

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 9 May 2023  
7.30pm

## Bach Dynasty

### Les Talens Lyriques

Christophe Rousset director, harpsichord • Gilone Gaubert violin  
Jocelyn Daubigney flute • Atsushi Sakaï viola da gamba

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Trio Sonata in G BWV1038 (1732-5)

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

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)

Sonata in G for flute and continuo Wq. 133 (1786)

*I. Allegretto • II. Rondo. Presto*

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784)

Trio in B flat F50 (by 1762)

*I. Largo • II. Allegro ma non troppo • III. Vivace*

Interval

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach (1732-1795) Trio Sonata in A BR B3 (pub. 1770)

*I. Allegretto • II. Andante • III. Tempo di Minuetto*

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782)

Violin Sonata in B flat Op. 10 No. 1 (pub. 1773)

*I. Allegro • II. Allegro assai*

Johann Sebastian Bach

Trio Sonata in C minor from *The Musical Offering*  
BWV1079 (1747)

*I. Largo • II. Allegro • III. Andante • IV. Allegro*

The harpsichord played in this evening's concert was made by Malcolm Rose in Lewes, East Sussex, and is a copy of an anonymous French double-manual instrument made in 1667, now kept at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, USA. We are very grateful to Dr Sabine Klaus for the use of this instrument tonight.

Malcolm Rose (1948–2022) set up his own workshop in Mayfield, East Sussex, in 1975, after graduating from Trinity College, London, in 1969, and training in the harpsichord workshop of John Feldberg in Tunbridge Wells from 1972–74. After a five-year period of testing historic wire samples with metallurgist Derek Slater, Malcolm started producing music wire in 1981, a world-wide business now continued by his daughters. Since 1990 based in Lewes, East Sussex, he made copies of French, Italian, German, and English harpsichords, virginals and spinets with a global customer base. Malcolm's restoration work included instruments in the Royal College of Music Museum in London, the Musical Instrument Museum of the University of Edinburgh, and other public and private collections.

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Around 1735, the Leipzig *Thomaskantor* **Johann Sebastian Bach** began compiling his family's genealogy and amassing an archive of their musical compositions. He had been born into a venerable tradition of professional music making - in parts of Germany, the name 'Bach' was virtually synonymous with 'musician' - and was deeply conscious of ensuring it lived on in his children. Four of his sons, all of whom are represented in this programme, became distinguished composers in their own right.

By the 1730s, having composed over 150 sacred cantatas to a punishing weekly schedule, JS 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 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 they should 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.

Of Johann Sebastian's four composer sons, **Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach** was the most prolific and original. Most of his flute sonatas were composed in Berlin during his employment at the court of Frederick II ('the Great'), and were written for the King - a fine flautist - to play himself. The Sonata in G Wq. 133, however, was composed in 1786 in Hamburg, where Emanuel had become director of church music. This late work is utterly unlike his earlier flute sonatas: it is in two movements (connected by a bridge passage), rather than three, and is very technically demanding. The brilliant, florid passagework seen throughout the work lends weight to the hypothesis that it was composed for the Paris-based virtuoso flautist Christian Karl Hartmann, who gave two concerts in Hamburg in June 1786.

Carl Philipp Emanuel's elder brother, **Wilhelm Friedemann Bach**, wrote four trios, three of which are likely to be early compositions. As David Schulenberg has noted, the Trio in B flat F50 stands out as a 'more mature and original work' than the others, with better handling of the part-writing, and may date from a later time (Friedemann noted that he performed it around 1760). It survives in two versions, one for flute and violin, and the other (probably the original) for two

violins. The opening *Largo* is based around a 'singing' theme, avoiding florid displays. Both it and the spirited second movement are fugal in nature, whilst the final quick *Vivace* employs free imitation; all combine learned counterpoint with the newer *galant* melodic style. A humorous touch is heard in the last movement, where the two halves of the main theme later reappear in reverse order.

**Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach** is also known as the 'Bückeberg Bach', after the town where he spent most of his working life in the service of Count Wilhelm. His three-movement Trio Sonata in A, BR-JCFB B3, was published in 1770 in CPE Bach's periodical *Musikalisches Vielerley*, and was among the first of his compositions to be printed during his lifetime. Christoph's youngest brother **Johann Christian Bach**, meanwhile, was living in London, employed as music master to Queen Charlotte. In 1773, he dedicated his Opus 10 to Lady Melbourne (mother of the future Prime Minister). Although these works are today referred to as 'violin sonatas', the title page of the first edition reads: 'Six Sonatas, for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte; with an accompagnament for a violin', making clear that the principal interest is to be found in the keyboard part.

The opening to the first sonata may strike many listeners as familiar: its theme is lifted from the *Prelude* to JS Bach's Partita No. 1 in B flat BWV825. But whereas his father proceeds to spin this melody out into extended counterpoint, Christian repeats it, with some of the harmony transferred to the violin, before continuing in the light *galant* style and introducing a second theme.

In May 1747, JS Bach travelled to Potsdam to visit Carl Philipp Emanuel at Frederick II's court. The King played a theme on his fortepiano and invited Bach to improvise, on the spot, a three-voice fugue based on it, which he did so skilfully that 'all those present were seized with astonishment'. On returning to Leipzig, Bach decided to expand it into a large work dedicated to the King: the *Musikalisches Opfer* ('Musical Offering'), BWV1079. He not only presented a polished version of the improvised fugue, but also included a fugue in six voices, five canons, and a trio sonata, all based on the Royal Theme.

More than any other part of *The Musical Offering*, the trio sonata showcases Bach's mastery of different styles. Whilst the beautiful opening *Largo* merely hints at the Royal Theme in its bass line, in the second movement it is heard in counterpoint with a lively fugue subject. The following *Andante* features the modern idioms of the fashionable *Empfindsamer Stil* ('sensitive style'), with highly expressive harmonic and rhythmic gestures. Finally, the last movement fuses two elements fundamental to JS Bach's music - counterpoint and dance - as the Royal Theme is effortlessly transformed into a fugal gigue.

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