

2024
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL
6 - 13 JULY

**Orchestra of the
Age of Enlightenment**

An Evening at Zimmermann's Coffee House

National Centre for Early Music
Monday 8 July 7.00pm

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Margaret Faultless *violin*

Rodolfo Richter *violin*

Anne Sophie van Riel *viola*

Jonathan Manson *cello*

Christine Sticher *double bass*

James Eastaway *oboe*

Steven Devine *harpsichord & director*

An Evening at Zimmermann's Coffee House

from Overture-Suite in D major

Johann Bernhard Bach 1676-1749

Ouverture

Concerto in C minor for oboe and
strings, TWV51:c1

Georg Philipp Telemann 1681-1767

Adagio

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

Overture-Suite in B minor, TWV55:h2

Telemann

Ouverture

Air

Rondeau

Loure

Entrée

Air en Rondeau

Menuets I & II

Gigue

from Overture-Suite in D major

Johann Bernhard Bach

Air

La Joye

Caprice III

Concerto in D minor for harpsichord,
oboe and strings, BWV1059R

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750
reconstruction by Steven Devine

[Allegro]

[Adagio]

Presto

In 1729, Bach had been Kantor and director of music at St Thomas's in Leipzig for six years, during which period he had realised his great project of producing a 'well-regulated church music' in the form of three cycles of cantatas for the complete Lutheran calendar, as well as two massive and profound settings of the Passion story and the starburst that was his Magnificat. But already he was becoming irritated by aspects of his work for the church and city authorities. Earning less than he had hoped, and unable to exercise the level of control over musical matters he had anticipated, he later lamented in a letter to a friend that his masters were 'odd, and little interested in music, with the result that I must live with almost constant vexation, envy, and harassment'. He had even started to consider alternative employment.

It must have come as a relief, then, when the opportunity presented itself for him to add to his sacred and civic duties the direction of a 'collegium musicum' originally founded in Leipzig in 1702 by Georg Philipp Telemann, then a student at the city's university. The collegium promoted public concerts on Friday evenings at the fashionable and well-appointed coffee house run by Gottfried Zimmermann during the winter, and in the summer months performed on Wednesday afternoons in Zimmermann's garden on the outskirts of the city. More a gentlemen's club than a café, the *Kaffeehaus* did not normally admit women, but the concerts were open to all. Zimmermann took no hire fee from the musicians, aiming instead to profit from increased sales of coffee.

The players who performed under Bach's direction were a mixture of the city's professionals and amateurs, including students from the university, but the standard appears to have been high: a musical directory in 1736 reported that 'the participants in these musical concerts are chiefly students here, and there are always good musicians among them, so that sometimes they become [...] famous virtuosos. Any musician is permitted to make himself publicly heard [...], and most often, too, there are such listeners as know how to judge the qualities of an able musician'. Bach remained director of the society until 1737, when he relinquished the post to a former pupil, Carl Gotthelf Gerlach, but he resumed from 1739 until into the early 1740s, perhaps leaving after Zimmermann's death in 1741. Gerlach took over again, renaming the operation the 'Neues Concert', and in 1743 it was reconstituted under Johann Friedrich Doles as the 'Großes Concert'. In this form it was the direct ancestor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts represented today by the city's world-famous concert hall and orchestra.

There is no record of what music was performed at Bach's collegium concerts, but we can be sure that many of his own compositions were heard there. This was a

perfect chance for him to rescue under-used instrumental pieces, especially orchestral concertos and suites he may not have had the chance to perform since his previous employment as director of the professional ensemble at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. More specifically, it was the time of his harpsichord concertos, a new genre he effectively invented by adapting earlier concertos (most now lost) for other instruments such as violin, oboe or oboe d'amore. We can hardly doubt that these joyous works were prepared for performances at the collegium by Bach or his sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, or by talented pupils such as Johann Friedrich Agricola and Johann Ludwig Krebs.

Bach's surviving harpsichord concertos number thirteen – of which seven are for solo harpsichord, and six for two, three or four harpsichords – but he also began a concerto for harpsichord, oboe and strings before tantalisingly breaking off after only eight-and-a-half bars. Its clear model, however, is the concerto-like *sinfonia* for orchestra and solo organ that opened the 1726 church cantata *Geist und Seele wird verwirret* (BWV35), and Steven Devine has taken that movement as the starting-point for a speculative reconstruction. From this beginning, he says, he felt that the rest of the cantata 'contained all the extra music needed to create a satisfactory whole'. Thus, the haltingly tender second movement arranges part of the cantata's first aria, with the oboe taking the vocal line and the harpsichord taking over the original obbligato organ part. The concerto then ends with the opening *sinfonia* from the cantata's second half, another concerto-style movement for organ.

Judging from the presence in Bach's own library of orchestral pieces by the likes of Albinoni, Handel, Telemann, Locatelli and Vivaldi, it seems likely that he programmed these composers at the collegium as well as his own. Since his law-student days in Leipzig, Telemann had risen to become Germany's most highly respected composer, but he had also been a friend of Bach's since the two had first met in 1709, and in 1714 he had even stood as godfather to Carl Philipp Emanuel. Like Bach, he worked to combine the competing Italian and French styles of Baroque music into a new synthesis which came to be seen as typically German, and the two works by him in tonight's concert show the two directions from which he was coming.

The Oboe Concerto in C minor survives in a manuscript which has been dated to around 1740. The concerto as a form originated in Italy, but although Telemann here hints at the dominant 'ritornello' form, he does not seek to delineate and oppose solo and orchestral passages to the same clear-cut degree exemplified by Vivaldi and (following his example) Bach. There are other individual touches too:

the opening chord is quite a moment, and the last movement offers flashes of the East European folk-style that Telemann so enjoyed inserting into his music. By contrast, the B minor Suite is a take on a French form that had become especially popular in Germany, where it usually carried the title of 'ouverture', reflecting not just its Frenchness but also the fact that opening movements were usually rather longer than the sequence of short dance movements that followed them; the modern-day coinage 'overture-suite' is thus an apt description. The B minor runs through seven dances of distinctively French fashionable cast.

Bach himself composed four surviving orchestral suites, three of which have similarly modish contents and can with reasonable certainty be considered as fodder for the collegium concerts. But his library also housed manuscript parts for a handful of overture-suites by his older cousin, Johann Bernhard Bach, copied out around 1730 by Bach and his family circle. There is no evidence that Sebastian ever met Bernhard – who had been organist in Bach's birthplace of Eisenach since 1703 – but it seems most probable that he did, and that these suites were acquired for use at the collegium. Bernhard 'composed many beautiful overtures in the manner of Telemann' an obituary noted, to which we might with hindsight add that among the convivially entertaining pieces presented in this evening's collegium, his seem stylistically closest to French models and thus, perhaps, the earliest.

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Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

In 1986, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the Orchestra, and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialise in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive ensemble playing on period-specific instruments began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to keep questioning, adapting and inventing as long as it lived. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and the Glyndebourne Festival didn't numb its experimentalist bent. Record deals didn't iron out its quirks. Instead, the OAE examined musical notes with ever more freedom and resolve.

That creative thirst remains unquenched. The Night Shift series of informal performance taking place in pubs and bars redefines concert formats. Its association

with another London venue, Kings Place, has fostered further diversity of music-making including the innovative series Bach, the Universe and Everything.

The OAE continues to tour around the UK – appearing in the major cities and concert halls as well as towns that most orchestras don't check in to – and internationally. In 2024/25 the OAE performs at the Brucknerhaus in Linz, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Musikverein in Vienna, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, in Copenhagen, Budapest, Graz, Antwerp, Munich, Zurich and on tour to the USA and Asia.

The OAE has never had a music director. It enjoys many long term collaborations and the title of Principal Artist is currently held by John Butt, Sir Mark Elder, Adam Fischer, Iván Fischer, Vladimir Jurowski, Sir Simon Rattle and Sir András Schiff.

In keeping with its values of always questioning, challenging and trailblazing, in September 2020, the OAE became the resident orchestra of Acland Burghley School in Camden (London). The residency – a first for a British orchestra – allows the OAE to live, work and play amongst the students of the school.

Andrew Mellor (with additions)

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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York Early Music Festival is administered by the National Centre for
Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation
(charity number 1068331)

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Supported using public funding by
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