

78TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | JANUARY 19, 2020



PROGRAM



Concerto Italiano, photo by Javier Sierra

Concerto Italiano

Rinaldo Alessandrini, conductor and harpsichord

Sonia Tedla, soprano

Gabriele Cassone, trumpet

Boris Begelman, violin

Andrea Rognoni, violin

Ludovico Minasi, cello

Venezia Roma Napoli

January 19, 2020 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713)

Sonata a Quattro, WoO4, for trumpet, two violins, and basso continuo (c. 1699)

Adagio

Allegro

Grave

Spiritoso

Allegro

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

Sonata in C Major, RV 60, for two violins and basso continuo (1705)

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

Adagio

Alessandro Marcello (1669–1747)

“Ecco l’aurora che,” (Aria for Farinello), S. D906, for soprano, two violins, and basso continuo (c. 1725–1747)

Arcangelo Corelli

Trio Sonata in A Major, op. 1, no. 3, for two violins and basso continuo (1681)

Grave

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

“Tu fedel? Tu costante?” HWV 171, for soprano, two violins, and basso continuo (1706–1707)

Sonata
Recitativo
Aria; Un poco allegro
Recitativo
Aria
Recitativo
Aria
Recitativo
Aria

Intermission

Leonardo Leo (1694–1744)

“Splende più dell’usato,” for soprano, two violins, and basso continuo (c. 1711–1744)

Introduzione
Recitativo
Aria; Larghetto
Recitativo
Aria; Spiritoso

Nicola Porpora (1686–1768)

Sonata in E Minor, for two violins and basso continuo (c. 1760)

Affettuoso
Allegro
Adagio
Giga; Allegro

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725)

“Su le sponde del Tebro,” H. 705, for soprano, trumpet, two violins, and basso continuo (c. 1690)

Sinfonia; Grave
Recitativo
Ritornello; Aria
Recitativo
Aria; Largo
Aria
Recitativo
Aria

THE MUSICIANS

Founder and conductor Rinaldo Alessandrini’s early music ensemble Concerto Italiano formed in 1984, coinciding with the revival of early music in Italy—a revival spurred by this group. Monteverdi, Bach, and Vivaldi are the main composers that have inspired the ensemble in honoring an appreciation of the language of baroque music, making a new aesthetic and musical rhetoric available to a fresh audience.

In 2016, Concerto Italiano made its debut in Australia and New Zealand, performing Monteverdi’s *Vespers*. The following year, the ensemble appeared at Carnegie Hall and toured China, Japan, Australia, and several European cities, performing Monteverdi’s *1610 Vespers*, *L’Orfeo*, and *L’incoronazione di Poppea*.

Over the course of its history, Concerto Italiano has appeared at major festivals and in venues throughout the European continent: Utrecht (Oude Muziek Festival), Rotterdam (De Doelen, De Singel), Antwerp and Leuven (Flanders Festival), London (Lufthansa Festival, Queen Elisabeth Hall), Edinburgh (Edinburgh Festival), Vienna (Konzerthaus), Spoleto (Festival dei Due Mondi), and Palermo (Festival Scarlatti).

Concerto Italiano has recently been involved in performing the complete Monteverdi opera cycle at La Scala and Opera Garnier, in collaboration with stage director Bob Wilson. Regularly recording for the Naïve label, the group’s recent releases include Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*, a collection of sacred music by Alessandro Scarlatti, and Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, *1610 Vespers*, and *Selva Morale e Spirituale*, as well as his complete *Eighth Book of Madrigals*. The impressive array of critical awards received for these recordings confirms the outstanding quality of Concerto Italiano’s performances, for which the group is now recognized as a unique force in the interpretation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music. After several decades, both critics and the public continue to consider the ensemble’s recordings as the definitive standard of baroque revival and style.

PROGRAM NOTES

The name “Italy” took on a political and geographical significance only at the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the cultural and musical panorama reflected different political conditions, which also determined varying cultural choices. The Republic of Venice considered the public aspect of music of great social importance, and that form of support is represented in today’s program through works by Antonio Vivaldi and Alessandro Marcello. In Naples, music was part of the daily passions of the people, thanks not only to the opera—most famously by Alessandro Scarlatti—but also to the fine music performed in churches. In Rome, public music was mainly performed in churches or chapels, since theaters faced a troubled life because of the varying points of view of the reigning pope. In all of these cities, the voice was held in the highest regard.

The cantata genre represented the operatic genre in reduced dimensions. The technical virtuosity demanded by the Venetian style was replaced in Rome with the Arcadian and pastoral atmospheres of the era, and in Naples, with particular care for the expressive style.

In Rome, Arcangelo Corelli stands as the foundation of the “violinist composer,” a particularly popular niche of composition that would last several generations. Corelli laid the groundwork for other violin composers, including Pietro Locatelli and Niccolò Paganini. It was also in Rome that our only non-Italian composer, George Frideric Handel—having been invited to Italy by Ferdinando I de’ Medici—likely composed today’s featured work “Tu fedel? Tu costante?”

In Venice, Antonio Vivaldi became a superstar of operatic, instrumental, and liturgical works, showcasing his trademarks of virtuosity, lyricism, and emotion. Finally, it is with baroque composers Leonardo Leo and Nicola Porpora, both largely overlooked today, that we hear our first music from Naples. Leo, considered the first Neapolitan composer to master modern harmonic counterpoint, is featured in this concert with his cantata “Splende più dell’usato,” and Porpora in a sonata for strings and continuo, which is fitting for a musician who would go on to teach the father of the string quartet, Joseph Haydn. The most famous of the Neapolitan composers is Alessandro Scarlatti, and it is with Scarlatti that modern opera is considered to have begun. In today’s piece by Scarlatti, we hear his operatic writing in its reduced dimensions with his cantata “Su le sponde del Tebro.” Paradoxically, it is Italy’s political fragmentation in the eighteenth century that contributed to the creation of this enormous artistic and cultural wealth, with distinct musical styles emerging from Venice, Rome, and Naples.

Program notes by Concerto Italiano

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Eighth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Singers from Washington National Opera’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

A Sense of Place: Art and Music Inspired by Landscape

Featuring opera arias and program director Robert Ainsley’s discussion of landscape paintings in the Gallery’s collection.

January 24, 12:10 p.m.

Minguet Quartett With Andreas Klein, pianist

Bach, Beethoven, and Beyond

Music of J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Prokofiev, and Israeli composer Avner Dorman.

January 26, 3:30 p.m.

Diane Monroe, violin With PUBLIQuartet

Violin Woman, African Dreams

Music inspired by the environment and objects from The Colored Girls Museum, Philadelphia.

This concert is part of a series of performances by female violinists, showcasing the brilliance and stylistic versatility of the instrument.

February 2, 3:30 p.m.

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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cover Colleen Browning, *Union Mixer* (detail), 1975, National Gallery of Art, Washington, George C. Miller & Son (printer), New York, Lorillard Company (publisher), Corcoran Collection (Gift of Lorillard Tobacco Company), 2015.19.2586

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