

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 29 January 2024
7.30pm

Lucy Crowe soprano
Joanna Songi soprano
Iestyn Davies countertenor
James Way tenor
Ashley Riches bass-baritone

The English Concert

Catriona Holsgrove
soprano
Anastasia Bevan soprano
Isabelle Blain alto
Gareth Edmunds tenor
Jon Stainsby bass

Nadja Zwiener violin, leader
Anna Curzon violin
Elizabeth MacCarthy violin
Annie Gard violin
Jordan Bowron viola
Joanne Miller viola

Joseph Crouch cello
Jonathan Byers cello
Alexander Jones double
bass
Katrin Lazar bassoon
Sergio Bucheli theorbo
Tom Foster harpsichord,
organ

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi HWV197 (by 1711)
Trio Sonata in B flat HWV402 (pub. 1739)
*I. Larghetto • II. Allegro, ma non presto •
III. Adagio - Allegro • IV. Gavotte. Allegro •
V. Menuet. Andante allegro*
Il duello amoroso HWV82 (1708)
Interval
Dixit Dominus HWV232 (1707)



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The pieces in tonight's concert reflect Handel's travels from Italy to Germany and then on to England. Having spent several years in Italy (where he wrote the final two pieces on the programme), Handel secured the post of Kapellmeister at the court of Hanover. Here he established a good relationship with the Elector's son George and, in particular, his wife Caroline of Ansbach – a friendship that would carry on until Caroline's untimely death in 1737. It was probably for her that Handel composed the duet **Tanti strali**. Italian duets had been made popular at the court by one of Handel's predecessors, Agostino Steffani, and Handel contributed ten more to the court's collection.

'Tanti strali' is a conversation between two lovers. The first section is a game of kiss-chase, the alto always running after the soprano. The second section, 'Ma se l'alma', is a sighing andante, with a throbbing bass line representing the beating heart. Its B minor melancholy is brushed aside by the return of G major and another fast section; the singers' sinuous semiquavers portraying beautifully the chains of desire.

The **Trio Sonata HWV402** was one of a set of seven Handel published in 1739. The first two movements are re-workings of the overture to the Chandos Anthem 'Let God arise' (HWV256a) – although in mood, they are not unlike 'Tanti strali'. In B flat major (a key Handel used for arias about love), the first movement is a gently affectionate conversation between the two violins, in contrast to the energetic chase of the second movement. A brief *Adagio* leads into a fugal finale: the basso in no longer just the continuo, but has joined, perhaps, a *ménage à trois*.

Handel wrote **Il duello amoroso** (or 'the loving duel') in Rome in the summer of 1708, probably for the marchese Ruspoli's Sunday entertainments, where it may even have been staged. It is scored, like the *Dixit Dominus*, for five-part strings, and it is Handel's only cantata for soprano and alto. The shepherd Daliso (Pasquale Betti, in its first performance) tries to force himself upon the unwilling Amaryllis (Margherita Durastanti), but she outwits him. His first aria is flustered, whereas she is in complete control. Amaryllis likens him to a sailor who, over-emboldened, is about to run aground – this aria recalls both *Armida abbandonata* and Tempo's 'È ben folle' in *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*. Daliso's response is a sad siciliano; he really is hopeless. The final duet, a minuet which Handel later re-used in his opera *Porò*, continues, with its canonic entries, to suggest that she has eluded him.

Late in 1706 Handel took himself from Hamburg to Italy, the European centre of cultural fashion, for what we might think of as a university education in the latest musical styles. His first stop was Rome, whose musical scene he exploded onto with, amongst other compositions, the **Dixit Dominus**. Written in April

1707, *Dixit* was scored for five-part choir balanced by five-part orchestra; in eight movements and at just over half an hour in length, it is quite a grand and extended setting. Where it was performed is rather a mystery: the text itself (Psalm 109 or 110 depending on your Bible) is for the office of Vespers, but whether, as is often claimed, it was for a service at the Carmelite friary of Santa Maria in Montesanto there is no hard evidence. Whichever church it was written for certainly could command virtuosic singers and instrumentalists.

One of the virtuosi Handel met in Rome was Arcangelo Corelli, whose profound influence on the young German can be clearly heard in the string writing in *Dixit* – from the violins' opening arpeggios to the elegant triplets in 'Tecum principum', to the precipitate fury of 'implebit ruinas'. At the same time that he was writing *Dixit*, Handel was working on his stunning oratorio *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*: both works show not just how quickly Handel responded to the refulgent Italian style, but the abundance of his invention. In both works, too, we hear the beginnings of what would become his trademarks. In the first movement of *Dixit*, he has the sopranos holding 'donec ponam inimicos' in a long line, with choral interjections from below: he would later use this motif in, for example, *Messiah's* 'Hallelujah' chorus. His talent for word-painting is shown throughout *Dixit*, in both broad brush-strokes and tiny details. Although the choral and instrumental parts are normally in some sort of dialogue, for 'Juravit Dominus' ('The Lord hath sworn'), they come together in unison, a huge wall of sound showing the strength of the Lord's word. In 'Dominus a dextris', the Lord's day of wrath ('die irae suae') is expressed by disquieting chromaticism. The chorus 'Judicare' mixes a stately legato theme for 'he shall judge' with the furious semiquavers of destruction ('implebit ruinas'); after the basses have heaped up the final body at the end of that section, the choir and orchestra enter with thumping crochets for 'conquassabit', suggesting the violent pounding of heads upon the ground – the ground itself ('terra') being a scale downwards. In the final chorus, the fugue subject of 'et in saecula saeculorum' ('world without end') is on one note, representing eternity.

Handel took the score of *Dixit* with him to London and reused snippets from it in some of his Cannons or Chandos Anthems (such as 'Let God arise') and in his oratorio *Deborah*, perhaps toning them down to suit English tastes and accomplishment. *Dixit* itself lay neglected until the early music revival in the latter 20th Century; happily for audiences and performers alike, it has now found its place among the jewels of the choral repertoire.

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George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi HWV197

(by 1711)

attr. Ortensio Mauro

Tanti strali al sen mi
scocchi,
Quante stelle sono in
ciel:
Tanti fior, quanti ne
tocchi,
S'innamorano al tuo
bel.

Ma se l'alma sempre
geme,
Nell'amor arsa e
consunta,
Questo avvien, perch'arde e
teme
Dal tuo cor esser
disgiunta.

Dunque annoda pur, ben
mio,
Di catena immortale anch'il
desio.

Many arrows strike at my breast

Many arrows strike at my
breast,
like the many stars which
are in the sky:
and the many flowers, which
you have touched,
have fallen in love with
your beauty.

But if a lover's soul is
melancholic by nature,
he will find love hard and
all consuming,
and his passion will, in time,
be diffused, scourged
and reproached by the
harshness of your heart.

The lover, therefore, is
bound and hurt, my dear,
by the unchanging chains of
his own desire.

Trio Sonata in B flat HWV402 (pub. 1739)

I. Larghetto

II. Allegro, ma non presto

III. Adagio - Allegro

IV. Gavotte. Allegro

V. Menuet. Andante allegro

Il duello amoroso HWV82 (1708)

Anonymous

Recitativo

Daliso

Amarilli vezzosa, appunto in
questo solitaria foresta,
Dove ne pur giungon del sole
i rai,
Di pianto sospirai,
quante pene
soffersi,
Sol per cagion del tuo
superbo orgoglio:
O la mercede, o la vendetta
io voglio.

The loving duel

Recitative

Daliso

Pretty Amaryllis, just here
in this lonely forest,
where not even the rays
of the sun reach,
I have sighed as many
laments as I have
suffered pains
solely because of your
arrogant pride.
Now I would have
recompense, or revenge.

Aria

Daliso

Pietoso sguardo,
Vezzo bugiardo,
Più non lusingano
Questo mio cor.
Tempo è da cedere
Alle mie lagrime
Che più resistere
Non sa'l dolor.

Recitativo

Amarilli

Dunque tanto s'avanza d'un
pastorel che m'ama
La temeraria voglia? E stolto
credi che la mercè che
chiedi
Ti possa dar necessita
d'impegno?
Misero, e non
t'avvedi
Che quel piacer ch'oggi it tuo
cor desia
Figlio del genio mio d'uopo è
che sia.

Aria

Amarilli

Piacer che non si
dona
Per opra del piacer
Più tosto è pena.
Forza crudel che sprona
L'altrui voglia goder
Fende l'arena.

Recitativo

Daliso

Sì, sì, crudel, ti
accheta,
O sia forza, o sia genio, o sia
dispetto,
Pria di morir fia lusinghieri
affanni
Meglio è rapir cio che donar
si vieta.

Amarilli

Semplicetto che sei, cangia
consiglio:
Mal si gode quel bene
Che dall'odio si acquista o
dal rigore;
E il vero Amor solo d'Amore
è figlio.

Aria

Daliso

A pitying glance,
a beguiling endearment,
no longer deceives
this heart of mine.
It is time to yield
to my tears,
for my grief
can no longer be restrained.

Recitative

Amaryllis

So does the bold desire of a
shepherd who loves me
dare so much? And, fool,
do you think that the
compulsion
of a pledge can give you
the reward you seek?
Wretched man, do you
not realise that the
pleasure which today your
heart desires must
needs be the offspring of
my own inclination?

Aria

Amaryllis

The pleasure that is not
bestowed
by an act of pleasure
very soon becomes pain.
The cruel force that incites
another to enjoy his desire
shatters the field of play.

Recitative

Daliso

Yes, yes, cruel one, you
shall be subdued
either by force, or inclination
or resentment
before the enticing pains
of death come;
It is better to seize what it
is forbidden to give.

Amaryllis

Fool that you are, change
your plan:
poorly one enjoys that gift
which is gained by hate or
cruelty;
true Love is the child of
Love alone.

Aria
Amarilli
 Quel nocchiero che mira le
 sponde
 La tema
 dell'onde
 Dal sen discacciò,
 Ma se intanto pretese
 conforto,
 In vece dal porto,
 Lo scoglio trovò.

Aria
Amaryllis
 That sailor who espies
 the shore
 dismisses the fear of the
 waves
 from his heart;
 But if meanwhile he
 thinks he is safe,
 instead of the harbour
 he finds a rock.

Recitativo
Daliso
 Amarilli, Amarilli, in vano
 tenti
 Con speranze fallaci
 uscir dal
 laccio
 Ove ponesti il piede;
 che di tua data
 fede,
 Benche fossero mille i
 giuramenti,
 Sempre in sostanza
 poi
 O il rio l'accolse o gli rapiro i
 venti.

Recitativo
Daliso
 Amaryllis, Amaryllis, in
 vain you try
 with false hopes to
 escape from the snare
 in which your foot
 is caught: though a
 thousand might be the
 oaths
 of your pledged faith,
 either the stream
 washes away their
 substance,
 or the winds blow it
 away.

Aria
Daliso
 È vanità d'un cor
 Quel viver in Amor
 Sempre sperando.
 Convien più volte
 udir
 Promesse di gioir
 Ma non il
 quando?

Aria
Daliso
 It is useless for a heart
 to live always
 in hope of Love.
 Is it better to hear many
 times
 promises of love,
 but not when they may be
 fulfilled?

Recitativo
Amarilli
 Or su, già che ostinato
 oscurar d'onore il peggio,
 Il core trapassami col
 ferro;
 E poi, crudele, di questo sen
 fedele,
 Di cui non curi
 il tormentoso
 affanno,
 Renditi pure a tuo piacer
 tiranno.

Recitativo
Amaryllis
 On then, if stubbornly you
 would now shut out
 the merit of honour: pierce
 my heart with a dagger,
 and then, cruel man, indeed
 let the tortured affliction
 of this faithful heart, for
 which you have no
 thought,
 be given up to your
 pleasure, tyrant!

Daliso
 Come? Amarilli? oh Dio,
 dunque ...

Daliso
 What? Amaryllis? Oh
 God, then ...

Amarilli
 Non più; desio l'empia voglia
 satiar che ti tormenta:

Amaryllis
 No more! I would have you
 satisfy the wicked desire

Barbaro! Su, che fai? Prendi
 lo strale
 E in questo sen
 l'avventa.

that torments you; unfeeling
 man, come! Why delay?
 Take the blade and strike
 it into this heart!

Daliso
 Vincesti, ah sì vincesti, ora ti
 chiedo
 Pietade all'error
 grave;
 Alma che di penar fu sempre
 accesa
 Già sitibonda aspetta
 Giusto risentimento all'alta
 offesa.

Daliso
 You have triumphed, ah,
 you have triumphed!
 Now I beg forgiveness for
 a dreadful wrong;
 my soul, which was ever
 given to suffering,
 is already eagerly expecting
 your just anger at my
 great offence.

Amarilli
 Ecco giunge opportuno
 Silvano il mio buon padre; or
 sappi,
 Amico semplicetto
 pastorello,
 Che tu credando a lusinghieri
 detti
 Del mio timore
 usato,
 Perdesti il tempo ed il piacer
 bramato.

Amaryllis
 Here, in good time, comes
 Sylvanus, my good father.
 Now understand, dear
 foolish shepherd,
 that when you believed
 the deceitful words
 of my well-practised fear,
 you lost your
 opportunity and the
 pleasure you desired.

Duetto
Daliso
 Sì, sì, lasciami
 ingrata
 Ma pria rendimi il
 cor.
 Sei tu selce spietata,
 Priva di senso e
 ardor.

Duet
Daliso
 Very well, leave me alone,
 heartless girl,
 but first give me back my
 heart.
 You are as hard as flint,
 void of feeling and love's
 flame.

Amarilli
 Su, su, restati in pace
 Ne più chiedermi
 Amor;
 No, non hai tu la
 face
 Per accender ardor.

Amaryllis
 Come, come, be at peace,
 and no longer seek love
 from me;
 no, you do not have the
 torch
 that can kindle my flame.

Interval

Dixit Dominus HWV232 (1707)

Liturgical text

Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis Donec ponam inimicos tuos Scabellum pedum tuorum.	The Lord said unto my Lord: sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
Virgam virtutis tuae Emittet Dominus ex Sion: Dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.	The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion: be thou ruler, even in the midst of thine enemies.
Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae In splendoribus sanctorum: Ex utero ante luciferum genui te.	In the day of thy power shall people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship: the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.
Juravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum: Tu es sacerdos in aeternum Secundum ordinem Melchisedech.	The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedech.
Dominus a dextris tuis Confregit in die irae suae reges. Judicabit in nationibus, Implebit ruinas, Conquassabit capita in terra multorum.	The Lord upon thy right hand: shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies, and smite in sunder the heads over divers countries.
De torrente in via bibet: Propterea exaltabit caput.	He shall drink from the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up his head.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, Et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, Et nunc, et semper, Et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, and is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.