

BELSIZE BAROQUE

Simon Standage,
Director

Two composer priests

Vivaldi

Bonporti



Sunday 28 November 2021, 6.30 pm

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

www.belsizebaroque.org.uk

Two composer priests

Tonight's programme contrasts two Italian composers, both ordained as priests. Both wrote interesting and exciting music for violin, and their published concertos became known all over Europe. Born in 1678, Vivaldi was from a poor background. Within two years of joining the priesthood, unable to perform the mass due to ill health he immediately returned to his first love, the violin. He was such a force of nature musically that he even managed to turn his teaching job at the Ospedale della Pietà into a vehicle for developing new forms of music. Vivaldi spent most of his life in Venice and is associated with the so-called Venetian school of composition that he developed with an emphasis on the solo concerto.

Bonporti, conversely, described himself as a nobleman from Trento and amateur musician. Born in 1672, he became a dedicated priest intent on a career in the church and performed his duties in full throughout his life in Trento. Nevertheless, while studying theology in Rome he took the opportunity to develop his composition skills with the greatest Roman musicians including Corelli. The Corellian concerto grosso contrasts a small group of players against a large group in dialogue. Bonporti developed his own style that, whilst not in the Corelli style, is also not like that of Vivaldi. Bonporti uses very short melodic fragments that he is able to effortlessly knit together to create a seamless flow of melody.

Tonight's music is a bit of an experiment for us. Bonporti published his opus 11 set of concerti sometime in the 1710s, possibly 1715. They were conceived to be performed with one player to a part. However, it was common practice in large court orchestras to adapt works to suit the house style of the court utilising the larger forces. In Dresden, for example, Johann Pisendel adapted works for strings to include oboes, flutes and bassoons. We know that one of the skills of a copyist was to be able to transform a violin part into a playable part for oboe. With this in mind, Simon Standage here presents a Dresden-style reading of the works using a large string group along with flutes and oboes.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Concerto in G minor RV 156

Allegro – Adagio – Allegro

The spirited opening of Vivaldi's Concerto RV 156, with its two syncopated violin parts pitted contrapuntally against each other, perfectly enshrines the idea of contest that is inherent in the idea of a concerto. But the contest we hear is not that of a solo instrument against an orchestra. The Venetian baroque took pride in cultivating the concerto for orchestra, of which this is a splendid example. The jagged, fiery first movement is followed by a short Adagio. Its chains of suspensions over a bass moving in quavers derive from Corelli, but the spectral harmonic intensity is Vivaldi's own distinctive hallmark.

Francesco Antonio Bonporti (1672–1749) Concerto in B flat major Opus 11 No. 3

Allegro – Siciliana – Allegro

Bonporti's gift for melody juxtaposes triple and duple rhythms during the opening Allegro. This is followed by a dark sicilienne perfectly showing that Vivaldi wasn't alone in exploring harmonic intensity. The melody is highly chromatic and undulates up and down, contrasting between solo and tutti violins. The final movement ends the work with a fast dance in triple time.

Antonio Vivaldi – Concerto in E minor Opus 3 No. 4

Andante – Allegro assai – Adagio – Allegro

Opus 3 was Vivaldi's most influential work, which truly exploded across Europe, revolutionising string music. This is the only work that we perform as written—for four violins, two violas, cello and continuo. Vivaldi uses all four violins as soloists, but also combines them to form a tutti string section without needing a string orchestra. All four players get equal share of the material which is tossed around between them throughout all four movements.

Francesco Antonio Bonporti – Concerto in F major Opus 11 No. 5

Andantino grazioso – Recitativo – Allegro deciso

A gracious slow movement that is full of twists and turns is followed by an operatic recitative with a solo violin as protagonist, who has free rein to improvise over chords. A triple-time contrapuntal dance rounds off the concerto.

Antonio Vivaldi – Concerto for oboes and strings in A minor RV 536

(Allegro) – Largo – Allegro

One of many concerti by Vivaldi where a pair of winds contrasts with tutti strings. From the start, oboes lead the main melody which Vivaldi shifts to different keys connected by stormy interludes. The final movement pushes the fiery tirade further with scales thrown between violins. Only the oboes supply calm contrast, but are eventually overtaken by the violins.

Interval

Francesco Antonio Bonporti – Concerto in D major Opus 11 No. 8

Allegro – Largo – Vivace

The bright key of D major gives the violins an effervescent fizz that brings out the fast figuration of the combined violins. Solo sections link the longer sections of tutti harmonic progression, where most of the interest lies. A solo violin leads the slow movement to explore darker hues while another dance-like movement in triple time brings the movement to a close. Listen out for the unusual chromatic scales in the minor key middle section.

Antonio Vivaldi – Concerto in C minor RV 120

Allegro non molto – Largo – Allegro

Like the first concerto, this too has no soloist. The key is particularly dark, but has a mysterious quality compared to the stormy G minor. The bumpy opening melody is explored in various keys. The second and third movements are heavily contrapuntal, the third being a fugue that builds in intensity to the extended pedal point towards the end.

Francesco Antonio Bonporti – Concerto in F major Opus 11 No. 7

Presto – Larghetto – Spirituoso

The opening has a lot in common with Corelli, where two violins contrast constantly with the tutti. A short connecting interlude leads to a final spirited chase with showers of triplets.

Antonio Vivaldi – Concerto in G minor RV 152

Allegro molto – Andante molto – Allegro molto

This work combines different aspects of the other Vivaldi works heard tonight. The opening bustles along robustly, giving way to arpeggios punching through the air. The slow movement provides calm contrast with a flowing continuous melody of triplets. The final turbulent fugue brings the work to a striking close.

Belsize Baroque 2021/22 Leadership Scholarship



Rebecca Bell is a recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, where she received her Masters with Distinction and was awarded a DipRAM Prize for outstanding performance in the final recital. Rebecca enjoys a wide variety of work with both modern and baroque ensembles, which have included the Royal Northern Sinfonia and the LSO. She is regularly invited to guest-lead ensembles at festivals and concerts across the UK, and very much enjoys the opportunities for creative input that this brings. As an in-demand chamber musician, Rebecca performs regularly with her award-winning quartet, The Bell Quartet, as well as being a founding member of The Nuevo Tango Quintet, with whom she has given sell-out concerts across London and featured on

BBC Radio 3's In Tune with Sean Rafferty. Outside of her musical endeavours, Rebecca enjoys crochet, vegan doughnuts and life by the sea in Brighton where she lives with her partner Rhys and young daughter Rosalie.



THE OLD MASTERS IN NEW HANDS

Sheku Kanneh-Mason MBE plays on a cello by Matteo Goffriller, Venice c1700, the 'Ex-Goritzki', made possible by the Florian Leonhard Fellowship, and an exceptionally fine bow by Nicolas Maire c1855, lent by a private sponsor.



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Simon Standage is well known as a violinist specialising in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music. After reading music at Cambridge University he joined the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra under Szymon Goldberg before receiving a Harkness Fellowship to study violin with Ivan Galamian in New York. On his return to England he played with the London Symphony Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra, of which he was sub-leader for four years. Leader and soloist with The English Concert from its foundation in 1973 until 1990, he also fulfilled the same role for many years with the City of London Sinfonia. As well as the many records he made with The English Concert (including Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, nominated for a Grammy award), he also recorded solo and chamber music – including all of Mozart's violin concertos – with the Academy of Ancient Music, of which he was, with

Christopher Hogwood, Associate Director from 1991 to 1995. Since his foundation, with Richard Hickox, of Collegium Musicum 90, he has made numerous recordings for Chandos Records, which have met with consistent critical acclaim.

As soloist and director of chamber orchestras and chamber musician, he is active both in Britain and abroad, where he had for some years a regular collaboration with Collegium Musicum Telemann in Osaka and Haydn Sinfonietta in Vienna. He is leader of the Salomon String Quartet (founded by him in 1981), which specialises in historical performance of the Classical repertoire, and has performed worldwide and made many recordings and broadcasts. He is Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, and teaches at summer courses in Europe.

In 2008 he received a medal for services to Polish Culture, in 2009 he was awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music and in 2010 he was the recipient of the Georg Philipp Telemann Prize, awarded by the city of Magdeburg.

Save the date! Belsize Baroque's next concert, directed by Catherine Martin, will be on Sunday 23 January at St Peter's Church, Belsize Park. Details will be available soon at www.belsizebaroque.org.uk.



Like most arts organisations, we rely on donations to cover the expenses of putting on concerts. As a charity we can benefit from *easyfundraising*. If our friends and supporters sign up to support us at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/belsizebaroque or download the *easyfundraising* app, we will receive a donation every time you shop online at one of 2700 retailers. Retailers include Amazon, most major grocery and department stores, trainline, and many, many more. There is no cost to you. Please sign up – it's very easy to use, and every amount you spend, large or small, will help us.



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.

First violins

Simon Standage (director)
Nick Hardisty
Graham Nicholson
Christine-Marié Louw
Alia Paienda

Second violins

Rebecca Bell (leader)
Miranda Ford
Val Hudson
Tom Suarez
Jenny Frost

Violas

Elizabeth Hart
Roger Mears

Cellos

David Winfield
Mary Walton
Yuji Kubo

Bass

Evangelos Saklaras

Lute

Quentin Miller

Harp

Jane Bliss

Harpsichord

Michael Strange

Flutes

Norman MacSween
Nikki Wilkinson

Oboes

Susan Cooksley
Sadie Kerslake

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