

London Harpsichord Ensemble

Graham Mayger *flute*
Sarah Francis *oboe*
Frances Mason *violin*
Margaret Powell *cello*
Ian Clarke *harpsichord*

The Ensemble is the longest established chamber music group in Britain. Its concerts of eighteenth century music regularly draw full houses to the South Bank. The group plays at festivals and music clubs throughout the country, and is frequently broadcast.

The Ensemble consists of a flexible number of four to eight players, which can present concerts of chamber music as well as concerto programmes. Its members are all distinguished chamber musicians. A large and varied repertoire of eighteenth century music, as well as twentieth century works, can be drawn upon. The Ensemble's recordings of Vivaldi, Albinoni, Telemann and Handel have received international acclaim. Often played on Classic FM and BBC Radio 3, they have been selected for special issues.

Reviews

"I find it nearly impossible to believe that the Albinoni concertos could be given more musical readings than these. The performances are exciting, life-like and full of the vitality that music of the Italian baroque demands. The London Harpsichord Ensemble plays its modern instruments to perfection."

American Record Guide

"A delightful disc, beautifully played and recorded. Sarah Francis's performances would be hard to beat."

Hi-Fi News and Record Review

"The performances are full of joy and sparkle and are equally impressive for their finely judged expressive feeling."

The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs

"They play stylishly, crisply and with spirit, and are outstandingly well recorded."

The Gramophone

"These performances, played on modern instruments, are always stylish and engaging."

Fanfare

Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-seventh
season
2007-8

4.00 pm
Sunday
18 November
2007

St. Mary's Church
East Bergholt



SVAM is a member of Making Music
and a Registered Charity (No 276640)

London Harpsichord Ensemble

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Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Quartet in G (Tafelmusik I) for flute, oboe,
violin and continuo

Largo-allegro-largo - Vivace-moderato-vivace
Grave - Vivace

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Concerto in C for violin, cello and harpsichord

Allegro - Largo - Allegro

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984)

Trio for flute, oboe and harpsichord

Allegro - Adagio - Allegro - Allegro molto

INTERVAL

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Trio sonata in G minor for oboe, violin and
continuo

Mesto - Allegro - Andante-largo-andante -
Vivace

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Sonata in B minor for violin and harpsichord
BWV 1014

Adagio; - Allegro - Andante - Allegro

J C Bach (1735-1782)

Quintet in D for flute, oboe, violin, cello and
harpsichord

Allegro - Andantino - Allegro assai

Programme Notes

During his lifetime, **Telemann** was widely regarded as Germany's leading composer. He began composing in boyhood and continued to do so at an astonishing rate for most of his life. His most significant post was in the city-state of Hamburg as musical director of the five main churches. He had to provide two cantatas for each Sunday and a new Passion for Lent. Music was required for induction ceremonies and for church consecrations, and further cantatas had to be written for the city's numerous civic celebrations. Once a year Telemann provided a sacred oratorio and secular serenata for the celebrations of the Hamburg militia commandant. In 1721 he initiated a series of weekly public concerts that ran each winter season: additionally, in 1722 he assumed the directorship of the Gänsemarktoper, where he performed his own operas as well as those by Handel and Keiser, for which he often provided additional material. Telemann's direction of the opera met with strong disapproval from certain church officials, who complained that such performances incited lasciviousness. Their objections were not acted upon by the city council, many of whose members regularly attended Telemann's performances.

Vivaldi was the most influential composer of his generation. He laid the foundations for the mature Baroque concerto, whilst his contributions to musical style, violin technique and the practice of orchestration were substantial. He was a pioneer of orchestral programme music through such works as *Le quattro stagioni* ('The four seasons'). Vivaldi was praised more by his contemporaries as a violinist than as a composer, though few went as far as Goldoni, who categorised him as 'an excellent violin player but a mediocre composer'. Such an unconventional man and musician was bound to elicit adverse comment in his lifetime. His vanity was notorious: he boasted of his fame and illustrious patrons, and of his fluency in composition, asserting that he could compose a concerto in all its parts more quickly than it could be copied – clearly an exaggerated claim. Along with his vanity went an extreme sensitivity to criticism. At the same time, his preoccupation with money was excessive by most standards: it is a subject that surfaces continually in his letters. For all this, his egotism must have been redeemed by higher qualities for him to have retained the loyalty of several influential patrons through his career.

Gordon Jacob was educated at Dulwich College and, after active service in World War I, studied at the RCM. He was on the teaching staff there from 1924 until his retirement in 1966, and his pupils included Malcolm Arnold, Imogen Holst, Joseph Horowitz and Elizabeth Maconchy. Jacob's active career as composer spanned 60 years, during which time the character of his output faithfully reflected the changes in opportunity open to composers of a conservative idiom. Early Prom performances were succeeded by increasing orchestral and choral commissions, and in the 1950s he was a respected figure, providing music for the Festival of Britain (1951) and for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953). In common with other more traditional composers of the time his music went into eclipse with the rise of the avant garde in the 1960s. In the BBC TV documentary 'Gordon Jacob' (directed by Ken Russell, 1959) the composer said: 'I personally feel that the day that melody is discarded, you may as well pack up music altogether'. His music is characterised by clarity of structure and instrumental writing that shows a keen awareness of the capabilities and limitations of every instrument.

JS Bach's appointment in the city of Leipzig was comparable to that of Telemann in Hamburg. The city authorities offered him the post only after having failed to attract Telemann: ludicrous though such an idea may nowadays appear, they believed that they had appointed the second-best candidate. For most of his life, Bach worked as a church musician, and never involved himself with opera. For six years before his Leipzig appointment, however, he held a different kind of post. Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cothen was a Calvinist, and so did not require elaborate music for worship. An accomplished musician himself, he paid Bach generously to direct and compose for his court orchestra, and so many of the composer's orchestral and instrumental works originate from this period. It is customary to think of Bach's work as one of the grand peaks of the baroque, summarising and usually surpassing what had previously been achieved in any given field. His works are often, also, the end of a line, in that changes of style, genre and fashion were quite soon to render them obsolete. One exception to this generalisation is the set of six sonatas for violin and harpsichord, regarded by his son CPE Bach as 'amongst my illustrious father's most distinguished compositions'. Earlier sonatas would have been scored for violin and basso continuo - harpsichord and cello would form a background to the violin's solo status. In these works, however, the harpsichord has a truly independent role. Some of the movements are written as trio sonatas, with violin and keyboard right hand weaving a duet over an independent keyboard left hand. Others integrate all three lines as fugues or three part inventions, and some sound like concertos. All in all, Bach made a stylistic leap forward which was to pave the way for later developments.

Johann Christian Bach (often referred to as 'the English Bach') was the youngest of JS Bach's eleven sons. His father instructed him in music until his death, at which time Johann Christian was 15. The boy then worked with his second oldest brother Carl Philipp Emanuel, considered at the time to be the most musically gifted of Bach's sons. Johann Christian thus imbibed the principles of both baroque and rococo styles, before finally completing his education in the classical style under Martini on his arrival in Italy at age 21. He became organist of Milan Cathedral, and later converted to Roman Catholicism and married the soprano Cecilia Grassi. His last years were spent in London, where he achieved considerable fame. With C.F. Abel, he did much to establish regular public concerts, and was also appointed as music master to Queen Charlotte. He composed cantatas, chamber music, keyboard and orchestral works, operas and symphonies, and his music was an important influence on Mozart. The Quintet in D for keyboard, flute, oboe, violin and cello is one of his most popular compositions, its three-movement design proclaiming his enthusiasm for the Italian classical style. New Grove makes special mention of 'the highly attractive slow movement with its pathos-filled minore central section, as far away from the facile 19th-century view of a 'porcelain' composer as can be imagined'.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Supper Concert on Sat. 12 January 08 – *NEARLY SOLD OUT*

Friday 1 February, 8 pm at the Constable Hall
Thomas Gould *Violin* and John Reid *Piano*

Mozart - Szymanowski - Schumann - Schubert