.  
Poor heart, afflicted and  
forsaken,  
a ruthless love divests  
you of calm,  
because an unkind face, a  
treacherous soul  
nurtures and harbours  
cruelty alone.

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

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Ah, ah ch'infelice sempre	Ah, cruel Dorilla wants me
Me vuol Dorilla ingrata,	to be unhappy for ever;
Ah sempre piu spietata;	ah, ever more heartless
M'astringe à lagrimar.	she drives me to tears.
Per me non v'è no,	For me there is,
Non v'è ristoro	no, there is no escape,
Per me non v'è no,	for me there is,
Non v'è più speme.	no, there is no more hope.
E il fier martoro e le mie pene,	And only death can ease
Solo la morte può consolar.	my suffering and woes.

<i>Recitativo accompagnato</i>	<i>Recitativo accompagnato</i>
A voi dunque, ricorro orridi specchi,	To you, then, I turn, fearful waters,
Taciturni orrori, solitari ritiri,	silent horrors, solitary places;
Ed ombre amichi trà voi porto il mio duolo,	friendly shadows, I bring my grief to you,
Perche spero da voi quella pietade,	for I hope you will offer me the pity
Che Dorilla inhumana non annida.	that is beyond cruel Dorilla.
Vengo, spelonche amate, vengo specchi graditi,	I come, beloved caves, I come, inviting waters,
Affine meco involto il mio tormento in voi	so that the torment I bear
Resti sepolto.	may lie buried deep within you.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Nell'orrido albergo ricetto di pene	In this dark place, a refuge from pain,
Potrò il mio tormento sfogare contento,	I can freely express my torment,
Potrò ad alta voce chiamare spietata	I can say out loud that Dorinda
Dorilla l'ingrata, morire potrò.	is cruel and thankless, I can die.
Andrò d'Acheronte sù le nera sponda,	I shall go to the dark banks of the Acheron,
Tinguendo quest'onda di sangue innocente,	staining its waters with innocent blood,
Gridando vendetta,	calling out for vengeance,
Ed ombra baccante vendetta farò.	and as a wrathful spirit I shall have that vengeance.

*Translation of Amor, hai vinto by Avril Bardoni. Care selve, amici prati by Hugh Graham, kindly provided by the artists. Cessate, omai cessate by Susannah Howe.*