

Ashley Solomon and Friends – Saturday 12 June 2021

Programme

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)	Two in One upon a ground 2 alto recorders and continuo
Georg F Handel (1685-1759)	Sonata in D (Fitzwilliam collection) Largo, Vivace alto recorder and continuo
Georg Ph. Telemann (1681-1767)	Fantasia No.2 in A minor solo flute
Martino Bitti (c.1655-1743)	Sonata 5 Largo, Allegro bass recorder and continuo
Johann S Bach (1685-1750)	Partita BWV1013 Sarabande & Bourrée Angloise solo flute
Serge Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)	Vocalise Op.34 No.14 tenor recorder and piano
Anon	Estampita Lamento di tristano solo medieval tenor recorder
Jacob van Eyck (c.1590-1657)	Variations on Wat zalmen ob den avond doen solo soprano recorder
William Williams (1675-1701)	Trio Sonata Op.1 No.6 "In Imitation of Birds" 2 alto recorders and continuo

Ashley Solomon baroque flute & recorders
Jo Preston recorders
Tom Bayliss piano

Programme notes:

Purcell's two in one upon a ground, a melancholy canon over a ground, seems to have been written with complete effortless mastery. It is amusing to note Purcell's own opinion that 'composing upon a ground is a very easie thing to do and requires but little judgment.' It comes from *The Prophetess, or The History of Dioclesian* which was composed in 1700.

Handel's Sonata in D minor (HWV 367a), a rather grand work consisting of 7 movements, was composed c1712. The manuscripts form part of a collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Although the autograph manuscript does not indicate instrumentation, the key and range are consistent with the recorder. The sonata has been arranged both as a flute (transverse) sonata in B minor and with the movements divided and published as a collection with the Bb recorder sonata.

Jo and Tom play the first two movements: a melodic Largo and a spritely Vivace, bearing more than a passing resemblance to the Hornpipe from *The Water Music*.

Telemann composed his Twelve Fantasias for Solo Flute between 1728 and 1733, and the original engraving was most likely to have been produced by Telemann himself. Possibly written for didactic purposes, the fantasias do not follow any strict form. This formal freedom is particularly obvious in some of the introductory movements which have an undeniably improvisational character. Telemann's twelve flute fantasias remain a challenge for today's players, as they were in the eighteenth century. The composer left us some of the most inventive, musically original Baroque music for solo flute, covering the widest possible range of expression in the shortest amount of time, and designed for both performance and instruction.

An Italian violinist and composer **Martino Bitti** trained in Venice under Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, spent his working life in Florence in the service of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. He is perhaps better known today for his woodwind sonatas (recorder and oboe) than those for his own instrument, which form an accomplished collection.

Sonata V in C minor is in 4 movements: Largo - Allegro-Sarabande - Gigue, and although likely intended for the alto recorder, the melody and range also becomes a lower instrument. Hence Jo will play the first two movements on the bass recorder showcasing as a solo instrument one more commonly confined to a continuo line.

Johann Sebastian Bach's small chamber works are in some respects the most mysterious pieces in his entire output. We know almost nothing about when or why they were written, or even if some of them are indeed by Bach. The old Schmieder catalogue listing of this work calls it a Sonata, but it is really a suite or partita (the term used in the New Bach Edition) because of its sequence of Baroque dance genres. The Partita in A survives in a version for solo flute, but it is not absolutely clear whether this is the original form in which Bach wrote it. Bach possibly composed the piece for the most distinguished flautist of his day, the Frenchman Pierre Buffardin. Bach visited Dresden, where Buffardin was the principal flautist, in 1717, and it is very likely that he composed this partita as a result of hearing a true master of the transverse flute for the first time.

Rachmaninoff's Vocalise is the last in a series of fourteen songs Op 34, originally composed in 1912. Unlike the other songs in the collection, Vocalise has no lyric but calls for an expressive, wordless vocalisation of the soloists choosing. It is a true duet between piano and voice, conveying intense emotion.

Since its premiere in 1916, Rachmaninoff and others have made arrangements for a variety of instrumental combinations. The recorder, also known as a voice flute, I felt was most appropriate to interpret the solo line.

This 14th century dance or **Estampita** is a musical composition without words which has a complex melodic progression and which is divided into points (puncti). Because of its difficulty, it totally absorbs both the performer and the listener, and according to Parisian musical theorist Johannes de Grocheio it often “distracts the minds of the rich from wicked thoughts” - an echo of the profound and abiding conviction of those early minstrels and poet-musicians, who even then were aware of the powerful influence that music can have in the education of human beings.

Lamento di Tristano is one of the dances in the so-called “London Manuscript” which is a collection of Italian dances of the Trecento, kept in the British Museum since 1876. The manuscript apparently belonged to the de’ Medici family in the 15th century, and by 1670 was in the hands of the Strozzi family.

Jacob van Eyck was one of the most remarkable figures in Dutch musical life during the so-called Golden Age. A nobleman and blind from birth, he was internationally respected as the greatest campanologist of his time. Intellectuals of the day such as René Descartes, Constantijn Huygens, and Marin Mersenne praised his art. Jacob van Eyck’s name is primarily associated with the city of Utrecht, where he worked as the city’s carillonneur from 1625 until his death. During his free time, he played the recorder, and he was a brilliant virtuoso on the instrument. Citizens of Utrecht could enjoy his remarkable artistic achievements as they strolled through the Janskerkhof (St. John’s Churchyard) on a pleasant summer’s evening. *Wat zalmen op den Avond doen* [What shall we do in the evening?] is both loved and feared by professional recorder players today. The music, technically demanding, bears unmistakable witness to Jacob van Eyck’s own virtuosity.

William Williams was a little-known English composer whose fame rests on his Opus 1 Trio Sonatas, three of them written for two violins and Basso Continuo, and three written for two recorders and Basso Continuo. Although influenced by Italian forms, they are still deep-rooted in the English tradition. Williams was an obscure figure, who flourished in Britain around the end of the seventeenth century. His name, plus the fact that he dedicated his Opus 1 to James, Earl of Anglesey, suggests inescapably that he was of Welsh origin, despite spending his working life in London. His Sonata “In Imitation Of Birds” (Opus 1 No. 6) is from Six Sonata’s in Three Parts and was written by Williams in the time of Queen Anne. It is an early eighteenth-century English recorder music piece which would otherwise remain virtually unknown.

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