

Love, Sorrow and Seduction

Galway Early Music Festival
Lunchtime Concert

22nd May 2021, 1pm

Streamed from the Mick Lally Theatre, Galway

Helen Hancock, soprano
Anita Vedres, violin
Sarah Groser, viola da gamba
Yonit Kosovske, harpsichord

Tu del ciel ministro eletto (Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno)	George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
Lascia ch'io pianga (Rinaldo)	George Frideric Handel
Tornami a vagheggiar (Alcina)	George Frideric Handel
Violin sonata in D major HWV 371 Affetuoso 2. Allegro 3. Larghetto 4. Allegro	George Frideric Handel 1.
Tristes apprêts (Castor et Pollux)	Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764)
V'adoro pupille (Guilio Cesare in Egitto)	George Frideric Handel
Pianger la sorte mia (Guilio Cesare in Egitto)	George Frideric Handel
Pièces de clavecin en concerts (Troisième concert) 1. La Lapoplinière 2. La Timide (Premier Rondeau gracieux, Deuxième Rondeau gracieux) 3. Premier Tambourin, Deuxième Tambourin en Rondeau	Jean-Philippe Rameau

PROGRAMME NOTES

In the eighteenth century, opera roles provided one of the few opportunities for women to achieve an acknowledged career in music, with the possibility of a high public profile and remuneration comparable to that of leading male singers. Both Handel and Rameau worked with the most famous Divas of the day, and wrote arias filled with emotion and beauty for them. Today you will hear six arias that run the gamut of the expression and emotion that is such a part of Baroque music. The arias are complimented by two instrumental pieces, one by Handel and one by Rameau.

George Frideric Handel (1685 -1759) was born in Halle, Germany where at a young age he began studying the principles of keyboard and composition. He worked for one year as organist of the Reformed Cathedral in Halle before heading north to Hamburg. In Hamburg he joined the Opera orchestra in the violin section, and occasionally was the harpsichordist. He premiered his first opera, *Almira*, in 1705. In 1706, Handel traveled to Italy and spent four years in the home of opera and oratorio, before bringing his cosmopolitan musical style to London. He became a naturalized British subject in 1727. Italian opera was central to his career for 35 years and arias continued to feature heavily in his subsequent English oratorios of which *Messiah* is the most famous.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) was born in Dijon in France. His father, who was an organist, wanted his son to study law, but Rameau was not a good scholar and eventually decided to pursue a musical career. After travelling briefly to Italy, he returned to France where he held a series of positions in provincial towns. It was in this period that he composed his treatise on harmony, which still forms the basis of many of the 20th books on musical harmony. He finally settled in Paris in the early 1720s, where he pursued a very successful career as a harpsichordist, teacher and composer, especially of opera, until his death in 1764.

Tu del ciel ministro eletto (Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno) George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Handel's first ever oratorio, **Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno** (The Triumph of Time and Disillusion) was composed in 1707, in Italy. The libretto is a moral-religious tale dramatized in music, with four characters. Bellezza (Beauty) is tempted by Piacere (Pleasure) to value and pursue earthly pleasures, but eventually heeds the advice and warnings of Tempo (Time) and Disinganno (Disillusionment). In this heartfelt aria Bellezza addresses the elected minister of heaven and declares her intention to pursue a life of virtue and Godliness.

Lascia ch'io pianga (Rinaldo) George Frideric Handel

The melody of *Lascia ch'io pianga* from **Rinaldo (1711)** originally appeared in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*. Considered one of Handel's finest operas, *Rinaldo* was the first Italian language opera composed for performance in London. Set in the time of the Crusades, this is a tale of love, war and redemption. Almirena, who is being held captive, is yearning for Rinaldo while trying to evade the unwelcome attentions of Argante, her captor.

Tornami a vagheggiar (Alcina) George Frideric Handel

Alcina (1735) was composed for Handel's first season at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in London. Sisters Alcina and Morgana live on an enchanted island and Alcina has trapped Ruggiero in her spell. Bradamante, Ruggiero's wife has landed on the island to search for him. Disguised as "Riccardo", Bradamante meets Morgana and discovers that Ruggiero is under the spell of her sister Alcina. Morgana falls for the handsome "Riccardo", who she believes loves her, and in this aria is attempting to seduce "him".

Violin sonata in D major HWV 371

George Frideric Handel 1.

Handel's *Violin Sonata in D major*, known as "The Great D Major" is considered a masterpiece for solo violin, and is his last violin sonata, never published in his lifetime. Handel did not write many violin sonatas, certainly not as many as were ascribed to him. The *Violin sonata in D major*, however, can be definitely authenticated, as an autograph manuscript of the sonata has survived.

Tristes apprêts (Castor et Pollux)

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764)

Castor et Pollux (1737 and revised in 1754) is Rameau's third opera and is widely regarded as one of his finest. Castor and Pollux are twins and both are famous heroes. They both love Teraira but she loves only Castor who has been slain in battle. In this most famous of Rameau's arias she expresses her grief at Castor's death.

V'adaro pupille (Giulio Cesare in Egitto)

George Frideric Handel

The plot of *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (1724) centres on the political and personal relationships between Caesar, Queen Cleopatra and her brother Tolomeo. The role of Cleopatra is one of the most extensive opera roles in Handel's operas. *V'adaro, pupille* depicts a scene in which Cleopatra is seducing Caesar.

Pianger la sorte mia (Giulio Cesare in Egitto)

In *Piangero la sorte mia*, Cleopatra has been ordered to prison by her brother for conspiring with Caesar who is believed to be dead. She is bemoaning his fate and planning to haunt her brother when she is dead.

Pièces de clavecin en concerts (Troisième concert)

Jean-Philippe Rameau

Pièces de clavecin en concerts was written in 1741, at the height of Rameau's work in the theatre. By 1741 he had written five operas, one of which was *Castor & Pollux* (from which you have heard the aria *Tristes apprêts*). It is not surprising, then, that *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* is full of theatricality, and, in fact, several of the movements were re-worked and used in his later operas. Unlike trio sonatas in the Italian manner, where the harpsichord supplies a continuo bass, Rameau puts the harpsichord at the heart of the ensemble, playing a fully written out *obbligato* part. Thus all the instruments bear an equal part in the weaving of the composition. Tonight you will hear the *Troisième concert*, which is in three movements:

La Lapoplinière is dedicated to the financier Alexandre Jean Joseph Le Riche de La Poupelinière (1693-1762), an immensely wealthy patron of the arts who supported Rameau.

La Timide (The timid one), is made up of two rondeaux gracieux. The first rondeau is in a minor mode, and the second one is in the major mode of the same key.

Premier Tambourin, Deuxième Tambourin is a lively Provençal dance in duple meter with a characteristic drum-like accompaniment and a melody imitative of a pipe.

Notes prepared by Helen Hancock

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