

WIGMORE HALL 125

Monday 29 September 2025
7.30pm

French Delicacies

London Handel Players

Adrian Butterfield director, violin solo
Oliver Webber violin I
Dominika Fehér violin I
Maxim Del Mar violin II
Sophie Simpson violin II
Oakki Lau violin II
Rachel Byrt viola I

Emilia Benjamin viola II
Sarah McMahon cello I
Gavin Kibble cello II
Cecelia Bruggemeyer double bass
Rachel Brown flute, piccolo I
Maria Filippova flute, piccolo II
Andreas Helm oboe I
Joel Raymond oboe II

Ursula Leveaux bassoon I
Chris Rawley bassoon II
Paul Sharp trumpet I
Phil Bainbridge trumpet II
Scott Bywater timpani, percussion
Eligio Quinteiro lute, theorbo
Silas Wollston harpsichord, organ

Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747)

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764)

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

I. Le Cahos from *Les éléments* (1737)

Violin Concerto in F Op. 7 No. 4 (1737)

I. Allegro moderato • II. Adagio • III. Allegro

Suite from *Naïs* (1749)

*Ouverture • Entrée majestueuse • Gavotte vive •
Gavottes légère et gracieuse • Rigaudons I & II •
Sarabande • Tambourins I & II • Air de triomphe*

Interval

Michel Corrette (1707-1795)

Concerto comique in G 'Les Sauvages et la Furstemberg'
Op. 25 (c.1773)

I. Allegro • II. Andante • III. Allegro

Jean-Marie Leclair

Violin Concerto in A minor Op. 7 No. 5 (1737)

I. Vivace • II. Largo • III. Allegro assai

Jean-Philippe Rameau

Suite from *Les Indes galantes* (1735)

*Ouverture • Tambourins I & II • Ritournelle •
Ballet des Fleurs • Gavotte en rondeau • Chaconne*



UNDER 35S

Supported by the AKO Foundation
Media partner Classic FM



Help us raise £125,000
for 125 years of music

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate



Join & Support
Donations

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

French 17th-century taste in music was greatly influenced by two figures, King Louis XIV and Jean-Baptiste Lully and it is remarkable that the latter, an Italian-born musician, should become the embodiment of the French style. But these two men shared a passion for dancing and elegant spectacle which resulted in the production of numerous opera-ballets which were performed in Paris and Versailles, a legacy that continued well into the 18th Century.

For much of the 17th Century the two most important European musical styles were those of France and Italy, but whereas the French emphasised order, restraint, elegance and the pictorial portrayal of the world around them, the Italians preferred to depict the extremes of emotion through tempo and dynamic as well as enjoying 'pure' music in sonatas and concertos. But as the next century drew nearer there was a desire to bring these two approaches together, described as *Les goûts réunis*.

Jean-Féry Rebel studied under Lully and was one of the first violinists in France to compose sonatas in the Italian style. *Les Elémens*, composed in 1737, is an extraordinary symphonic depiction of the creation of the world and its opening movement, *Chaos*, begins with possibly the most dissonant chord ever written up to that point. As Rebel wrote:

'The Elements as painted by dance and music seem to me to lend themselves to a pleasant variety, both by means of the costumes and steps of the dancers. The introduction to this Symphony was natural; it was Chaos itself...The Bass represents the Earth by notes tied together, and which are played in jerks; the flutes, by lines which move up and down, imitate the murmur of running Water; Air is depicted by long held notes followed by trills on the piccolos; finally the violins, by means of lively and brilliant music, represent the activity of Fire. These distinctive characteristics of the Elements may be recognised, separately or all together, wholly or in part, in the several reprises which I call by the name of Chaos, and which show the efforts made by the Elements to shake each other off.'

Born in Lyon a generation after Rebel, **Jean-Marie Leclair** was the French violinist who finally established the violin as a solo instrument in his country. He studied dancing and the violin and in acquiring these latter two skills he was following the French dancing-master tradition. But the years he spent in Italy inspired him to write music that brought about that fusion of the French and Italian styles, *les goûts réunis*, that was such an important aspiration of the age in which he lived.

The first movement of his Op. 7 No. 5 is full of drama, the second violins immediately jumping in on the third beat of the first, third and fifth bars. The first solo is a variant on the opening theme, a device that the composer also employs in the finale of this concerto as well as elsewhere.

The *Largo* second movement is an exquisite *siciliano* that has an atmosphere of gentle warmth and tenderness, with the soloist accompanied very simply by the continuo. The composer opts for the pastoral key of F major and then at the close he adds a *sostenuto*-style five-bar *Adagio* that links into the finale.

The *Allegro assai* third movement has a *rigaudon*-like feel and shares some of the dramatic mood of the first movement though there are also several contrasting periods of light-heartedness. Halfway through the movement we suddenly find ourselves in the tonic major in music that has a charming rustic mood.

The opening *Allegro moderato* of the fourth Concerto of Op. 7 is warm and lyrical. There is much filigree solo writing, sometimes accompanied by the main theme in the tutti parts, and a lengthy chain of arpeggiated chords in the central section built on one of Leclair's favourite harmonic devices, the cycle of fifths.

The slow movement is sombre and brooding and in the relative minor and has an almost continuous tick-tock accompaniment. Leclair is at his most Vivaldian here in the way that he invites the soloist to weave a beautiful line accompanied only by unison violins.

The finale is happy and genial, the lightness of the opening emphasised by the composer delaying the first entry of the bass line for more than 20 bars. The virtuoso double stopping, the extended chordal sequence over a long pedal point and further filigree writing for the soloist bring the concerto to a joyful close.

Michael Corrette was an organist, composer and writer on music. His 25 *Concertos Comiques* were intended as entr'acte music for the *Comédie Française* and this final concerto was written c.1773. The slow, middle movement is based on a folk song and gives the harpsichord and flute a solo moment accompanied by pizzicato strings, whilst the outer movements offer variations on two famous melodies of the day.

Jean-Philippe Rameau took on the mantle of French opera composition from Lully in the 18th Century. In the opera-ballet, *Les Indes Galantes* (1735), each act was set in an exotic place but unified through a shared theme of love. *Naïs* (1749) was an opera based on a pastoral theme and the plot concerns the sea-god, Neptune, who falls in love with a mortal nymph, Naïs.

In the *Naïs Suite* the *Ouverture* is followed by a grand *Entrée majestueuse*, two pairs of *Gavottes*, the first light and fast and the second *gracieuse* and tender, a pair of rustic *Rigaudons* featuring piccolos, a delicate but passionate *Sarabande*, two light-hearted *Tambourins* and a final *Air de Triomphe*. The *Ouverture* to *Les Indes Galantes* leads into a pair of joyful *Tambourins*, a gentle *Ritournelle*, a delicate pair of *Airs pour les Fleurs* and a happy *Gavotte en rondeau* and the programme is rounded off with a grand *Chaconne*.

© Adrian Butterfield 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.