

The Intimate Theatre of Handel

MONDAY

13

JULY
8 P.M.

ÉGLISE DE
SAINT-JEAN-DE-
MATHA

Presented by



PROGRAM

> GEORG FRIEDRICH HANDEL (1685-1759)

SONATA IN D MAJOR, HWV 371 - 12'
AFFETTUOSO - ALLEGRO - LARGHETTO -
ALLEGRO

SUITE FROM THE *WATER MUSIC*
HORNSPIPE - ARIA - LENTEMENT - UNTITLED
(BOURRÉE) - 10'

SONATA IN A MAJOR, HWV 372
ADAGIO - ALLEGRO - LARGO - ALLEGRO
8'

INTERMISSION - 20'

OVERTURE FROM *ARIODANTE*
HWV 33 - 5'

SONATA IN A MAJOR, HWV 361
ANDANTE - ALLEGRO - ADAGIO - ALLEGRO
8'

ALLEGRO FOR SOLO VIOLIN,
HWV 407 - 3'

SONATA IN G MINOR
OP. 1 N° 6, HWV 364A
LARGHETTO - ALLEGRO - ADAGIO - ALLEGRO
8'

TRIO SONATA OP. 5, N° 4 IN G MAJOR
HWV 399 III. PASSACAGLIA
5'

ARTISTS

Emmanuel Resche-Caserta, violin

William Christie, harpsichord

PROGRAM NOTES

For George Frideric Handel, peace is never a given. It is not a state but a conquest. Behind the “valiant Hallelujahs,” the virtuosity of the allegros or the sovereign grace of the gavottes, his language reveals a constant search for balance: between the individual and the community, between motion and rest, between human passions and a higher order that gives them meaning.

The journey proposed by Emmanuel Resche-Caserta and William Christie might be heard as a meditation on this fertile tension. The sonatas and the transcriptions converse around a single aspiration: to transform energy into harmony—like a channel through which emotion flows with an economy of means of crystalline purity. Handel most likely composed sonatas throughout his life; they are his finest autobiography.

In the Sonata in D major, each movement seems to seek its rightful breath. The *Affettuoso* never wholly surrenders to melancholy; it establishes an inner space where expression remains contained, almost meditative. The rapid episodes that follow do not break this balance; on the contrary, they prolong its momentum, as though the *perpetuum mobile* were itself a form of stability.

The suite after the Water Music belongs to another world: that of political representation. Composed to accompany the royal navigation on the Thames, it celebrates authority without ever sacrificing musical invention. The dances chosen here—Hornpipe, Aria, *Lentement* and

Bourrée—trace an art of measure where pomp yields to the fluidity of the discourse. Water becomes less a votive décor than the image of a world able to follow the currents without losing its cohesion.

This idea also runs through the sonatas in A major. Here Handel favours a stripped-back, almost conversational eloquence. Each phrase seems to answer the previous one with an obviousness that never excludes surprise. The contrasts do not oppose one another; they complement one another. The silences breathe as much as the notes, a reminder that balance arises as much from what is withheld as from what is expressed.

The overture to *Ariodante* holds a singular place in this itinerary. Behind the French solemnity inherited from Lully, the theatre of the passions already appears. The opera tells of a threatened innocence, a trust broken before being restored. This dramatic trajectory sums up a great part of the Handelian aesthetic: disorder is never an end in itself but the necessary trial of a deeper order.

PROGRAM NOTES

(Sequel)

The Allegro for solo violin reveals another facet of the composer. Deprived of harmonic support, the instrument becomes its own interlocutor. The writing then concentrates all of Handel's contrapuntal vitality in a single voice capable of sounding several planes of thought at once. This solitude is not isolation; it becomes an inner dialogue.

The Sixth Sonata of Opus 1 brings this reflection to its fulfilment. The alternation of the Larghetto, the two Allegro movements and the Adagio sounds a balance endlessly recomposed between gravity and impulse. Nothing here remains still; everything is ordered according to a breathing that recalls the natural order of the seasons or of the tides. And this eternal renewal recurs later in Handel's works, among them the overture to *Siroe* of 1728.

The famous Passacaglia is drawn from the Trio Sonata of Opus 5. The ground bass, tirelessly repeated, never confines the imagination; on the contrary, it builds a foundation from which the variations unfold with an ever-renewed freedom. In Handel, permanence is not the opposite of change—it is its primordial condition.

This lesson remains strikingly timely. In an age when balance often seems fragile, this music reminds us that peace proceeds neither from stillness nor from uniformity. It arises from mutual listening, from a dialogue between differences, from a trust in the capacity of opposing forces to find their right proportion. Beneath the apparent simplicity of these chamber forms, the most intimate portrait of the Caro Sassone seems to call us to live in the “sweetest Harmony” amid troubled times.

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