

Total performance time: approximately 110 minutes, including an interval of 20 minutes

Irish Baroque Orchestra: Best-loved Baroque

Irish Baroque Orchestra
Peter Whelan conductor

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
Overture from *Il pastor fido* (1712) 3'

Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783)
Concerto in F for oboe, chalumeau,
bassoon and continuo 12'
*Adagio – Allegretto – Adagio –
Allegretto ma poco*

'Signora Barberini's Minuet',
from Concerto Op.4 No.1 1'

Handel
'The Arrival of The Queen of Sheba',
from *Solomon* (1748) 4'

Handel, arr. John Walsh
'Va tacito e nascosto',
from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (1742) 4'

INTERVAL

'**Mr Charles**' (c.1705–?1780)
Chasse, from Suite No.1 2'

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G (1721) 11'
Allegro – Adagio – Allegro assai

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)
Napolitana (1728/9) 2'

Lorenzo Bocchi (d.1725)
Sonata X (1724) 5'

Handel, arr. John Walsh
'Water Music' Suite No.1 in F (1717)
*Allegro – Andante – Allegro
Passepied
Minuet
Bourrée
Hornpipe
Andante*

'Water Music' Suite No.2 in D (1717)
*Overture (Allegro)
Alla Hornpipe* 23'

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)
Marche pour la Cérémonie des Turcs,
from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) 2'

Dublin, May 1742: An enterprising visiting impresario 'Mr Charles' places an advert in the *Dublin Mercury* promoting 'A GRAND CONCERT OF MUSIC ... accompanied by all the best Hands in this City'. The Irish Baroque Orchestra recreates this extravagant concert in spirit, if not as an exact replica.

Details of Mr Charles' life and career are shadowy, as one may guess from his dates on this concert's title page. Also known as 'Charles the Hungarian' (he may, or may not have been Hungarian by birth...), he was probably Charles (Carlo) Vernsberg, a horn player who travelled and performed extensively in the UK and Ireland in the 1730s and 1740s, promoting and performing concerts and setting up a teaching practice in London and Dublin. He is known to have gone on to be the impresario of a theatre in Bristol during the 1750s.

His concert in Dublin was particularly audacious, given that this was at the height of 'Handelmania'. Handel's promotion of performances of his own music were as wildly successful in Dublin as they were in the theatres of London. *Messiah* had been premiered in the city only a month prior to this concert, and to huge public enthusiasm. More audacious still – or perhaps merely a sensible nod to current public taste – was Mr Charles' inclusion of several works by Handel, and his use of some of Handel's musicians. Evidently his ambition was rewarded – not only was there a scheduled repeat performance of this 'Grand Concert' (a sure sign of a concert promoter's confidence) but an audience was admitted to the rehearsals (an equally sure sign that both public concerts were – or were likely to be – full).

We begin with the Overture to *Il pastor fido* ('The faithful shepherd') – the second of a staggering 40 operas that Handel composed in London, satisfying – or perhaps creating – an insatiable thirst for Italian opera and an enthusiasm for the city's adopted musical son (he had settled there earlier that year, before becoming a naturalised British citizen 15 years later).

Two works follow by Johann Adolphe Hasse, a near contemporary of Handel, also a prolific opera composer and similarly well-travelled, largely dividing his time between Dresden and Italy. Firstly, a charming little concerto for three reed instruments. The chalumeau was a small, soft-toned sister to the clarinet, with a more limited range and a beguiling sound-quality. It was one of several instruments Mr Charles included in his concert that he claimed had not been heard to that date in Ireland – bold claims that are difficult to verify. 'Signora Barberini' was the Italian ballet prodigy Barbara Campanini, soon to make her Dublin debut. 'Her' minuet is in fact the last movement of a pre-existing *concerto grosso* for oboes, horns and strings.

In keeping with many of the concerts of the time, Mr Charles included popular segments from larger works in his programmes. In that spirit we hear two Handel opera excerpts. Firstly, his famous opera *entr'acte* from *Solomon*, which adroitly combines the gravitas and the breathless excitement of the visit of a head of state to King Solomon's court, then an aria from *Giulio Cesare*. The London printer John Walsh acquired exclusive rights to publish Handel's music from around 1739. His arrangement of Caesar's aria ('Silently and stealthily / the cunning hunter moves / when he is hungry for prey') transcribes the vocal line for flute.

Appropriately for mentions of hunters and hunting, the horn is always prominent. The Irish Baroque Orchestra's music director Peter Whelan and principal horn Anneke Scott give fascinating insights into the development of the horn in videos on the page devoted to IBO's recording of this project on the Linn records website. The horn was a relative newcomer to the instrumental party at this time, still in the process of transition from an outdoor instrument – as the preeminent instrument of hunting on horseback – to the concert stage. It was clearly not an instrument taken up by the wealthy gentleman, and was consequently played by a much more diverse demographic than we might expect amongst 18th-century musicians. There are records of Black horn players (perhaps due to former slaves taking up positions as horsemen, and their logical involvement in hunting), and of women playing the instrument. Mr Charles' Chasse ('hunt') is a horn duet, possibly performed on that occasion with his wife.

Bach's set of Brandenburg Concertos includes this gem for strings alone (plus keyboard continuo). It's the only one of the set without named soloists. Instead, it's a concerto for orchestra, or rather small ensemble. Nine players (three each of violins, viola and cello) have individual parts that share the musical material and soloistic brilliance – the transfer of material up and down the ensemble is a bravura display both musically and visually. The slow movement contains only two chords, the reason for which remains unknown. Perhaps it's a cue for some improvisatory embellishment, or the trigger for other contemporaneous works by Bach to be inserted, though some performances merely leave it as an unadorned upbeat to the dashing finale.

Telemann's *Napolitana* is a solo for the oboe d'amore (a version of the oboe much beloved of Bach, with a bulbous bell sounding a 3rd lower, pitched between the modern oboe and cor anglais). It comes from an instructional set of solo pieces named *Der getreue Musik-Meister* ('The faithful music master'), and Lorenzo Bocchi's sonata is also from a collection (published in Dublin), entitled *A Musically Entertainment*.

Handel's *Water Music* was composed for a lavish royal summer waterborne party, with King George I travelling along the Thames accompanied (from a separate barge) by newly-composed orchestral music for the occasion. It is recognisably 'outdoor' music full of rustic hornpipes, boisterous dances and ceremonial pomp with a pair of horns to the fore. John Walsh replaced trumpets with a clarinet and oboe in his arrangement. Publishers reprinting popular works with alternative instrumentation to maximise performances and therefore revenue for them, and to a lesser extent the composer, is a practice that is centuries old. Walsh's pragmatism has musical merit though – the clarinet's higher registers have a piercing, strident quality not unlike the trumpet – the middle register of the modern instrument is named 'clarion' in recognition of that acoustic property.

From Dublin and London to ceremonial music from continental Europe to end, in the form of the Lully's robust march 'for the Ceremony of the Turks' from his incidental music to Molière's notorious satirical 'comédie-ballet *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* ('The would-be nobleman').