

Wednesday 11 March 2026 | 7.30pm
West Road Concert Hall,
Cambridge

Thursday 12 March 2026 | 7.30pm
Milton Court Concert Hall,
London

Gambarini: English Impresaria

2025-26

ACADEMY *of*
ANCIENT
MUSIC

Haydn in Paris

Paris in 1780s: the musical playground of Europe

Wednesday 12 November 2025 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Friday 14 November 2025 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Handel's Messiah

A Christmas tradition we've made our own

Monday 15 December 2025 | Barbican Hall, London

Songs of Love and War

Monteverdi's genre-defying Madrigals

Wednesday 11 February 2026 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

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Gambarini: English Impresaria

Elegance, exuberance and one remarkable woman

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The Chosen One

Leipzig's got talent: JS Bach and his competitors

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Thursday 16 April 2026 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Rhythm Across Time

An ingenious musical voyage across five centuries

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Handel's Serse

Handel's sensational opera of love and power

Friday 19 June 2026 | Barbican Hall, London

2025-26

ACADEMY *of*
ANCIENT
MUSIC

Mhairi Lawson soprano

Academy of Ancient Music

Bojan Čičić director & violin

HANDEL Overture and 'Pious orgies' from Judas Maccabaeus

GAMBARINI (arr. Rachel Stroud)

Orchestrated music from Six Sets of Lessons
for the Harpsichord, Op. 1

HANDEL 'Come, ever-smiling liberty'

GEMINIANI Concerto Grosso, Op. 7 No. 6

INTERVAL

TESSARINI Overture in D major 'La Stravaganza', Op. 4

HANDEL 'O liberty' from An Occasional Oratorio

TESSARINI Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 1 No. 7

GAMBARINI (arr. Rachel Stroud)

'Behold and Listen'

Canzonetta: 'Se mai fosse la mia forte'

Minuet in A major

HANDEL March from Judas Maccabaeus

HANDEL 'Prophetic raptures' from Joseph and his Brethren

Wednesday 11 March 2026, 7.30pm
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Milton Court Concert Hall, London



Academy of Ancient Music was founded in 1973, with a mission that seemed revolutionary at the time. It began with a simple, radical question: what could historical research tell us about the way the composers of the 17th and 18th centuries approached their music? Our founder, the harpsichordist Christopher Hogwood, hoped that ‘by studying their manuscripts and instruments, by returning to the colours, the style and clarity of their individual periods, we can rediscover their works.’

It was a bold ambition. AAM was not alone in its field, but it was in the vanguard, making recordings of Handel, Purcell, Mozart and many more that have helped to define the way we play – and listen – today. We’re proud of our recordings (more than 300), and of our partnerships with some of the most inspirational and inquisitive artists in the field, such as Richard Egarr and Robert Levin – with whom, in 2024, we completed the first ever recorded cycle of Mozart’s complete works for keyboard and orchestra.

Today, under the direction of Laurence Cummings, AAM is reaffirming its founding values. We manage our own record label, and through our education programme AAMplify we’re sharing our expertise with emerging performers and listeners. Above all, we give live performances that

put our principles and our scholarship into living, inspirational practice.

For our audiences, the results can be transformative; refreshing, in fact, in all sorts of surprising ways. ‘The music doesn’t just wash over you’ is one reaction that we’ve heard: ‘You’re pulled into each part ... rawer and more elemental, and yet softer, organic.’ That’s the aim, of course. Great art should be startling, vital, moving – but never routine. In its sixth decade AAM continues to explore: uncovering forgotten repertoire, and charging even familiar classics with an emotional conviction that sweeps away barriers and unites performer and listener alike. You might even call it transcendent. To discover the world anew is one of life’s most fulfilling experiences – one that AAM aims to share every time it plays.



Welcome

from
John McMunn,
Chief Executive

Underlying Academy of Ancient Music's mission to delight and inspire audiences the world over with historically informed performances of baroque and classical music of the highest quality is a set of core beliefs. Amongst these is a belief in the inherent value of historical performance and a commitment to furthering its development, as well as an acknowledgment of the need to address historical inequities in the arts. This evening's programme, I hope, goes some way to satisfying both.

We speak in shorthand of classical music being written by 'dead white men' but – as has been shown time and time again – this is far from the whole story. In recent seasons, AAM has explored the works of the freed slave Ignatius Sancho (*Sons of England* in the 2023–24 season) and celebrated the genius of the 'Brazilian Mozart' José Mauricio Nunes Garcia (*Transatlantic*, 2024–25). Tonight, we shine a light on no less a figure in Elisabetta da Gambarini, a musical force of nature: impresaria, composer and performer, celebrated in her day but all but forgotten now. Alongside her imaginative and richly evocative works, we perform music by some of her contemporaries – Tessarini, Geminiani and some bloke you've probably never heard of called Handel – to create a snapshot of her cultural milieu, a moment with which we think we are familiar but that becomes delightfully strange with a simple change of perspective.

I'm hugely grateful to AAM's AHRC Research Fellow Leo Duarte and Dr Rachel Stroud for their work curating and realising this evening's programme, as well as to our acclaimed musicians – directed from the violin by AAM's Leader Bojan Čičić – for bringing it vividly to life as only they can. And to you, dear reader, for joining us on this voyage of discovery. Hang on tight and enjoy the ride.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'John McMunn' followed by a stylized flourish.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Overture and 'Pious orgies' from Judas Maccabaeus, HWV63 (1746)

Elisabetta de Gambarini (1730-65) (arr. Rachel Stroud)

Orchestrated music from Six Sets of Lessons for the Harpsichord, Op. 1 (c. 1747)

March, 2nd movement from Sonata IV in G major

Grazioso, 1st movement from Sonata II in D major

Siciliana Andante, 2nd movement from Sonata V in A minor

[No tempo indication], last movement from Sonata II in D major

George Frideric Handel

'Come, ever-smiling liberty' from Judas Maccabaeus

Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762)

Concerto Grosso in B flat major, Op. 7 No. 6 (1746)

Allegro moderato – Andante Adagio – Presto | Affettuoso |

Allegro moderato | Andante | Adagio

INTERVAL 20 MINUTES

Carlo Tessarini (1690-1766)

Ouverture in D major 'La Stravaganza', Op. 4 (1736)

George Frideric Handel

'O liberty' from An Occasional Oratorio, HWV62 (1746)

Carlo Tessarini

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 1 No. 7 (c. 1715)

Elisabetta de Gambarini (arr. Rachel Stroud)

Lessons and Songs, Op. 2 (1748):

'Behold and Listen' (Song I)

Canzonetta: 'Se mai fosse la mia forte' (Song IV)

Minuet in A major (Lesson III)

Minuet | Variation 1 | Variation 2 | Variation 3

George Frideric Handel

March from Judas Maccabaeus

'Prophetic raptures' from Joseph and his Brethren, HWV59 (1744)

Texts are on page 12

Gambarini: English Impresaria

Mayfair, 1730: Giovanna Stradiotti was in labour. An opera singer with an international career, Stradiotti had been performing in London since 1714 and was among the first wave of ambitious Italians to try to persuade the British public that Italian opera was superior to native musico-dramatic forms. Unfortunately, she failed to charm them. Francis Colman, in his Register of Operas, called her 'a very bad singer', and Handel, the talk of the musical town, was never tempted to hire her for his own performances. Undeterred, in 1722 Stradiotti was in Hamburg singing in a production of Handel's *Radamisto*, and in Dublin in 1725 she sang arias from Handel's *Ottone*, *Rodelinda* and *Giulio Cesare*. While in Dublin, Stradiotti married Carlo Gambarini, counsellor to Frederick I of Sweden and a collector of fine art. The pair returned to London by 1728. Two years later the couple's second daughter, Elisabetta, was born.

We know very little about Elisabetta de Gambarini's early life, but her first teacher was almost certainly her mother, herself a respected music teacher. Recognising her daughter's prodigious gifts, Stradiotti likely engaged Francesco Geminiani to enrich her education. Geminiani began his career as a violinist, though orchestral life seems not to have suited him. Charles Burney reported that, while in Naples, Geminiani suffered the indignation of being demoted from first violin to viola because he couldn't play in time. In 1714, around the same time as Stradiotti, Geminiani decided to leave Italy and make his way to London where, it is said, he was presented to King George I to whom he played sonatas accompanied by none other than Handel. After years dividing his time between Dublin, Paris, and London – as musician and art dealer – he settled again in London around 1741. It may have been then that he began teaching the eleven-year-old Gambarini in earnest.

By 1741 Handel had produced his last Italian opera. After his Dublin triumph with *Messiah*, and in response to renewed Italian operatic competition in London, he turned

his focus to English music-drama in the form of oratorio. Following on the heels of *Samson* and *Semele*, *Joseph and His Brethren* was first performed at Covent Garden on 1 March 1744 and became one of his most frequently revived oratorios. The aria '**Prophetic raptures**' was originally composed for the French soprano Elisabeth Duparc, ('La Francesina'), but a note in an early manuscript tantalisingly suggests that Gambarini may have sung in a 1747 revival.

In 1745 Geminiani had thrown his lot in with the Italian opera companies. His *pasticcio* opera *L'incostanza delusa*, was performed that February at the Haymarket theatre, the site of many of Handel's operatic triumphs. Between the acts, Geminiani's **Op. 7 Concerti Grossi** were played; published the following year and dedicated 'alla Celebra Accademia della buona ed antica Musica' (to the celebrated Academy of Good and Ancient Music). A handsome set of partbooks for these pieces now resides in the library at Westminster Abbey, probably the presentation set received by the original Academy of Ancient Music, of which Geminiani was a founder member.



Elisabetta de Gambarini by Nathaniel Horne

In August 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie – son of James Stuart, the Old Pretender – landed a Jacobite invasion force in Scotland which, by September, had taken the city of Edinburgh in the name of the Stuarts in opposition to the Hanoverian king, George II. Tensions had simmered since the last Jacobite rising in 1715, and foreigners, especially Catholics, were viewed with particular suspicion. A 1733 pamphlet titled *Do you know what you are about* all but names G[eminia]ni, S[en]esi[n]o, Catsoni (=Cuzzoni), and ‘G[a]mb[a]r[i]ni, the Picture-monger’ as spies for foreign powers. This Gambarini was almost certainly Elisabetta’s father.

At the age of 16, Gambarini’s precocious talent had come to the notice of the 62-year-old Handel, who employed her for his 1746-47 season to sing at the premieres of *An Occasional Oratorio* and *Judas Maccabaeus*. **An Occasional Oratorio** is unusual in that it does not tell a narrative story but rather deals more

broadly with war, peace and victory. It was essentially a propaganda piece, written in support of the Duke of Cumberland’s pursuit of the Jacobite rebels and was given its first performance at Covent Garden on 14 February 1746. ‘**O liberty**’ was originally intended to be included in *Judas Maccabaeus* but it found its way into the Oratorio and was tailor-made for Gambarini’s vocal talents.

The run of performances of **Judas Maccabaeus** began on 1 April 1747. The **March** was a later insertion, originally composed for Handel’s 1748 oratorio *Joshua* but found longer-lasting fame when Handel introduced it into revivals of *Judas Maccabaeus*. Gambarini does not seem to have sung for Handel after 1747 but her name does appear in annotations to manuscript scores of *Messiah* and *Samson*, suggesting that she was considered for later revivals.

London was a place where women could make a good living for themselves, particularly in the field of music as singers, but Gambarini set her sights higher. On 9 May 1747 an announcement appeared in *The Daily Advertiser*:

MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT
When Miss Gambarini will sing several new Italian Airs, and two Songs in English, at the Request of several Ladies of Quality, viz. O Liberty, from the occasional Oratorio, and the Pious Orgies from Judas Maccabeus; she will also perform several Sonatas on the Harpsichord, and upon the Organ, which she never play’d before in publick; she will play a Concerto, a Capriccio; besides Mr. Handell’s March in the Oratorio of Judas Macabes; with an Overture of Sig. Tessarini, playd by him.

The reference to playing the organ is noteworthy as being the first mention of a woman playing the organ in public in Britain. Later that year, in Bath, Gambarini gave a similar concert which included:

*Two English Favourite SONGS
in JUDAS MACCABEUS,
Pious Orgies, and Come
Ever-Smiling Liberty.
She will perform, on the HARPSICORD,
several New Pieces,
compos'd by the best Masters.
Also, for the Satisfaction of
the SUBSCRIBERS,
She will play some of the **Six Sets
of Lessons for the Harpsicord,**
of her own Composing.*

With these sets of lessons, Gambarini would become the first woman in Britain to publish a collection of her own compositions by subscription. Handel was named on the printed list of subscribers, as was Geminiani, and the aforementioned Signor Tessarini. Born in Rimini, Carlo Tessarini worked as a violinist at St Mark's, Venice, from 1720-35. He arrived in London in 1747 though his compositions had already been published there since 1725 when a pirated collection of *Concerti a Cinque* were published as his Op. 1. The overture **La Stravaganza** was also published illicitly, probably around 1736. These pirated publications, though earning the composer no money, would certainly have served to advance Tessarini's name, as would his appearances with the young, entrepreneurial Gambarini.

Gambarini continued to organise concerts until 1764, inviting many of London's finest musicians to perform alongside her. She not only booked the venues and artists, she sold the tickets, composed the music, performed as a singer and a keyboard player

and directed the musical ensemble. She also continued her late father's business as a picture-monger, often holding exhibitions at which musical entertainments were advertised to enhance custom. Sadly, all that survives of Gambarini's music is what she published herself. These amount to three small collections of keyboard pieces and some songs, though concert advertisements attest that she composed works for larger instrumental forces. The published music, often in short score, includes indications of where orchestral interludes might have been present. With this in mind, Dr Rachel Stroud has arranged several items from Gambarini's published works as orchestral pieces which we hope will present them in a way in which Gambarini would have approved.

In March 1764, Gambarini married Étienne Chazell, the Master of the Horse to the French ambassador. Her story then took a harrowing turn. Chazell was an abusive husband. Stradiotti testified to a magistrate that her son-in-law, 'beat and treated his Wife in a very bad and brutal manner in so much that the Neighbourhood, have been frequently alarmed with her cries of murder from the Windows of her Apartment on those Occasions.' When officers attempted to arrest Chazell at the ambassador's residence, they were assaulted and locked in a room, giving Chazell the chance to flee to France. A major diplomatic incident ensued, which resulted in Chazell escaping prosecution. Gambarini died in February the following year, aged only 35. The cause of her death was not reported, but it is likely that she died giving birth to a daughter, Giovanna Georgiana Chazell.

Programme note © Leo Duarte

Orchestral Arrangements

Peals of bells, heart-felt folk songs, raucous hunting calls and military marches. Perhaps not sounds that immediately evoke the music of a mid-18th-century female composer. 'Feminine' music making at this time was typically viewed as a domestic pursuit: virtuous, delicate, polite, constrained to the four walls of the salon. However, Elisabetta da Gambarini's Six Sets of Lessons for the Harpsichord, Op. 1 paint a very different picture. The context for performance might have been private and intimate, but the music acts as a portal to the outside world, conjuring with delicious immediacy the sounds, sensations and styles of the court, the theatre and even the streets. Throughout her Op. 1 sonatas we hear allusions to hunting horns, folk-like siciliennes, and courtly dances, and we encounter a 'Tambourin' and a 'Cariglion' in her Op. 2. My orchestral arrangements of these vivid keyboard works simply amplify what Gambarini already invited us to hear.

The 'orchestral suite' begins with a stately – and sometimes quirky – March from her Sonata IV; a nod to the March from *Judas Maccabaeus*, but also a fitting way to announce Gambarini's arrival on stage. The use of buoyant quaver motion in the first movement of Sonata II takes inspiration from the symphonic writing of another of Gambarini's contemporaries, William Boyce. Next comes a poignant Siciliana in A minor – surely a reference to her Italian heritage – from her Sonata V, before the final movement of Sonata II: an extravaganza of hunting horns.

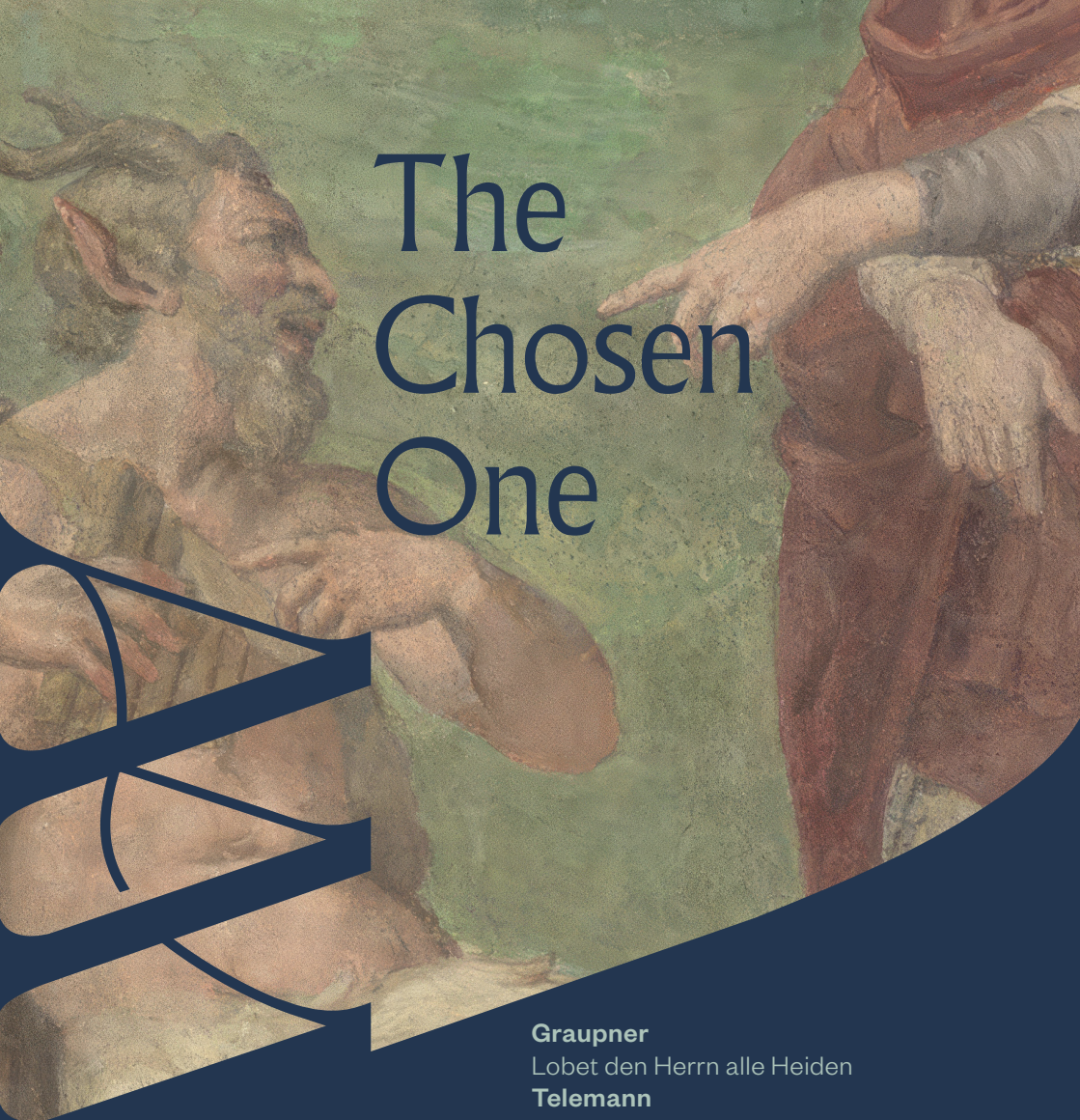
I've taken more formal liberty with the two songs that I selected from her Op. 2, Lessons for the Harpsichord Intermix'd with Italian and English Songs. 'Behold and Listen', a text set in a radiant D major, evokes

contemporary ideas of awe at the naivety and beauty of nature. I composed a new introduction that turned the rising fifth motif on the word 'Behold' into bird calls between a solo traverso and violin, set over a pastoral drone. For the Canzonetta: 'Se mai fosse la mia forte' I feature one of my favourite Handelian colours: the dark, yet gorgeously rich, combination of viola and bassoon. It begins with a stark, bleak opening, before orchestral interpolations propelled by hemiolas add warmth and expression.

It has been a privilege to work on this project, and I hope that these arrangements showcase Gambarini's music in its full technicolour glory.

Programme note © Dr Rachel Stroud

Rachel Stroud is a violinist and musicologist specialising in historical performance. She holds a doctorate from King's College, Cambridge and previously studied baroque violin at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Kati Debretzeni and Walter Reiter. Rachel performs and records internationally with leading period-instrument ensembles, including Solomon's Knot and English Baroque Soloists, and has been a member of the Swiss-based orchestra Les Passions de L'Ame since 2014. Closer to home, she appears as leader and director of ensembles such as Norwich Baroque, Bury Baroque, and her own group, The Geldart Ensemble. A committed chamber musician, she recently formed a duo with harpsichordist Andrew Arthur and is a founding member of the Cambridge String Quartet. Alongside her performing career, Rachel writes programme notes for a variety of record labels and orchestras such as OAE, teaches at the University of Cambridge, and serves as an examiner for ABRSM.



The Chosen One

Graupner

Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden

Telemann

Ich muß auf den Bergen weinen und heulen

JS Bach

Du wahrer Gott und Davids Sohn BWV 23

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Nick Pritchard tenor

Ben Kazez bass

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Texts

HANDEL – JUDAS MACCABAEUS

Pious orgies

Pious orgies, pious airs,
Decent sorrow, decent pray'rs,
Will to the Lord ascend, and move
His pity, and regain His love.

Come, ever-smiling liberty

Come, ever-smiling liberty,
And with thee bring thy jocund train.
For thee we pant, and sigh for thee,
With whom eternal pleasures reign.

O liberty

O liberty, thou choicest treasure,
Seat of virtue, source of pleasure!
Life, without thee, knows no blessing,
No endearment worth caressing.

GAMBARINI

Behold and Listen

Behold and listen while the Fair
Breaths in sweet sounds the yielding air.
And with her own breath fans the fire
Which her bright eyes did first inspire.

Canzonetta: Se mai fosse la mia forte

Se mai fosse la mia forte
Di poter a voi piacer
L'al ma mia sempre piu forte
Diverrebbe nel saper.

*If ever my strength
Were able to please you
My soul would become ever stronger
in knowing.*

HANDEL –

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

Prophetic raptures

Prophetic raptures swell my breast,
And whisper we shall still be blest;
That this black gloom shall break away,
And leave more heav'nly bright the day.

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Cover image: Thomas Gainsborough *Portrait of Ann Ford* (1760)



Bojan Čičić

director &
violin

Croatian-born violinist Bojan Čičić has established himself as one of the leading names on the early music scene, as both a soloist and music director.

Alongside his duties as Leader of Academy of Ancient Music, he directs ensembles including Lyra Baroque Orchestra, De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Dunedin Consort, Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and Phion Orkest van Gelderland & Overijssel. As a soloist he has performed with AAM, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Kioi Hall Chamber Orchestra Tokyo and Orquesta Barocca de Sevilla. In May 2025 he was appointed Artistic Director of the Lyra Baroque Orchestra in St Paul, Minnesota.

Bojan formed his own group, the Illyria Consort, which explores and specialises in lesser-known repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries. Illyria Consort's debut album of Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli: Sonate da Camera on Delphian Records received great critical acclaim and won Presto Recordings of the Year Award in 2017 and, in collaboration with Marian Consort, *Adriatic Voyage* won the same award in 2021. The same year saw

the release of *Pyrotechnia* featuring Italian virtuoso violin concertos by Vivaldi, Tartini and Locatelli ('a thrilling musical discovery', *Classical Music Daily*).

In 2022, Illyria Consort released the first ever complete recording of Johann Jacob Walther: *Scherzi da Violino* ('enviously spontaneous and carefree', *Gramophone*), as well as an album of Christmas instrumental music titled *La Notte*. Their latest release of Heinrich Biber: *Violin Sonatas 1681* was named *Gramophone's* Recording of the Month.

Bojan's recording of JS Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas* was nominated for the Critic's Choice 2023 in *Gramophone* and Editor's Choice in *BBC Music Magazine*.

In 2016, Bojan was appointed Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal College of Music, and is passionate about training the next generation of instrumentalists in historically informed performing styles.



Mhairi Lawson

soprano

Mhairi Lawson has performed in opera houses and concert halls worldwide. In the UK, she has regularly collaborated with such companies as Gabrieli Consort & Players, English National Opera, Early Opera Company and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and with many leading conductors including William Christie, Sir Charles Mackerras, Paul McCreesh, Jane Glover and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, in repertoire ranging from traditional folksong to opera.

Last season, she performed Mozart's *Requiem* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and a Netherlands tour of the piece with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, and returned to the London Handel Festival, the Gabrieli Consort, and also La Serenissima for an Ariosti oratorio at Wigmore Hall.

Recent highlights include performances of Handel's *Messiah* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and with Orquesta de Castilla y León, Bach's *Mass in B minor* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht, regular residencies at the Carmel Bach Festival in the USA, and performances of Purcell's *King Arthur* on tour with the Gabrieli Consort, and also with the Early Opera Company.

With Les Arts Florissants, Mhairi has performed dramatic music by Purcell, Charpentier, Landi and Monteverdi at the Cité de la Musique, Paris,

throughout Europe, and London's Barbican Centre and Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Further afield, Mhairi has sung Bach's *St John Passion* in New York's Lincoln Centre and in Weimar, Germany, and *King Arthur* with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Francisco.

Her many recordings, including Haydn's *Creation* with the Choir of New College, Oxford, conducted by Edward Higginbottom, Scottish Jacobite Songs on the Avison Ensemble's CD *Rebellion*, and two discs of Schubert Lieder, including the vocal *tour de force*, *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, with clarinettist Jane Booth and pianist Eugene Asti. Mhairi also features on Les Arts Florissants' 2017 release of Monteverdi Madrigals vol. 3 'Venezia' for Harmonia Mundi, which was a finalist for the *Gramophone* Baroque Vocal Award.



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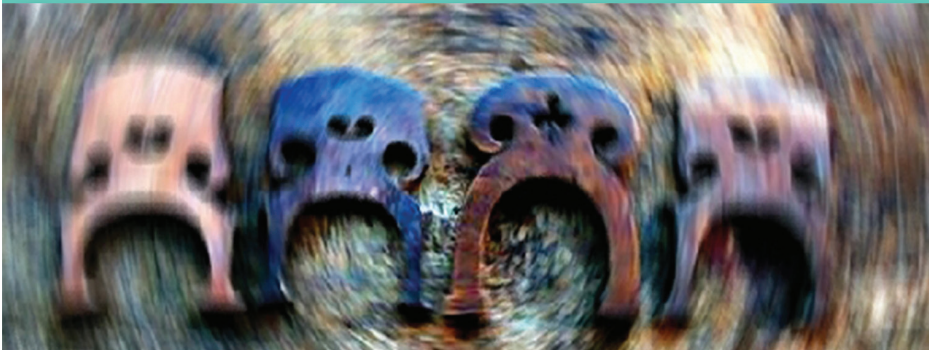
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Instruments of AAM

At AAM we don't use ordinary musical instruments. We aim to use the types of instruments that were around at the time the composers were writing the music we play. Through hands-on engagement with this ancient technology we believe this adds a freshness to our music-making and allows us to bring out details in the music which might be obscured by today's modern technology.

Leo Duarte, AHRC Research Fellow



exploitation of a wide dynamic range. Bow design underwent significant changes through the 18th century with the stick gradually growing more parallel to the hair and eventually a concave model, very similar to modern-day bows, was developed by the French Tourte family at the end of the century.

The **violin family** evolved into a recognisable form in the middle of the 16th century. Instruments such as the medieval fiddle had been used to play dance music in the previous centuries but makers experimented with different sizes of instruments and created consorts with larger and smaller instruments until around 1650. The Italians standardised models with four strings tuned in fifths, and began to exploit the instruments' potential outside of dance music. The violin's body length was the first to become standardised around 1700, the viola varied in size between c38-c48cm. Cellos eventually became standardised at c75cm around the start of the 19th century but previously had varied in size between c53-c80cm. Today, cello-shaped instruments with a larger body are often called 'bass violins' in order to distinguish them from the cello.

Baroque bows were convex in shape and were strung with horsehair. Their lengths varied from shorter and lighter bows, facilitating a more articulate style, to longer and heavier models which encouraged a more singing style and allowed an easier

The **strings** themselves were made of animal gut, which gave the sound a more rounded quality when compared to modern steel strings. During the course of the 18th century, players began to experiment with winding a layer of metal over the gut core which, according to an English commentator, sounded, 'much better and lower'.

The **playing position** of the violin and viola was less uniform than it has become today. Many players rested the instrument somewhere on the chest or against the collar-bone instead of gripping it underneath the chin, a position which has no need of supporting structures such as chin- or shoulder-rests. The cello was usually held between the legs without the support of a spike. Baroque violins, violas and cellos have a shorter fingerboard which is less steeply angled away from the body and a bridge which is lower and less rounded than on modern instruments, though by the end of the 18th century these fittings reached proportions which have remained largely unchanged.

AAM's leader, Bojan Ōičić, plays a 1701 violin by G Tononi of Bologna.

During the 18th century, **double basses** were called 'contrabasso', 'violone', or 'violone grosso', though the names did not necessarily correspond to different instruments. Instruments had between three and six strings and were usually shaped like a viol, with sloping shoulders and a flat back. They often had frets and were strung with very thick strings made of animal gut, sometimes overwound with metal.

One of the most common types, a six-string instrument which today we call the G-Violone, played at the same pitch as the cello though its lowest string could play a fourth lower. Another six-string instrument, the so-called D-Violone, extended the entire range a further fourth lower but its size made it somewhat unwieldy and

impractical. Four-string instruments tuned an octave below the cello were developed in Italy in the late seventeenth century though their spread across Europe was slow and limited. During the middle of the 18th century there was a localised Viennese vogue for instruments with five strings and a distinctive tuning system which was particularly suited for virtuoso solo repertoire.



The **oboe** was developed in France in the mid-17th century in a process which tamed the boisterous nature of the shawm. The internal bore was modified and the reed was controlled by the players' lips, allowing performers a more nuanced and dynamic control over tone production.

The oboe spread rapidly across Europe and was generally made of boxwood with a reed made of cane attached to a metal tube. Up until about 1800 it was furnished with only two keys which, like the other Baroque woodwind instruments, meant that chromatic notes had to be achieved by using complex fingerings.

These notes all had individual colours which composers exploited to subtle artistic ends. Later in the eighteenth century the internal bore of the instrument was modified again, making it narrower, which favoured the upper registers of the instrument and made its sound more penetrating and distinct.



The **bassoon** was modelled after an earlier instrument called the curtal, or dulcian. Designs created in the middle of the 17th century by the same French makers who developed the oboe spread across Europe alongside those of its smaller cousin. The bassoon initially functioned as the bass instrument to the oboe band but quickly found a place reinforcing the bass section of the orchestra more generally. Composers also began to exploit the bassoon as a solo instrument with Vivaldi writing perhaps the most famous corpus of concertos for the instrument.

Initially made with only three keys, a fourth was

added in the first part of the 18th century to aid one of the more intractable notes which otherwise had to be produced by an acoustically awkward fingering. As the 18th century progressed, up to five more keys were added and the internal bore of the instrument was narrowed which, as with the oboe, allowed composers increasingly to exploit the upper registers of the instrument.





The **horn** is essentially a brass tube with a conical taper. In the middle of the 17th century, in France, it was first coiled around to form a hoop and Lully was the first composer to introduce the horns into an operatic hunting scene in *La princesse d'Elide* (1664). The horn could play only notes in the harmonic series which required players to have separate instruments to play in different keys. In

the middle of the 18th century makers developed interchangeable crooks so that horns could be played in every tonality though they couldn't modulate to another key without taking time to change the crooks.

From the first decades of the 18th century players began experimenting with putting the hand in the bell of the instrument which subtly modified the pitch of the notes while also changing the character of the sound. Over the course of the century this technique was explored to such a virtuosic degree that most chromatic notes could be played and composers began deliberately to exploit the characteristic colour changes of these non-harmonic notes.



The **harpsichord** developed in the late-14th century, most likely in Northern Europe. The defining feature of this keyboard instrument is the plucking action on the strings. The key, controlled by the player's finger, raises a jack which houses a quill. This quill plucks the string as it passes upwards, and pivots away silently from the string on the way down thanks to a connecting

sprung axel. Finally the string is damped by a piece of cloth at the top of the jack. The strings themselves were made either from brass or iron.

A second keyboard, or manual, was often added to instruments around the end of the 16th century which allowed a second set of strings, tuned an octave higher, to be played independently. In the middle of the 17th century, French makers added a third set of strings tuned to the same notes as the lower octave. Plucked further down the length of the string, this created a subtly softer sound. Makers also found ways of coupling the keyboards so that single keys could sound each string-set individually or in combination.

The latest surviving harpsichord was made in 1800 after which the piano became the most prevalent keyboard instrument.

Have your say

We love to hear your feedback. Here's what you said about *Songs of Love & War* last month in London and Cambridge

The Monteverdi: *Songs of Love and War* on 11 February was truly exceptional, even for the AAM's high standards. One of the best concerts I have been to for some time.

Tancredi e Clorinda was the greatest musical experience I have had for many months.

This concert was amazing! It was so engaging. I wasn't familiar with Monteverdi before but absolutely loved it, the performance really was one of a kind. I attend classical concerts fairly frequently, but haven't been this excited about one in a long time. Thank you for having the under-35 tickets.

Fantastic music and such a treat to have such top-tier singers join the orchestra. Beautifully programmed and staged. My only negative comment would be about the venue and its entrance/exit pinch point.

Thanks for the surtitles – made it all more meaningful during the concert.

We have been coming to AAM concerts for over 20 years and would count last Wednesday's performance as one of the top five. The individual performers were top class, the delivery was polished and so emotive. The overall production was completely professional – well done Laurence Cummings.

My first AAM concert – one of the most enjoyable concerts I have ever seen. The orchestra, singers and soloists were excellent. Also loved the venue.

Keep an eye out for our post-concert survey email, and tell us what you think about this evening's concert.



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