



Florilegium

with

Rowan Pierce *soprano*

Friday 23 May 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, North Bar Within

Florilegium

Ashley Solomon *director, flute*

Oonagh Lee, Andrés Villalobos Lépiz *oboes*

Sally Holman *bassoon*

Magdalena Loth-Hill, Gabriella Jones *violins*

James O'Toole *viola*

Sarah McMahon *cello*

Rosie Moon *bass*

Steven Devine *harpsichord*

with

Rowan Pierce *soprano*

Orchestral Suite no. I in C major, BWV1066
*Ouverture – Courante – Gavotte I & II – Forlane –
Menuet I & II – Bourrée I & II – Passepied I & II*

Johann Sebastian Bach
1685-1750

Sweet Bird
from L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato

George Frideric Handel
1685-1759

INTERVAL

Concerto Grosso in G major, op. 3 no. 3
Largo – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro

Handel

Cantata: Ich bin in mir vergnügt, BWV204

Bach

Recit *Ich bin in mir vergnügt*

Aria *Ruhig und in sich zufrieden*

Recit *Ihr Seelen, die ihr außer euch*

Aria *Die Schätzbarkeit der weiten Erden*

Recit *Schwer ist es zwar, viel Eitles zu besitzen*

Aria *Meine Seele sei vergnügt*

Recit *Ein edler Mensch ist Perlenmuscheln gleich*

Aria *Himmlische Vergnügsamkeit*

Orchestral suites or overtures, as they were often called, were immensely popular in Germany during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. These usually began with a 'French overture' and then proceeded through a variety of pieces inspired by French court dances. Bach's Suite in C major is cast in the manner of a concerto grosso, with a concertino group of two oboes and bassoon pitted against the larger group of strings. This suite, which is the earliest of four, is the most consistent in following the old-fashioned practice of featuring individual dances in pairs. Bach used many of the most popular dance forms of his day, including the courante, a dance in triple time that originated in the sixteenth century, the gracious gavotte, originally a French peasant dance and later performed in court circles, a forlane, a lively folk dance from northern Italy, the elegant minuet, which was particularly popular at the court of Louis XIV (himself an excellent minuet dancer), and the bourrée, a lively French folk dance in duple meter. Bach ends with a double passepied, a spirited dance in triple time.

The oratorio *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* was premiered in February 1740, a time when Handel was still also writing and producing opera. James Harris, a member of the circle of friends who were taking a keen interest in Handel's development of large-scale English works, noted 'Allegro' and 'Penseroso' (basically happy and sad) aspects to Handel's own personality and took lines from two poems by John Milton for a proposed new work. At Handel's request, Charles Jennens – another member of the circle, soon to create the libretto for *Messiah* – revised it and added a third part in praise of moderation. The theme and its pastoral imagery inspired Handel fully. The da capo aria known generally as 'Sweet Bird' comes from the middle of Part I, and is sung by the allegorical character Penseroso. An obbligato flute provides the pictorial warbling in the main section.

Handel's first published concertos were the set of six Concerti Grossi issued by John Walsh in 1734 as the composer's opus 3. Walsh had enjoyed success with Handel's 12 Solo Sonatas (op. 1) and six Trio Sonatas (op. 2), published the year before as well as with publications of concerti grossi by Corelli, Geminiani and others. Although the opus 3 concertos were compiled without Handel's direct involvement, they enjoyed great popularity, quickly becoming staple pieces for orchestras across Europe. This format was especially popular in England, where Handel's music had a devoted following, and his skill in combining elements of Italian operatic style, French dance and German counterpoint made these works unique and widely appreciated. For this third concerto Walsh compiled the Largo, Allegro and Adagio from the opening movements of an anthem and a *Te Deum* that Handel

composed for the Duke of Chandos. The final Allegro comes from a fugue for solo harpsichord.

Bach's cantata *Ich bin in mir vergnügt* is an elegant example of one of his secular cantatas, composed for an unknown occasion around 1727-28 for solo soprano and orchestra. Whilst it is not as well known as some of his sacred works, it offers listeners a unique window into the composer's sensitivity to themes of human character and morality. Its refined beauty and introspective depth provide a compelling argument for the importance of the inner life – a theme as resonant today as it was in Bach's time. This cantata stands out for its reflective exploration of themes of inner peace, contentment, and stoic philosophy – qualities that reflect Bach's interest in moral and philosophical themes outside of his sacred music. Each movement develops a theme of emotional tranquillity and self-sufficiency. The opening aria, a tender expression of satisfaction, serves as a declaration of inner peace, setting a meditative and intimate tone that is sustained throughout the work. The text of subsequent arias and recitatives contrasts the fleeting, often turbulent, nature of worldly desires with the unshakeable stability found within the self. In the final aria, Bach gives voice to the idea that even amidst the 'wild noise' of the world, one can find a state of personal harmony.

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Sweet Bird from l'Allegro, il Penderoso ed il Moderato

Sweet bird, that shun'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy even-song.
Or, missing thee, I walk unseen,
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wand'ring moon
Riding near her highest noon.
Sweet bird. . . *da capo*

Cantata: Ich bin in mir vergnügt

I. Rezitativ

Ich bin in mir vergnügt,
Ein andrer mache Grillen,
Er wird doch nicht damit
Den Sack noch Magen füllen.

I. Recitative

I am happy within myself;
If someone else creates grievances,
and he will not fill
my sack or stomach with them.

Bin ich nicht reich und groß,
Nur klein von Herrlichkeit,
Macht doch Zufriedensein
In mir erwünschte Zeit.
Ich rühme nichts von mir:
Ein Narr rührt seine Schellen;
Ich bleibe still vor mich:
Verzagte Hunde bellen.
Ich warte meines Tuns
Und lass auf Rosen gehn,
Die müßig und darbei
In großem Glücke stehn.
Was meine Wollust ist,
Ist, meine Lust zu zwingen;
Ich fürchte keine Not,
Frag nichts nach eitlen Dingen.
Der gehet nach dem Fall
In Eden wieder ein
Und kann in allem Glück
Auch irdisch selig sein.

2. Arie

Ruhig und in sich zufrieden

Ist der größte Schatz der Welt.

Nichts genießet, der genießet,
Was der Erden Kreis umschließet,
Der ein armes Herz behält.

3. Rezitativ

Ihr Seelen, die ihr außer euch

Stets in der Irre lauft
Und vor ein Gut, das schattenreich,
Den Reichtum des Gemüts verkauft;

Die der Begierden Macht gefangen hält:

Although I am not rich or great,
only a midget in magnificence,
contentment creates within me
well-desired leisure.
I will not boast of myself:
a fool rings his own bells;
I will keep quiet and self-possessed:
frantic hounds bark.
I tend to my own affairs
and let others go on their rosy path
who idly exist
in great good fortune.
Where my pleasure lies
is in my desire to overcome;
I fear no trouble,
nor quest for vain objects.
Thus one, after the Fall,
re-enters into Eden,
and can, in every fate
be happy on the earth.

2. Aria

To be peaceful and content in
oneself

is the greatest treasure in the
world.

He enjoys nothing, who enjoys
all that the world contains,
but harbours a wretched heart.

3. Recitative

You souls, who are beside
yourselves

with constantly wandering in error
and for a commodity that is illusory
would sell the treasure of your
equanimity;

you who are prisoners of greed's
power:

Durchsuchet nur die ganze Welt!

Ihr suchet, was ihr nicht könnt kriegen,

Und kriegt ihr's, kann's euch nicht vergnügen; and if you acquire it, it cannot give pleasure;

Vergnügt es, wird es euch betrügen
Und muss zuletzt wie Staub zerfliegen
Wer seinen Schatz bei andern hat,
Ist einem Kaufmann gleich,
Aus andrer Glücke reich.

Bei dem hat Reichtum wenig statt:
Der, wenn er nicht oft Bankerott erlebt,

Doch solchen zu erleben in steten Sorgen
schwebt

Geld, Wollust, Ehr

Sind nicht sehr

In dem Besitztum zu betrachten,
Als tugendhaft sie zu verachten,
Ist unvergleichlich mehr.

4. Arie

Die Schätzbarkeit der weiten Erden
Laß meine Seele ruhig sein.
Bei dem kehrt stets der Himmel ein,
Der in der Armut reich kann werden.

5. Rezitativ

Schwer ist es zwar, viel Eitles zu besitzen

Und nicht aus Liebe drauf, die strafbar,
zu erhitzen;

Doch schwerer ist es noch,
Dass nicht Verdruss und Sorgen
Zentnern gleicht,

just search throughout the entire world!

You seek for what you cannot achieve,

If it pleases, it will betray you
and in the end dissolve like dust.
Whoever has his treasure in others
is like a merchant
wealthy from the fortunes of others.
For him riches have little value:
since, even if he seldom experiences
bankruptcy,
he lives in fear of going through it.

Money, pleasure, honour
are not much to contemplate
as possessions;
but to despise them virtuously
is incomparably better.

4. Aria

The valuables of the world
leave my soul undisturbed.
For him heaven will always return
who can be wealthy in poverty.

5. Recitative

It is difficult, indeed, to own many
pointless things
and not be warmed with guilty love
for them;
yet it is much harder
to avoid frustration and heavy
unhappiness

Eh ein Vergnügen, welches leicht
Ist zu erlangen,
Und hört es auf,
So wie der Welt und ihrer Schönheit Lauf,

So folgen Zentner Grillen drauf.
In sich gegangen,
In sich gesucht,
Und sonder des Gewissens Brand

Gen Himmel sein Gesicht gewandt,
Da ist mein ganz Vergnügen,
Der Himmel wird es fügen.
Die Muscheln öffnen sich, wenn
Strahlen darauf schießen
Und zeigen dann in sich die Perlenfrucht:

So suche nur dein Herz dem Himmel
aufzuschließen,
So wirst du durch sein göttlich Licht
Ein Kleinod auch empfangen,
Das aller Erden Schätze nicht which
Vermögen zu erlangen.

6. Arie

Meine Seele sei vergnügt,
Wie es Gott auch immer fügt.
Dieses Weltmeer zu ergründen,
Ist Gefahr und Eitelkeit,
In sich selber muss man finden
Perlen der Zufriedenheit.

7. Rezitativ

Ein edler Mensch ist Perlenmuscheln gleich,
In sich am meisten reich,
Der nichts fragt nach hohem Stande
Und der Welt Ehr mannigfalt;
Hab ich gleich kein Gut im Lande,

without that pleasure that is
easy to come by;
and when it ceases,
as the way of the world and of
beauty is,
then a ton of aggravations follows.
To go within,
to search oneself,
and instead of the burning of
conscience

to turn one's face towards heaven,
that is my entire pleasure,
and heaven will bring it about.
The oyster opens up when
sunbeams strike it,
and reveals within itself its fruit -
the pearl:

so seek only to open your heart
to heaven,
and through its divine radiance
you will also enclose a jewel
all the earth's treasures
cannot possibly buy.

6. Aria

May my soul be content,
As God always ordains.
To fathom the depths of this world
is a dangerous and frivolous thing,
rather in oneself must be found
the pearls of contentment.

7. Recitative and Arioso

A noble person is like a pearl-oyster
rich mostly within himself,
who does not request high status
and the many honours of the world;
Although I have no wealth or land,

Ist doch Gott mein Aufenthalt.
Was hilft's doch, viel Güter suchen

Und den teuren Kot, das Geld;
Was ist's, auf sein' Reichtum pochen:

Bleibt doch alles in der Welt!

Wer will hoch in Lüfte fliehen?
Mein Sinn strebet nicht dahin;
Ich will nauf im Himmel ziehen,
Das ist mein Teil und Gewinn.

Nichtes ist, auf Freunde bauen,
Ihrer viel gehn auf ein Lot.
Eh wollt ich den Winden trauen
Als auf Freunde in der Not.

Sollte ich in Wollust leben
Nur zum Dienst der Eitelkeit,
Müßt ich stets in Ängsten schweben
Und mir machen selbstn Leid.

Alles Zeitliche verdirbet,
Der Anfang das Ende zeigt;
Eines lebt, das andre stirbet,
Bald den Untergang erreicht.

8. Arie

Himmlische Vergnüsamkeit,
Welches Herz sich dir ergibet,
Lebet allzeit unbetrübet
Und genießt der güldnen Zeit,
Himmlische Vergnüsamkeit.
Göttliche Vergnüsamkeit,
Du, du machst die Armen reich
Und dieselben Fürsten gleich,
Meine Brust bleibt dir geweiht.

God is nevertheless my refuge.
What does one gain to seek many
riches
and that precious dung, money;
What good is it to insist on one's
wealth:
it all remains behind in the world!

Who wants to soar up in the sky?
My mind does not yearn for this;
I wish to go to heaven,
that is my portion and reward.

To rely on friends is also worthless,
most of them are fickle.
Sooner would I trust the wind
than on a friend when in need.

If I were to live for pleasure,
and exist in servitude to vanity,
I would constantly hover in anxiety
and create my own misery.

Everything earthly decays,
its beginning indicates its end;
one survives, another dies,
soon their downfall is here.

8. Aria

Heavenly contentment,
those hearts given over to you
live always untroubled
and enjoy the Golden Age,
heavenly contentment.
Divine contentment,
You make the poor rich
and just like princes,
my breast will be dedicated to you.

Florilegium

Regular performances in some of the world's most prestigious venues have confirmed Florilegium's status as one of Britain's most outstanding period-instrument ensembles. Since its formation in 1991 it has established a reputation for stylish and exciting interpretations, from intimate chamber works to large-scale orchestral and choral repertoire, working as an instrumental ensemble and also in collaboration with some outstanding solo singers and choirs. Concert venues have included Sydney Opera House, Teatro Colon (Buenos Aires), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam) and Konzerthaus (Vienna). Florilegium has been Ensemble-in-Residence at London's Wigmore Hall and is currently Ensemble-in-Association at the Royal College of Music, working regularly each term with students on both period and modern instruments in the area of Baroque chamber music.

Many of Florilegium's recordings for Channel Classics have been awarded prizes including *Gramophone* award nominations, *BBC Music Magazine* awards, numerous Editor's Choice from *Gramophone*, and half a dozen Diapasons d'Or and Chocs de la Musique in France, as well as an Edison Award, Dutch music's most prestigious prize. The recording of the complete Bach Brandenburg Concertos was awarded a Dutch Luister 10 Award, Classical CD Choice CD of the Month and was Classic FM's Featured Album.

florilegium.org.uk

Rowan Pierce

Saltburn-by-the-sea soprano Rowan Pierce was awarded the President's Award by HRH Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, at the Royal College of Music in 2017. She won both the Song Prize and First Prize at the inaugural Grange Festival International Singing Competition in 2017, the first Schubert Society Singer Prize in 2014 and the Van Someren Godfery Prize at the RCM. Rowan was a Britten Pears young artist, a Samling artist, a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a Harewood Artist at English National Opera.

Rowan made her BBC Proms debut at the Royal Albert Hall in 2017 with the OAE and returned in 2019 for Handel's *Jephtha* and 2023 for Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, both with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. She made her Wigmore Hall debut in 2017 with the London Handel Players and has subsequently appeared there with many other chamber ensembles in both early and late repertoire. Rowan performs on concert platforms worldwide, appearing regularly with ensembles including the

Academy of Ancient Music, Dunedin Consort, Early Opera Company, Les Arts Florissants, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Gabrieli Consort, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Other highlights include performances with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Les Violons du Roy, Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Freiburg Baroque, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC NOW and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

She made her Royal Opera House début in 2022/23 singing Papagena and in 2024 played the role of Dede in Oliver Mears' new production of Leonard Bernstein's opera *A Quiet Place* at the Linbury Theatre, ROH.

rowanpierce.co.uk

BEVERLEY & EAST RIDING EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL is directed by Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation (registered charity number 1068331)

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