

The Bach Players

Bach and Buxtehude

St John's Smith Square, London

Thursday 15 July 2021

Rachel Elliott *soprano*, Marta Gonçalves *flute*,
Nicolette Moonen *violin*, Jean Paterson *violin*, Rachel Stott *viola*,
Jonathan Manson *cello*, Silas Wollston *harpsichord*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750):
Brandenburg concerto no. 5 in D major, BWV 1050

Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707):
Sacred concerto 'Quemadmodum desiderat cervus', for soprano,
two violins and basso continuo, BUXWV 92

Johann Sebastian Bach:
Canons from the Goldberg Variations, BWV 1087
(arranged by Silas Wollston)

Johann Sebastian Bach:
Cantata 'Non sa che sia dolore', BWV 209

Our programme

Just over three hundred years ago, in March 1719, Bach was in Berlin concluding negotiations for the purchase of a new harpsichord for his employer, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. The instrument, which had two keyboards, was made by Michael Mietke. On the same occasion Bach played in the presence of the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, and his performance prompted the Margrave to command Bach to compose some music for him. Bach took his time with this commission: it was a full two years later, in the March of 1721, that he sent off his autograph manuscript of ‘Six Concerts avec plusieurs instruments’. The musicians in the service of the Margrave were neither numerous nor virtuosic enough to perform Bach’s concertos, which call for a dazzling array of instruments, so sadly, but not unsurprisingly, Bach’s manuscript lay unused until the Margrave’s death in 1734 when it was sold for 24 groschen – a pittance.

It is unlikely that any of the Brandenburg Concertos were composed especially for the Margrave, and in some cases it is clear that Bach took the opportunity to revise existing works as he made his presentation copy. An early version of one movement appears to have been used as the opening sinfonia of a secular cantata that Bach composed when employed in Weimar in 1713, and Concertos no. 3 and 6 may also have been composed during his tenure there (1708–17), a period during which Bach transcribed many concertos (including those of Vivaldi) as well as composing his own. An early version of **Concerto no. 5** also survives, in which the famous harpsichord cadenza in the first movement is slightly shorter than in the revised version Bach made for the Brandenburg manuscript. This concerto, which is possibly the first concerto for harpsichord ever written, is also the first piece in which Bach wrote for the transverse flute. This instrument was not available to Bach in Weimar, a fact that lends credence to the possibility that Concerto no. 5 was composed for a performance in September 1717 by members of the court orchestra in Dresden, where the flautists Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin and J. J. Quantz had recently been appointed. The occasion for this performance was a ‘competition’ between Bach and the Frenchman Louis Marchand, who was in Dresden at the time: the virtuosic display of the harpsichord cadenza in the first movement would certainly have served Bach’s purposes well, and the theme of the slow movement happens to be taken from an organ fugue by Marchand – making it simultaneously a form of tribute to Marchand and a display of Bach’s ability to transform musical material, in this case from an old-fashioned fugue in Marchand’s hands to an up-to-date *Affetuoso* in Bach’s. In the event, Marchand fled Dresden on the early coach on the morning of the competition. [SW]

As its title implies **Buxtehude’s** Ciaccona aria ‘*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*’ is set in the manner of a chaconne whose 2-bar *Ostinato* in the bass is repeated without variation 64 times. The device was not new and among well-known predecessors is that upon which Monteverdi based his setting as a vocal duet of Rinuccini’s poem ‘*Zefiro torna*’. The opening of Buxtehude’s Latin text is drawn from the beautiful introductory verses of Psalm 42 which lead to a further short quotation from Psalm 118, ‘the day which the Lord hath made’, and to otherwise largely non-biblical words.

Buxtehude’s masterly setting of this strophic aria is rich in word-painting, often seemingly improvisatory in manner and bringing to mind the spirit of an Italian opera aria. [NA]

When Bach’s personal copy of the 1741 printed edition of the **Goldberg Variations** was discovered in 1974, it was found to include manuscript annotations: a set of 14 canons based on the first eight notes of the bass part of the Goldberg Aria. Bach left us the music for these canons only in a cryptic notation – the equivalent of crossword clues without a solution. When making this arrangement of the 14 canons, my intention was to create a score that would make the canons attractive and digestible, while also making their internal

structure as audible as possible. The result was a three movement plan typical of a sonata – Allegro moderato, Adagio, Allegro. Canon no. 13, which Bach chose to hold in the portrait of him by E. G. Hausmann, posed the trickiest riddle: this ingenious triple canon produces only a few seconds of music which runs round in very close circles, building up a great sense of anticipation, but with nowhere to go. My solution was to release the energy created by this canon into the 'Quodlibet' (literally 'what pleases') from the Goldberg Variations (Variation 30). This is based on German folk songs, two of which have been identified. The most audible melody was sung to the words 'Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben, hätt mein' Mutter Fleisch gekocht, wär ich länger blieben' ('Cabbage and turnips have driven me away, had my mother cooked meat, I'd have opted to stay').

It is also worth mentioning the reason that there are 14 canons. Bach appears to have considered the number 14 to be a sort of signature, since in a number alphabet if A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, etc, then B + A + C + H adds up to 14. Bach waited a number of years so that he could become the 14th member of the elite club run by his friend and former student Lorenz Mizler and in the Hausmann portrait, Bach's formal coat has exactly 14 buttons. [SW]

Bach's '**Non sa che sia dolore**' is one of his two cantatas with Italian texts. As the text makes clear, it was written to honour someone who was departing – who exactly has been a matter of speculation. Johann Matthias Gesner is one candidate: a classical scholar and friend of Bach, he came originally from Ansbach (mentioned in the text) and was for several years rector at the Thomasschule in Leipzig, where Bach was also employed. Gesner left Leipzig for Göttingen in 1734. So if this piece was written to honour him it might well date from that year. On the other hand, the text mentions sailing away and serving one's country, and mentions Minerva the goddess of defensive war, and implies that the subject is a young person. It seems that the author of this text was not a native Italian: while there are quotations from Italian poetry, the rest of the text is marked by poor grammar and its meaning is difficult to grasp. However, Bach's music is very fine. The work opens with a lengthy da capo instrumental Sinfonia that sounds as if it could have been a movement from a (lost?) flute concerto. There then follow two soprano arias, each preceded by a recitative. The flute is a prominent soloist in both arias.

Dieterich Buxtehude
Sacred Concerto 'Quemadmodum desiderat cervus'

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus
As the stag desires
 ad Fontes aquarum:
the source of water:
 ita desiderat anima mea ad te deum.
so my soul desires you, God.
 Sirivit anima mea
my soul thirsts
 ad te deum fontem vivum:
to you, God, font of life:
 quando veniam et apparebo
when shall I come and appear
 ante faciem tuam?
before your face?
 O fons vitae,
O source of life,
 vena aquarum viventium,
course of the waters of life,
 quando veniam
when shall I come
 ad aquas dulcedinis tuae?
to the waters of your sweetness?
 Sirio, domine: fons vitae es,
I thirst, O Lord: you are the font of life,
 satia me, sitio te deum vivum.
fill me, I thirst for you, living God.
 O quando veniam
Oh when will I come
 et apparebo, Domine,
and appear, Lord,
 ante faciem tuam?
before your face?
 Putasne videbo diem illam,
For I will see that day,
 diem inquam jucunditatis et laetitiae,
a day of happiness and joy,
 diem quam fecit dominus,
a day that the Lord made,
 exultemur et laetemur in ea,
we will rejoice and be joyful,
 ubi est certa securitas,
where there is certain security,
 segura tranquillitas
the security of tranquility,
 et tranquilla jucunditas,
and the tranquillity of happiness,
 jucunda felicitas,
the happiness of good fortune,
 felix aeternitas,
the fortune of eternity,
 aeterna beatitudo,
the eternity of blessing,
 et beata trinitas unitas,
and the united Blessed Trinity,
 et unitatis deiras,
and the unity of gods,
 et deiratis beata visio,
and the vision of blessed divinities,

quod est gaudium domini tui.
which is your joy of your Lord.
 O gaudium super gaudium,
O joy of joys,
 gaudium vincens omne gaudium.
joy surmounting all joys.

Johann Sebastian Bach: Cantata 'Non sa che sia dolore' (BWV 209)

Sinfonia

Recitative [Soprano]

Non sa che sia dolore
He does not know what sorrow is
 chi dall' amico suo parte e non more.
who parts from his friend and does not die.
 Il fanciullin' che plora e geme
The child who weeps and groans
 ed allor che più ei teme,
and then is more afraid,
 vien la madre a consolar.
his mother comes to console.
 Va dunque a cenni del cielo,
Go therefore at the signs from heaven,
 adempi or di Minerva il zelo.
fulfil now the zeal of Minerva.

Aria [Soprano]

Parti pur e con dolore
Depart then and with sorrow
 lasci a noi dolente il core.
leave to us sorrowing hearts.
 La patria goderai,
You will delight your fatherland,
 a dover la servirai;
in its service you will do your duty;
 varchi or di sponda in sponda,
cross now from shore to shore,
 propizi vedi il vento e l'onda.
may you see the wind and waves favourable to you.

Recitative [Soprano]

Tuo saver al tempo e l'età contrasta,
Your knowledge contrasts with the time and age,
 virtù e valor solo a vincer basta;
virtue and valour alone are sufficient to conquer;
 ma chi gran ti farà più che non fusti
but who will make you greater than you were
 Ansbaca, piena di tanti Augusti.
Ansbach, full of so many distinguished people?

Aria [Soprano]

Ricetti gramezza e pavento,
Do away with anxiety and dread,
 qual nocchier, placato il vento,
like the steersman, when the wind is calmed,
 più non teme o si scolora,
who no more fears or turns pale
 ma contento in su la prora
but content on his prow
 va cantando in faccia al mar.
goes singing in the face of the sea.

The players

The Bach Players is a group of singers and players known for their engaging programmes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music. According to needs, the ensemble varies in size from three to twenty-five musicians. In their concerts links are made between composers, national styles, and developments in music – to provide a wider context in which to present the famous composers of the time. They play on original instruments, and all vocal music is sung in its original language. When singers are involved they are part of the group and not ‘add ons’. They work without a conductor.

Founded in 1996 by Nicolette Moonen, the group’s artistic director, at first their main focus was on J. S. Bach’s sacred cantatas, performed with small forces. Gradually horizons were expanded to a broader picture of Bach’s time and the circumstances in which these pieces were composed. Experience has shown that old music comes alive when put in context, and when questions are posed.

A regular concert series was started in London in 1997. This series continued until Covid-19 struck, twinned with a venue in Norwich. The Bach Players used to appear in both cities three times a year. Aside from their own concert series, the group has also toured widely in the UK, Ireland, and continental Europe.

In 2007 The Bach Players made its first recording. The series of 12 CDs, each based on a concert programme and telling a musical story, was completed in 2017. Two recordings of French chamber music by Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre and Nicolas Clérambault have since been issued on the Coviello label.

Rachel Elliott studied piano and cello at the Purcell School, before moving on to read music at Selwyn College Cambridge. At this point, she took singing lessons from David Pollard, continuing with him afterwards at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Her performing career has been a combination of solo and ensemble work, collaborating with such groups as I Fagiolini, the Taverner Consort, and Concordia in the UK, Les Arts Florissants and Il Seminario Musicale in France, and Ensemble Hippocampus in Spain. She has travelled internationally and performed at venues as diverse as the Funda Community Centre in Soweto and the Lincoln Center in New York. As well as live concerts, she has made many recordings, especially of Renaissance and Baroque music. More recently, Rachel has developed a career in education and now teaches singing, piano and class music to young people. She first appeared with The Bach Players in their first year of concerts, in 1997, and has been a consistent member of the group since then.

Marta Gonçalves completed Music Conservatoire in Porto with Ana Maria Ribeiro. In 2003, she moved to London to study with Jaime Martin, as a scholar at the Royal College of Music. This is where she had her first experience with early flutes, completely transforming her musical journey. She then started to learn the baroque flute with Rachel Brown, alongside modern flute, at the RCM. Since then, Marta has performed with all the major period orchestras and ensembles in the UK, as well as in Portugal. She often appears as a soloist with Orquestra Barroca da Casa da Música, Porto, under the direction of Laurence Cummings, Andreas Staier, and others. She is Deputy Director of Music at The Music in Secondary Schools Trust and teaches flute in several schools across London. Marta believes passionately that music education should be accessible to all children, regardless of backgrounds and life opportunities.

Jonathan Manson was born in Edinburgh to a musical family. He received his formative training at the International Cello Centre, later going on to study at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. A growing fascination for early music led him to study viola da gamba with Wieland Kuijken at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. For ten years he was the principal

cellist of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, with whom he performed and recorded more than 150 Bach cantatas. Jonathan now devotes most of his time to chamber music, performing repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to the Romantic. He is a founding member of the viol consort Phantasm and is the cellist of the London Haydn Quartet. He also has long-standing partnership with the harpsichordist Trevor Pinnock. Jonathan frequently appears as a principal and continuo player with the Dunedin Consort, Arcangelo, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and other leading early music groups. He teaches baroque cello and viola da gamba at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Nicolette Moonen grew up in Amsterdam and studied violin there and in The Hague. Early encounters with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt inspired her to make a career in Early Music. She has played with most of the major baroque orchestras in continental Europe and in the UK and has been invited to lead ensembles such as Collegium Vocale Gent, La Chapelle Royale, Ex Cathedra, the European Union Baroque Orchestra, and English Touring Opera. She teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in London. As well as running The Bach Players, Nicolette is also a Feldenkrais teacher.

Jean Paterson's love of music began through the provision of free violin lessons at the local school, and through singing and dancing. As a player, she has had a career in the best of the UK's period instrument orchestras and chamber groups, including many recordings, concerts and tours all over the world. Among others, she has played with English Baroque Soloists, the London Handel Orchestra, Florilegium, Oxford Bach Soloists, Instruments of Time and Truth, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and has for a long time been a principal player in English Touring Opera's period instrument orchestra, The Old Street Band. As a teacher, she had a long association with the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra as violin coach, and now has an active teaching practice in her home town. Her violin teachers included Emanuel Hurwitz and Manoug Parikian, and on the baroque violin, Micaela (Mica) Comberti. She plays on an Italian instrument formerly owned by Mica, built by Fabrizio Senta in Turin in 1669.

Rachel Stott's career has been divided between performing wet ink manuscripts on modern instruments, interpreting faded manuscripts on period instruments, and creating entirely new manuscripts for both kinds of instruments. She is a long-standing member of The Bach Players and the Revolutionary Drawing Room, also performs contemporary music with Sopriola (soprano and viola/viola d'amore) and music from across the centuries with Trio Incantato (recorders, viola d'amore, viola da gamba). Rachel's own compositions include four string quartets, song cycles to poems by Thomas Campion and Stevie Smith, and an opera for children, *The Cuckoo Tree*, based on the novel by Joan Aiken. Less conventional works include a tone poem, *Odysseus in Ogygia* (for six viola d'amores), *Dark Arts in a Stony Place* (for four trumpet marines), and *Several World*, a fugal piece for a hundred saxophones.

Silas Wollston: recognized as a leading early music specialist, Silas combines performance and academic research in a varied career. He studied the organ with John Scott before taking up an organ scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge. He then went on to study harpsichord and fortepiano at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Conservatoire Royale in Brussels. A longstanding member of the English Baroque Soloists, he played a major role in John Eliot Gardiner's Bach Cantata cycle in 2000, performing the organ obbligato of BWV 146 on the Trost organ in Altenburg. He also has much experience as a choral director, working as Director of Music at Queens' College, Cambridge, between 2011 and 2015. He has published research on the string music of Locke and Purcell, and on Handel's compositional process. As well as The Bach Players, he is a member of the London Handel Players, the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, and In Echo.

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