

BELSIZE BAROQUE



Catherine Martin

Director

Baroque Spring

Corelli

Dieupart

Schmidt

Wassenaer

Matteis

Caldara

Sunday 10 May
2026, 6.30 pm

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

www.belsizebaroque.org.uk

Baroque Spring

Taken together, these six pieces offer a rather appealing snapshot of Baroque Europe on the move: Italian music in Dresden, French-inflected elegance in London, a Dutch aristocrat composing in an Italian style, and Viennese theatre music shaped by composers from elsewhere. One of the pleasures of this programme is that it never settles in one place for long: the sound keeps changing from string-only refinement to the brighter, sharper colours of oboes and bassoon, and the forms range from concerto grosso to overture-suite to operatic sinfonia and dance. It is also a reminder that Baroque composers were much less boxed-in than we sometimes imagine. Titles could be flexible, styles were happily borrowed across borders, and a work could be at once ceremonial, theatrical, dance-like and delightfully informal. If there is a theme here, it may simply be conversation: between soloists and ensemble, winds and strings, stage and concert room, French poise and Italian flair. And that makes for a very good hour of music.

Nicola Matteis Jr (c.1667–1737): Concerto Grosso in B-flat

Allegro – Adagio – Air/Presto – Sarabanda – Menuet

Nicola Matteis Junior was the son of the famous Nicola Matteis, a dazzling Italian violinist who made a great success in London, but the younger Matteis eventually built his own career further east, spending many years in Vienna and becoming closely associated with imperial court music. In fact, from the 1710s onward he was deeply involved in ballet and instrumental music for the Viennese court theatre, which makes him a particularly apt figure for a programme that likes to blur the lines between concert music and something more theatrical. This B-flat piece survives in Dresden sources, and one of the interesting things about it is that although it is often called a violin concerto, it does not behave like a straightforward Vivaldian showpiece from beginning to end. Only the opening movement really fits the usual solo-concerto mould; after that the work opens out into a sequence of contrasting sections, including a *Presto*, a *Sarabanda* and a *Menuet*, so it feels almost like a concerto that has wandered cheerfully into the world of the suite. The surviving parts even preserve the names of Dresden court players, which gives the work a lovely sense of occasion: this is not just music on paper, but music we can connect to real performers in a real orchestra. What comes across most winningly is its mix of elegance and energy. It has a virtuoso sparkle, certainly, but it also has the easy variety and rhythmic lift that keep it feeling sociable rather than severe.

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713): Sinfonia to Santa Beatrice d'Este

Grave – Allegro – Adagio – Largo assai – Vivace

Corelli is one of those composers whose name comes with a kind of instant authority. He was one of the great violinists of the Baroque age, spent most of his career in Rome, and did a huge amount to shape what later generations would recognise as the sonata and the concerto grosso. His music was admired across Europe for its balance, clarity and singing violin style, and even composers who went in very different directions owed him something. This sinfonia dates from 1689 and served as the overture to an oratorio, *Santa Beatrice d'Este*, by Giovanni Lorenzo Lulier. So although the title may look modest, it is really stage-opening music – or perhaps “curtain-raising” would be a better description, even if the setting was devotional rather than operatic. There is something very satisfying about the way it unfolds in five short sections from a grave opening to a lively finish. The Grave opening has a ceremonial weight, the quicker sections move with real purpose, and the slower episodes never overstay their welcome. Even detached from its original context, it still feels like an invitation to something larger – a reminder that Corelli could create drama without ever needing to raise his voice.

François Dieupart (1676–1751): Concerto Grosso in B-flat

Vivace – Allegro – Grave – Allegro

François Dieupart – often called Charles Dieupart in English sources – was a French musician who made his name in London, and he is one of those figures who seems to capture the wonderfully

cosmopolitan feel of early eighteenth-century musical life. He played, taught, composed, and was involved in operatic enterprises in the city at a time when London was greedily absorbing foreign styles from all directions. He is best remembered for his harpsichord suites, which travelled widely and were thought influential enough to be linked with Bach's English Suites – not a bad legacy at all. This B-flat concerto grosso shows him looking admiringly toward Italy. The work sets a smaller concertino group against a larger ripieno body, and the oboes and bassoon reinforce the texture, so the whole thing has both intimacy and public brilliance built into it. What makes it particularly attractive is that it never feels like a dry academic exercise in form. Instead, it exhibits the easy assurance of someone who knows several musical languages and is perfectly happy to mix them. Dieupart was part of a group of musicians experimenting with bringing English language opera to London theatres and it is likely that he wrote this work for performance within a dramatic work like an opera. Like the best concerto grosso writing, it thrives on contrast – not just loud versus soft, but intimacy versus public flourish. It feels both polished and faintly theatrical, as if the concert hall and the opera house were only a street apart.

Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer (1692–1766): Concerto “Armonico” No. 4 in G

Largo – Da capella (non presto) – Largo affettuoso – Allegro

Wassenaer is one of the most charming surprises in Baroque music, because he was not primarily known as a professional composer at all. He was a Dutch nobleman, diplomat and public official – a man of rank, education and political responsibility – who happened also to write some remarkably attractive music. His *Concerti Armonici* were published anonymously in 1740, then misattributed first to Carlo Ricciotti and later to Pergolesi, and only in 1980 was Wassenaer's authorship firmly re-established. This story alone gives the music a certain glamour, but the real reason the pieces survive is that they are simply very good. This concerto uses a strikingly lean string group – four separate solo violin parts, a viola, a cello and continuo – which means the texture can feel more like finely woven chamber music than a full orchestral display. The slow movements are especially memorable: poised, lyrical and expressive without ever becoming heavy. And perhaps that is the magic of the piece as a whole: it has an aristocratic ease, but is never aloof. It seems perfectly content to charm the ear rather than overwhelm it, which is often the better strategy anyway.

Antonio Caldara (c.1670–1736) & Nicola Matteis Jr (c.1667–1737): Sinfonia and Ballet from *Scipione nelle Spagne*

Sinfonia (Allegro assai & Allegro) – Sarabande – Lourd – Giga

Antonio Caldara was one of the great theatre composers of his day: Venetian by birth, immensely prolific, and eventually a central musical figure at the imperial court in Vienna, where he served as Vice-Kapellmeister under Johann Joseph Fux. He wrote operas, oratorios, cantatas and sacred music in astonishing quantities, and in his time he was a very big name indeed. *Scipione nelle Spagne* was first staged in Vienna in 1722, with a libretto by Apostolo Zeno, and the surviving sources tell us that the music for the ballets attached to the opera was composed by Nicola Matteis Jr, so we have here a genuine collaboration: Caldara's operatic sinfonia opened the door, and Matteis's ballet music carried the scene onward into the world of dance and spectacle. The named dances – *Sarabande*, *Lourd* and *Giga* – already tell you quite a lot about the shape of what follows: noble gravity first, then something broader and more lilting, and finally a quick, bright finish. It is easy to imagine costumes, entrances and carefully staged movement here, because this is music written to keep an audience's eye as well as ear engaged. Heard in concert, it offers a lovely reminder that Baroque instrumental music was often closely tied to the theatre, and that even a short sequence of dances could carry a great deal of character.

Johann Schmidt (probably Johann Christoph Schmidt, 1664–1728):

Ouverture in due cori

Intrade – Ouverture – Air I – Menuet & Trio – Sinfonie – Grand Air – Air II – Chaconne

Johann Christoph Schmidt was an important Dresden court musician who rose to become Kapellmeister and whose surviving orchestral music suggests a composer of real imagination and colour. He is much less well known today than Telemann or Bach, but that is more a quirk of musical history than a fair reflection of quality. The phrase *due cori* means two choirs, or two contrasted groups of instruments, and that is the fun of the piece from the outset. One body of winds – here including two oboes, tenor oboe and bassoon – is set against the strings, allowing the music to play with space, echo and colour in a way that must have sounded especially splendid in a court setting. The movement sequence is also unusually rich: not just an overture and a few standard dances, but an *Intrade*, *Airs*, even a *Sinfonie* and a closing *Chaconne*, all arranged as though Schmidt were determined to keep refreshing the listener's ear. Stylistically, it belongs to the German love affair with the French overture-suite, but it also has that Dresden taste for mixed influences and for instrumental colour used almost theatrically. Highlights include the echo effects between the two groups throughout the opening *Intrade*, the powerful French flavour of the *Ouverture*, the short *Sinfonie* serving as a mid-point scene setting curtain raiser, and the delightfully conversational *Chaconne*. It makes a splendid close to the programme: ceremonial, clever, and just a little bit grand in the best Baroque way.

Programme notes by Richard Austen

Design/layout by Andrew Welsh

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



Catherine Martin read music at St Anne's College, Oxford, completing her postgraduate studies with David Takeno at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, on the Advanced Solo Studies course.

During this time, she became interested in historical performance, playing the baroque violin alongside her modern violin studies. Catherine spent twelve years as a member of The English Concert under the direction of Trevor Pinnock, before leaving in 2005 to take up the post of leader of the Gabrieli Consort and Players. In 2010 Catherine was also appointed concertmaster of Die Kölner Akademie in Germany. She has been the leader of the orchestra of the Early Opera Company since its inception in 1994.

Catherine was invited by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in 2012 to coach the players on baroque and classical repertoire. She also runs

weekend workshops and concert performances with many amateur baroque orchestras and modern chamber orchestras who wish to know more about the field of historical performance. Catherine has a particular interest in Norwegian folk music, playing the hardanger fiddle.

In 2003, Catherine joined the Salomon String Quartet as second violin to Simon Standage, with whom she also plays trio sonatas in Collegium Musicum 90. Catherine appears on many recordings; for Deutsche Grammophon and Winged Lion with The Gabrieli Consort and Players, EMI with Ensemble Galant, and Chandos with I Fagiolini. She teaches historical violin at the Royal College of Music in London.

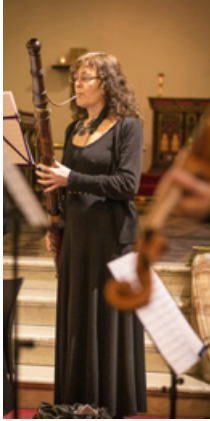


Photo by John Watson



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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](https://twitter.com/Belsize_Baroque)



Photo by John Watson

Belsize Baroque would like to thank 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
Rachel Ambrose Evans
Michael Jenner
Camilla Nelson
Emma Demetriades

Second violins

Nick Hardisty
Tamsin Ireland
Christine-Marié Louw
Trisha Montague
Jenny Frost

Violas

Elizabeth Hart
Miranda Ford
Deborah Miles-Johnson
Roger Mears

Cellos

David Winfield
Paul Woodmansterne
Marco Russo

Bass

Izzy Nisbett

Harpsichord

Michael Strange

Theorbo

Quentin Miller

Harp

Jane Bliss

Oboes

Susan Cooksley
Craig White
Myrthe Egberink

Bassoon

Hilary Ougham



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.



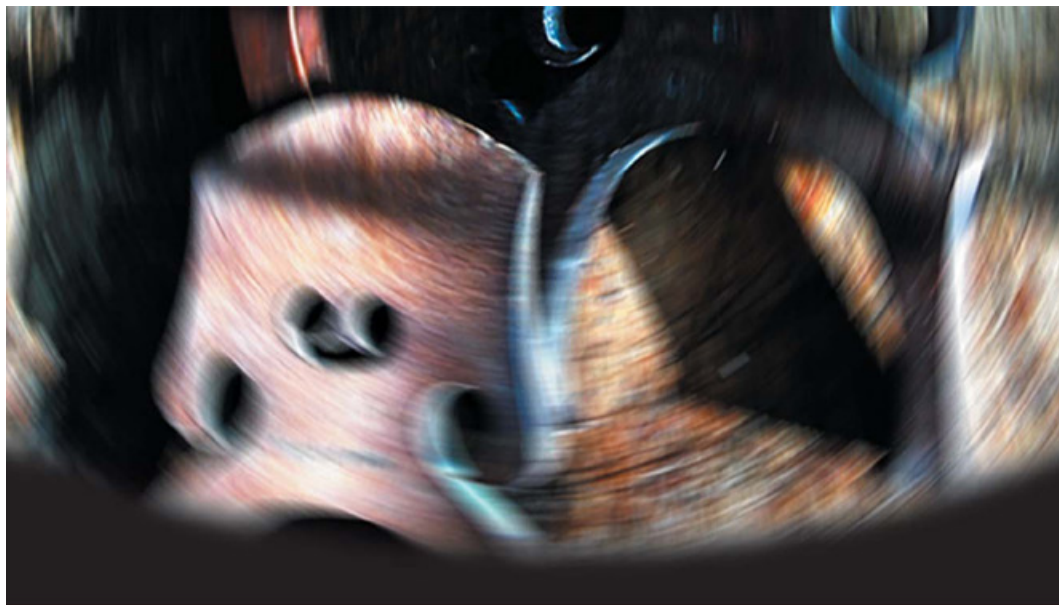
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Save the date! Our next concerts will be on Sunday 20 June, Sunday 5 July, Sunday 13 September and Sunday 15 November at St Peter's, Belsize Park. Details will be available soon at www.belsizebaroque.org.uk.



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