

FOTHERINGHAY CHURCH Friday 19 July at 7.45

*Sponsored by
Central Television*

Peterborough String Orchestra

led by Paul Manley

James Parsons Organ
Sheila Lawrence Organ
Clare Southworth Flute

Concerto Grosso in D Op.6 No.5

G.F. HANDEL
(1685 – 1759)

(no tempo marking) – Allegro
Presto
Largo – Allegro
Menuet: un poco larghetto

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle in Saxony in 1685, the same year as his compatriot J.S. Bach. Like Bach his origins were middle class and Protestant, but unlike Bach, he travelled extensively.

From 1712 until his death 47 years later Handel lived in London where his considerable reputation rested on an almost constant stream of fashionable Italian operas. When the popular fashion changed he stopped writing operas and turned his attention to oratorios.

In all, Handel wrote 25 concerti grossi or grand concertos of which two sets, Opus 3 (six works) and Opus 6 (twelve works) are the best known. Modern audiences will most often experience the concerto in the form popularised in the 18th and 19th centuries where a single instrument is pitted against the whole orchestra. With the concerto grosso, the composer pits one smaller group of instruments (the concertini) against a large group (the ripieno).

The fifth of the Opus 6 concerti grossi in D major opens with a fanfare on the solo first violin. The rhythm – three quick notes followed by a long one – anticipates by more than 60 years the famous opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. But the effect is completely different: here swaggering confidence; there the uncertainties of fate.

Then comes a bright allegro which Handel starts in his best academic manner. This is only one of two movements in which we see demonstrated the true concerto grosso technique; small group alternating with large group. In the following presto the solo violins are merely accompanied by the rest of the instruments.

In the beautiful largo we again experience the light and shade of soloists side by side with the full orchestra. But from then on the soloists disappear. Note in particular the grand, spacious minuet tune in the last movement. For once you can really visualise the courtly dance.

Kanon in D

JOHANN PACHELBEL
(1653 – 1706)

Pachelbel's Kanon is part of a growing body of music by 'classical' composers both famous and unknown to enjoy the kind of popularity usually afforded pop songs following exposure on television. Until then Pachelbel had perhaps been best known as a composer of rather ornate mid-seventeenth century organ music.

The Kanon is in fact a series of increasingly luxuriant and ornate variations over a repeated plodding 'ground bass' heard in isolation at the beginning. Johann Pachelbel was a German but, like many composers of this period, one that had absorbed the influences of Italy. One is reminded of those superb Baroque churches in South Germany which make their impact by sheer accumulation of repetitive detail.

Concierto No.3 in G for Two Organs

ANTONIO SOLER
(1729 – 1783)

Andantino
Minué con variaciones

Soler owes much to the third of the tercentenary composers, Domenico Scarlatti. He was born in Gerona, and in 1752 he entered the Escorial Monastery, which during the years 1752 – 6 was frequented by Domenico Scarlatti. His works may be dismissed by some as too often gay and frivolous, but his inventiveness in general and the endearing contrasts he makes between the two instruments in this concerto demand that he is taken rather more seriously.

Organ Concerto in G minor Op.4 No.1

G.F. HANDEL
(1685 – 1759)

Larghetto e staccato
Allegro
Adagio-Andante

In March and April 1733 Handel first included an organ concerto as an interlude between the acts of his oratorios and he 'invented' this form partly to show off his own skill as an improviser. The G minor concerto was possibly first performed in April 1735 before Act One of *Athalia*. The opening Larghetto shows Handel at his most inventive.

INTERVAL