

BELSIZE BAROQUE



Catherine Martin, director
Clover Willis, soprano

Handel
Vivaldi
Telemann
Scarlatti

Sunday 9 February 2025, 6.30 pm

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

www.belsizebaroque.org.uk

Handel and his inspirations

This evening's concert celebrates the genius of George Frideric Handel, presenting his music alongside works by composers who deeply influenced his development. From the theatrical brilliance of Alessandro Scarlatti to the inventive textures of Telemann and Vivaldi, these musical pioneers helped shape Handel's distinctive fusion of Italian, German and English styles. Handel himself was not above borrowing from his contemporaries, once quipping, when accused of taking a theme from Bononcini, "It's much too good for him; he did not know what to do with it." Each piece in this programme offers a glimpse into the vibrant musical world that inspired Handel, culminating in a performance of his exquisite motet *Silte Venti*, sung by the soprano Clover Willis.

George Frederick Handel (1685–1759) Overture to *Serse* (1738)

Overture – Gigue

Serse received its premiere on 15 April 1738 at the King's Theatre in London. The title role was sung by the alto castrato Caffarelli, but the role of Arsamene, *Serse's* brother, was written for a woman, Maria Marchesini. Initially, the opera was not a great success. It ran for only five performances and was not heard again until the twentieth century. One account from the time tells us that the performances of both the cast and the orchestra were weak, but some of the problems lay elsewhere. Being one of Handel's last operas, *Serse* was written at a time when the British love affair with Italian opera was waning, and Handel was beginning to turn toward writing oratorios in English. Today, however, *Serse* is one of Handel's most popular operas and has come to be considered one of his finest. The dramatic fluidity that surprised his own audience now seems refreshing and effective, and the music is unquestionably of the highest level.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Concerto for Strings in G minor, RV 153

Allegro – Andante – Allegro assai

This type of concerto does not usually involve soloists, but in this case Vivaldi's manuscript comes in at least two versions. It seems that Vivaldi originally marked out solo sections which divide the orchestra into a large group (the *ripieno* which in this case is all players) and a small group (the *concertino* group). However, he later crossed out all solo markings, and made some significant cuts to the music, presumably for a later performance. Tonight we have decided to perform Vivaldi's original ideas prior to the cuts, which we have prepared ourselves from the manuscript. Handel was very familiar with the florid virtuosic writing style of composers such as Vivaldi, but in his London operas he chose to use a less virtuosic style to match the taste of the English audience. Nevertheless, as we will see later in the programme, he certainly knew how to emulate Vivaldi's florid show-stopping style when he needed to.

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725): Sinfonia No. 4 in E minor

Vivace – Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro

Alessandro Scarlatti, a key figure in the development of the Italian Baroque style, is best known for his operas and cantatas, but his instrumental works also deserve significant recognition. During Handel's time in Italy (1706–1710), he was deeply influenced by Alessandro's operas, drawing upon similar compositional models in his own works. The connection between the two composers is further enriched by Handel's meeting with Alessandro's son, Domenico Scarlatti, in Italy. The two were born in the same year and became lifelong friends and musical rivals. This sinfonia is part of a set of 12 concerto-like works written for varied combinations of winds and strings. It is a poignant and expressive work, marked by its dramatic harmonic shifts and lyrical beauty. Scarlatti's mastery of counterpoint and his ability to convey emotional depth shine through, particularly in the melancholic slow movements, which contrast with the lively and rhythmically engaging allegros.

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) Concerto for Three Violins in F major, TWV 53:F1

Allegro – Largo – Vivace

Telemann's Concerto for Three Violins is an elegant example of his approach to the concerto form. Published as part of his second collection of *Tafelmusik* (*Table Music*), this concerto was widely known and appreciated throughout Europe. In this work, three solo violins weave intricate lines that alternate between harmonious interplay and virtuosic flourishes. Telemann's vibrant use of texture is evident throughout, with a joyous and playful spirit permeating the outer movements. The reflective central movement, by contrast, balances lyrical beauty with a touch of melancholy. This evening, we are thrilled to present this concerto under the leadership of our director, Catherine Martin, joined by our talented scholarship and bursary winners, Sophia Mücke and Sara Matović. And the connection to Handel? Listen closely to the opening bars of the first movement – does it remind you of something? While not a direct quotation, the melody bears a striking resemblance to Handel's famous *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba from Solomon*. Handel frequently borrowed themes from Telemann's works, transforming them to great effect.

George Frideric Handel *Silete Venti* HWV 242

Sinfonia e recitativo – Aria – Accompagnato – Aria – Alleluia

Handel was well known for borrowing material, not only from other composers but also from his own earlier works. Among the richest sources for these borrowings were the more than 100 Italian cantatas he composed during his formative years in Italy. Ideas from these cantatas surface in *Silete Venti*, and fragments of the motet were later repurposed in several of Handel's subsequent compositions. *Silete Venti* is one of Handel's most substantial and elaborate Latin motets, though its exact date of composition remains a topic of debate. Most scholars agree it probably originates from the 1720s, well after Handel had settled in England. Why, then, would he compose a Latin motet, a genre associated with Italian traditions, at this time? One possibility is that it was written during Handel's brief return to Italy in 1729. Alternatively, it may have been crafted in England for a visiting Italian singer or patron. The work has an unusual beginning. It starts with a typical French overture, in which a stately opening section is followed by a faster, more contrapuntal music. The orchestral flurry is suddenly interrupted by the soprano soloist, who commands the swirling winds to fall silent. The music immediately calms down and settles into a beautiful accompanied recitative, followed by two substantial arias. The motet concludes with a dazzlingly virtuosic *Alleluia*, reminiscent of similar works by Vivaldi or Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate*.

Sinfonia e Recitativo

Silete venti,
nolite murmurare frondes,
Quia anima mea dulcedine
Requiescit!

Be silent, winds,
do not murmur, leaves,
because my soul rests in sweet
bliss.

Aria

Dulcis amor, Jesu care,
quis non cupit te amare;
Veni, transfige me.
Si tu feris non sunt clades:
tuae plagae sunt suaves, quia
totus vivo in te.

Sweet love, dear Jesus,
who does not wish to love you?
Come, transfix me.
If you strike me, there is no injury:
your blows are sweet, as I live totally
in you.

Accompagnato

O fortunata anima, O blessed soul,
O iucundissimus triumphus, O most joyful triumph,
O felicissima laetitia O happiest joy!

Aria

Date sarta, date flores; Bring garlands, bring flowers;
me coronent vestri honores; may your honours crown me;
Date palmas nobiles. Bring noble palms.
Surgent venti et beatæ spirent Let the winds blow and let
almae blessed spirits
fortunate auras caeli fulgidas. breathe heaven's radiant air.

Presto

Alleluia!

There will be no interval.

Programme notes by Richard Austen
Design/layout by Andrew Welsh

Clover Willis is a soprano from Worcestershire who began singing with the Wyre Forest Young Voices and Worcester Cathedral Girls' Choir. She studied music at the University of Cambridge and is now in demand across the UK as both an ensemble singer and a soloist. Recent solo engagements have included Haydn's Nelson Mass with the chapel choir at the Tower of London, Mendelssohn Psalm 42 with Wolverhampton Chamber Choir and Bach's B Minor Mass with Ex Cathedra. She performs regularly with a number of the UK's best choirs and ensembles including The BBC Singers, The Carice Singers, ORA Singers, Ex Cathedra and SANSARA. She is an associate artist with Tenebrae for the 24/25 season.



Our 2024–25 Leader Scholar – Sophia Mücke

Belsize Baroque is delighted to announce that our scholar for 2024–25 will be **Sophia Mücke**. Sophia has just completed her BA at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, and is starting her masters at the Royal Academy of Music in London this autumn, studying with Pavlo Beznosiuk and Nicolette Moonen. She has performed with Zürcher Barockorchester, La Chapelle Ancienne, Musica Basiliensis, among others. In 2023 she participated in an internship programme with Concentus Musicus Wien in Melk and in 2024–25 she will be part of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment experience programme. In 2024 she was awarded the Friedl Wald Stiftung scholarship.



Sophia writes: *I am happy, proud and grateful to be given the opportunity to work with you for the season 24/25. It is a fantastic chance for me to dive into the active music scene in London from the very beginning of my stay. I am excited to meet you, and curious to learn from you, to share, to discover, to create and to experience many wonderful musical adventures together! The exchange with fellow musicians, the dialogue during rehearsals and performances, and the magical power that arises when many people make music together, always give me new energy and fill me with deep gratitude. I am very much looking forward to sharing these experiences with you soon.*

2024–25 Leadership Bursary – Sara Matović

Belsize Baroque has also awarded a bursary to **Sara Matović**, who is currently studying with Adrian Butterfield for her masters at the Royal College of Music, London. Sara completed her undergraduate studies at Belgrade Baroque Academy, and has performed in Belgrade with the Belgrade Baroque Academy, in Salzburg with The Mozarteum Baroque Orchestra, and in London with the Royal College of Music Baroque Orchestra.



Sara writes: *I am honoured to be a part of the Belsize Baroque Orchestra and thrilled to receive this bursary. Being involved with this esteemed ensemble allows me to deepen my passion for baroque music and connect with fellow musicians. I look forward to contributing to and learning from this vibrant musical community.*

Both Sophia and Sara are wonderful violinists, and we look forward to supporting and performing with these talented young musicians in the coming year.

APERIVINO

COME • SIT • STAY



12 Belsize Terrace
London NW3 4AY

Open for wine, cocktails and
food after tonight's concert

Belsize Baroque

The orchestra comprises music professionals, music students and amateur players. Our amateur musicians come from many different walks of life, and our players in general come from all over the world. Many musicians who joined us as students over the years have gone on to successful careers in top orchestras. Since 2016 the generosity of supporters has in addition made our formal scholarship programme possible.

Over the past two decades, we have been privileged to work with renowned directors and many talented musicians. We have performed many large-scale works with numerous choirs, and have given performances in aid of charities, as well as working with the Handel House and the London Handel Festival. Our first concert at St Peter's was on 22 June 2013, since when we have been orchestra in residence at the church, enjoying the support of its staff and the local community.

Belsize Baroque Orchestral Society Ltd is a registered charity (number 1108596) and company (number 5267265). The orchestra can be hired for orchestral or choral concerts and other events, and is delighted to assist other charities. www.belsizebaroque.org.uk; Twitter: @Belsize_Baroque



Belsize Baroque would like to thank the Richard Link and The Rofeh Trust for their generous donations in support of the orchestra, and the churchwardens of St Peter's for their assistance.

First violins

Catherine Martin
Nick Hardisty
Sara Matović
Miranda Ford
Michael Jenner

Second violins

Sophia Mücke
Christine-Marié Louw
Val Hudson
Carsten Maass
Jenny Frost

Violas

Elizabeth Hart
Graham Nicholson
Camila Corvalan

Cellos

David Winfield
Mary Walton
Paul Woodmansterne

Double bass

Jude Chandler

Harpsichord

Michael Strange

Recorder

Richard Austen

Oboe

Susan Cooksley

Bassoon

Hillary Ougham

Theorbo

Quentin Miller

Harp

Jane Bliss

Putting on performances, running workshops, and maintaining our scholarships all require funds. Concerts alone cannot cover the costs of these and we receive no regular external funding. All of the administration is carried out by unpaid volunteers. We hope that tonight's concert will inspire you to donate to the orchestra, which you can do very easily via the link. Thank you for your generosity. www.justgiving.com/campaign/belsizebaroque



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.



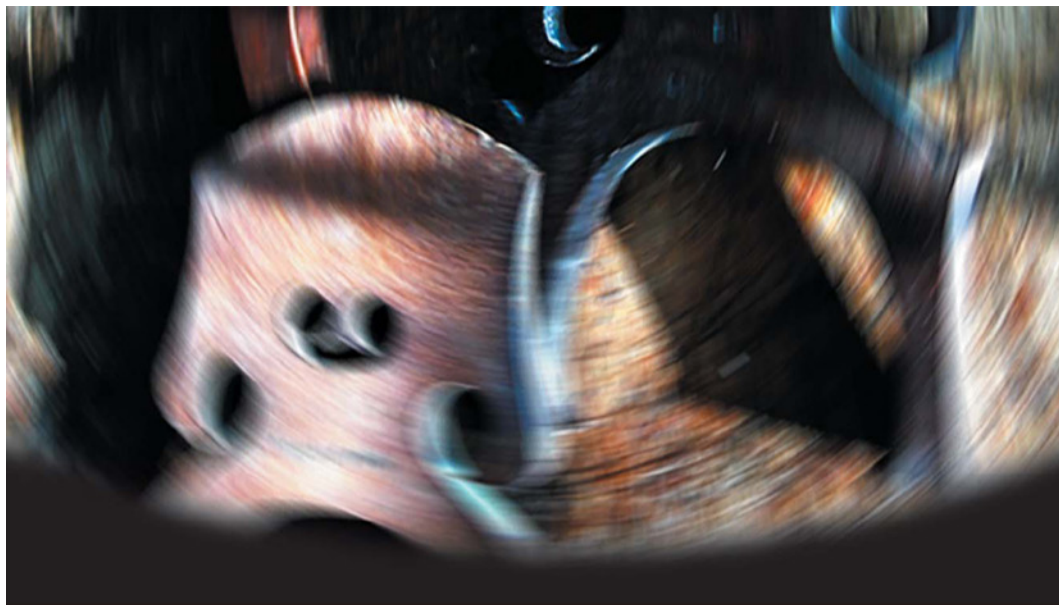
FLORIAN
LEONHARD
FINE VIOLINS

LONDON | HONG KONG | SEOUL | SAN FRANCISCO | NEW YORK
violins@florianleonhard.com | www.florianleonhard.com

Save the date! Our next concerts in 2025 will be on 11 May, 6 July, and 21 September at St Peter's, Belsize Park, directed by Catherine Martin. We also have a concert with the choir of the Royal Free Music Society scheduled for 14 June. Details will be available soon at www.belsizebaroque.org.uk.



Photo by John Watson



BRIDGEWOOD & NEITZERT

dealers, makers & repairers of good modern & baroque violins, violas, cellos, basses & bows

Expertise led by a passion for sound

Fine selection of instruments and bows

Baroque and Classical period instruments

Repairs and conversions

Tonal adjustments

Bow rehairing

Same day string mail order service

Advice, expertise and valuations

020 7249 9398

146 Stoke Newington Church Street London N16

www.bridgewoodandneitzert.london