

2026  
**YORK**  
EARLY  
MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

**University of York Baroque Ensemble**

*with*

**Ensemble Hesperis**

*The Music Party*

**National Centre for Early Music**

**Tuesday 7 July | 2.30pm**

# University of York Baroque Ensemble

*with*

## Ensemble Hesperii

### *The Music Party*

Eight Overtures in 8 Parts, no. 3 **Thomas Arne** 1710-78  
*Presto – Andante – Tempo di Minuetto*

Airs for the Summer: **James Oswald** 1710-69  
The Honeysuckle  
Aria – Giga

Soloists: Kirk Robb; Kit Shepherd

Endless Pleasure, Endless Love **George Frederick Handel** 1685-1759  
*from Semele*

Soloist: Scarlett Murfin

Six Grand Concertos, op. 8 no. 2 **Giuseppe Sammartini** 1695-1750  
*Andante Staccato – Allegro – Minuet*

VII Sonatas for Two Violins, op. 3 no. 6 **Thomas Arne**  
*Largo – Allegro – Larghetto – Allegro*

Soloists: Alison Nairn, Immy McPhun

Under the Greenwood Tree **Thomas Arne**  
*from music for As you Like it*

Soloist: Scarlett Murfin

Twelve Trio Sonatas, no. 2 **Giuseppe Sammartini**  
*Allegro – Adagio – Allegro*

Soloists: Mary-Jannet Leith; Lottie Bradley

Six Concerti Grossi, op. 3 no. 3 **George Frederick Handel**  
*Largo e staccato – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro*

In 1733, the French artist Philippe Mercier was commissioned to paint 'The Music Party', in which the young Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51) plays chamber music with his two sisters. Frederick was a keen cellist, and he and his family spent much time playing music together until his untimely death. Frederick and his wife Augusta (1719-72) were enthusiastic musical patrons, advocating for the flourishing of the arts as a way to restore Britain's lacklustre reputation on the world stage. In this programme, the University Baroque Ensemble and Ensemble Hesperii present a joyful selection of instrumental and vocal music by the circle of composers the royal couple knew and loved.

Literature, poetry, visual art and music were vital to the political image that the 'Patriot' royal couple projected. Our first composer, Thomas Arne, became a significant part of Frederick and Augusta's patriot vision in 1740, when he composed the music for the first production of *Alfred* at their country residence, Cliveden. Frederick's version of Britishness relied on a belief in the cultural and moral superiority of the past, and the Saxon king Alfred the Great, the archetype of a brave and learned leader, was his personal idol. It was for the royal couple's private performance of *Alfred*, written by the Scots James Thomson and David Mallet, that Arne wrote the incidental music, including, most famously, 'Rule, Britannia'. At the time, Arne was in much demand as a composer of theatre music and song, and we include in the programme his familiar soprano air, 'Under the Greenwood Tree', written in later in 1740 for Shakespeare's *As you Like It* at the Royal, Drury Lane. We also feature two instrumental pieces by Arne: an overture from his collection of 1751, and a later trio sonata in the newly fashionable *galant* style.

The Scottish composer and cellist James Oswald was also well known to Frederick and Augusta, who became his principal patrons upon his arrival in London in 1741. Soon after his arrival, he dedicated two collections of Scots Tunes to Frederick, and later, after Frederick's death, continued to be supported by Augusta, to whom he dedicated *A Collection of The Best Old Scotch and English Songs* in 1761. The Dowager Princess herself also probably orchestrated Oswald's appointment as Chamber Composer to her son, George III, within weeks of his accession to the throne. From 1747, Frederick and Augusta maintained their opposition court at Leicester House, five minutes from Oswald's residence and music shop on the pavement of St Martin-in-the-Fields. By the mid-1750s, Augusta was busy expanding her collection of exotic plants at Kew, with the expert knowledge and support of the Earl of Bute (also known to Oswald). Given Oswald's connections, it seems very likely that his collections of floral airs – here 'The Honeysuckle' from his first *Airs for the Summer* (1755/6) – were inspired by Augusta's unparalleled collection.

For many years, it was believed that Frederick was hostile to Handel, as his Opera of the Nobility was intended to rival Handel's Academy of Music, from which he withdrew his support in 1734. However, there is much evidence to suggest that Frederick continued to support Handel's career: he and Augusta continued to attend his oratorios regularly, and Frederick also commissioned Handel to write the anthem 'Sing unto God' for his wedding to Augusta in 1736. In this programme, we feature an aria from Handel's *Semele*, first performed in 1744, and one of his well-known concerti grossi, published without the composer's knowledge in 1734 by John Walsh. Finally, we perform music by oboist and recorder player Giuseppe Sammartini, who was not only Handel's favourite 'hautboy' player, but also was employed by Princess Augusta to teach music to her children. In addition to a delightful trio sonata for two recorders and continuo, the strings play one of Sammartini's 'grand concerti' from his op. 8, published in 1752.

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### **Endless Pleasure**

Semele enjoys above!  
On her bosom Jove reclining,  
Useless now his thunder lies;  
To her arms his bolts resigning,  
And his lightning to her eyes.

### **Under the Greenwood Tree**

Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither:  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.



## **University Baroque Ensemble & Ensemble Hesperii**

Gabriella Jones \*, Kit Shepherd *first violin*  
Grace Wagg, Imogen Cox, Olivia Virgo, Indira Buckley *second violin*  
Jasmine Bending, Abi Roberts *viola*  
Florence Petit \*, Rowan Kitchener *cello*  
Immy McPhun, Kirk Robb, Baasandorj Enkhjargal *flute*  
Alison Nairn *flute/oboe*  
Mary-Jannet Leith \*, Lottie Bradley *recorder*  
Thomas Allery \* *harpsichord, chamber organ*  
Scarlett Murfin *soprano*

\* 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. It works towards two public performances in the academic year: in 2025, the ensemble gave a concert at Baroque+ Day exploring the musical tastes and talents of Queen Charlotte, and in July presented a lunchtime performance at the York Early Music Festival entitled 'Concertos on the Edge'.

**Ensemble Hesperis** is a dynamic, innovative London-based period ensemble, with a reputation for showcasing Baroque music through intelligent, research-led programming. The four members of Ensemble Hesperis met during their studies at the Royal College of Music in London, and particularly enjoy performing rarely heard music for today's audiences, especially those who would otherwise have no opportunity to hear live classical music. In early 2026, the ensemble received charitable status, and looks forward to expanding its programme of performances and workshops in the 2026-2027 season and beyond.

Funded by a Lottery grant from Arts Council England, Hesperis'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 Britten Pears Young Artists, 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. Hesperis 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, Hesperis launched its new vocal ensemble, the Hesperis 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 coach music students in historically informed performance.

# YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

## Artistic Advisors

John Bryan  
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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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## York Early Music Festival 2027

Friday 2 – Friday 9 July

Guest artists include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment,  
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