

RED PRIEST

Piers Adams, recorder

Julia Bishop, violin

Angela East, cello

Howard Beach, harpsichord

8pm St Peter's Parish Church, Oundle

*Pirates of the Baroque**Tambourin*

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764)

*Sonata in C Minor, Op.5, No.2 'La Burrusca' ('The Sea-Storm')**Preludio (Grave) - Presto assai - Largo - Allegro*

Giovanni Paolo Simonetti (18th Century)

Adagio

Tomasso Albinoni (1671-1751) / Remo Giazotto (1910-1998)

*The Harmonious Blacksmith Variations**Aria Amorosa (from Op.2, No.1)*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

*Concerto Grosso in D minor (RV 565)**Allegro - Adagio e Spiccato - Allegro - Largo - Allegro*

Antonio Vivaldi (1676-1741)

Interval

Chaconne

Tommaso Vitali (1665-1717)

Senti lo Mare ('Listen to the Sea;')

Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770)

Suite: Pirates of the Baroque

Francois Couperin (1668-1733)

*Wake Up Call - All Hands on Deck - Rocked by the Calm Waters - A Call to Arms - Battle at Sea - Disorder - Groans of the Wounded - Dancing at the Tavern - Seduction - The Weary Rogues - Overcome by Slumber**Concerto in G major (RV 433) 'La Tempesta di Mare' ('The Sea Storm')**Allegro - Largo - Presto*

Antonio Vivaldi (1676-1741)

To equate swashbuckling pirates with learned baroque composers may seem fanciful, but we can draw useful parallels between them. The leading musicians from the baroque era were adventurers, riding the seas of change with wild abandon, ever searching for new musical treasures to titillate the ears of the public. Most of them lived boozy, philandering, extravagantly bohemian lives, intent on maximising their profits through, if necessary, dubious means. Yet ironically it is from this very atmosphere of skulduggery that their greatest works were produced.

The life of Antonio Vivaldi - the original Red Priest of Venice - is a case study in baroque extravagance. He was described as a man with 'too much mercury in his constitution', a characteristic in plentiful display in the two extrovert concertos presented here: the swashbuckling Concerto in D minor from '*L'Estro Armonico*', and the pounding seas of the famous '*La Tempesta di Mare*'. As with most of the works in this concert, these concertos have been subjected to our own form of musical piracy, stolen and freely adapted from the orchestral originals. This was a common enough practice in the baroque era, when arrangements of the works of others were rife, but we confess that our imagined arrival of a pirate ship onto Vivaldi's stormy seascape may stretch the point a bit!

Elsewhere our transcriptions are inspired by the work of early 20th century violinists, who would frequently borrow and re-arrange repertoire from the baroque era to fit into romantic recital programmes - the sparkling '*Tambourin*' by Jean-Marie Leclair and Tomasso Vitali's epic '*Chaconne*' are amongst the works made famous in this way.

In Howard Beach's assemblage of works from the '*Ordres*' of François Couperin, under the title 'Pirates of the Baroque', the art of arrangement is taken a stage further as innocent solo harpsichord character-pieces are kidnapped, dissected, augmented and re-presented as a suite depicting the life of a baroque pirate, encapsulated within a single day, from the opening wake-up call and morning toil on the ship, to a bloody sea-battle, a raunchy celebration and finally, sleep.

Handel might seem an unlikely pirate, but he was certainly not averse to a little harmless musical theft. The theme of his celebrated 'Harmonious Blacksmith Variations' was quite openly stolen from the lips of a whistling blacksmith, whilst the haunting melody from his '*Aria Amorosa*' sounds suspiciously reminiscent of an aria composed many years earlier by Reinhardt Kaiser.

Musical piracy was not restricted to the poaching of melodies, but extended also to the false attribution of famous composers' names to works by lesser-known authors - a common practice amongst the

unscrupulous music publishers of the time. The famous 'Albinoni' Adagio is a recent example of such identity theft. It is no secret that this best known of all baroque adagios was actually composed in the 1940s, by the Italian musicologist Remo Giazotto; our own arrangement removes it yet further from any genuine baroque association!

The work of Giovanni Paolo Simonetti raises further puzzling questions of identity, which were, bizarrely, answered for me one day in a German bar in the 1980s. Having been intrigued by the music of this shadowy figure, whose style ingeniously combines the high baroque with the '*Sturm und Drang*' of the early classical masters, I was rather surprised to be introduced to the composer of the entire Simonetti opus, an unassuming musician named Winfried Michel. Although a charge of identity theft cannot be levelled at Herr Michel, as he invented the character of Simonetti, the inclusion in our Pirates programme of his trio sonata '*La Burrusca*' has an irresistible logic to it.

Finally, the search for music of the past can often have the sense of a pirate treasure hunt, as one follows up numerous leads in dusty museum collections, occasionally chancing across a true gem along the way. One such is the barely known sonata evocatively entitled '*Senti lo Mare*' by the celebrated violinist Giuseppe Tartini, from which we have adapted the opening movement, a luminous melody which represents the tip of an iceberg of forgotten musical jewels.

Piers Adams 2009

Founded in 1997, and named after the flame-haired priest, Antonio Vivaldi, **Red Priest** has performed at many of the world's most prestigious festivals and in most European countries, as well as Japan, Australia and throughout North and Central America. The group has been the subject of hour-long TV profiles for NHK (Japan) and ITV - the latter for the South Bank Show in 2005, which documented the launch of the Red Hot Baroque Show, an electrifying marriage of old music with the latest light and video technology. Red Priest's latest venture is the launch of its own record label, Red Priest Recordings, and its brand new recording, 'Pirates of the Baroque'. Many exciting projects are planned for the coming months, including solo recordings from group members, an all-Bach CD, a DVD of the 'Four Seasons' and downloadable sheet music.

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