

Music from the Court of Frederick the Great

Tercentenary Concert

London Handel Players

Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford Wednesday, 17 October 2012, 8pm



Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages
University of Oxford



This concert forms part of a range of events organised by the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, University of Oxford, in the tercentenary year of the birth of Frederick the Great.

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COVER

Adolph Menzel, Flute Concert by Frederick the Great in Sanssouci, 1852

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Adolph Menzel (1815-1905) gained fame for his historical paintings of Frederick and his court. This painting – created some hundred years after the concerts it evokes – shows Frederick playing the flute, C.P.E. Bach at the harpsichord, and violinist Franz Benda in the foreground on the right. Frederick's flute teacher J.J. Quantz is on the far right, leaning against the wall. The audience includes Frederick's elder sister Wilhelmine sitting on the sofa, Hofkapellmeister Carl Heinrich Graun standing next to her, and in the background, looking at the ceiling, the mathematician Pierre-Louis Maupertuis, first President of the Berlin Academy.

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J.S. Bach

Musical Offering, BWV 1079

Ricercar a 6

Trio Sonata Largo; Allegro; Andante; Allegro

J.J. Quantz

Flute Concerto in A major, No. 256

Allegro di molto; Arioso ma con tenerezza; Presto

⇄ INTERVAL ⇄

Frederick II, King of Prussia

Flute Sonata in C minor

Recitativo-Arioso et Andante; Andante et Cantabile; (Allegro)

Franz Benda

Violin Concerto in D major

Third movement: Allegro

C.P.E. Bach

Flute Concerto in D minor, H425

Allegro; Un poco andante; Allegro di molto



Rachel Brown *Flute*

London Handel Players

Adrian Butterfield *Violin/Director*

Music from the Court of Frederick the Great

Frederick II, born in 1712, was King of Prussia from 1740 to 1786. He practised a form of 'enlightened absolutism' and gained fame across Europe as an extraordinarily multifaceted monarch, capturing the imagination of his contemporaries as 'Philosopher King' and 'Frederick the Great'. Unlike his father, who favoured German, he mainly spoke and wrote in French, and developed a high-profile friendship with Voltaire in order to gain a place among the cultural opinion-leaders of Europe. His bold military campaigns had a major impact on the European political landscape, and he established Prussia as a European power in the Seven Years' War (1756-63), which involved much of the contemporary world. He re-founded the Berlin Academy, attracting intellectuals especially from France, and put Berlin on the cultural map.

His father King Frederick William I, known as the 'Soldier King', was a Calvinist who had rejected baroque pomp in favour of a Spartan lifestyle that was focused on military values. While Frederick's mother Sophia Dorothea of Hanover – daughter of Great Britain's King George I and sister of George II – was at home in the world of learning and entertainment, fostering her children's love of French culture, his father banned all artistic pursuits for his son as effeminate. He subjected Frederick to a highly repressive regime that culminated in his incarceration for a year after a failed attempt to flee to Britain in 1730. Nevertheless music became Frederick's great passion, an expression of pleasure and an escape from the trials of his everyday duties at court. He shared this passion – alongside a love of dogs – with his elder sister and confidante Wilhelmine, who was to establish the musical culture of Bayreuth as Margravine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth. Frederick took his flute everywhere with him, practising in his tent even in times of war – it was his '*principessa*', the great love of his life, and rival to his sister's lute, her '*principe*'.

Reluctantly, Frederick married in 1733 but at least in his own residences in Ruppín and Rheinsberg he was afforded some degree of choice. On ascending the Prussian throne in 1740 following the death of his father, he was at last free to indulge his passion for art, literature, philosophy and, above all, music. He immediately set in motion lavish plans for an opera house in Berlin, attracting some of the finest singers of his day, and at his beloved Sanssouci palace in Potsdam, inaugurated in 1747, Frederick surrounded himself with an impressive entourage of outstanding musicians. These included various members of the Graun and Benda families, accompanist Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and the renowned flautist Johann Joachim Quantz. Flute lessons, which had previously taken place clandestinely, now became part of the daily schedule together with concerts at which Frederick reportedly played several sonatas and concertos every evening. He amassed a huge private repertoire, much of which has never been published. All the flute sonatas and concertos composed for Frederick testify to his impressive technical ability.





Antoine Pesne, King Frederick II, 1745
SPSG, GK I 51018, Photograph: Roland Handrick

Programme Notes

The programme of the Tercentenary Concert sets in stark contrast the regular musical fare at Frederick's court with the intellectual genius of the works of J.S. Bach, who visited his son C.P.E. Bach in 1747. The Berlin circle regarded the elder Bach's mathematical fugues with some disdain as 'music for the eyes', preferring the dramatic, soul-stirring and pleasurable works in the 'Empfindsamer Stil'.



Johann Sebastian Bach

Musical Offering, BWV 1079

Ricercar a 6

Trio Sonata Largo; Allegro; Andante; Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) composed the *Musical Offering* in 1747 as a gift to Frederick following a visit to Potsdam to see his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, who had been appointed as a court musician in 1738. This historic encounter is well documented. Although Bach was primarily on a family visit, together with his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, he was nevertheless called upon to inspect Frederick's keyboard collection and was publicly challenged by him to improvise a three-part fugue based on a theme provided by the King. This particular highly chromatic theme had been constructed in such a way as to prevent traditional canonic or fugal imitation. Impressively, Bach sat down and improvised what is now known as the three part Ricercar (standing for *Regis Iussu Cantio Et Reliqua Canonica Arte Resoluta* – the theme provided by the King, with additions, resolved in the canonic style). However, Frederick then demanded a piece in six parts! Bach demurred but offered a different six-part fugue. Whether out of humiliation or simply in response to the challenge, later that year Frederick received an engraved copy of the *Musicalisches Opfer*, an extraordinary set of pieces based upon the royal theme. Tonight's programme opens with the six-part Ricercar in an instrumental setting and the monumental Trio Sonata. Here the theme is buried within the second movement and elaborated in the fourth. Nevertheless, the melancholic chromaticism pervades the two very beautiful slower movements.





Johann Joachim Quantz

Flute Concerto in A major, No. 256

Allegro di molto; Arioso ma con tenerezza; Presto

The German flautist, flute maker and composer Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) is chiefly remembered as the author of a work on the art of playing the transverse flute, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, published in 1752. He wrote this extensive treatise for Frederick the Great, and it gives a rare insight into the performance practice of the time. Quantz was well known and respected as an extremely versatile, widely travelled and experienced musician. He had met and impressed Alessandro Scarlatti and Johann Adolph Hasse, and when he visited London in 1727 Handel apparently urged him to remain there. However, unlike Handel, Quantz returned to his employment in Germany at the thriving musical establishment of Augustus II the Strong in Dresden. It was here, on a state visit in 1728, that Frederick first heard Quantz play and from then on their lives were inextricably linked.

In 1741, Quantz was officially engaged as flute teacher and master of the chamber concerts to his most illustrious and fanatically keen pupil, the new King of Prussia, on a staggering salary of 2000 thalers per year. In addition he received bonuses for each new flute and every new composition he produced. The Concerto in A major is one of three hundred! Needless to say, Quantz became one of the richest musicians of his day. This particular concerto is bursting with vitality in the outer movements, whilst the middle movement is a lilting, almost classical serenade, doing much to dispel the contemporary English music critic Charles Burney's accusation that Quantz was merely churning out the same old formulae.



Frederick II, King of Prussia

Flute Sonata in C minor

Recitativo-Arioso et Andante; Andante et Cantabile; (Allegro)

As well as being a committed flautist, the Prussian monarch was a keen composer who produced some 120 flute sonatas and a few flute concertos. After hearing Hasse's *Cleofide* on that fateful visit to Dresden in 1728, Frederick became a passionate patron of Italian-style opera. The building of his grand opera house in Berlin was commenced within two months of his ascending the throne, and opened in 1742. For the next fourteen years two productions were staged each year during Carnival, and Frederick even composed some arias himself. He sketched the libretto for several stage works, including Carl Heinrich Graun's opera *Montezuma*; Frederick's French text was translated into Italian verse and then set to music.

The Flute Sonata in C minor opens, unusually, with a Recitativo, a heartfelt declamation without words which leads in and out of arioso sections, very much in the style of an operatic aria. The second movement is composed in the form of a da capo aria, allowing great scope for florid ornamentation in the style described in so much detail by his teacher, Quantz, and as practised by one of his prized string players, Franz Benda. The final movement is a rare example of Frederick composing in a fugal style.



Franz Benda

Violin Concerto in D major

Third movement: *Allegro*

Franz Benda (1709-86) started his musical career as a boy soprano, initially in Prague and then at the court in Dresden, and later gained considerable renown as a violinist. He was introduced to Frederick by Quantz and entered the service of the King in 1733, remaining at the Prussian court until his death. He was appointed lead violinist in Frederick's orchestra and estimated in his autobiography that he accompanied the King in 10,000 performances of flute concertos! He appealed to audiences especially with his affecting performance of lyrical adagios, and his style was emulated by many contemporary musicians. Many of his violin sonata movements, both fast and slow, have come down to us in several differently ornamented versions, offering a fascinating insight into his highly varied and decorative style of performance.

Benda composed mainly for the violin, producing symphonies, concertos and numerous sonatas. The Violin Concerto in D major consists of a lively but well-mannered rococo-style opening *Allegro* that is followed by a contrasting and much more intense B minor *Largo*. The finale, performed alone this evening, is rather more energetic than the first movement and the style is instantly recognisable in its similarity to that of Quantz and C.P.E. Bach in that the violin parts are largely in unison or thirds and the viola and bass parts work frequently in partnership, driving the music forward with their repeated notes and motor rhythms.



Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

Flute Concerto in D minor, H425

Allegro; Un poco andante; Allegro di molto

The Flute Concerto in D minor by C.P.E. Bach (1714-88) is an impassioned, virtuosic work, empowered by rhetorical declamation from start to finish. The outer, dark and dramatic movements frame an exquisitely melodious *Adagio*. Incredibly, Emanuel Bach's genius was rather overshadowed by the dominant flute teacher, Quantz, and he received a paltry salary by comparison. He composed a fair number of sonatas and concertos for the flute but perhaps because they were not often performed, all his flute concertos exist in alternative arrangements for keyboard or cello. Though no manuscript of the flute version of the D minor concerto survives in C.P.E. Bach's hand, this tour de force was certainly played on the flute, since difficult passages from the last movement appear in a surviving practice notebook, annotated with recommended double tonguing.



London Handel Players



The London Handel Players first performed together in 2000 as part of the London Handel Festival. They perform regularly at the Wigmore Hall and at festivals throughout Europe such as the Internationale Händel-Festspiele Göttingen. They have made several appearances in Canada, and their US debut in January 2012 included a concert at the Frick Collection celebrating the tercentenary of the birth of Frederick the Great. The members of the group pursue busy solo and directing careers, work with many of the major early-instrument ensembles in the UK and abroad, and bring together a wealth of recording experience. The Tercentenary Concert will be performed by the following members of the ensemble:

Rachel Brown, *Flute*

Adrian Butterfield, *Violin & Director*

Oliver Webber, Clare Salaman, *Violin*

Peter Collyer, *Viola*

Katherine Sharman, *Cello*

Peter Buckoke, *Double bass*

David Gordon, *Harpsichord*

Rachel Brown

Flute

Best known for her moving and virtuosic performances on a wide range of flutes and recorders, Rachel Brown is an acknowledged authority on historical performance practice. Her recital discs of French Baroque Music and Quantz Sonatas established her reputation, and her recording of virtuosic works by Schubert and Boehm on simple-system, ring-keyed and alto flutes has been described as 'a revelation'. As a soloist she has recorded extensively and toured in Europe, Japan and North America with a comprehensive concerto repertoire from J.S. Bach, Vivaldi and Telemann to Mozart. She has given many performances of the newly discovered Handel Flute Concerto and her championing of the works of the Berlin School has reawakened interest in largely unknown masterpieces by Quantz. Her dazzling recordings of the Quantz and C.P.E. Bach Concertos have won international acclaim.

A dedicated teacher, Rachel has given masterclasses in the USA, Canada, Sweden, Poland, Spain, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland and New Zealand; she is currently professor of baroque flute at the Royal College of Music. She is author of the Cambridge University Press handbook *The Early Flute*. Rachel has launched her own recording label and publishing house, Uppernote, with a tour de force recording of the complete Telemann Fantasias and *Private Passion*, Quantz sonatas composed for Frederick the Great. Last autumn she published a new edition of Quantz sonatas, and future plans include a baroque flute practice book and style guides to eighteenth-century articulation, ornamentation and cadenzas as well as a trill book for children and help with scales and sight reading.

Adrian Butterfield

Violin & Director

Adrian is a violinist, director and conductor who specialises in performing music from 1600-1900 on period instruments. A former chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral and a graduate of Trinity College Cambridge, he is Musical Director of the Tilford Bach Society and Associate Musical Director of the London Handel Festival. He regularly directs the London Handel Orchestra and Players and the Theatre of Early Music, Montreal, and is increasingly invited as a guest director in Europe and North America. He directs a baroque project annually with the Southbank Sinfonia, is Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal College of Music in London, teaches on the *Aestas Musica* Baroque Course in Croatia, and gives masterclasses in Europe and North America.

Repertoire conducted by Adrian includes Bach's *B minor Mass*, Handel's *La Resurrezione* and *Alcina*, Purcell's *Fairy Queen*, Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione di Anima e Corpo* and Rameau's *Pigmalion*, and concerto appearances include numerous baroque works, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with the LHO and rare performances on period instruments of the Beethoven Concerto with the Hanover Band. He has appeared on numerous recordings and with most of the period-instrument orchestras in London. His solo recordings include C.P.E. Bach sonatas (ATMA), Bach's Concerto for oboe and violin with John Abberger (Analekta) and Handel's Violin Sonatas (Somm). His recording of Leclair's 1st Book of sonatas (Naxos), issued on 3 separate CDs, was released in 2009 to great acclaim.



Concert Room in the Palace of Sanssouci

SPSG, Photograph: Daniel Lindner / Wolfgang Pfau

BACK COVER

Potsdam Palace Night 2007, Sanssouci Park, view of the Palace of Sanssouci across the fountain and terraces, 2007

© SPSC, Photograph: Daniel Lindner

Frederick was inspired to create the summer palace of Sanssouci while out on a ride in 1743, when he discovered the beautiful view from a hill just outside Potsdam during a picnic. Following his sketched outline, the court architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff built the palace in 1745-47. Frederick decreed that he should be buried there together with his dogs. The words sans souci – 'without cares' – are inscribed on the garden facade.

