

Johann  
Sebastian  
**BACH**

Keyboard  
Concertos

*Klavierkonzerte*

**Lucia Micallef**

*pianoforte*

European Union  
Chamber Orchestra

conducted by **Brian Schembri**

BWV 1052  
BWV 1054  
BWV 1056  
BWV 1058

**Johann Sebastian BACH**  
1685-1750

**Keyboard Concertos**

**Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052** **21:59**

- |   |                     |      |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 1 | I. <i>Allegro</i>   | 7:46 |
| 2 | II. <i>Adagio</i>   | 6:33 |
| 3 | III. <i>Allegro</i> | 7:39 |

**Concerto in D major, BWV 1054** **16:29**

- |   |                                  |      |
|---|----------------------------------|------|
| 4 | I. [ <i>Allegro</i> ]            | 7:38 |
| 5 | II. <i>Adagio e piano sempre</i> | 5:47 |
| 6 | III. <i>Allegro</i>              | 2:44 |

**Concerto in F minor, BWV 1056** **9:43**

- |   |                       |      |
|---|-----------------------|------|
| 7 | I. [ <i>Allegro</i> ] | 3:15 |
| 8 | II. <i>Largo</i>      | 2:59 |
| 9 | III. <i>Presto</i>    | 3:28 |

**Concerto in G minor, BWV 1058** **13:24**

- |    |                           |      |
|----|---------------------------|------|
| 10 | I. [ <i>Allegro</i> ]     | 3:45 |
| 11 | II. <i>Andante</i>        | 5:48 |
| 12 | III. <i>Allegro assai</i> | 3:51 |

Total duration: **61:59**

**Lucia Micallef**, pianoforte

European Union Chamber Orchestra (leader: Gergely Kuklis)

Brian Schembri, conductor

Johann Sebastian Bach was famous in his lifetime as a performer on the harpsichord and organ; the authors of his obituary, one of them his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, declared that he played his own music “with the greatest perfection”. He left not only a large body of solo keyboard music, but also a number of concertos featuring the keyboard. These date from his later years in Leipzig, where he was primarily employed as a church musician, Cantor of St Thomas’s Church. The concertos for two, three and four keyboards came first, in about 1730. They were probably intended for Bach to play with his sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann and his talented pupil Johann Ludwig Krebs at the convivial weekly meetings of the Collegium Musicum, an amateur society consisting largely of university students which he directed for much of his time in Leipzig.

The seven solo concertos have survived in a manuscript of around 1737–39, and were presumably designed as vehicles for Bach’s own playing – though perhaps not initially at the Collegium Musicum, as he had given up the directorship of the society temporarily during that period: the nearby Dresden court, where he had been appointed an honorary *Kapellmeister* in 1736, has been suggested as a possible alternative. With the exception of Bach’s own Fifth Brandenburg Concerto of the 1720s, which has a harpsichord leading the trio of solo instruments (and also of the organ concertos which Handel began writing in London at more or less the same time), these were the first ever concertos for solo keyboard. Originally, the instrument would of course have been a harpsichord; but the concertos have for many years formed part of the repertoire of the piano, and in performances with orchestras of modern instruments the piano provides arguably a better balance than all but the largest (and least authentic) harpsichords.

Bach’s concertos are all modelled on the concertos of Antonio Vivaldi, which had begun to appear in print in northern Europe in the 1710s: in their scoring with an accompanying string orchestra; in their overall fast–slow–fast outline; and in the “ritornello” structure of their outer movements – that is, with an opening orchestral statement repeated in varied forms, in alternation with episodes featuring the soloist. Bach wrote solo concertos for the violin, Vivaldi’s preferred solo instrument, and perhaps also for woodwind instruments, during his earlier career as a court musician: at Cöthen (1717–1723), where his duties as *Kapellmeister* specifically included the composition of concertos; and possibly before that at Weimar (1708–1717), where the young Prince was an enthusiast for the new Italian genre. It was on these early concertos that Bach based his Leipzig harpsichord concertos. We know, for example, that the two-keyboard concerto in C minor, BWV 1062, is an arrangement of the famous Concerto for two violins, and the solo keyboard concertos in D major, BWV 1054, and G minor, BWV 1058, are versions of surviving violin concertos. And it is now generally assumed that the other keyboard concertos are similarly arrangements of originals which have not been preserved.

The D minor solo Concerto, BWV 1052, is thought to have been based on a violin concerto in the same key, possibly from the Weimar period. The keyboard part certainly includes passages of violinistic figuration, and the slow movement contains long, heavily decorated phrases which sound like attempts to suggest through harpsichord ornamentation the natural sustaining power of the string instrument. However, Bach's other surviving reworkings of this material provide no further evidence for a violin original: he used the first movement twice as a cantata Sinfonia, and in one case, in a real *tour de force* of the arranger's art, he also adapted the slow movement as a four-part chorus; but on both occasions the solo part was given to another keyboard instrument, the organ.

The Concerto carries through Vivaldi's formal plan with Bach's characteristic sense of momentum and richness of detail, and on an unusually substantial scale. The first movement has a six-bar opening ritornello for all the instruments in unison, a model of purposeful single-line writing, which generates much of the material of the movement, but returns in its original form only at the very end. The slow movement, in G minor, also has a unison opening and closing ritornello; in between, the same theme is used as a recurring accompaniment to the solo line, but freely varied so that the music does not remain stuck in the same key. Unusually, the scoring is not reduced during the solo section, but is for the full strings in four-part harmony throughout. The finale begins with a twelve-bar ritornello of muscular counterpoint, from which Bach immediately extracts a propulsive little motif – similar to the initial idea of the Third Brandenburg Concerto – for use in the first and subsequent solo episodes. In the later stages of the movement, the solo part reaches increasing heights of virtuosity, arriving at an *Adagio* cadence which leads once again to an exact restatement of the opening ritornello – a satisfying way of bringing the work to a close.



The Concerto in D major, BWV 1054, is an arrangement of the well-known Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042, which Bach had probably written at Cöthen. Comparison of the two versions reveals the thoroughgoing nature of Bach's transcription. A good deal of violinistic figuration in the solo part is rewritten to suit the keyboard – a process which begins as early as the little “breaks” for the soloist in the fourth and fifth bars of the first movement, in which one note is adjusted so that the phrases lie more readily under the hand, while supporting arpeggios are added in the left hand. And the orchestral bass line of the Violin Concerto is not simply transposed into the cello and bass parts of the keyboard version: much of it is also transferred, often in elaborated form, to the left hand of the solo part.

In this Concerto, Bach treated Vivaldi's formal precedents with great flexibility. He imposed a much freer alternation between orchestra and soloist – starting with those “breaks” in the first ritornello – and a much greater richness of detail. The first movement is laid out in the ternary (A–B–A) form of the Baroque opera (or cantata) aria, with a middle

section mostly in minor keys and ending in a cadenza-like *Adagio*, followed by an exact repeat of the whole of the first section. The *Adagio*, in B minor and “quiet throughout”, consists like many of Vivaldi’s slow movements of an almost continuous melody for the soloist, framed by an opening and closing ritornello: but whereas Vivaldi’s accompaniment to the melody is normally a simple harmonic substructure, Bach’s is full of thematic ideas derived from the ritornello. And the finale, in the nimble rhythm of the *passepied*, is not a Vivaldian ritornello movement, with varied returns of the opening statement, but a rondo, in which the main idea is exactly the same each time. The overall scheme is extremely four-square on paper, with a 16-bar rondo theme and 16 bars for each intervening episode until the last, which has 32; but in performance the music dances along with every appearance of total spontaneity.



The Concerto in F minor, BWV 1056, has been the subject of conjectural reconstructions as a concerto for violin, for flute and for oboe. The oboe hypothesis is the most tempting, as the slow movement has also survived as a Sinfonia with oboe obbligato in Bach’s Cantata No. 156, written in Leipzig in 1729; the melodic line in the Cantata is in a much simpler form, but it would be natural for Bach to have transcribed it with added decoration to compensate for the harpsichord’s lack of sustaining power. However, while this movement and the finale may have come from a lost oboe concerto, the opening movement is not as well suited to the Baroque oboe, and must be from a different source. And the New Bach Edition, in its volume of concerto reconstructions, postulates a complete violin concerto in the key of G minor.

The work, unusually compact in dimensions, again shows how much refinement of detail Bach brought to the Vivaldian concerto form. As early as the fourth bar of the first movement, the soloist injects a tiny echo phrase into the orchestral ritornello; and throughout the movement the strings enliven the texture with little figures derived from the material of the ritornello. The strings’ accompaniment to the A flat major *Adagio* is in an initially repetitive interlocking rhythmic pattern, but every few bars the bass line is varied to create clear cadences which shape the movement into paragraphs. The finale, like the first movement, has little echoes within the opening ritornello, this time given to the upper strings, *pizzicato* – though later they are also taken up by the soloist. The movement includes some passages of intricate contrapuntal writing, with the strings providing four lines of the texture and the right hand of the keyboard a fifth.

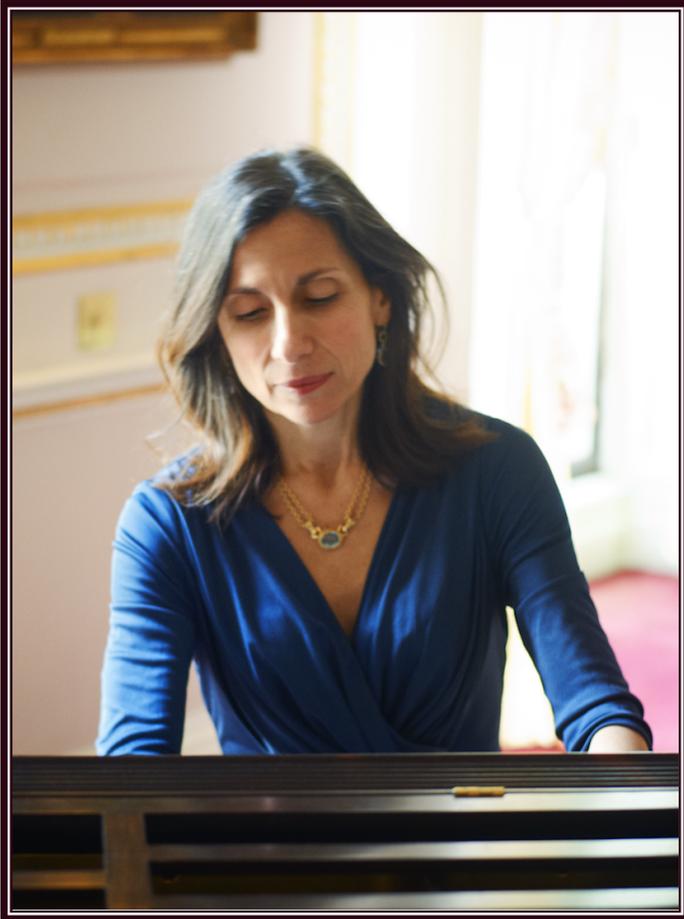


On the evidence of the manuscript source, the Concerto in G minor, BWV 1058, is thought to have been the earliest of Bach’s solo keyboard concertos. It is a version of the familiar Violin Concerto in A minor, which probably dates from Bach’s years at Cöthen. The adaptation is relatively straightforward, as if Bach was still working out how to tackle the

task. The accompanying string parts are transposed unaltered, and the right hand of the keyboard part simply takes over the solo violin part, varied to suit the new instrument in a few passages, while the left hand sometimes doubles the lowest string part and sometimes decorates it or adds an additional strand to the texture.

As in the other concertos, Bach's natural tendency towards complexity of thought prompts a much less clear-cut division than Vivaldi's between orchestral ritornellos and solo episodes, and much greater richness of detail. In the first movement, for example, the solo episodes are for most of their length accompanied by all the strings, either exchanging fragments of the ritornello material or sustaining full harmonies. The B flat major slow movement expands on the Vivaldian idea of a recurring "ostinato" figure in the bass by having the figure come and go, in different keys and versions, usually alternating with the soloist's ornate melodic line but sometimes combined with it. And in the finale, in 9/8 gigue time, the ritornellos are full of contrapuntal interest, with the (virtually identical) opening and closing statements concealing a full fugal exposition - an indication of how Bach brought his learning as well as his expertise as a performer to bear on the medium of the solo concerto.

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LUCIA MICALLEF



BRIAN SCHEMBRI

## The musicians

**Lucia Micallef** was born in Malta and studied the piano with Giovanna Bascetta. From a very early age Lucia performed as a soloist and also regularly played with the Johann Strauss School of Music orchestra conducted by Austrian conductor Alexander Maschat. She went on to win a scholarship awarded by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Lois Phillips. She later worked with Alexander Kelly, Ruth Harte and Hamish Milne and also attended several masterclasses including the Corso di Perfezionamento at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena with Rudolf Buchbinder.

Lucia has performed in Malta, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Czech Republic and North America. She has played at numerous festivals including the Prague Easter Festival, the Edinburgh Festival and the International Spring Orchestra Festival in Malta. Lucia has represented her country on various occasions. She performed for all the assembled Heads of State at the Crans Montana Forum and played for the inauguration of the opening of the Malta High Commission in London. She has performed as a soloist with many orchestras including the Virtuosi of London under the direction of Anthony Goodchild, the Britten Sinfonia conducted by Nicholas Cleobury and the European Union Chamber Orchestra with conductor Brian Schembri. She is also recognised as an accompanist and chamber music player and has worked with many distinguished artists among them Stefan Popov, Nicola Loud, Pauline Lowbury, Daniel Hope and Vladimir Ovchinnikov.

In 2011 she made a recording of The Love Songs of Paolo Tosti with soprano Gillian Zammit which was released by Claudio Records.

Lucia has also given many broadcasts on television and radio both in Malta and abroad. Broadcasts include TVM (Malta), BBC (UK), Mezzo (France) and CBC (Canada).

Apart from her work as a soloist and chamber music player, Lucia has been artistic director of several festivals and other cultural activities. As cultural consultant to the Manoel Theatre, she founded the Malta Baroque Festival and the Music and More concert series. In the year 2000 she instigated and co-ordinated a year-long festival focusing on the arts of the twentieth century which highlighted music, painting and architecture. She was also artistic director of a violin and piano concert series showcasing the works of British composers and organised two other festivals, Celebrating Handel and Celebrating Britten. Lucia is currently one of the artistic directors of the Three Palaces Festival, featuring leading musicians from around the world. This is held at the Presidential Palaces under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Malta.

One of the most brilliant musicians to emerge from Malta, **Brian Schembri** started his music studies under the guidance of his father Carmelo Schembri, very early establishing a reputation as a highly talented concert pianist, frequently performing on TV, radio and at public concert halls.

After he became the youngest ever to obtain the Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (London) he continued his studies at the Kiev and Moscow “Tchaikowsky” State Conservatories, studying piano with Alexander Snegiriov and Serguei Dorensky as well as conducting with Roman Kofman and Gennady Rozhdestvensky.

Soon after graduating, he was appointed assistant conductor with Michel Plasson at the Orchestre du Capitole and the Theatre du Capitole de Toulouse, also collaborating with prestigious conductors James Judd, Serge Baudo, Yuri Temirkanov, Garcia Navarro, Armin Jordan and Emmanuel Krivine.

Over the years Brian Schembri has conducted extensively in several countries, appearing as guest conductor with reputed orchestras such as the London Mozart Players, l'Orchestra Ciutat de Barcelona, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Novosibirsk, the Moscow Soloists, l'Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana, l'Orchestra Sinfonica di San Remo, the Chamber Orchestra of Geneva, l'Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre National de Lyon, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has collaborated with soloists Lucia Aliberti, Tatiana Lisnic, Karen Huffstodt, Sandrine Piau, Jose Cura, Joseph Calleja, Gianluca Terranova, Oleg Kulko, Alexandre Da Costa, Alexander Kniazev, Colin Carr, Sergey Antonov, Ludmila Berlinskaia, Oleg Polianksy, Balazs Szokolay, Anne Queffelec, Emma Johnson and has performed at the “Festival Massenet”, “Kiev Symphonic Evenings”, “Octobre en Normandie”, “Les Rencontres Musicales d'Evian”, “Festa da Musica”, “Lisboa em Festa”, transmitted live on Eurovision, “Festival MusicAtlantico”, “Fêtes de Genève”, “Festival de Piano Vendôme”, “Henley Festival”, “Kings Lynn Festival”, “G7 Summit Concert” in Lyon which was televised internationally. He has also conducted opera productions with ARCAL, Ensemble Justiniana, the Atelier Lyrique du Centre, Opera Nomade (Paris), the Rennes and Nancy Opera Theatres, the National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Lvov, Opera Hong Kong, Lübeck Opera Theatre.

Besides giving piano recitals in Malta, Italy, France, Ukraine, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and Great Britain, he has recorded a CD Piano Recital of sonatas by Beethoven, Schubert and Rachmaninov and other CDs of works by Charles Camilleri with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (Divine Art Diversions DDV24126) and with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Brian Schembri has been Chief Conductor of the OPF (Orchestre Philharmonique de France), the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa. More recently he was Music Director of the Malta National Theatre “Teatru Manoel” and is currently Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. He has been awarded the Malta Cultural Award and the Medal for Service to the Republic.

Receiving critical acclaim as an artist of high calibre for his strongly passionate and lyrical performances, he has forged a strong reputation for a moving profound musicality.

The **European Union Chamber Orchestra** was formed in 1981 with players from the member states of the European Union. The Orchestra lays an emphasis on giving unique opportunities and experience to young musicians at the outset of their professional careers.

An acknowledged Cultural Ambassador for the European Union, EUCO has an annual schedule of some 50 concerts and a worldwide reputation for musical excellence. It has performed in such concert halls as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Musikverein, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt and Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels. Enjoying the Royal patronage of HM Queen Sofia of Spain the Orchestra has been invited to play for many Heads of State, notably Queen Noor of Jordan, Princess Galyani of Thailand and King Sihanouk of Cambodia. Supported by the European Commission, it has performed in some 50 countries overseas, while also appearing at major venues and festivals throughout Europe.



*Lucia Micallef, the orchestra and Brian Schembri, Malta 2013*



*The orchestral players on this recording:*

*Violin 1*

Gergely Kuklis (leader)  
Alessandro Ruisi  
Jacob Reina Caro  
Kamil Karolak  
Amy Tress

*Violin 2*

Guy Button  
Emma van der Schalie  
Peter Asp  
Merel Jonker

*Viola*

Wouter Huizinga  
Laura Hendriks  
Julian Fish

*Cellos*

Michael Wigram  
Alessandro Sanguineti

*Double Bass*

Vilmos Buza

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Recording engineer: Geoffrey Addis

Booklet & packaging design: Stephen Sutton

Photographs of Lucia Micallef: Amelia Troubridge

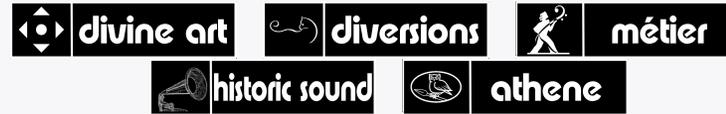
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