

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH CONCERT SERIES · AUTUMN · WINTER 2011

Concerts at The University

Friday 11 November 2011

1.10pm

St. Cecilia's Hall

Christopher Field · baroque violin

Tom Wilkinson · harpsichord

Programme of works by **VIVALDI** and **J.S. BACH**.



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Sonata IV in C minor, BWV 1017

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

(i) Siciliano (Largo) (ii) Allegro (iii) Adagio (iv) Allegro

In 1774 Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel sent a 'much worn' manuscript of this sonata and its five companions to the musicologist Johann Nikolaus Forkel with the comment: 'The six keyboard trios, whose individual numbers form a set, are among the best works of my dear departed father. They still sound excellent and give me much joy, though they date back more than fifty years. They contain some adagios that even today could not be written in a more cantabile style.' The term 'trios', used here by C.P.E. Bach, reflects the fact that often the harpsichordist — who is provided with a fully written-out part, not a figured bass — plays two contrapuntal strands and the violinist a third. In most early sources, however, they are described as sonatas for concertato harpsichord and solo violin ('Sonate a Cembalo concertato e Violino Solo'). Forkel would later observe of the violin writing: 'Bach knew the potentialities of that instrument, and spared it just as little as he did his keyboard'. The set had taken shape by about 1725, when Sebastian's teenage nephew Johann Heinrich Bach (a pupil at the Thomasschule in Leipzig, where his uncle was by that time Cantor) wrote out a set of parts under the composer's supervision. By then Bach had already decided to lay out the six sonatas in an inverted palindromic key scheme [B minor – A major – E major – C minor – F minor – G major].

The C minor sonata, the fourth of the set, opens with a movement of a type favoured by Italian composers such as Alessandro Scarlatti when evoking moods of pastoral melancholy. Bach exploits both the *siciliano's* characteristic lilting rhythms, which permeate the melody, and its penchant for affective harmony. The second movement is a light-footed study in three-part counterpoint, with episodes in which chromatic lines are interwoven with the main fugal subject. The third movement, in E flat major, unfolds as a series of eloquent violin phrases, each answered with an acknowledgement from the harpsichordist's left hand, against a background of triplet quavers which finally give way to a brief pensive cadenza. The concluding Allegro is another brilliant contrapuntal invention, this time in binary form. In its second half a new subject and jizzily syncopated countersubject are introduced; their ability to combine with material heard earlier makes for an ebullient climax.

Sonata III in G minor ('Manchester' set), RV 757

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

(i) Preludio (Largo) (ii) Allemanda (Allegro) (iii) Sarabanda (Grave)
(iv) Corrente (Allegro)

In the field of Vivaldi studies one of the most exciting finds of recent years was Michael Talbot's discovery in Manchester in 1974 of a manuscript containing a dozen of the

master's violin sonatas, the majority of which (including the present one) were previously unknown. The volume is entitled in Vivaldi's hand 'Suonate à Violino solo, e Basso per il Cembalo, Del Sig: D. Antonio Viualdi'. It seems to have belonged to Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, one of the great musical patrons of his day; Professor Talbot has suggested that it was presented to him during his stay in Venice in 1726, possibly on the occasion when an oratorio was performed in his honour at the Ospedale della Pietà, where Vivaldi was *maestro de' concerti*.

The set appears to have been put together with an eye to the cardinal's taste for *sonate da camera*. This third sonata, like all the others, is in four movements: first a 'Preludio', then three with dance titles. It is unusual, however, in having been later transformed by Vivaldi into a violin concerto (RV 329). Only the Preludio, with its ardent, angular melody, is absent from the concerto. The Sarabanda, in E flat major, was taken over virtually intact as the concerto's slow movement (with violoncello and harpsichord alone accompanying the solo violin). Most of the music of the Allemanda and Corrente reappears in the concerto's two Allegro movements: in each case the sonata's first strain becomes the first solo section in the concerto, and the second strain furnishes the material of the subsequent solo sections. All that remained was for the composer to write short orchestral ritornellos to frame and punctuate these outer movements.

Sonata VI in G major, BWV 1019

Johann Sebastian Bach

(i) Molto allegro (ii) Largo (iii) Allegro (iv) Adagio (v) Allegro assai

None of Bach's other sonatas for concertato harpsichord and violin is as unusual in its design, or underwent such radical revision, as this one. Three versions of it survive. The earliest, copied partly by the composer's nephew and partly by Bach himself, dates from c.1725; the second appears to have been made around 1730; and the third, preserved in four manuscripts (including the set of parts that C.P.E. Bach lent to Forkel), is thought to date from the mid-1740s. It is this last version that was used when the sonatas were first published in 1802, and will be performed today.

Of its five movements, only the first and second — a brilliant concerto-like movement (variously marked Vivace, Presto, Allegro or Molto Allegro) and a languorous Largo in E minor — are common to all three versions. Bach's requisitioning of the original third and fifth movements to use in his E minor partita for harpsichord, first published in 1730, seems to have precipitated the first revision: this involved transcribing an aria from his cantata BWV 120 to form a new third movement. In the final revision that aria is replaced by an Allegro in binary form for harpsichord solo, thus re-emphasizing the keyboard's concertato role. An Adagio in B minor that had been used in the first two versions was also dropped, and a more expansive fourth movement in the same key

substituted. Last but not least, instead of ending with a repetition of the opening movement, as he had done in both of the earlier versions, Bach composed a finale whose mix of gigue, fugato, concerto and da capo elements brings the sonata, and the set as a whole, to an exhilarating conclusion.

Christopher Field

Christopher Field read classics and music at New College, Oxford, and went on to do doctoral research there on seventeenth-century English consort music. While an undergraduate he studied the violin in London with Frederick Grinke and became president of the University Musical Club. An invitation in 1963 from David Boyden, the visiting Fulbright professor and historian of the violin, to demonstrate early string instruments and bows in the Ashmolean Museum collection reinforced his interest in period performance. In 1964 he moved to St Andrews, where he lectured in Music and took a prominent role in university music-making, including conducting the first performance of Kenneth Leighton's *Laudes Montium* (1976) and playing the solo violin part in that of Edward Harper's *Fantasia IV* (1981). For a time he was a regular member of the Scottish Baroque Ensemble. Later, as associate director of the Scottish Early Music Consort, he devised many of the group's programmes (including two for the Edinburgh International Festival and a Chandos recording of early Burns settings), worked with guest artists such as Monica Huggett and Ton Koopman, and performed in London, Bruges, Berlin, Warsaw, Jerusalem and New York. In 1987 he was appointed senior lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, where he served as Dean of Music at the time of the Faculty's centenary in 1993–5; he is currently an honorary fellow in the Edinburgh College of Art. Recent musicological work has included critical editions of the consort music of Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger (2003) and of John Birchensha's writings on music (2010).

Tom Wilkinson has been University Organist and Director of Chapel Choirs at the University of St Andrews since 2009. Born in 1985, he studied at St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, and was subsequently Organ Scholar of Truro Cathedral, Cornwall. In 2004 he took up the Organ Scholarship at The Queen's College, Oxford, and graduated with a first-class degree in 2007. In the same year, Tom took the Fellowship Diploma of the Royal College of Organists. From 2008 to 2009 he held the position of Assistant Director of Music at Chelmsford Cathedral. His teachers have included Richard Beauchamp, Matthew Owens and the late David Sanger; he has also played in masterclasses with Marie-Claire Alain, Graham Johnson, Vanessa Latache, Nicolas Kynaston, Jennifer Bate and Melvyn Tan. As an accompanist Tom has worked with artists such as James Bowman, Colin Campbell, Cheryl Enever, Timothy Travers-Brown and Jeremy Huw Williams. Tom's performances have taken him throughout the UK and Europe, as well as to Africa, Asia and the USA.

The instruments used in this recital are the single-manual harpsichord by Johann Adolf Hass (Hamburg, 1764), EUCHMI no. 4314, and a violin by Colin J. Irving (Ash Green, 1985), with bow by Brian Tunnicliffe (Sedlescombe, 1986), the latter both based on Italian models dating from c. 1700.