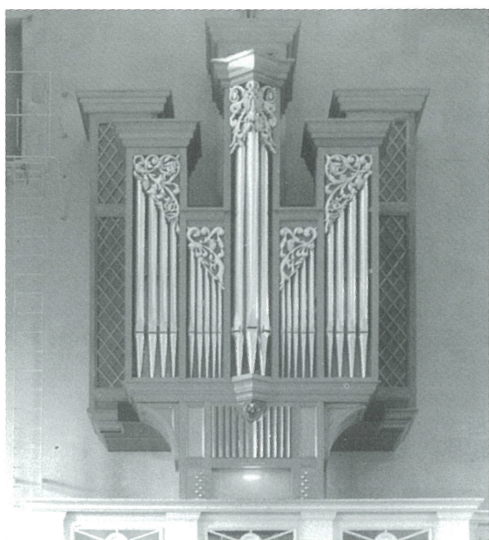


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Photo: The organ by Matthew Copley at
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fiori musicali

penelope rapson, director
kerstin linder-dewan, violin
gail hennessy, oboe
james parsons, organ

8.30pm

oundle school chapel

Looking back on the early eighteenth century from today's perspective, two composers stand out as musical giants of the period: George Frideric Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach. But during their lifetimes Bach and Handel were valued somewhat differently. Certainly Handel was well regarded. He lived in London, the cultural capital of Europe at the time, and enjoyed an international reputation as an opera composer. He travelled widely and wrote prolifically for an enthusiastic public.

His compatriot J S Bach never achieved such recognition. Indeed when the comparatively modest position of Cantor fell vacant at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig in 1723, the town council endeavoured to appoint first Telemann and then Kuhnau before finally offering the post to Bach.

During his lifetime Bach's reputation was primarily that of an organist. With this in mind, two of the cornerstones of tonight's concert are concertos for the organ, one by Handel and the other by the much under-rated English musician John Stanley. The remainder of the programme fetes J S Bach and his neglected contemporary Alessandro Marcello, whose 250th anniversary also falls this year.

Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor J S Bach
Allegro; Adagio; Allegro (1685-1750)

This much loved work comes down to us as a concerto for two harpsichords, one of the many works which Bach produced for the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig. During the 1730s Bach never missed an opportunity to hear, perform and study what was new, nor indeed to revive what he had composed earlier at Cöthen. Many made the acquaintance of the great J S Bach at this time, not as the cantor in church but as he presided over a collection of enthusiastic young musicians at Zimmermann's Coffee House, a celebrated establishment which was the haunt of scholars and intellectuals.

Thanks to the scholarship of Max Schneider earlier this century, musicians now have a reconstruction of this concerto as Bach originally conceived it, namely for oboe and violin. The two energetic allegros frame a meditative central adagio which is one of Bach's most sublime creations.

Organ Concerto, Op 10 no 4 in C minor John Stanley
Vivace; Andante affettoso; Presto (1713-1786)

The blind organist-composer John Stanley was something of a child prodigy. He already had his first organist position before the age of 12 and soon afterwards became organist at St Andrew's, Holborn. Stanley graduated from Oxford at the precocious age of sixteen and was shortly afterwards appointed



J S Bach

organist at the Temple Church in London where Handel, amongst others, enjoyed his playing. John Stanley is remembered today chiefly for his organ voluntaries. His six organ concertos (Op 10) are some of the finest English concerti of the time. First published in 1775, the score calls for minimal orchestral resources: just violins and bass with no viola or woodwind.

interval

Oboe Concerto in D minor Alessandro Marcello
Andante e spiccato; Adagio; Presto (1684-1750)

Unlike most composers of the time, Alessandro Marcello and his brother Benedetto belonged to the higher echelons of Venetian society. Alessandro was held in great esteem as a mathematician and philosopher as well as composer, and was a member of the Arcadian Academy. Indeed, it seems his concertos were only ever performed for the Academy or on other private occasions.

The Oboe Concerto in D minor, dating from around 1716, was much admired by J S Bach, who made his own arrangement of it for harpsichord, embellishing the melody copiously. The middle movement in particular, with its stark string accompaniment, provides ample opportunity for the soloist to embroider the line.

Organ Concerto, Op 4 no 4 in F George Frideric Handel
Allegro; Andante; Allegro (1685-1759)

Life for Handel immediately prior to the publication of his Op 4 organ concerti had not been easy. His reputation in London rested on the many Italian operas he was then writing and performing. By the 1730s the composer, long since adopted into English society, had become a political football between George II and Frederick, Prince of Wales. Both were ardent supporters of Handel's music, but Frederick's hostility towards his father led the heir to the throne to set up a rival opera company in order to contrive Handel's downfall.

Predictably the consequences for Handel were dire. Two competing companies vying for the same clientele resulted in financial disaster for the 1735 opera season and Handel was left almost bankrupt. It was at this point that Handel accepted defeat, and resolved to abandon opera to his enemies. The year 1736 saw him change tack. Instead of opera he offered oratorio, and interspersed organ concerti between the acts of oratorios. These the composer performed himself for, like Stanley, Handel was an extraordinarily accomplished exponent of the organ. Handel's first set of organ concerti, from which this concerto in F comes, was originally published in 1738. It is scored for organ, strings and oboes.

Fiori Musicali

Founded in 1983 Fiori Musicali is a period instrument group that focuses on rarely performed works as well as upon the more widely known repertoire. Under artistic director Penelope Rapson the group reaches back to a type of playing which would have been familiar to 17th and 18th century audiences,

paring away the layers of more recent interpretation which have become attached to music of the baroque and classical periods. Fiori Musicali is the orchestra in residence for the St Cecilia International Festival of Music in the City of London and gives recitals throughout the UK and in Europe, often accompanied by the Fiori Musicali choir. The ensemble has recently returned from its first Spanish tour, appearing at the Madrid Early Music Festival. Classic FM has broadcast Fiori Musicali's concerts, and Radio 3 has selected the group's recordings for its Composer of the Week programmes.

Kerstin Linder-Dewan, baroque violin, was born in Germany and studied at the Musikhochschule Würzburg, gaining the postgraduate Concert Recital diploma. She completed her advanced solo studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. As a soloist Kerstin has premiered several works for violin including *Encore* by Berthold Goldschmidt, which is dedicated to her. She now plays with many leading period ensembles all over the world and has won prizes in several competitions, including the International Locatelli Competition in Holland.

Gail Hennessy studied modern oboe in Louisville, Kentucky, and historical performance practice at Washington University before coming to London in 1982, where she studied baroque oboe with David Reichenberg. Gail works as a freelance player with many groups, including The English Concert, Hanover Band, The King's Consort and Les Arts Florissants. She is also increasingly in demand as a soloist, and has broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Irish television.

British organist **James Parsons** is one of the organ's most articulate advocates on today's musical scene. He is well known both for his international career as a concert organist and recording artist, as too for Oundle International Festival which he founded in 1985. Regular recital engagements in the UK, Europe, South Africa and the USA, have received warm critical acclaim. He is Education Editor for *Organists' Review* magazine, serves on the Education Working Party of the Royal College of Organists and is a teacher at St Giles International Organ School.

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