

Total performance time: approximately 100', including an interval of 20 minutes

## **Academy of Ancient Music: Bach & Telemann**

**Academy of Ancient Music**  
**Laurence Cummings** director & harpsichord

**Bojan Čičić** violin  
**Rachel Brown** flute & recorder  
**Olwen Foulkes** recorder

### **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685–1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No.5 in D, BWV 1050 (by 1721) 23'

*i Allegro*

*ii Affettuoso*

*iii Allegro*

### **Georg Philipp Telemann** (1681–1767)

Concerto in E minor for flute and recorder, TWV 52:e1 (c.1705–6) 15'

*i Largo*

*ii Allegro*

*iii Largo*

*iv Presto*

### **INTERVAL**

### **Telemann**

Ouverture-suite 'Burlesque de Quixotte' (1761) 18'

*i Overture*

*ii. Quixote's Awakening*

*iii. The Attack on the Windmills*

*iv. His Sighs of Love for the Princess Dulcinea*

*v. The Gallop of Rosinante*

*vi. The Gallop of Sancho's Donkey*

*vii. Don Quixote's Sleep*

### **Bach**

Brandenburg Concerto No.4 in G, BWV 1049 (by 1721) 15'

*i Allegro*

*ii Andante*

*iii Presto*

Good friends as Georg Philipp Telemann and Johann Sebastian Bach were, these two giants of German Baroque music would no doubt have enjoyed the irony and even-handedness of fate that has meant that, while in their day it was Telemann's fame that eclipsed that of Bach, it has since become Bach's music that is the most universally known and revered. Whether that mutual enjoyment would have taken the form of delighted hand-shaking or gentle joshing, we'll never know. Either way, one suspects that any fly-on-the-wall during one of their verbal or musical exchanges would have been treated to a warmly sympathetic and sparkingly erudite atmosphere. For starters, there was the certain similarity between their career shapes, both chalking up early-career periods as court musicians – Bach at the Weimar and Köthen courts, Telemann in Sorau (now Żary, Poland) and Eisenach – before spending the last and longest-running slices of their working lives as *Kantors* responsible for their respective cities' church music, Telemann in Hamburg, and Bach in Leipzig (after Telemann turned the job down); and while such careers made them necessarily staggeringly prolific, they both also possessed the skill and perfectionism to always match that quantity with quality. Their shared perspectives continued with their joint passion for secular music, each keeping it in his life even when officially a church musician.

One further meeting of minds heard strongly over this particular programme was their mutual magpie-like interest in, and assimilation of, the best in new music from beyond Germany's borders. And this was possible even for a composer such as Bach, who kept largely to a single corner of Germany for his whole life – thanks in part to those musicians who did travel, and in part to scores and manuscripts. The Amsterdam-published scores of Italian composers such as Corelli and Vivaldi, for instance, were very much available to Bach, and it's precisely the Italian influence that's audible in his six Brandenburg concertos.

Compiled a couple of years into his Köthen stint, these owe their name to their dedicatee, Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, to whom Bach sent them in 1721, apparently in response to an in-person encounter during which the aristocrat had invited Bach to 'Send [me] some of [your] compositions'. For such an illustrious commissioner, only the highest display of skill, imagination, invention and plain old dazzle would do, and there was one genre whose potential for meeting that brief sat head and shoulders above anything else: the *concerto grosso*, in which a small group of soloists dialogues with a 'ripieno' ensemble, making it tailor-made not only for showing off Bach's knowledge of different instruments, and how to make them shine through virtuosic display, but also his powers of invention in terms of what unusual combinations in which to group them.

Take **Concerto No.4**, because while violin concertos were two-a-penny, the pairing of a highly virtuosic solo violinist with a recorder duo – who get handed their own fair share of acrobatics – was thoroughly original. As for the actual writing, its opening Allegro features a particularly catchy and toe-tapping theme, coloured by delicious Vivaldian syncopations. A more melancholic central Andante follows, over which the recorders duet, often in 3rds, with the strings. The upbeat final Presto then sees German and Italy collide, as Bach melds more Vivaldi-breathed syncopations

and virtuosic display with his own trademark fugal writing.

Then, while **Concerto No 5's** soloists are ostensibly violin, transverse flute and harpsichord, it's the latter who quickly assumes central stage, in what is the very first instance of a harpsichord being plucked from a concerto's *continuo* section to perform a prominent soloist role; and what's especially ingenious here is the way Bach works this by stealth, the harpsichordist's role growing throughout the opening Allegro, before the arrival of what begins as a triple cadenza, but which swiftly becomes a glittering solo-harpsichord affair, before the movement concludes with a brief *tutti* reprise. The following tender Affettuoso is for the solo trio alone. Then to conclude, one of Bach's sunniest and melodic finales – a prancing Vivaldian gigue, soloists gorgeously dancing in and out of both each other and the *ripieno*.

Still, anything Bach could proffer in the realm of unheard-of instrumental combinations, Telemann could more than match, his own soloist marriages including mandolin, hammered dulcimer and harp. And while, in that context, his **Concerto in E minor** for recorder and transverse flute may sound a little less revolutionary, it was nevertheless an exceptionally rare pairing for its time. Its actual writing meanwhile is a perfect example of Telemann's 'Gemischter Geschmack' ('mixed taste') attitude to drawing on foreign musical languages. That is to say, why limit yourself to the best of one country for any given piece, when you could incorporate that of several? So, the work opens on a Largo whose writing doesn't sound dissimilar to what you might find in an Italian concerto slow movement, before an Allegro marries Germanic fugal style with more Italianate solo writing. Next, another Largo, opening on a sweetly Vivaldian violin solo; and while there's a similar air to the *pizzicato* accompaniment supporting the flutes, their own imitative, contrapuntal interweavings again sound more Germanic. Then it's ebullient Polish folk-flavoured swing and pedal drones for the concluding Presto.

On to his **Ouverture-suite 'Burlesque de Quixotte'**, and beyond the love of literature that led to this Cervantes-inspired work in the first place and the love of opera no doubt behind its music's theatrical flair, we now also have French style firmly in the frame. Firstly in the very fact that it's a suite, then also immediately via the stately, dotted-rhythm introduction to the *Ouverture*, before it tips into an Allegro brimming with operatic spirit. Next comes a courtly French menuet for 'Quixote's Awakening'. There's an operatic atmosphere again for the delusional self-dubbed knight's madcap attack on windmills. Followed by vivid word-painting for the fourth movement, as none-too-subtle violins depict 'His sighs of love for the Princess Dulcinea' (in reality a far-from-dulcet peasant woman, as those familiar with *Don Quixote* will know); and equally as upwards-whooshing strings figures depict Quixote's dim-witted servant Pancho being tossed in the air. It's then back to French-style, dotted rhythms for 'The Gallop of Rosinante', Quixote's elderly mount, complete with low *pizzicato* interjections depicting the braying of Sancho's donkey – who then gets his own lighter-textured galloping music featuring a dainty violin solo dance of lop-sided rhythms. Eastern folk exoticism then wraps things up for Quixote's concluding dream.

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