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CLASSICS

THE ENGLISH CONCERT

HARRY BICKET

DALL'ABACO • PORPORA • MARCELLO • TARTINI • TELEMANN



THE ENGLISH CONCERT

DALL'ABACO, PORPORA, MARCELLO, TARTINI & TELEMANN

Concerto à più strumenti in D major Op. 5, No. 6 Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco (1675-1742)

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------|--------|
| 1 | I. Allegro | [3.30] |
| 2 | II. Aria Cantabile | [1.49] |
| 3 | III. Ciaccona | [2.41] |
| 4 | IV. Rondeau Allegro | [0.58] |
| 5 | V. Allegro | [3.56] |

Nadja Zwiener & Tuomo Suni *violins* | Joseph Crouch *cello*

Cello Concerto in G major Nicola Porpora (1686-1768)

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------|--------|
| 6 | I. Amoro | [4.57] |
| 7 | II. Allegro | [4.45] |
| 8 | III. Largo | [3.37] |
| 9 | IV. A tempo giusto | [4.09] |

Joseph Crouch *cello*

Oboe Concerto in D minor Alessandro Marcello (1673-1747)

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------|--------|
| 10 | I. Allegro moderato | [3.22] |
| 11 | II. Adagio | [3.13] |
| 12 | III. Allegro | [3.35] |

Katharina Spreckelsen *oboe*

Violin Concerto in B minor D.125 Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770)

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--------|
| 13 | I. Allegro assai | [5.36] |
| 14 | II. Larghetto, "Lascia ch'io dica addio" | [5.09] |
| 15 | III. Allegro | [4.40] |

Nadja Zwiener *violin*

Viola Concerto in G major TWV 51:69

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------|--------|
| 16 | I. Largo | [3.20] |
| 17 | II. Allegro | [2.43] |
| 18 | III. Andante | [3.20] |
| 19 | IV. Presto | [3.21] |

Alfonso Leal del Ojo *viola*

Total timings: [68.43]

HARRY BICKET DIRECTOR / HARPSICHORD

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The English Concert is an orchestra which draws its inspiration from the elite orchestras of 18th-century Europe: its members are recruited from amongst Europe's foremost instrumentalists who are led either from the harpsichord or by their principal violinist or *Konzertmeister*, just as were the famed court orchestras of Dresden, Munich, Mannheim Potsdam and others. This recording is a showcase for the leading instrumentalists of today's English Concert, playing on 18th-century instruments and amongst the world's finest musicians in the long tradition of the great Italian and German masters whose works they perform.

Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco (1675-1742) was born in Verona, the son of a noted guitarist, Damiano Dall'Abaco. Unusually, he appears to have been a skilled player of both violin and cello, having studied both instruments with Giuseppe Torelli. His first post was as a violinist in the court orchestra in Modena, but in 1704 he moved to Munich where he was taken on as a cellist in the court orchestra of Maximilien Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria. After only a few weeks Dall'Abaco was forced to flee, with the rest of the orchestra and courtiers, following Maximilien's defeat by the Duke of Marlborough at the battle of Blenheim. Most of the musicians eventually

reached Brussels, where Dall'Abaco was to spend the next 10 years, absorbing the musical style of the French and Dutch into his native Italian musical 'language'. This fusion of styles is exemplified in the Op. 5 Concerto Grosso in D which begins with a decorous *Allegro* reminiscent of Arcangelo Corelli's Op. 6 concerti, but the middle movements, especially the *cantabile* Aria, are distinctly French in their inspiration, while the concluding *Allegro*, in an energetic triple time, has a rustic drive which is more or less uncategorisable. This stylistic cross-fertilisation gives Dall'Abaco his own distinctive musical voice.

Dall'Abaco's Op. 5 collection was published in Amsterdam in 1715, in which year Maximilien was restored to his Bavarian throne. Dall'Abaco returned to Munich, this time as a violinist, having been rewarded for his loyalty with the post of *Konzertmeister*, remaining in post until his retirement in 1740.

Nicola Porpora (1686-1768) was a gifted composer and musical pedagogue who commanded the highest respect from the leading musicians of his time. Amongst his most devoted followers was the 'superstar' castrato, Farinelli (1705-1782), whom he

taught and coached throughout his professional career, the leading librettist of the 18th century, Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), and, most significant of all in terms of his compositional output, none other than Joseph Haydn, who claimed to have learned the "true fundamentals of composition" from Porpora while serving as his valet and accompanist.

As was common amongst 18th-century musicians, Porpora led a peripatetic life, travelling frequently to Venice and sometimes further afield to Vienna and Dresden. He also spent seven years in London (from 1730 to 1737) as director of the opera company, the so-called 'Opera of the Nobility', established in opposition to Handel. Porpora's instrumental compositions owe much to contemporary operatic style, especially in their thematic material which is both highly ornate and inherently 'vocal'. In the cello concerto the cello is of course the virtuoso 'singer', although its tenor voice is often also involved in the musical texture too. Both allegros, the first being a double fugue, feature exotic passage-work, while the slow movements are as beautiful as anything to be found in this mid-baroque period.

Nicola Porpora lived to the age of 82, dying in Naples, his home city, in poverty and out of fashion. He had suffered the misfortune to have been overshadowed during his best years by that musical giant, Handel, and in his declining years by changing musical tastes and the rise of *galant* and Classical styles.

Alessandro Marcello (1673-1747) was the eldest son of a respected and influential aristocratic family in Venice. The family's high social rank meant that the young Alessandro, and his younger brother Benedetto, would receive a 'gentleman's' education which included music of course, but which precluded the pursuit of music in anything other than an amateur capacity as a '*nobile dilettante*'. Alessandro was taught violin by his father Agostino, and had additional music tuition from Francesco Gasparini (a predecessor of Vivaldi at the Ospedale della Pietà) and from the then organist of San Marco Cathedral, Antonio Lotti. However, as befitted his social position, a career in the Venetian judiciary and as a diplomat for the Republic followed, and his music was published under the pseudonym Eterio Stinfalcio.

Today Alessandro Marcello is remembered almost exclusively for his oboe concerto (published in 1716 by Roger, the same Amsterdam publisher as of the Dall'Abaco concerto), and even this is sometimes misattributed to his more prolific brother Benedetto. The oboe concerto was also unwittingly misattributed (although thereby achieving much wider vicarious fame) by J.S. Bach who mistakenly believed it to be by Vivaldi and included it, arranged for solo harpsichord, in a volume entitled "XVI Concerti nach A. Vivaldi".

The antiphony between the three upper strings and the solo oboe in the opening of the first movement, the reiterated chords in the accompaniment of the slow movement *Adagio*, and the solo opening of the final *Presto* are all features which give the work its individuality, revealing the extraordinary level of musical skill and 'professionalism' even amongst the musical 'amateurs' of the most serene republic of 18th-century Europe.

In common with many musicians of the period, Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770) was educated by priests with a view to his own eventual ordination. However, in 1709 he

enrolled as a student of law, and any lingering aspirations to the priesthood were finally abandoned when he scandalously married the niece of the local bishop of Padova. This caused such outrage that Tartini was obliged to flee to Assisi, without his new spouse with whom he was not re-united for five years.

Tartini seems to have used his time well in Assisi, honing his legendary technical skills on the violin to such effect that a reconciliation with the Bishop was eventually achieved, and before the age of 30 he had returned to Padova as director of that city's orchestra at the Basilica of St. Anthony. Such was his growing reputation, indeed, that he negotiated for himself a generous contract which allowed him to accept numerous engagements: in 1723, for example, he was in Prague playing at the coronation of the Habsburg Emperor Charles VI as Viceroy of Bohemia. Tartini's career as a touring virtuoso was brought to an abrupt end in 1740 by a mysterious injury to his bowing arm, but he retained his post as orchestral director in Padova for the next 30 years and all the leading violinists of the next generation continued to beat a path to his door.

Tartini's playing was famed for its combination of technical and poetic qualities. The latter are particularly a feature of his slow movements for which the melodies have a uniquely vocal quality. Indeed in some of them, including in this B minor concerto, the tune is a setting of an actual text, with the words written beneath the notes. Here the text, '*Lascia ch'io dica addio*' ('Let me say farewell'), could be said to apply to the first movement too, a rather melancholy, but nevertheless dramatic *Allegro assai*. The final movement, though, is an incisively rhythmical *Allegro* in which graceful *tutti* passages alternate with brilliant soli.

Given our modern-day reverence for J.S. Bach it can seem surprising that in the musical world of the mid-18th century Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) was the North German composer of supreme fame and influence. This was partly thanks to the sheer quantity of music composed during his long life (Telemann was born before Bach, yet by the time he died Haydn was a mature composer aged 32 and Mozart had written his first operas), and partly due to his early mastery of the opportunities for self-promotion presented by the explosion in music printing and distribution in the early decades of the 18th century.

Telemann's early works often explore a kind of fusion between the melodic and rhythmic energy of the Italian concerto and the ornamented elegance of French music of the time. The Viola Concerto, probably dating from 1712, is typical in that it has, in Telemann's own colourful description "the smell of France" in the slow movements while owing much to

Corelli in the rhythmic drive of the faster movements. The *Largo* and *Allegro* form an opening-movement pair, but it is the beautiful third movement *Andante* which is the heart of the work, revealing Telemann at his most elegant and harmonically adventurous.

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THE ENGLISH CONCERT

Violin I

Nadja Zwiener (*leader*)
Jonas Zschenderlein
Julia Kuhn
Thérèse Timoney
Magdalena Loth-Hill

Violin II

Tuomo Suni
Elizabeth MacCarthy ¹
Jacek Kurzydło
Diana Lee
John Crockatt ²

Viola

Alfonso Leal del Ojo
Louise Hogan

Violoncello

Joseph Crouch
Jonathan Byers
Anna Holmes ³

Doublebass

Philippa Macmillan

Organ

Tom Foster ⁴

Archlute/baroque guitar

Paula Chateaufneuf
David Miller ⁵
Taro Takeuchi ⁶

¹ Tutti viola in Telemann

² Tartini only

³ Porpora only

⁴ Dall'abaco only

⁵ Porpora only

⁶ Dall'abaco only

'In fact, one can't say enough about the splendours of The English Concert under Bicket. At every turn, it seemed, they brought more colours and virtuosity to the music than we have any right to expect, whether in grand solos or the most minor phrase.'

Broadway World

'each instrumentalist played as though personally responsible for the entire show, wringing out every ounce of drama: at one point during Act II, the cellos unleashed such a torrent of fury that they threatened to upstage the cast.'

Financial Times

'a performance so stunning it was liable to make even the most jaded of early-music sceptics take note ... Through it all, Bicket and The English Concert were nothing short of brilliant. Sporting perfectly tight ensemble, spacious and ringing tone, a variety of colors, gleaming strings and clean, forceful brass, they are the model of a period chamber orchestra in every sense.'

New York Classical Review

'To hear The English Concert playing Handel is to arrive in technicolour Oz after a lifetime of black and white baroque in Kansas.'

The Arts Desk

'Bicket's band is in its element in this repertoire'

Sunday Times

"The very building seemed to glow and sigh with delighted recognition at the playing of this Baroque ensemble"

Stage Talk Magazine

'Refreshingly direct and impactful'

The Times

'...I thought I had gone to heaven. Here, in any case, was a superb performance that left the audience glowing with pleasure. Unobtrusively yet firmly overseen by Harry Bicket, leading the spritely English Concert from the harpsichord.'

The Telegraph

'in arguably one of the most memorable performances of any opera in 2018, The English Concert came in with a superstar cast and conquered in a big way...'

Operawire

HARRY BICKET

director / harpsichord

Making his Glyndebourne festival début in 1996 with Peter Sellars' landmark production of *Theodora*, Harry Bicket is internationally renowned as an opera and concert conductor of distinction. Noted particularly for his interpretation of baroque and classical repertoire, he was appointed Artistic Director of The English Concert in 2007. In 2013 Harry also became Chief Conductor of Sante Fe Opera, opening the following season with a critically-acclaimed *Fidelio*. Born in Liverpool, he studied at the Royal College of Music and Oxford University and is an accomplished harpsichordist.

From New York to Los Angeles, and Hong Kong to Stockholm, Harry is no stranger to the great orchestras and opera houses the world over. Following his celebrated production of *Rodelinda* with Renée Fleming and David Daniels in 2004, he is a regular guest at the Metropolitan Opera. Highlights of the 2017/18 season included visits to Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Orphée et Eurydice*), Cincinnati Symphony (joined by Iestyn Davies), Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and Royal Northern Sinfonia.



With The English Concert he led performances of *Rinaldo* in Europe and the US (including Carnegie Hall), the latest title in a highly successful series of Handel operas given by the orchestra.

While his production of Handel's *Orlando* for the Royal Opera House received an Olivier Award nomination for Best New Opera Production, his recordings are equally admired. Recordings to date with The English Concert include releases for Virgin Classics, Chandos and Harmonia Mundi featuring Elizabeth Watts, David Daniels, Lucy Crowe, Sarah Connolly and Rosemary Joshua. Harry's discography also includes five recordings with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, including a collection of Handel opera arias with Renée Fleming (Decca) and Ian Bostridge (EMI), as well as selections from Handel's *Theodora*, *Seirse*, and the cantata *La Lucrezia* with Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (Avie), which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His Gramophone Award-nominated CDs also include *Sento Amor* with David Daniels featuring arias by Gluck, Handel and Mozart (Virgin Veritas) and *Il tenero momento* with Susan Graham featuring arias by Mozart and Gluck (Erato).

NADJA ZWIENER

violin

In the 2017/18 season German-born violinist Nadja Zwiener celebrated 10 years as leader of The English Concert. Before Nadja began to specialise in historical performance practices of the 17th to 19th centuries at the Guildhall Scholl of Music and Drama in London, she spent a number of years focusing on string quartet playing as a founding member of the Kuss Quartet in Berlin, working with composers on their newly written pieces, and playing for the Munich Opera House orchestra. Having discovered a love of playing on gut strings, this soon led to performing in orchestras such as the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and English Baroque Soloists.

Appointed leader of The English Concert in 2007, Nadja has frequently been invited to appear as concertmaster for the likes of William Christie and Emanuelle Haïm. She has worked with Simon Rattle, Trevor Pinnock and Christian Curnyn in the same respect and regularly appears as a guest leader for the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

Nadja is also active as a concerto soloist and directs programmes from the violin. Her regular chamber music partners include Maurice Steger, Kristian Bezuidenhout, and Xenia Löffler and of course her colleagues from The English Concert. She particularly enjoys working with singers and creating interesting chamber music programmes that might go as far as combining Early Music with improvised, electronic or even contemporary music and with dance or literature.

In 2016, Nadja took over as a concertmaster of the Gaechinger Cantorey in Stuttgart, for which she oversaw the transformation into a new period instrument orchestra.

As a Thuringian living in Leipzig, she feels particularly close to the music of Bach whose works also play an important role in her teaching the baroque violin and viola at the Hochschule für Musik "Franz Liszt" in Weimar.



ALFONSO LEAL DEL OJO

viola

Alfonso Leal del Ojo grew up and received his initial training in Seville. In 1998 he moved to London where he studied at the Guildhall School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music where he specialized in period instrument performance.

He has been principal viola of The English Concert since 2006 and tours extensively with them throughout Europe, East Asia and North America. In addition to his work with The English Concert, Alfonso is much in demand with other European ensembles, frequently appearing as a soloist or guest principal.

Alfonso appears on numerous recordings, many of them award-winning; his recording of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6* with the Dunedin Consort was nominated for a Gramophone award and was Classic FM album of the week.

Chamber music remains an important part of his life and often collaborates with Trevor Pinnock, Rachel Podger and many other fine musicians.

Alfonso plays on a fine English viola by Edward Lewis (1687).



JOSEPH CROUCH

cello

Joseph Crouch has been principal cellist of The English Concert since 2008, but his relationship with the orchestra began over thirty years ago: as a boy treble in the choir of Westminster Abbey Joe joined in collaborative concerts and recordings with the orchestra that also featured its current director, Harry Bicket, on keyboard. Along with the immersive vocal and choral education offered at the choir school came an early exposure to – and preference for – Renaissance and Baroque music. Joe was a choral scholar and read music at King's College Cambridge, where further collaborations brought him into contact with period instrument specialists of The Brandenburg Consort.

It was not only the repertoire that attracted Joe to the Baroque cello, but the role of the basso continuo in the orchestral texture; the responsibility for providing the music's harmonic foundations and rhythmic propulsion seemed to offer an activity in which one could happily spend an entire career. Joe made the final shift from voice to cello as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, studying with Jennifer Ward Clarke, and on graduation was



invited to join the European Union Baroque orchestra as its principal cellist.

Since then Joe has enjoyed a career that has seen him playing and teaching the basso continuo role in a huge variety of settings: he was first appointed principal cellist with The Gabrieli Consort & Players, and then joined Monica Huggett in Trio Sonnerie; later he became principal with The Academy of Ancient Music, The Sixteen, and today Joe combines principal positions with The English Concert and the Internationale Bach Akademie, Stuttgart, with teaching positions at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

This recording is one of Joe's increasingly frequent forays away from the bass line and into the soloist's spotlight, but his chief love remains the basso continuo and collaborations with solo and choral voices.

KATHARINA SPRECKELSEN

oboe

Katharina Spreckelsen is one of the leading baroque oboists of her generation. She was born in Germany and after studying with the

late Michel Piguet in Basle, Katharina moved to London for further studies with Paul Goodwin at the Royal College of Music.

She soon became a much sought-after player with many European Ensembles. Katharina was principal oboist with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, the Gabrieli Consort & Players and Florilegium and she now divides her time between The English Concert, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Christian Curnyn's Early Opera Company.

Katharina often performs and records with singers such as Mark Padmore, Thomas Quasthof, Ian Bostridge, Andreas Scholl, David Daniels and Rolando Villazon. Her performances as an obbligato soloist are frequently paired with solo concerto performances.

Katharina has recorded extensively. She can be heard on many of Ton Kopman's Bach Cantata recordings. With the Gabrieli Consort & Players she has recorded Oratorios by Handel, sacred works by J.S. Bach and Haydn's *Creation*. With The English Concert she appears notably on discs with David Daniels, Elizabeth Watts, Danielle De Niese and Lucy Crowe.



Katharina is professor of baroque and classical oboe at the Royal Academy of Music. Over the past 20 years she has fostered a new generation of baroque oboists, many of whom are now her colleagues.

The English Concert wishes to acknowledge the generous support of The English Concert in America (TECA) in making this recording.

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SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK. +44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com
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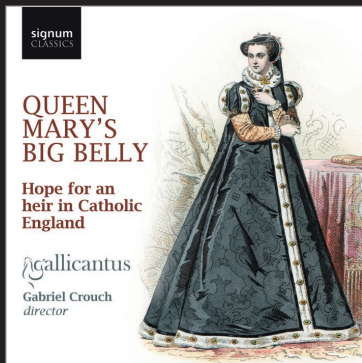


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