

'To Touch the Heart'

Passacaglia Trio

Annabel Knight – baroque flute, bass recorder
Robin Bigwood – harpsichord
Reiko Ichise – viola da gamba

CPE Bach (1714-1788)

Sonata in E minor for flute and basso continuo Wq 124
Adagio – Allegro – Minuetto

JS Bach (1685-1750)

Ricercar a 3 from *The Musical Offering* BWV 1079

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (1712-1786)

Sonata in C minor for flute and basso continuo
Recitativo – Andante e cantabile – (Alla breve)

CPE Bach

from Sonata in C major for viola da gamba and basso continuo Wq 136
Andante – Allegretto

Wilhelmine of Prussia, Margravine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1709-1758)

Sonata in A minor for flute and basso continuo
Affettuoso – Presto – Allegro

[Short break]

Princess Anna Amalia of Prussia (1723-1787)

Sonata in F major for flute and basso continuo
Adagio – Allegretto – Allegro ma non troppo

CPE Bach

Les Folies d'Espagne

[continued below]

CPE Bach

Trio sonata in F major for bass recorder and viola da gamba Wq 163
Un poco andante – Allegretto – Allegro

Anna Bon di Venezia (1738-after 1769)

Sonata in G minor Op. 1 No. 5 for flute and basso continuo
Allegro – Andante staccato - Allegro

Programme Notes

‘It seems to me that music primarily must touch the heart’
(CPE Bach, Autobiography, 1773)

The years of rule under King Frederick the Great of Prussia between 1740 and 1786 represent a golden era of cultural productivity which came to have significant influence across Europe. The King himself, ‘The Old Fritz’, was a keen flute player and musician, who employed at his court some of the most celebrated and talented composers and players of the age, including Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach - son of the revered Johann Sebastian - as well as the famous flautist, teacher and writer, Johann Joachim Quantz.

Emanuel Bach (as he was known) in particular came to be a leading light in a new age of late baroque music. In 1775, the English journalist and writer Charles Burney described him as ‘one of the greatest composers that ever existed’. Emmanuel had arrived in Berlin in 1737, following studies in Law at Leipzig and Frankfurt an der Oder; in 1740 he officially entered royal service as a keyboard player and composer, accompanying the very first flute solo that Frederick performed as King at Charlottenburg. Remarkable for its extraordinary passion and sensibility, the music of the youthful Emanuel was shaped by the desire to liberate new expressive and dramatic musical possibilities. Audaciously breaking free of the conventions of the previous generation (including those of his illustrious father), Emanuel combined galant simplicity and balance on the one hand, but, crucially, a feeling for the more emotive *Empfindsamkeit* (sensibility) on the other: his instrumental sonatas are full of drama and unexpected twists and turns. But there are also moments of great beauty and fragility - designed, in his own words, to ‘touch the heart’.

Just such an aesthetic blend forms the basis of the variation set for keyboard *Les Folies d’Espagne*, dating from the late 1770s, when Emanuel had been in Hamburg for a decade. The treatment of this well-known theme (which must

have seemed peculiarly 'ancient' at this relatively late date) is alternately expressive and rhythmically driven. Several variations include dynamic markings, ranging from pp to ff, which may perhaps point to the use of Emanuel's preferred keyboard instrument, the overtly expressive clavichord; other aspects seem well suited to the harpsichord. The essence of the work, often dramatic, and at times wryly witty, survives intact with either instrument.

The Sonata for viola da gamba and basso continuo in C Major, Wq 136 was probably written for the gamba virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse, a musician at the Berlin court. By this time, the viol had fallen out of general use and was rarely encountered outside German court circles, but Hesse's French playing style was appreciated by the King. The two gamba sonatas by Emanuel mark both a height of technical and musical demand for the instrument, as well as being amongst the last works written for it. The C Major Sonata is a playful and *galant* work, extended in form, and offering a chance for virtuosity and expression.

The Trio Sonata in F Major for Bass Recorder, Viola, and Bass, Wq 163 is likely, due to the extremely rare requirement of a bass recorder, to have been a specially commissioned work. Like the viola da gamba, the recorder had generally been superseded by the transverse flute by the middle of the century. Dating from 1755, it remains unknown for whom this work was written, although Bach's music library contained a similarly scored work by Johann Gottlieb Graun. Presumably both works were commissioned by, or dedicated to, the same person - most likely a patron from the Berlin music scene and perhaps a bass recorder player.

In 1747, Emanuel's father, Johann Sebastian Bach made a visit to Potsdam to see his son and to visit the King. The composer's genius as an improviser was not lost on King Frederick, who took great pleasure in setting him an almost impossible task: to improvise a 6-part fugue on a particularly difficult theme. Although we do not know exactly what Bach composed on the fly that evening, two weeks later he had completed and dispatched to Potsdam the famous collection of pieces known as The Musical Offering, a set of sixteen pieces of exquisite beauty and perfection which have teased musicologists and scholars for decades. It consists of a trio sonata, ten canons, and two ricercars (fugues) – one in three parts, the other in six.

King Frederick's remarkable flute sonata in C minor (one of over a hundred flute pieces of his own composition), must surely have been written not long after

this incident. Perhaps produced as proof of his own skill and creativity, or maybe as a mark of respect, the first movement appears to emulate a recitative and aria style familiar in Bach's religious works, and the last quotes part of the theme of the Musical Offering in an old-fashioned contrapuntal style hardly seen elsewhere in Frederick's musical output.

Our programme also includes rarely-performed contributions by talented women within royal circles.

King Frederick's elder sister, Wilhelmine of Bayreuth, was an important cultural influencer. With her husband the Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, she oversaw the re-building of the great Bayreuth opera house and had a major influence on the planning and furnishing of the Bayreuth palaces and the design of the gardens. A great patron of the arts, she painted, composed, wrote works for the stage, and was an important international writer who corresponded with the great intellects of her day, including Voltaire. Her flute sonata in A minor is one of only a handful of her surviving musical compositions; it is not clear for whom the piece was written (both her husband and her brother were flautists), but one contemporary source suggests Wilhelmine preferred 'wild thundering flute-playing' over an affected performance.

Wilhelmine was also a supporter of women at court; she brought the composer Anna Bon di Venezia, who had been educated at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, to Bayreuth to join her musical parents who were already engaged at the palace. Anna was given the post of 'chamber music virtuosa'. Her opus 1, consisting of six flute sonatas, was composed around 1756 and dedicated to the flute-playing Margrave.

Princess Anna Amalia of Prussia was the King's youngest sibling, and, unusually for a member of the royal family, was able to devote much of her life to music. She was herself a flute player, as well as a harpsichordist. She attained considerable skill on the latter, as well as recognition as a composer; she was taught and advised in musical matters by Johann Philipp Kirnberger. The Sonata in F Major for flute was composed in 1771 and dedicated to her elder brother, King Frederick the Great. Anna never married but became the abbess of Quedlingburg which allowed her an additional income; she is also known as an important collector of scores which included works by Palestrina, JS Bach and Telemann.

Annabel Knight 2021

Passacaglia

For many years the baroque ensemble Passacaglia has been acclaimed for its engaging and charismatic performances of seventeenth and eighteenth-century chamber music, featuring the unique sound of recorders, flutes, violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord.

Featuring some of the UK's leading period instrument players, the ensemble has appeared at London's Wigmore Hall and Southbank and has toured in Scotland, Scandinavia, Ireland and America. The ensemble has featured on numerous BBC and worldwide radio broadcasts and has so far recorded six albums, for Linn Records, Naxos and BCR (the ensemble's own in-house label).

'A performance of irrepressible joy' – Gramophone

'Each a superb Musician, they form a tight, sensitive ensemble that plays with great passion...' - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Annabel Knight (recorders, flutes) has established a successful performing and teaching career as a recorder player and historical flautist, which has taken her across the UK, Europe, America and the Middle East. As well as working with Passacaglia, she is a member of the recorder quintet Fontanella, and has also collaborated with other ensembles including the Maggini String Quartet, with whom she recorded Gordon Jacob's complete recorder music. Annabel enjoys teaching at all levels; she is the founder and director of the popular Woodhouse Recorder Courses and runs the recorder department at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Annabel can also be heard playing on film soundtracks including Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1, Fantastic Mr Fox and Philomena. More recently she has also enjoyed performing with the band Art of Moog on an EWI (an electronic wind synthesizer).

Reiko Ichise (viola da gamba), born in Tokyo, read musicology at Kunitachi College of Music and subsequently at the Royal College of Music in London, where she is now a professor. She has established herself as one of the leading gamba players in UK. As a soloist, she has performed with many leading orchestras including Academy of Ancient Music, Gabrieli Consort, English Baroque Soloists, Arte dei suonatori, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, appearing in many international festivals. Reiko is in great demand as a chamber musician and member of prestigious ensembles such as Passacaglia,

Florilegium and the Bach Players. From 2008 for 9 years she was a member of award-winning ensemble, Fretwork, with whom she had the privilege of performing consort music, both old and new.

Robin Bigwood (harpsichord) won the Broadwood Harpsichord Competition in 1995 and nowadays enjoys a career combining solo recitals, chamber music and orchestral continuo. Robin is a member of La Serenissima and Feinstein Ensemble and visiting teacher of harpsichord at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Also active in the field of recording and music technology, he works regularly as a producer, writes for *Sound on Sound* magazine, and founded the label Barn Cottage Records. He also directs the ensemble Art of Moog, formed in 2018, which plays Bach on synthesizers.