

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 7 January 2025  
7.30pm

Thomas Dunford lute  
Kristian Bezuidenhout harpsichord  
Théotime Langlois de Swarte violin

John Eccles (1668-1735)  
Daniel Purcell (c.1664-1717)

Nicola Matteis  
Christian Ritter (c.1645-1717)

Louis Couperin (1626-1661)

Jean Baptiste Senaillé (c.1688-1730)

François Couperin (1668-1733)

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764)

Jean Baptiste Senaillé (c.1688-1730)

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

John Eccles (1668-1735)

Joan Ambrosio Dalza

Nicola Matteis

Nicola Matteis

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Nicola Matteis

Henry Eccles

Aire V from *The Mad Lover* (c.1700)

Sonata in F minor for violin and continuo

Improvisation for solo lute

Variations on *La Folia*

Allemanda in discessum Caroli xi Regis Speciae from  
Suite in C minor

Courante in C major (Pièces de Clavecin Nr. 19)

Sarabande in C major (Pièces de Clavecin Nr. 28)

Passacaille in C major (Pièces de Clavecin Nr. 27)

From Violin Sonata in G minor Op. 1 No. 6

*Preludio. Largo • Gavotta. Allegro*

Les Baricades mystérieuses (pub. 1716-7)

*Interval*

Gavotte. Andante grazioso from Sonata in E minor for  
2 violins Op. 3 No. 5

From Violin Sonata in E minor Op. 4 No. 5

*Largo • Corrente. Allegro*

Les Voix Humaines (pub. 1701)

Aire III from *The Mad Lover*

Calata

Fantasia in A minor for solo violin (by 1720)

Sarabanda amorosa from Suite in A minor from Ayres  
*for the Violin Book I*

From Suite in G minor Z661

*Prelude • Almand*

Ground in C minor ZD221

Diverse bizzarie sopra la Vecchia Sarabanda ò pur

Ciaccona (pub. 1676)

A new division upon the ground bass of 'John come and  
kiss me'

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*Note: The programme of this concert has changed since the note was written.*

When King Charles II returned from exile in France in 1660 to resume the monarchy after the execution of his father eleven years earlier, his first act was to open all the theatres which the Puritans had closed. Most had been demolished so new ones were built, not where they had been in Southwark, but now to the west of the City, starting with the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. These were indoor theatres with a proscenium arch and a large backstage area and no longer the doughnut shape of the Globe, open to the sky. The new theatres proliferated and make up what we now call the West End.

There was an almost insatiable appetite for entertainment among the population of Restoration London, starved of it for almost 20 years. In 1661, the diarist Samuel Pepys twice went to see John Fletcher's *The Mad Lover*. Fletcher had been Shakespeare's successor as chief playwright for the acting company The King's Men, whose members, if they had survived the Civil War and Protectorate of the 1640s and 1650s now made up the cast at the Theatre Royal. Fletcher had died of plague in 1627, but his works were revived and proved popular. In 1700, *The Mad Lover* was updated with music by **John Eccles**, appropriate to its story of a jilted youth suffering depression. Eccles's music, which opens each half of the programme, describes both the lover's melancholia and its cure.

Eccles was a member of the King Charles's 24 Musicians-in-Ordinary, a copy of the French king's '24 Violons du Roi', with which Charles had become familiar in exile. The composer **Jean-Baptiste Senaillé** was a violinist with this celebrated group. He published four sets of violin sonatas – that is, multi-movement works for violin and harpsichord. In the early set (Op. 1) the keyboard is a duet partner equal with the violin, where in the later set (Op. 4), it is more of an accompaniment, subservient to the soloist, playing straight chords filling in the harmony over a solid bass. A trip to Italy had intervened and taught him, it would seem, the technique of the figured bass, in which a series of numbers attached to the bass line indicate the harmony in the manner of today's guitar chords. This came to be most useful in Italian opera where the dialogue is sung in free rhythm over an improvised accompaniment. This came to be known as 'continuo' or 'thorough bass'.

As a result, musicians generally improved their skill at extemporisation, like jazz players, and variations over set bass patterns, known as ground bass, were taken to an extraordinary level of sophistication. Dozens of composers devised variations on the eight-note ground *La Folia*, including the Italian **Nicola Matteis**, who brought his talent to London and in 1687 published a book here entitled *The False Consonances of Music: Instructions for Playing the Through-Bass on the Guitar or Other Instrument*. It is likely that, as a fellow London-

based performer, Eccles had read it before he composed his 'New Division Upon the Ground Bass of John Come and Kiss', a popular song composed some years before, which closes the programme.

The English 24 Musicians-in-Ordinary effectively introduced the sweet-toned, resonant violin to this country at the expense eventually of the dry, rasping viol. Pepys records a conversation with the manager of the Theatre Royal who boasts to him of his innovations: an orchestra of 10 violins, wax candles and young women to teach the boys the facts of life. In Restoration London the pendulum of morality swung back a long way from where it had been in the Puritan city. Charles loved the theatre and attended often. Living up to his nickname as the 'Merry Monarch'. In France he'd not only enjoyed the 24 Violons du Roi, he'd also seen actresses on stage and duly encouraged the introduction of women to the theatrical profession in London. The actress Nell Gwyn was the first great comedienne and after an eight-year career on the London stage, during which she played leading roles in no fewer than 19 dramas, became the King's mistress – to the disappointment of Samuel Pepys as she would not appear again on the stage. Gwyn performed works by the playwright John Dryden with incidental music by **Daniel Purcell**, the less prolific brother of Henry, who studied at Magdalen College, Oxford and became organist of St Andrew's Church, Holborn. His songs would have been accompanied by keyboard and lute improvising harmonies over a figured bass. A vast repertoire of lute music existed which went into abeyance when the instrument became dormant from about 1800 until its revival in the 20th Century. The bass viol often played with the lute, emphasising the bass line, and, as it was tuned the same, even sharing its repertoire.

The great 17th Century virtuoso of the instrument was **Marin Marais** who made his gut strings sing like vocal cords in 'Les Voix Humaines'. The human quality of his instrument was explored to agonising effect in another of his works depicting the painful removal of a kidney stone, the stages of the unanaesthetised operation added as annotations in the score.

The keyboard master at The Sun King's court, whence Charles brought so much to London, was **François Couperin** who composed a vast body of music for the harpsichord including 'Les Baricades Mistérieuses' in 1717. It is in rondo form, that is with a recurrent theme separating episodes of varying length, and written in Couperin's favoured style *luthé*, the notes of each chord spread out as if played on a lute. Mysterious barricades? The enigma intrigues audiences still. Could they be the stamping bucolic beat or the or the hurdle-like repeats? We leave that for you to discuss.

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