

Programme

Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739)

Sonata for violoncello and basso continuo in E minor Op 2 no 2

From *Six solos for a violoncello with a thoroughbass for the harpsichord*

Adagio

Allegro

Largo

Andante

Vivaldi (1678 – 1741) Sonata in A minor

Largo

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

Martin Berteau (1691 – 1771) [Formerly attributed to Sammartini]

Sonata for violoncello and basso continuo in G major Opus 1 no.3

From *Sonate de Camera a Violoncello solo Col Basso Continuo dedicate*

Alli Amatori di musica

Allegro

Grave

Allegro

Amoroso

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Suite no.2 in D minor for violoncello solo BWV 1008

Prelude

Sarabande

Vivaldi Sonata 5 in E minor

Largo

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

Notes to the programme

“Basso continuo” or “thoroughbass” or “throughbass” as it is sometimes referred to, are terms which indicate that the bass line is to be embellished with chords to support the harmonic structure of the piece. This is done by observing a series of rules around figures put under or over the bass line. For example a figure “6” will mean you play an interval of 6 notes above the bass line and implied is also the interval of a 3rd. This gives what is called a six/three chord. However if you want an interval of a fourth as well as a sixth you put both the figures 6 and 4 above (or below) the bass note concerned. Keen students of harmony will note that the first instance is a first inversion chord and the second with the 6 and 4 is a second inversion chord. While this is a mere snippet of the art of reading figured bass it should give you some idea of the complexities involved.

Most bass lines have fairly accurate figures although one does come across errors. The issue then, is whether the composer means something startling or is it really an error!

Even worse is when one is expected to extemporise a bass line and no figures have been given. This is the case in the piece by Berteau which possibly indicates he was just as happy to have a second cello accompany the solo cello line instead of a harpsichord or that he expected the harpsichordist to be really good!

Berteau was considered by some to be the founder of the French school of cello playing. Amongst his students was the Dauphin son of Louis XV. Virtually all we have left of his music is the collection of six cello sonatas despite the reports of him playing his own cello concerto and other works. The sonata played today was for a long time mistakenly attributed to Sammartini. It includes the delicate sounds of harmonics played by lightly touching the strings in certain places and even doing this with double stopping (two notes at the same time). In addition the rapid arpeggiation of chords with string crossings is frequently used to create a touch of showmanship.



Benedetto Marcello is the more well-known of the two brothers although Alessandro's concerto for oboe and strings enjoys great popularity. Both brothers composed in a very Vivaldian style and much of his influence can indeed be seen in this sonata. The clear harmonic structure and the musical gestures and melodic writing all reflect this.

There are nine sonatas considered possibly to be Vivaldi's with a 10th sonata lost to us. These come from four different sources. While one source does not have any figures it seems to have more accurate slurring. The set of 6 published in Paris in 1740 has the figured bass with some errors which I have corrected or reconstructed. Some scholars believe that the sonatas 2 - 5 may not be by Vivaldi.

In contrast to the other works the unaccompanied suites by J.S. Bach for violoncello use an implied bass all in the one instrument. By following the lowest notes a sort of bass line emerges along with the melody line and even a few harmony lines in between. Written during the years Bach was in Köthen, "these suites for unaccompanied cello are remarkable in that they achieve the effect of implied three-to-four-voice contrapuntal and polyphonic music in a single musical line". [A. Wittstruck - *Dancing with Bach*]. These works are considered by musicians of note and audiences alike to be the peaks of solo repertoire for this instrument along with the suites for unaccompanied violin. While this programme does not include a whole suite, any movement or two of these suites in a programme is always welcome.

Notes by Peter Hagen

The Next Concert 29 September at 4.00pm is a trio with Shane Lestideau on baroque violin, Natasha Kraemer on baroque violoncello and Peter Hagen on harpsichord with works by Italian masters.

On 27 October at 4.00pm is the solo recital entitled "**The Orchestral Harpsichord**" with orchestral works arranged for harpsichord from the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Salon Concerts at Broadford

Sam Goble – violoncello

Peter Hagen – harpsichord



4.00pm, Sunday 25 August 2019