

CONCERT

by the

NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Conductor : Paul Stanhope
Leader/Soloist : Andrew Rostron

Saturday 22nd June 2024
at 7:30pm

St. Aidan's Church,
Manchester Road, Sudden, Rochdale

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PROGRAMME

G F Handel	:	Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 1 in G major, HWV 319
A Corelli	:	Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 6 in F major
A Vivaldi	:	Violin Concerto Op. 3 No. 6 in A minor, RV 356 ***Soloist - Andrew Rostron***

INTERVAL

G F Handel	:	Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 2 in F major, HWV 320
G P Telemann	:	Concerto à 4 for strings in A major, TWV 43:A4
F S Geminiani	:	Concerto Grosso No. 8 in E minor (after Corelli), H. 139

PROGRAMME NOTES

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 1 in G major, HWV 319 — G F Handel

A tempo giusto
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro
Allegro

In the summer of 1739, George Friderich Handel (1685-1759) had suffered some operatic disasters and decided to turn his hand to oratorio writing. While preparing two major works in oratorio style (*Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and *L'Allegro ed Il Pensero*) for the forthcoming season at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Handel started to compile some instrumental pieces for 'two new concerts for several instruments, never performed before'. In fact, he wrote twelve *concerti grossi* for his Opus 6 in little over a month – each taking only about two days to compose – specifically for performance between the acts of these oratorios.

These 'Grand Concertos' – a title given by Handel more to emphasise the large scale of the works – contain various new musical elements evolved to satisfy the expectations of Handel's audiences, including greater dynamic contrast and new harmonic boldness. Most of them consist of entirely new musical material, although some movements are reworkings of previous pieces by Handel or other composers (e.g. Domenico Scarlatti).

The first concerto in this set is in the '*da chiesa*' (church) style, with alternately slow and quick movements. The overture (*A tempo giusto*) makes use of some musical material that Handel had produced for the overture to his opera *Imeneo*. This grand processional movement is followed by a cheerfully vigorous and chirpy *Allegro*. The subsequent *Adagio* is reminiscent of a duet from a Baroque opera; the solo violins soar over the top of a pulsing continuo with tuneful, sweeping melodic lines. The penultimate *Allegro* movement demonstrates Handel's mastery of counterpoint as he gives a fugal treatment to its opening theme. The final *Allegro* – which extensively quotes the second sonata from Scarlatti's *Essercizi Gravicembalo* – features a dance-like lilt heard throughout until its final, satisfyingly grand ending.

Linda A Williams (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 6 in F major A Corelli

Adagio
Allegro
Largo
Vivace
Allegro

Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) is widely regarded as one of the first master violinists. Born in Fusignano in north-east Italy, he gained his first major success in Paris at the age of 19 and subsequently worked in Bavaria, Modena, Rome and Naples. His style of playing was preserved by his pupils and it is still possible to trace generations of violinists (from pupil to teacher) all the way back to Corelli. Nevertheless, he only used a limited portion of the violin's capabilities and very rarely wrote above a D on its highest string in his compositions. Legend has it that he refused to play a passage in Handel's oratorio *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (first performed in Rome in 1708) that went up to a top A and was deeply offended when the young composer played the note!

His twelve Opus 6 *concerti grossi* were published in 1714, a year after his death, although several of them had first been performed some thirty years earlier. These can be subdivided into eight *concerti da chiesa* ('church concerti') with alternating slow and fast movements and four *concerti da camera* ('chamber concerti') with movements based on popular dance types. They all involve a group of solo instruments, the *concertino* (two violins and 'cello), and a larger *ripieno* group for tutti passages.

The sixth concerto in the collection, a 'church concerto', starts with an extended slow introduction (*Adagio*) by the entire orchestra (*concertino* and *ripieno*) with dynamic contrasts. A contrapuntal *Allegro* then follows, which is introduced by the *concertino* group but is otherwise supported by the *ripieno* with the exception of a recapitulation of its opening bars. The solo 'cello and ripieno violas introduce a *Largo* in the relative minor (D minor), in which the parts enter one after another in telling imitation. This is then followed by a *Vivace* with a gigue-like rhythm that returns us to F major, initiated by the *concertino* and featuring a call-back to the previous Allegro part of the way through. The concerto closes with an *Allegro* that is a dance movement in all but name, with further interplay between the *concertino* group and *ripieno*.

M Seaton

Violin Concerto Op. 3 No. 6 in A minor, RV 356 A Vivaldi

Allegro
Largo
Presto

While Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) was internationally famous during his lifetime, his reputation faded after his death. Most of his published works were unknown after the Baroque era and even the original version of his most famous work, *The Four Seasons*, was scarcely known during the Classical and Romantic eras. In 1927, the violinist Fritz Kreisler published a *Concerto in C* supposedly by Vivaldi: while this work was later revealed to be a fake composed by Kreisler himself, it sparked renewed interest in Vivaldi's work and came soon after the rediscovery of many of his works (including 300 concerti) at a monastery in Piedmont. In 1939, the Italian composer Alfredo Casella organised the now historic 'Vivaldi Week', which included a performance of the recently rediscovered *Gloria* and *L'Olimpiade* (a three-act opera dating from 1734). This prompted new interest in Vivaldi and his works, and since the end of World War II his compositions have enjoyed wide success, with historically informed performances increasing his fame still further.

His first published set of concerti was his Opus 3, *L'estro armonico* ('The Harmonic Inspiration'). Originally published in 1711 in Amsterdam, they were printed in eight parts – four violins, two violas, 'cello and continuo – and consisted of four groups of three concerti: in each group, the first concerto has four violin soloists, the second has two and the third has one. While some of these concerti conform to the usual *concerto grosso* form of the period (with a solo 'cellist forming a *concertino*), several do not and are essentially the origin of the solo concerto form.

The sixth concerto in A minor is for solo violin and strings with continuo. The opening *Allegro* has a *ritornello* form, featuring a theme (played by all of the violins, soloist and *tutti* alike) that keeps returning after more elaborate passages for the soloist. The *Largo* movement involves no lower strings or continuo at all – the soloist is accompanied by quiet chords played by the *tutti* violins (divided into three) and violas – while they form the main accompaniment for solo passages in the final *Presto*.

M Seaton

INTERVAL

Tea & coffee will be served at the back of the Church

Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 2 in F major, HWV 320 — G F Handel

Andante larghetto
Allegro
Largo – Larghetto, Andante e piano
Allegro, ma non troppo

Handel's Opus 6 *concerti grossi* arguably hark back to the earlier compositional style of Corelli, who was extremely popular at the time in Handel's adopted homeland of England, but they are by no means the highly polished works of his predecessor, in which the nuances of orchestration and the sequence of movements had been worked out in fine detail. Handel preferred things not too well ordered in music, as in life, and took delight in twisting accepted patterns and throwing in whatever took his fancy at the time. While their orchestration generally follows the usual two violins and 'cello in the *concertino* group, Handel did later add oboe parts to essentially double the *ripieno* violins to four of his concerti.

While several movements throughout his Opus 6 concerti were 'borrowed' from other works (see e.g. his first concerto), the second concerto was newly composed in its entirety. It resembles a '*sonata da chiesa*' ('church sonata') with four movements, although the original autograph suggests that Handel did originally intend to include two extra movements: a fugue in a minor key and a final *Gigue*. (These movements were not discarded entirely, but used in later concerti in the set.)

The opening *Andante larghetto* is a noble, spacious and flowing *ritornello* movement, with *concertino* passages derived from the opening theme as responses to it that alternate between a graceful *legato* and more decisive dotted rhythms. This is followed by a contrapuntal trio sonata styled *Allegro* in the relative minor (D minor), with the opening animated semiquaver figure played in imitation or in parallel thirds as a form of *moto perpetuo*.

The third movement takes an unusual form with two different moods that alternate. The full orchestra and solo violins respond in successive bars with incisive dotted rhythms in stately *Largo* sections, while the *Larghetto, Andante e piano* sections features gentle and mysterious repeated quavers with suspensions in the inner parts creating harmonic complexity.

The more conventional final *Allegro, ma non troppo* begins with a vigorous four-part fugue, which is interrupted by contrasting pianissimo interludes with a slow-

moving theme in the solo strings above repeated chords, that is later revealed to be a counterpoint to the original fugue subject.

D Peak, adapted by M Seaton

Concerto à 4 for strings in A major, TWV 43:A4 — G P Telemann

Adagio
Allegro
Grave
Allegro

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) had originally planned a career in law and was self-taught as a musician, but by his early twenties he had already written several operas and been appointed organist and later *Kapellmeister* at various courts. In 1721 he applied for and was offered the position of Cantor at St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, but turned it down for a similar post with a higher salary in Hamburg—the church then offered the position to Johann Sebastian Bach!

While in Hamburg, Telemann was in charge of the music in five churches and the city schools, conducted at the Opera, founded the *Collegium Musicum* (which gave public concerts) and published the first music journal to appear in Germany. Apart from all of these activities he was a prolific composer with some 3000 works to his name. In spite of some inevitable inconsistency from such a large output, the best of Telemann's music is delightful and was highly regarded by his contemporaries, including Bach and Handel.

Unlike most of the works tonight, this Concerto in A major is actually a *concerto a quattro* (or a *ripieno* concerto) consisting of four independent parts for strings and continuo. As opposed to the Italian fast-slow-fast three-movement concerto, this one consists of four movements that are alternately slow and fast, according to the Germanic style of the period. A nearly identical version of this work also exists as a quartet for flute, violin, viola and continuo, with the flute taking the first violin part.

The opening *Adagio* starts with a steady 'walking bass line' passage in *tutti* violins and violas that is taken up by the *basso continuo* ('cellos, bass and harpsichord) as an ostinato while the two violin parts play a duet above it. The subsequent *Allegro* is based on pairs of voices (the two violins, the violas and basses) 'arguing' against each other, starting with a descending scale in the lower voices responding to an ascending A major triad in the violins, before swapping and adding tremolo. The

Grave moves to F sharp minor and begins with heavy staccato chords underneath the first violins' solo that is later taken up by the seconds, before finally returning to A major. The *Allegro* finale again pits the violins against the lower strings with Italian string concerto musical 'clichés' but in a more gallant French style.

Linda A Williams (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Concerto Grosso No. 8 in E minor (after Corelli's Sonata Op. 5 for violin and continuo), H 139

F S Geminiani

Preludio: Largo
Allemande: Allegro
Sarabanda: Largo
Giga: Allegro

Francesco Saverio Geminiani (1687-1762) was born in the Italian city of Lucca, but came to England in 1714 and remained there for the rest of his life. He received lessons in music from Alessandro Scarlatti and studied violin under both Carlo Ambrogio Lonati and Arcangelo Corelli. Geminiani subsequently gained so much orchestral experience that he had obtained a reputation as a virtuoso violinist before his arrival in England, playing his violin concerti for King George I with Handel at the keyboard the following year. While less widely known now, he and his *concerti grossi* were considered equal to both Handel and Corelli during his lifetime.

Some of Geminiani's early *concerti grossi* were not entirely original works: a set of twelve first published in 1726 were actually arrangements of Corelli's much praised Opus 5 set of Sonatas for violin and continuo from 1700. As well as exploiting the popularity of Corelli's music in London, Geminiani seems to have created these concerti as an act of homage to his old teacher.

In the case of Corelli's Eighth Sonata, Geminiani retained the key (E minor) and main characteristics of the original work with alternating slow and fast movements resembling dances: an opening *Preludio*, an *Allemande*, a *Sarabanda* and a closing *Giga*. While the *concertino* first violin and 'cello are essentially given the same parts as in the original sonata, the *concertino* second violin sometimes provides additional counterpoint and fills out the harmonies, along with the rest of the ensemble (*ripieno*). The work is therefore transformed into a true *concerto grosso*.

John Dalton (Making Music), adapted by M Seaton

Some of these programme notes were supplied through the Programme Note Bank of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies.

Paul Stanhope : Conductor



When not working as a portrait photographer, Paul devotes a lot of time to music.

As well as teaching violin and piano, he conducts several ensembles in the North West of England: Macclesfield Light Orchestra, Wesley Street Community Orchestra, SK Community Wind Band, Grove Baroque and Saddleworth Strings.

He also plays violin in Hazel Grove Orchestra and Stockport Symphonic Sounds.

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www.northernbaroque.org.uk

THE NORTHERN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

The Northern Baroque Orchestra is now in its thirty-ninth year of existence. In the early 1980s, the late Linda Williams, violinist and peripatetic teacher in Rochdale, had the idea of forming a small chamber orchestra with her friends and fellow professionals. The players would meet regularly and aim to give at least two concerts a year, basing their repertoire principally on the Baroque period. The Northern Baroque Orchestra was born soon after and gave its first concert on 22nd May 1985.

Players come mainly from Rochdale, Saddleworth and West Yorkshire, but also from Manchester and further afield. Essentially a string ensemble, it is pleased to invite along guest woodwind or brass players when augmentation is required. Concerto soloists come from within the ranks of the orchestra or are invited friends or colleagues. The orchestra is also pleased to offer young musicians an opportunity to play or sing with an ensemble and has welcomed young soloists from the RNCM and Chetham's School of Music.

Part of the pleasure of playing in such an ensemble comes from having the opportunity to work with different conductors. The NBO has forged close links over the years with members of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra: Bob Chasey, Timothy Ang, Richard Davis and Simon Robertshaw. George Kennaway from the Orchestra of Opera North and Leeds University also conducted the orchestra regularly. Michael Dow, Director of Music at Stockport Grammar School, has given sixteen consecutive summer concerts with the orchestra since June 2004, and Paul Witkiewicz, conductor of Bolton Symphony Orchestra, has given five autumn/winter concerts as well as spring concerts in 2019 and 2023.

The NBO extends a warm 'welcome' to Paul Stanhope for this evening's concert. We very much enjoy working with Paul and trust that this enjoyment transmits itself to you in our playing.

NBO COMMITTEE 2024-2025

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Saturday 9th November 2024

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