

2025
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL

**University of York
Baroque Ensemble**

with

Ensemble Hesperii

Concertos on the Edge

**National Centre for Early Music
Monday 7 July 1.00pm**

University of York Baroque Ensemble

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Concertos on the Edge

Concerto II in C major

John Hebden 1712-65

(from *Six Concertos in Seven Parts*)

Allegro – Largo e Siciliana – Ma non troppo

Concerto for 2 recorders in A minor

Georg Philipp Telemann 1681-1767

TWV 52:a2

Gravement – Vistement – Largement –

Vivement

Soloists: Mary-Jannet Leith; Hannah Birrell

Clarinet Concerto in B flat major

Johann Stamitz 1717-57

Allegro moderato – Adagio – Poco presto

Soloist: Weikang Yuan

The Poppy

James Oswald 1710-69

(from *Airs for the Summer*)

Aria – Gavotta

Harpsichord Concerto no. I in D minor,

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750

BWV1052

Allegro

Soloist: Ed Cooke

We begin with a lively concerto in three movements by John Hebden, York's most celebrated Baroque composer. Born in Spofforth, near Harrogate, Hebden spent his formative musical years in York, moving to London in 1742, where he worked as a cellist and bassoonist in theatre orchestras and at the Vauxhall pleasure gardens. Here, he published his *Six Concertos in Seven Parts* in around 1749, supported by a large list of subscribers, including members of the aristocracy, academics, fellow

musicians and musical taverns. The collection was rediscovered in 1980, adding greatly to our understanding of Hebdén's Italianate compositional style.

A virtuosic concerto for two recorders follows, an excellent example of Telemann's inventive writing for the recorder, an instrument he played himself. Written in around 1718 in Frankfurt, this concerto is one of Telemann's first published works, one of many composed during this happy period of his life, in which he remarried after the death of his first wife. In Frankfurt, Telemann was responsible for composing music for two of the city's churches, and for the many chamber musicians who performed at civic occasions. The piece, perhaps intended for the latter, is an early example of Telemann's mature High Baroque style, and is highly idiomatic, exploring the full range and the sweet high register of the alto recorder.

Johann Stamitz's clarinet concerto was written some time before his death in 1757, and, as such, is recognised as one of the earliest concertos for the instrument. Composed towards the tail end of our modern definition of the Baroque period, this work is a prime example of a newly fashionable style from Mannheim, Baden-Württemberg. There, Stamitz presided over a court orchestra unparalleled across Europe, and hailed by music historian Charles Burney as 'an army of generals' for its skill and discipline. Those who composed for the orchestra featured many stylistic innovations, including increasingly independent treatment of wind instruments, and the dramatic 'Mannheim crescendo'. Johann Stamitz died at only 39, but his son, Carl, followed his father's example with at least ten further concertos for clarinet.

Flutes, oboes and a small continuo team continue with a short floral air by the Scottish Baroque composer James Oswald. Born in Crail, Oswald established a name for himself in fashionable Edinburgh, before leaving his native Scotland for London in 1741. Here he attracted several influential patrons, including Frederick, Prince of Wales and his wife Princess Augusta. Oswald's two collections of *Airs for the Seasons*, both published in London, may very well have been inspired by Augusta's growing garden at Kew Palace, the foundation of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. 'The Poppy' appears in Oswald's first summer collection, showcasing his talent for synthesising Baroque style and trademark musical features of traditional Scottish music, such as the 'Scotch snap' and pentatonic scale.

We travel to Leipzig for a stormy finish in the form of the first movement of Johann Sebastian Bach's harpsichord concerto in D minor. Revived in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and performed at the Berlin Sing-Akademie by Sara Levy, the great aunt of Felix Mendelssohn, this piece survives in a 1738 autograph manuscript of Bach's eight harpsichord keyboard concertos. However, it was likely written earlier, as orchestral parts survive from a performance of around 1734, and it has

been suggested that BWV1052, like many of Bach's keyboard concertos, was adapted from a previous original, either for a melody instrument, or for organ. Regardless, the work is likely to have been performed by Bach's own students at the famous coffeehouse concerts of Leipzig's Collegium Musicum.

© Mary-Jannet Leith

University of York Baroque Ensemble

First Violin

Magdalena Loth-Hill *
Kit Shepherd
Olivia Virgo

Second Violin

Jose Villanueva Zayas
Lijie Liu

Viola

Jasmine Bending
Jamie Robson

Cello

Florence Petit *
Mina Jachimowicz

Flute

Immy McPhun
Ziyun He

Oboe/Cor Anglais

Alison Nairn
Rosie Lynch

Clarinet

Weikang Yuan

Recorder

Mary-Jannet Leith *
Hannah Birrell

Harpsichord/Organ

Thomas Allery *
Ed Cooke

* members of Ensemble Hesperii

The University of York Baroque Ensemble draws players from undergraduate and postgraduate music courses to explore historically informed performance styles and techniques. Students usually play on modern instruments, with string players given the opportunity to play with Baroque bows. The ensemble explores a wide range of repertoire from the Baroque and early Classical periods, challenging boundaries and bringing historical music to life for modern audiences.

The ensemble works towards two public performances in the academic year. In March 2025, it performed as part of the University's Baroque Day at the National Centre for Early Music, presenting 'Then I play'd upon the Harpsichord', a programme which explored the musical tastes and talents of Queen Charlotte.

Ensemble Hesperì

Mary-Jannet Leith *recorders*

Magdalena Loth-Hill *Baroque violin*

Florence Petit *Baroque cello*

Thomas Allery *harpsichord*

Ensemble Hesperì is a dynamic and innovative London-based period ensemble, with a reputation for showcasing Baroque music through intelligent, research-led programming. The four members of Ensemble Hesperì met during their studies at the Royal College of Music in London, and the varied talents of each member of the ensemble combine to present joyful and educational performances for audiences of all kinds. Whether performing as the core ensemble of recorder, Baroque violin, Baroque cello and harpsichord, or collaborating with friends for larger projects, Hesperì aims to embody the true spontaneity of chamber music.

Funded by a Lottery grant from Arts Council England, Hesperì's debut project, 'The Pheasant's Eye', celebrated Scottish eighteenth-century music, featuring special choreography from Highland dancer Kathleen Gilbert. In 2020, the ensemble was selected as a Britten Pears Young Artist, and won first prize at the London International Festival of Early Music Young Ensemble Competition. In 2021, the ensemble was awarded third prize at the prestigious International Van Wassenaer Competition, became City Music Foundation artists, and released its debut album, *Full of the Highland Humours*, with EM Records. Hesperì has been delighted to receive several grants from the Continuo Foundation for recent projects, including 'Celestial Music did the Gods Inspire', celebrating the organ battle of the 1680s at Temple Church, London. The ensemble appears regularly on BBC Radio 3's Early Music Show and In Tune programmes, and has a busy schedule of performances at leading festivals and venues in the UK and further afield.

In autumn 2023, Hesperì launched its new vocal ensemble, the Hesperì Voices, and in December 2024 released its second recording, *A Gift for your Garden*, which has received glowing reviews in *Gramophone* and *Diapason* magazines. In autumn 2024, the ensemble was appointed Ensemble in Association at the University of York, where its members tutor music students in historically informed performance.

Soloists

Ed Cooke is a classically trained pianist and keyboardist, currently pursuing an MA in Historical Performance Practices at the University of York. Originally from Cumbria, Ed relocated to York after completing a bachelor's degree in Classical with Folk, Roots & Soul Music at Leeds Conservatoire. Beyond his academic pursuits, Ed is passionate about uncovering under-appreciated classical works, experimenting

with historical instruments, and contributing to the vibrant cultural scene through his work with Opera North in Leeds. Drawing from a diverse background in multiple musical genres, he brings a fresh, genre-crossing perspective to classical music, with a mission to inspire previously unreachable audiences.

Weikang Yuan, an international exchange student from China, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Historical Performance Practice at the University of York. He specializes in clarinet performance under the guidance of Lesley Schatzberger as well as learning the principles of Historical Informed Practice (HIP) from Emily Worthington and Mary-Jannet Leith. During his Masters at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, he studied wind band education under Doctor Tian Tee Lee. Weikang is dedicated to imbuing music with warmth and vitality, bridging the gap between listeners and performers to foster a stronger emotional connection, enabling audiences to deeply resonate with the feelings conveyed through the music.

Hannah Birrell is a first-year music student at the University of York, specialising in Musical Theatre and Education. She has pursued her classical music training on the recorder under the guidance of Deborah Porro. Hannah has been dedicated to the recorder and Baroque music from a young age: she played as a finalist in Music For Youth, and won the Hastings Musical Festival Recorder Golden Medal Award in 2021. Outside of recorder, Hannah is a keen and experienced musical director and has a passion for education and leadership. She currently chairs the York Music Education Group (MEG) and received the National Trinity Leadership in Music Award for her work with the local young community. She is extremely grateful for the opportunity to share the stage with the incredible Baroque Ensemble!



We are grateful to the John Feldberg Foundation for supporting events in the Festival that showcase the achievements of young musicians

John Feldberg was a talented violinist and harpsichord builder who died aged 30 in 1960. He and his future wife Ann met at Cambridge, where she was a music student and keyboard player with passion for early music. In 1957 they set up a harpsichord building workshop. John died just as the workshop was beginning to take off; Ann continued the business with great success for another 22 years.

The John Feldberg Foundation aims to support some of the many charitable causes Ann and John Feldberg espoused, in particular:

- encouraging people to access music and the arts
- finding ways to live sustainably and protect and conserve the environment
- enabling people to bring about change through their activities in these spheres – even where the challenge seems impossible

The John Feldberg Foundation is a Charity registered in Hamburg: Charity No. 922.20-64 (2367) and recognised by the UK Charity Commission.

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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York Early Music Festival is administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the
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