

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 8 October 2022
7.30pm

inVISIBILI

Xavier Sabata countertenor

Vespres D'Arnadi

Dani Espasa harpsichord, conductor

Farran Sylvan James concertmaster

Luca Giardini violin

Oriol Algueró violin

Adriana Alcaide violin

Kathy Leidig violin

Natan Paruzel viola

Oleguer Aymamí violoncello

Mario Lisarde double bass

Pere Saragossa oboe

Rafael Bonavita theorbo

Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)	Sinfonia from <i>Il nascimento dell'Aurora</i> (c.1710)
Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)	Render mi vuole from <i>Astianatte</i> (c.1727)
Giovanni Alberto Ristori (1692-1753)	Bellezze adorate from <i>Le fate</i> (c.1736)
Antonio Lotti (1666-1740)	Sinfonia from <i>Ascanio</i> (c.1718)
Tomaso Albinoni	Con cetra più sonora from <i>Il nascimento dell'Aurora</i>
Giovanni Porta (c.1675-1755)	Non sempre grandina from <i>Farnace</i> (c.1731)
	<i>Interval</i>
Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)	Toccata in A minor (1723)
Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727)	Qui ti scrivo o nome amato from <i>L'oracolo del fato</i> (c.1709)
Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)	Scuote la chioma d'oro from <i>Deianira, Ercole e Iole</i> (c.1711)
Francesco Mancini (1672-1737)	Sinfonia from <i>Alessandro il grande in Sidone</i> (c.1706)
Geminiano Giacomelli (c.1692-1740)	Mi par sentir la bella from <i>Gianguir</i> (c.1729)
Domenico Natale Sarri (1679-1744)	Gelido in ogni vena from <i>Siroe, re di Persia</i> (c.1726)

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The programme has changed slightly since these programme notes were written.

The composers in this programme are the lesser known and therefore nowadays perhaps 'invisible', products of the great Italian opera factories of the 18th Century who learned their trade in Italy and took their skills through Europe. Several of the works have roles for star instrumentalists or 'obbligati', the 'invisible' musicians in the orchestra out of the spotlight. True to the Renaissance ideal, the operas are mostly settings of the stories of classical antiquity in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.

Born in Venice, **Tomaso Albinoni** was a paper merchant's heir who became a violinist and composer and, when his father died in 1709, gifted the family business to his brothers in exchange for a third of the profits. He produced the opera *Il nascimento dell'Aurora* ('The birth of Aurora') the following year in Vienna for the Emperor Charles VI who had also just come into his inheritance. The aria 'Con cetra più sonora' is in 'da capo' form and repeats the first section with vocal embellishments. In the same year Albinoni opened a singing school to teach the artistry displayed here, though he called himself *Musico di violino*. The aria is headed *con arciliuto*, 'with archlute', the plucking of which imitates the obbligato *cetra*, or zither, of the title.

In 1720's London, composer **Giovanni Bononcini** was a celebrity, whose portrait now hangs in the Royal College of Music. He was hired by the opera company of the Royal Academy and became Handel's more successful rival. His opera *Astianatte* was performed in 1727 at the King's Theatre, Haymarket. In the *Iliad* Astianatte, son of Hector, is captured by the Greeks who, fearing he might grow up and avenge his father's death, throw him from the walls of Troy. His mother Andromache sings the da capo aria 'Render mi vuole' with a bitter first part including a melisma (extended syllable) on *ingannerà* ('will deceive') leading to a presto instrumental (obbligato) section and a top-line of prickly arpeggiated chords. The middle is slow with an emphatic repeat on *non ha dolor* ('knows no grief') and a melisma on *avrà*. The opera became infamous because of fighting on stage between rival sopranos.

Bononcini left London after he was accused of claiming a work by the Venetian composer **Antonio Lotti** as his own. Lotti's *Ascanio* was his penultimate opera and was performed at the Dresden carnival in 1718. Ascanio is the son of the Trojan Aeneas who fled Troy and founded Rome. The *Sinfonia* or overture consists of a slow introduction in dotted rhythms featuring oboes and bassoon doubling the strings and a fast section in which the winds break into a fugal section of their own. An *Adagio* movement in stately three-time leads to an *Allegro* finale with a brief episode for wind obbligati alone once more.

The Bolognese composer **Giovanni Ristori** was the son of a travelling actor with a company of comedians for which he wrote music. He composed the one-act opera *Le fate* ('The fairies') for the Dresden Hoftheater in 1736 when the Elector of Saxony was crowned King of Poland. The opera tells the story of Ruggiero, descendant of Hector through Astianatte, leading to the Italian Este family. Ruggiero sings the da capo aria 'Bellezze adorate' with an

intensifying melisma on *rinforzate* ('strengthen') and pierced high notes on *punite* ('punish'). In the middle, the singer is instructed to sing *piano* on *mercede* ('mercy') and *conforto* ('comfort').

Giovanni Porta was born in Venice and died as court Kapellmeister in Munich, where he had settled in 1736 after much travelling, including a stint in London in 1720 where one of his operas opened the Royal Academy. In 1731 he produced in Bologna the opera *Farnace*, whose title character is an enemy of the Roman general Pompey. The da capo aria 'Non sempre grandina' uses agricultural metaphor for the inevitable return of peace and everyday life to the people.

The second half opens with **Francesco Gasparini**, who was born at Lucca and died in Rome. He produced *L'oracolo del fato* for the Vienna Hoftheater in 1719, though it may have been written a decade earlier. In the aria 'Qui ti scrivo o nome amato', an obbligato theorbo or archlute traces the carving of the beloved's name against the singer's dreamy voice and the steady pumping of the semiquavers.

Nicola Porpora was born and died in Naples but travelled widely during his life. The Austrian occupation of Naples from 1707 introduced him to musicians who brought him to Vienna. He produced the short, sketch-like serenata *Deianira, Ercole e Iole* for Naples in 1712 and dedicated it to the Austrian general Raphael Kieswetter. The aria 'Scuote la chioma d'oro' (referring to the lion who 'shakes out his golden mane') forms a large part of it. Porpora came to London in 1733 to lead the Opera of the Nobility as rival to the Royal Academy run by Handel.

Francesco Mancini was also thoroughly Neapolitan, but never left the city. His opera *Alessandro il grande in Sidone* ('Alexander the Great in Sidon' – the Lebanese city occupied by the Greek king in 333BC) was produced in Naples in 1706, shortly before Naples became Austrian – and Mancini director of the Neapolitan court, as more senior composers fled. The *Sinfonia* has three movements – an *Allegro* in stately dotted rhythms, an ominous *Larghetto* and a racing, frivolous jig.

Geminiano Giacomelli was born in Piacenza and died in Loreto. He learned his trade as a chorister in Parma cathedral, where he became choirmaster in 1719, and remained a professional church musician throughout his short life, though he composed for the theatre. He produced the opera *Gianguir* (Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor) for Venice in 1729. The gentle texture and pizzicato accompaniment of the da capo aria 'Mi par sentir la bella' suggests the Mughal court. The oboe obbligato is a snake charmer around a darkened, ominous minor key middle section.

Finally, **Domenico Sarri**, born in Apulia, produced *Siroe, re di Persia* for Naples in 1727. The da capo aria 'Gelido in ogni vena' features glacial strings against a chilling vocal line. Sarri followed Mancini as director of court music and began his tenure opening the new theatre of San Carlo to celebrate the reign of the contemporary Neapolitan king – one Charles III.

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Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)

Sinfonia from *Il nascimento dell'Aurora* (c.1710)

Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)

Render mi vuole from *Astianatte* (c.1727)

Antonio Salvi rev. Paolo Rolli

Render mi vuole La pace amore, Ma traditore M'ingannerà. Ché se spietata Della sua prole Non ha dolor, Di questo cor Pietà l'ingrata Mai non avrà.	I want love to return peace to me, but the traitor will deceive me. And since the cruel one knows no grief over her children, from this heart the ingrate will never know pity.
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Giovanni Alberto Ristori (1692-1753)

Bellezze adorate from *Le fate* (c.1736)

Stefano Benedetto Pallavicino

Bellezze adorate, Confesso il mio torto, L'ardor rinforzate Punite il mio core. Non cerca mercede, Non chiede conforto Sol brama languire, Morire d'amore.	Beloved beauties, I confess my wrongs; strengthen my passion, punish my heart. It seeks not mercy, it asks not for comfort, it longs only to languish, to die for love.
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Antonio Lotti (1666-1740)

Sinfonia from *Ascanio* (c.1718)

Tomaso Albinoni

**Con cetra più sonora
from *Il nascimento
dell'Aurora***

attr. Pietro Pariati

Con cetra più sonora I fausti dell'Aurora Apollo canterà. Allor più pago il mondo	With ever more resounding zither Apollo will sing the victory of Aurora. So the world, which in her
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Ch'in ella or si ricrea Dal labbro mio facondo Di questa augusta dea Il nome ascolterà.	now recreates itself, is ever more pleased and will hear from my eloquent lips the name of this great goddess.
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Giovanni Porta (c.1675-1755)

**Non sempre grandina
from *Farnace*** (c.1731)

Antonio Maria Lucchini

Non sempre grandina Il cielo irato Sul campo arato, Né sempre affanna L'agricoltor. Il ciel tranquillasi, Il ciel s'adorna, E quei ritorna Dalla capanna Al suo lavor.	Not always will the furious sky hail down on the ploughed field, nor always will the farmer be troubled. The sky will calm, the sky will grow light, and all will return from the barn to their work.
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Interval

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)

Toccatà in A minor (1723)

Francesco Gasparini (1661-1727)

**Qui ti scrivo o nome
amato from *L'oracolo
del fato*** (c.1709)

attr. Pietro Pariati

Qui ti scrivo o nome amato, Qual ti scrisse nel mio seno Col suo dardo un giorno Amor; Qual ti scrisse nel mio cor La mia stella, ed il mio fato.	I inscribe your beloved name here, that name Cupid engraved in my breast with his dart one day, that name he wrote in my heart, my star and my destiny.
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Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)

Scuote la chioma d'oro Shakes out his from Deianira, Ercole e golden mane

Iole (c.1711)

Nicola Giuvo

Scuote la chioma d'oro
Fiero leon ne' campi
Ma di una face a i lampi
Perde l'usato
ardir.

Al par di quello ardito
Già fosti o mio tesoro
Or sei così avvilito
Che un sen ti fa
languir.

The proud lion in the fields
shakes out his golden mane
but all at once in a flash
he loses his customary
courage.

Just as you once had
that courage, my beloved,
and now are so dispirited
that anything makes you
weak.

Francesco Mancini (1672-1737)

Sinfonia from *Alessandro il grande in*

Sidone (c.1706)

Geminiano Giacomelli (c.1692-1740)

Mi par sentir la bella I seem to hear my from *Gianguir* (c.1729) fair

Apostolo Zeno

Mi par sentir la bella
Dolce mia guida e stella,
Dirmi tutt'amorosa:
Andiamo, o caro.

Premio di mia vittoria
Saran diadema e
sposa,
E già per man di
gloria
Serti di lauri e mirti al crin
preparo.

I seem to hear my fair
and gentle guiding star
saying lovingly to me:
let us go, my dear.

The reward for my victory
will be the crown and a
bride,
I am already preparing for
the hand of glory
to wreath my brow with
laurels and myrtle.

Domenico Natale Sarri (1679-1744)

Gelido in ogni vena The blood runs cold from *Siroe, re di Persia*

(c.1726)

Pietro Metastasio

Gelido in ogni vena
Scorrermi sento il sangue,
L'ombra del figlio esangue
M'ingombra di terror.

The blood runs cold
through my every vein;
the shade of my lifeless son
overwhelms me with fear.

E per maggior mia
pena,
Vedo che fui crudele
A un'anima innocente,
Al core del mio cor.

And to make the pain
worse,
I can see that I was cruel
to an innocent soul,
the heart of my heart.

Translation of Giacomelli by texthouse