

BELSIZE BAROQUE



Catherine Martin, *Director*

Music by
Albinoni
Veracini
Vivaldi
Sarro
Locatelli
Venturini

Sunday 23 June 2019, 6.30 pm

St Peter's Church, Belsize Square,
Belsize Park, London, NW3 4HY

www.belsizebaroque.org.uk

Programme

The drama and fire of Italian Baroque music have engaged performers and audiences for generations, ever since this style of music first exploded across Europe 300 years ago. There is so much to explore, with much still buried in libraries around the world.

Tonight's concert includes the first youthful ebullient works both of familiar composers and of composers who remain virtually unknown.

Francesco Venturini (1675–1745) Sonata da Camera Op. 1 No. 9 in G minor

Ouverture – Aria – Aria – Gavotte – Menuet 1 & 2

It may seem strange to start an Italian programme with a “fake” Italian composer. Even Venturini's real name is unknown. He was probably from present day Belgium, and spent most of his life in Hanover. He became Kapellmeister of the court orchestra there in 1715, the year in which he wrote his only set of published works, Opus 1. These works were forgotten over time, but copies can nevertheless be found in archives around Europe. Titled *Sonate di Camera*, they are suites fusing French and Italian elements.

This one remains unpublished, but exists in manuscript in the British Library. It is from this manuscript that we have created parts for performance tonight. A dramatic French overture that merges the haunting beauty of French music with the direct fire of Italian concerti is followed by a pair of dances titled *Aria*, the second of which features solo cello coloured by a bassoon reminiscent of Handel at his most creative. This is followed by a brisk rustic gavotte, then rounded off by a pair of elegant minuets.

Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695–1764) Concerto Grosso Op. 1 No. 2 in C minor

Adagio – Allegro – Largo – Allegro – Allegro

So now to our first bona fide Italian. So brilliant was Locatelli's playing style that in later times he was known as the “Paganini of the eighteenth century”. He apparently never played a wrong note, save on one occasion when in his exuberance he thrust his little finger through the bridge of his violin and was unable to withdraw it. While he was praised by contemporaries, he was castigated by some for his artifice and display. His compositions were, to quote from the time, “rocks famed for a thousand shipwrecks”.

Typical for an Italian concerto grosso, made popular by Corelli, the concerto grosso performed tonight features a solo quartet of 2 violins, viola and cello that alternates with the full tutti ensemble over the course of five movements. The key of C minor lends a rather serious tone to the work, but it also adds a rich sonority to the orchestra.

Domenico Sarro (1679–1744) Introduzione to Partenope

Allegro e spiccato – Tempo Giusto – Allegro

Sarro was a highly successful opera composer in Naples, though his work is largely forgotten today. Like its French equivalent, the overture, the Italian sinfonia that opens an Italian opera became such a popular form that they were played in their own right outside of the theatre. Although very short owing to its functional purpose, the Italian sinfonia eventually evolved into the classical symphony we know today, so it is interesting to revisit it. This

one was written for the opera *Partenope*, which premiered in 1722. It begins in typically bouncy fashion, the leaping violins acting as a clear signal for the audience to be quiet. There are no soloistic moments in a *sinfonia*, simply a *tutti*. However, Sarro does call for a reduced ensemble in the short scene-changing slow movement before launching into an Italian minuet where the melody is casually tossed between wind and strings.

Interval

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Ripieno Concerto in G minor RV157

Allegro – Largo – Allegro

Vivaldi experimented with every variation of concerto he could think of. His favourite was the solo violin concerto, but he also wrote concerti for a *tutti* band without a soloist. The first movement of the concerto we are playing tonight has a funky ground bass underpinning a whole series of melodic and rhythmic inventions in the upper strings. Over ten repetitions of this ground, Vivaldi plays with the physical space by moving melodies around the orchestra as if in a musical washing machine. The two violin parts alternate their melodies every four bars, producing a satisfying antiphonal effect. This is followed by a very tentative *Largo* that includes some clever harmonic clashes. Then Vivaldi throws us into a mechanical storm full of rhythmic devices that are tossed across the orchestra. In particular the technically difficult thunderous bass line provides an exciting finale.

Tomaso Albinoni (1671–1751) Concerto for oboes and strings in D major Op. 7 No. 8

Allegro – Largo – Allegro

At the time of Albinoni's birth in Venice in 1671, the city was awash with gambling. Bad for some, for the Albinoni family business of producing playing cards it was a goldmine. Albinoni himself qualified as a stationer, giving him the right to print his name on the two of spades. Fortunately for us, it also gave him the means to gain a musical education. Leaving the family business was probably a wise move, as it folded in 1721.

Albinoni's early success was as a composer of opera, but sadly all his operas have been lost. Tantalisingly, we know that he was writing opera in Venice at the same time as Vivaldi, but we know nothing of their relationship.

Albinoni's oboe concerti combine a light effervescent style with tuneful melodies. Rather than featuring oboes as virtuoso soloists, Albinoni prefers to contrast the oboes with the strings and then combine them in interesting ways. The outer movements bounce along, while the slow *Largo* for strings provides a pleasing contrast.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Concerto in A minor RV356

Allegro – Largo – Presto

How could a programme of Italian music not include a solo violin concerto? Vivaldi's first set of concerti, *L'Estro Armonico*, exploded across Europe in 1711. Full of rich invention and free violin virtuosity, it had a huge influence on musicians everywhere. All twelve concerti are scored for four violins, two violas, cello and continuo. However, Vivaldi combines these in various ways to mix up the concerto form. Some are concerti where all four violins are soloists without a *tutti* band. Others, like this one, are solo violin concerti where three violins

play together to create a tutti orchestra sound. In the middle slow movement, the bass is left out entirely, while the violins have separate parts, providing an eerie background harmony to the soloist. This classic Vivaldi device gives us a sense of instability and of gently floating on a cloud. We have chosen to perform this as Vivaldi's score indicates, with a single player on each part.

Francesco Maria Veracini (1690–1768) Overture No. 6 in G minor *Allegro – Largo – Allegro – Menuet*

When Prince August from Dresden went to Venice in 1718 to find musicians for the orchestra, one of the violinists he recruited was Francesco Veracini. In 1722, embarrassed by a colleague outperforming him, he refused to leave his apartment for several days, eventually leaping out the window and permanently damaging his leg. Blaming his colleagues for attempted murder he moved back to his home town of Florence, before subsequently becoming a star in London.

This overture is the last of six and was probably written in 1716. Despite its title, it is an Italian concerto/sinfonia hybrid, similar to others favoured by the Dresden orchestra. The wild opening is full of fire and eccentricity. The second movement provides some respite with its Handelian beauty. Another wild Allegro full of twists and turns follows, and in the final minuet Veracini asks the whole orchestra to play in unison throughout! Although this overture seems to reflect the madness Veracini is said to have been afflicted by, its passion and energy fittingly round off the concert.

Programme notes by Richard Austen

Design/layout by Andrew Welsh

Photographs of the orchestra by Steve Linehan, Meng He, Susan Cooksley and Andrea Liu





Save the date! Belsize Baroque's next two concerts will be on **Sunday 29 September** and **Sunday 1 December**, directed by Catherine Martin. Details will be available at www.belsizebaroque.org.uk.



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Catherine Martin read music at St Anne's College, Oxford University, and completed her postgraduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where she studied the modern violin with David Takeno.

Catherine now specialises in performance on period instruments and has been the leader of the Gabrieli Consort and Players for the last 11 years. Catherine also leads the orchestra of the Early Opera Company, and has appeared as guest leader of The English Concert and Florilegium.

In demand as violin soloist and director, recently Catherine has directed concerts with Barokkanerne in Oslo and the Wroclaw Baroque Orchestra as well as collaborations with amateur and student orchestras on both baroque and modern instruments. Catherine has been a member of the Salomon String Quartet since 2003, exploring music of the Classical period from Haydn to Mendelssohn.

She appears on many recordings: for Deutsche Grammophon and Winged Lion with The Gabrieli Consort and Players, for EMI with Ensemble Galant, and for Chandos with I Fagiolini. Catherine teaches at the Royal College of Music in London.



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Belsize Baroque 2018 Leadership Awards

Simone Pirri and Alice Poppleton are the holders of the 2018 Belsize Baroque Leader Scholarship and the 2018 Belsize Baroque Bursary, respectively. Alice will be leading the second violins in tonight's concert. Many thanks to everyone whose support makes our scholarship programme possible.



Simone Pirri is a captivating and rising young violinist from Italy, based in the UK, who performs primarily on period instruments. He recently graduated with distinction from masters programmes at both the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, where he specialised in historical performance, studying with leading experts such as Rachel Podger, Simon Standage and Nicolette Moonen. Since completing his post-graduate studies, he has played with a number of well-known groups such as Il Pomo d'Oro (with

whom he also appeared as a soloist), Ensemble Diderot, La Nuova Musica and Dutch Baroque Orchestra. He was the winner of London's Nancy Nuttall Early Music Prize for two consecutive years and has received grants from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust, the Loan Fund for Musical Instruments, The Gane Trust and The Kirsten Scott Memorial Trust. In May 2017, after winning an online world contest, he was invited to join Symphoniacs (a classical electro crossover band signed to Universal Music) on their highly acclaimed European tour. Recently, he has performed at the 2018 Clifton International Festival of Music in Bristol with baroque chamber group FIGO, ensemble-in-residence at the festival.

Simone comments, "I am so delighted to have been chosen as winner of the Belsize Baroque Leader Scholarship 2018. It is a great privilege to be in charge of the group's musical activities and I can't wait to share with everyone my profound enthusiasm for early music. I am committed to shaping the group's activities, working on lots of engaging repertoire, and presenting the 'best Belsize Baroque' to audiences. This unique opportunity will be so beneficial to me and my future career, and I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone at Belsize Baroque for offering it to me."

Alice Poppleton, originally from Salisbury, is a freelance violinist and viola player specializing in historical performance, and an enthusiastic educator. In July 2018 Alice graduated with an MA with Distinction in Historical Performance from the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied as an Enlightenment Scholar under the tutelage of Rachel Podger, Nicolette Moonan and Jane Rogers. She has performed



at The Wigmore Hall (on both violin and viola), at St John's Smith Square and in the Kohn Bach Cantata Series, working with directors such as Jane Glover and Philippe Herreweghe. In July 2017 Alice received a Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction from The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where she was an EMI Sound Foundation Scholar. Alice graduated with a BA Honours in Music from the University of Bristol

in 2015, where she led the symphony, chamber and festival orchestras and was awarded the Ladyman Bequest Prize. Alice has recently played at the 2018 Clifton International Festival of Music in Bristol with baroque chamber group FIGO, ensemble-in-residence at the festival, and is looking forward to returning to Salisbury to perform Bach's Double Violin concerto in 2019.

Alice comments, "I am very much looking forward to performing with Belsize Baroque and will relish the opportunity to lead a period instrument orchestra of this high standard, as well as the chance to work closely with such acclaimed guest directors. I am passionate about historical performance and can't wait to join this community of committed historical performers from different walks of life."

Antonio Stradivari 1717



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Belsize Baroque

Formed in 2002, Belsize Baroque is one of the leading amateur baroque orchestras. It comprises young professionals, students and committed amateurs. The orchestra performs on period instruments in a historically informed style. It collaborates regularly with leading baroque directors to give orchestral performances as well as working with choral groups.

The orchestra showcases the talents of music college students and young professional musicians, providing these players with the opportunity to perform with top directors, to learn core repertoire and to gain experience in section leading.

Charity events in which the orchestra has participated include concerts for the Coram Trust, Cancer Research UK and the Dominic Simpson Memorial Trust.

The orchestra can be hired for orchestral or choral concerts and other events, and is delighted to assist other charities.

Belsize Baroque Orchestral Society Ltd is a registered charity (number 1108596) and company (number 5267265).

www.belsizebaroque.org.uk; Twitter: @Belsize_Baroque



Belsize Baroque would like to thank Father Paul Nicholson and the churchwardens of St Peter's for their assistance. We would also like to say a special thank you to Richard Austen for his help in assembling the music, including his research at the British Library.

First violins

Catherine Martin (director)
Nick Hardisty
Christine-Marie Louw
Adelia Myslov

Second violins

Alice Poppleton
Miranda Ford
Maxim Del Mar
Val Hudson

Violas

Elizabeth Hart
Jam Orrell

Cellos

Jacob Garside
Mark Walkem
Michael Mullen

Bass

John Henry Baker

Harpsichord

Norman Macsween

Theorbo

Quentin Miller

Harp

Jane Bliss

Oboes

Susan Cooksley
Nicola Barbagli

Bassoon

Hilary Ougham

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