

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 7 July 2024
7.30pm

London Handel Players

Adrian Butterfield violin, director

Rachel Brown flute, recorder 1

Olwen Foulkes recorder 2

Oliver Webber violin

Jean Paterson violin

Alexander Chance alto

Rachel Byrt viola

Gavin Kibble cello

Cecelia Bruggemeyer double bass

Silas Wollston harpsichord, organ

Kristiina Watt lute, theorbo

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Sonata a5 in B flat HWV288 (c.1707)

I. Andante • II. Adagio • III. Allegro

Sussurrate, onde vezzose from *Amadigi di Gaula*
HWV11 (1715-7)

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Concerto for sopranino recorder, strings and
continuo in C RV443

I. [Allegro] • II. Largo • III. Allegro molto

George Frideric Handel

Cara sposa from *Rinaldo* HWV7 (1711, rev. 1717-31)

Interval

George Frideric Handel

Flute Concerto in G minor HWV287 (c.1704-5)

*I. Grave • II. Allegro • III. Sarabande.
Largo • IV. Allegro*

Antonio Vivaldi

Trio Sonata in D minor Op. 1 No. 12 RV63 'La
follia' (pub. 1705)

Nisi Dominus RV608 (c.1713-7)

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Handel's Sonata a5 is a violin concerto in all but name, as it is scored for a soloist with four-part strings and continuo. The autograph manuscript is undated, but the evidence seems to point to 1707 as its likely composition date, a time when the composer was working in Rome. It seems reasonable, therefore, to speculate that Arcangelo Corelli was the intended soloist, since he and Handel collaborated a great deal at that time. Handel was clearly fond of the beautiful theme that opens the first movement as it reappears several times in his later works. A stately slow movement leaves plenty of opportunity for solo improvisation, before the final *Alllegro* sees the solo violin take wing in flights of increasing fantasy.

Amadigi di Gaula was premièred in 1715, during Handel's wildly successful first few years in London. Such was the impact made by this 'magic' opera, loosely based on an Iberian chivalric romance known to authors such as Cervantes and de la Motte, that Handel revived it twice, and it was also produced in Hamburg in 1717. The aria 'Sussurrate, onde vezzose' opens the second act, and is sung by the title character Amadigi as he gazes at his reflection in the 'Fountain of True Love'. According to the original translation, 'he invokes the pleasant Streams to comfort his miserable Heart, as also the God of Love to pity his tormented Mind'. Handel utilises a pair of recorders to establish an atmosphere of calmness and reflection, while gentle dotted rhythms evoke the limpid movement of the water.

For 40 years, **Vivaldi** fulfilled the duties of musical director at the Ospedale della Pietà, one of the four orphanage convents in Venice. Of the thousand or more girls there, many received an intensive musical education; Vivaldi's vast output of concertos, many of them written for his students, included at least 230 for the violin, 40 for the bassoon, 26 for the cello, about 16 for the flute, six for the viola d'amore and one for the mandolin, as well as many for mixed combinations of instruments. Of the three concertos for the flautino, an unusually high-pitched recorder also known as the sopranino, this one in C major is particularly striking, featuring a somewhat formal opening movement, a hauntingly beautiful slow movement and a brilliant finale.

Primaired in 1711, *Rinaldo* was the first Italian opera ever composed especially for the London stage. Astonishingly, it was put together in great haste: the librettist, Rossi, remarked that 'Mr. Hendel [sic], the Orpheus of our century, while composing the music, scarcely gave me time to write, and to my great wonder I saw an entire Opera put to music by that surprising genius, with the greatest degree of

perfection, in only two weeks'. Many of the arias were, in fact, adapted from works that Handel had already written in Hamburg and Italy, but all of the music for the principal castrato, Nicolini, was newly composed. The plot, set in the Crusades, is one of love and loss; 'Cara sposa' comes at Rinaldo's lowest ebb, as he laments the abduction of his beloved Almirena.

Until relatively recently, Handel's Concerto in G minor HWV287 was known as an oboe concerto, and it was first published as such in Leipzig in 1863/4. Despite claiming to represent an original manuscript dating from 1703, this rather dubious edition contained so many editorial ideas typical of the mid-19th Century that some scholars even doubted whether the work could be by Handel at all. However, in 1993 an 18th-century manuscript source came to light which ascribes the solo part to either flute or oboe. Whilst the two instruments have very different characters, many early 18th-century wind players played both and might have liked to perform it on either.

Originally a Portuguese folk dance representing the idea of madness, the *Folia* or *Follia* came to occupy a prominent position in European musical culture and was, by the time Vivaldi published the Sonata RV63 in 1705, almost ubiquitous. Nearly always in D minor and based on a distinctive 16-bar repeating harmonic progression in triple time, by the 18th Century the *Folia* had acquired a nobler, more dignified character due to its slower tempo and characteristic dotted rhythm, becoming more closely related to the sarabande. In this example, as in those by Corelli and Marais, Vivaldi seizes on the *Folia* framework as an opportunity for an astoundingly varied and exciting set of increasingly virtuosic variations.

The Divine Office of Vespers rivalled the opera for popularity with the paying public in Vivaldi's Venice, and the cantata *Nisi Dominus*, a setting of Psalm 127, was clearly calculated for maximal dramatic effect. Most verses of the text describe a particular action, such as building a house, going to sleep or shooting arrows, and Vivaldi displays formidable powers of invention in bringing these to life. A particular highlight is the 'Gloria Patri'; normally a moment of extreme grandeur, Vivaldi's setting here is highly unusual in featuring the viola d'amore, an instrument originally played by Vivaldi's star pupil Anna Maria della Pietà. 'Sicut erat in principio' ('as it was in the beginning') recalls the music of the opening, before the final 'Amen' features an extraordinary display of coloratura for the solo voice.

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George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Sonata a5 in B flat HWV288 (c.1707)

I. *Andante*

II. *Adagio*

III. *Allegro*

Sussurrate, onde Murmur, fair waves

vezzose from *Amadigi*

di Gaula HWV11 (1715-7)

?Giacomo Rossi or Nicola

Francesco Haym, after

Antoine Houdar de la Motte

Sussurrate, onde vezzose,

Limpidette, consolate

Questo misero mio cor.

Murmur, fair waves

and limpid, console

this my wretched heart.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Concerto for sopranino recorder, strings
and continuo in C RV443

I. [*Allegro*]

II. *Largo*

III. *Allegro molto*

George Frideric Handel

Cara sposa from My dear betrothed

Rinaldo HWV7 (1711, rev.

1717-31)

Giacomo Rossi and Aaron

Hill

Cara sposa, amante

cara,

Dove sei?

Deh! ritorna a' pianti miei!

My dear betrothed, my

dear love,

where are you?

Ah! return at my tears!

Del vostro Erebo sull'ara

Colla face dello sdegno

Io vi sfido, o spirti

rei!

On your altar of Erebus,

with blazing scorn

I defy you, offending

spirits!

Interval

George Frideric Handel

Flute Concerto in G minor HWV287 (c.1704-5)

I. *Grave*

II. *Allegro*

III. *Sarabande. Largo*

IV. *Allegro*

Antonio Vivaldi

Trio Sonata in D minor Op. 1 No. 12 RV63

'La follia' (pub. 1705)

Nisi Dominus RV608

(c.1713-7)

Liturgical text

Unless the Lord

Nisi Dominus aedificaverit
domum,

In vanum laboraverunt qui
aedificant eam.

Nisi Dominus custodierit
civitatem,

Frustra vigilat qui custodit
eam.

Unless the Lord builds
the house,

they labour in vain who
build it.

Unless the Lord guards
the city,

futilely does he who
watches guard it.

Vanum est vobis ante
lucem surgere.

Surgite postquam sederitis,

Qui manducatis panem
doloris.

It is pointless for you to
get up early:

you get up before you
have gone to bed,

you who eat the bread of
misery.

Cum dederit dilectis
suis somnum:

Ecce

haereditas Domini,
filii:

Merces, fructus
ventris.

For he has granted rest to
those he loves:

behold an inheritance
from the Lord –
children:

a reward, the fruit of the
womb.

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

Sicut sagittae in manu
potentis:
Ita filii
excussorum.

Like arrows in the hand of
a powerful man:
such are children born in
your youth.

Beatus vir qui implevit
desiderium suum
ex ipsis:
Non confundetur
cum
loquetur
Inimicis suis in
porta.

Blessed is the man who
has filled his desire with
these;
he will not be confounded
when he speaks
with his enemies at the
gate.

Gloria Patri et
Filio,
Et Spiritui Sancto.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Sicut erat in
principio, et nunc, et
semper:
Et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen.

As it was in the
beginning, is now, and
ever shall be:
forever and ever.
Amen.