

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 8 April 2023
7.30pm

Florilegium

Ashley Solomon artistic director,
recorder I, flute

Bojan Čičić violin I

Gabriella Jones violin II

James O'Toole viola

Jennifer Morsches cello

Carina Cosgrave double bass

Rebecca Miles recorder II

Alexandra Bellamy oboe I

Sarah Humphrys oboe II

Sally Holman bassoon

David Blackadder trumpet I

Richard Thomas trumpet II

Tamsin Cowell trumpet III

Steven Devine organ, harpsichord

Elsa Bradley timpani

Rowan Pierce soprano

Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano

Andrew Tortise tenor

Michael Craddock bass

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745)

Concerto à 8 concertanti in G ZWV186 (1723)

I. Allegro • II. Largo • III. Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Trio Sonata in G BWV1038 (1732-5)

I. Largo • II. Vivace • III. Adagio • IV. Presto

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Concerto in E minor for flute, recorder and strings
TWV52:e1

I. Largo • II. Allegro • III. Largo • IV. Presto

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Easter Oratorio BWV249 (1725 rev. 1735)

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Although **Jan Dismas Zelenka** spent most of his working life as a church composer at the Catholic royal court of Dresden, he maintained close links with his native Bohemia. Amongst the most important of his dozen or so surviving instrumental compositions are four large-scale concerted works, including the Concerto à 8 concertanti in G ZWV186, that were written in Prague in 1723, possibly for the coronation festivities of Charles VI. A note at the top of the autograph score of ZWV186 suggests that it formed part of a set of six concertos, of which at least two are now lost.

This Italianate concerto displays a number of features that are distinctive of Zelenka's highly original style. In the lively outer movements, quirky cross-rhythms, irregular phrase structures, cheeky off-beat accents and sudden tempo changes abound, wrong-footing the listener's sense of pulse. The main themes are played largely in unison, contrasting with the virtuosic displays of the soloists. The dramatic slow movement is built around a mournful melody introduced by the bassoon; one by one, other solo instruments enter, and fragments of the theme are passed between them, creating layers of imitation above a throbbing bass that foreshadows some of Zelenka's greatest liturgical music.

It was also in 1723 that **Johann Sebastian Bach** arrived in Leipzig to become musical director of the St Thomas School. By the early 1730s, having composed over 150 sacred cantatas to a punishing weekly schedule, Bach was seeking new creative opportunities. Much of his Leipzig chamber music, including the Trio Sonata in G BWV1038, dates from this time. This work exemplifies why the trio sonata form was held in such high esteem in the early 18th Century, due to the special challenges of balancing harmony, counterpoint and melody in three equal parts.

The authenticity of this trio sonata has long been questioned: although it survives in Bach's own hand, the manuscript is not signed. Unusually, the upper parts of the sonata were composed above a pre-existing bass line taken from the Violin Sonata in G BWV1021, and BWV1038 was itself later arranged for violin and harpsichord in F major as BWV1022. These facts led many scholars to suspect that both BWV1038 and BWV1022 were compositional exercises by one of Bach's sons. However, recent research suggests this is unlikely, and that they should instead be regarded as authentic. Another curious feature of BWV1038 is that, alone in Bach's output, it calls for the violinist to use *scordatura*, an archaic practice in which the tuning of the strings is altered to increase resonance and playability.

Like Zelenka and Bach, **Georg Philipp Telemann** was a master of the main national styles of his day. The Italian style is especially prominent in the double Concerto in E minor TWV52:e1, which employs the rarely-heard combination of flute and recorder (only used by Telemann in one other work, the D minor quartet TWV43:d1) to create a spellbinding sound world. The opening *Largo* acts as an unsettled prelude to the

exciting fugal *Allegro* that follows, filled with brilliant solo writing. By contrast, the second *Largo* is more melodic, featuring a beautiful duet for the soloists accompanied by delicate pizzicato strings.

The final movement is a rondeau cast in the Polish style (although Telemann claimed he 'clothed it in an Italian dress'). Its main feature is a bass drone, above which sits an extraordinary array of 'musical barbarisms' that evoke an exotic, rustic character: bizarre harmonic shifts and jangling modal inflections, repeated driving rhythms and ornamental snaps and slides. In Telemann's hands, the effect is thrilling.

JS Bach's *Easter Oratorio* (given the catalogue number BWV249.5 in the new edition of the *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis*, published in 2022) has a complex history. It differs from both the Christmas and Ascension Oratorios in that the plot is not narrated by an Evangelist, but instead sung directly by soloists, originally representing the characters of Mary (soprano), Mary Magdalene (alto), Peter (tenor) and John (bass) gathered at Jesus's grave. This feature stems from the work's origin as the lost secular pastoral cantata *Entfliehet, verschwindet, entweichet, ihr Sorgen* (BWV249.1), which was written in 1725 for the birthday of the Duke of Weissenfels. A few weeks later, it was recast as a church cantata for performance on Easter Sunday, *Kommt, gehet und eilet* (BWV249.3), in which the text was changed but most of the music remained the same (thus, the shepherds hurrying to congratulate the Duke on his birthday became the disciples rushing to the grave). In 1738, the cantata was performed in a revised version, *Kommt, eilet und lauffet* - now designated 'Oratorium' - and the names of the characters were eliminated (BWV249.4). Finally, around 1743-6, Bach made further revisions by expanding the third movement from a duet into a four-part chorus.

The oratorio opens with two concerto-like instrumental movements that set the dramatic scene and anticipate the first chorus, where rising scale passages portray the hurrying feet of the disciples. At the work's heart is the sublime tenor aria 'Sanfte soll mein Todeskummer', in which muted violins and recorders over a gently pulsating bass line conjure the calm, pastoral atmosphere of a lullaby - the 'Schlummer' ('slumber') of the text. The virtuosic alto aria is likewise filled with word-painting: running semiquavers in the vocal and oboe parts depict the alto's desire for Jesus to come 'geschwinde' ('quickly'), and a sudden adagio at the end of the middle section movingly expresses the words 'ganz verwaiset und betrübt' ('quite orphaned and distressed'). The brief closing chorus, musically reminiscent of the *Sanctus* from the B minor Mass, is a rousing song of praise and thanksgiving. It culminates in a blazing triple-time fugato in which the 'Lion of Judah' triumphantly enters heaven, leaving Bach's listeners in no doubt that the battle against the devil has been won.

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Johann Sebastian Bach

Easter Oratorio BWV249 (1725 rev. 1735)

attr. Picander

Sinfonia

Sinfonia

Adagio

Adagio

Duet with chorus

Kommt, eilet und lauft,
Ihr flüchtigen Füße,
Erreicht die Höhle, die
Jesus bedeckt!
Lachen und Scherzen
Begleitet die Herzen,
Denn unser Heil ist
auferweckt.

Duet with chorus

Come, hasten and run,
you who are fleet of foot,
make for the tomb, where
Jesus lies hidden!
Laughter and gladness
attend now our hearts,
for our Saviour has been
raised up.

Recitative

O kalter Männer Sinn!
Wo ist die Liebe hin,
Die ihr dem Heiland schuldig
seid?
Ein schwaches Weib muss
euch beschämen!
Ach, ein betrübtes Grämen
Und banges Herzeleid
Hat mit gesalzenen Tränen
Und wehmutsvollem Sehnen
Ihm eine Salbung zugedacht,
Die ihr, wie wir, umsonst
gemacht.

Aria

Seele, deine Spezereien
Sollen nicht mehr Myrrhen
sein.
Denn allein
Sich mit Lorbeerkränzen
schmücken
Schicket sich vor dein
Erquicken.

Recitative

Hier ist die Gruft,
Und hier der Stein,
Der solche zugedeckt.
Wo aber wird mein Heiland
sein?
Er ist vom Tode auferweckt!
Wir trafen einen Engel an,
Der hat uns solches
kundgetan.
Hier seh ich mit Vergnügen
Das Schweisstuch
abgewickelt liegen.

Aria

Sanfte soll mein
Todeskummer,
Nur ein Schlummer,
Jesu, durch dein
Schweisstuch sein.
Ja, das wird mich dort
erfrischen
Und die Zähren meiner
Pein
Von den Wangen tröstlich
wischen.

Recitative

Indessen seufzen wir
Mit brennender Begier:
Ach! Könnt es doch nur bald
geschehen,
Den Heiland selbst zu sehen!

Recitative

O men so cold of heart!
Where is that love
which you owe the
Saviour?
A weak woman must put
you to shame!
Ah, our sad grieving
and anxious sorrow
intended to anoint Him here
with salty tears
and melancholy yearning,
but it was for you, like us,
in vain.

Aria

O soul, your spices
should consist no more of
myrrh.
For only
with resplendent laurel
wreaths
will you still your anxious
longing.

Recitative

Here is the tomb
and here the stone
which covered it.
But where might my
Saviour be?
He has risen from the dead!
We met with an angel,
who made this known to
us.
I see now with joy
the shroud lying here
unwound.

Aria

My final agony shall be
gentle,
just a slumber,
O Jesus, due to thy
shroud.
Yea, it will refresh me
there
and wipe the tears of my
pain
consolingly from my
cheeks.

Recitative

Meanwhile we sigh
with burning desire:
ah, if only we could
soon
see the Saviour himself!

<p><i>Aria</i> Saget, saget mir geschwinde, Saget, wo ich Jesum finde, Welchen meine Seele liebt! Komm doch, komm, umfasse mich; Denn mein Herz ist ohne dich Ganz verwaiset und betrübt.</p>	<p><i>Aria</i> Tell me, tell me quickly, tell me where I might find Jesus, whom I love with my soul! Come now, come, embrace me; for my heart without thee is quite orphaned and distressed.</p>
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<p><i>Recitative</i> Wir sind erfreut, Dass unser Jesus wieder lebt, Und unser Herz, so erst in Traurigkeit Zerflossen und geschwebt, Vergisst den Schmerz Und sinnt auf Freudenlieder, Denn unser Heiland lebet wieder.</p>	<p><i>Recitative</i> We rejoice that our Jesus lives again, and that our heart, which once drifted in such sadness, now forgets the pain and turns to joyful anthems; for our Saviour lives again.</p>
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<p><i>Chorus</i> Preis und Dank Bleibe, Herr, dein Lobgesang. Höll und Teufel sind bezwungen, Ihre Pforten sind zerstört. Jauchzet, ihr erlösten Zungen, Dass man es im Himmel hört. Eröffnet, ihr Himmel, die prächtigen Bogen, Der Löwe von Juda kommt siegend gezogen!</p>	<p><i>Chorus</i> May laud and thanks remain, O Lord, thy song of praise. Hell and the devil are vanquished, their gates are destroyed. Rejoice, ye ransomed voices, that ye be heard in heaven. Spread open, ye heavens, your glorious arches, the Lion of Judah shall enter in triumph!</p>
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