

Les Violons du Roy with Philippe Jaroussky

Thursday, April 13, 2017 at 8:00 pm

This is the 715th concert in Koerner Hall

Philippe Jaroussky, countertenor
Mathieu Lussier, Associate Conductor
Les Violons du Roy

PROGRAM

Johann Joseph Fux: From the Overture in D Minor, E. 109

Overture

Menuet

Aria: Adagio

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Son pur felice al fine ... Bel contento già gode quest'alma" from *Flavio, re di Longobardi*, HWV 16

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Deggio morire, o stelle" from *Siroe, re di Persia*, HWV 24

Johann Joseph Fux: From the Overture in D Minor, E. 109

Fuga: Presto

Lentement

Gigue

Aria

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Se potessero i sospir' miei" from *Imeneo*, HWV 41

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Vieni, d'empietà mostro ... Vile! Se mi dai vita" from *Radamisto*, HWV 12

INTERMISSION

Georg Friedrich Händel: Overture from *Ottone, re di Germania*, HWV 15

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Chi mi chiama alla gloria? ... Se parla nel mio cor" from *Giustino*, HWV 37

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Inumano fratel ... Stille amare" from *Tolomeo, re d'Egitto*, HWV 25

Johann Gottlieb Graun: Symphony in B-flat Major, GraunWV A:XII:27

Allegro assai con spirito

Arioso – Andantino –

Allegro

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Ombra cara di mia sposa" from *Radamisto*, HWV 12

Georg Friedrich Händel: "Privarmi ancora ... Rompo i lacci, e frango i dardi" from *Flavio, re di Longobardi*, HWV 16

Les Violons du Roy

Violin 1

Pascale Giguère
Maud Langlois
Nicole Trotier
Noëlla Bouchard

Violin 2

Pascale Gagnon
Agélique Duguay
Michelle Seto
Véronique Vychytil

Viola

Isaac Chalk
Jean-Louis Blouin
Annie Morier

Cello

Benoit Loïselle
Raphaël Dubé

Bass

Raphaël McNabney

Oboe

Marjorie Tremblay
Jean-Luc Côté

Bassoon

Mary Chalk

Harpsichord

Mélanie McNabney

Archlute

Sylvain Bergeron

Johann Joseph Fux

Born in Hirtenfeld, Styria, 1660; died in Vienna, Austria, February 13, 1741

From the Overture in D Minor, E. 109 (c. 1722-6)

From humble origins, Fux rose to become the highly respected Kapellmeister at the Viennese court. He wrote at least 80 masses for services at the Imperial Chapel and St. Stephen's Cathedral. His 1725 treatise, *Gradus ad Parnassum*, not only gave Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven a solid grounding in fugal writing but remains in print to this day. In it, Fux demonstrates a gift for consolidating what he had learnt from a study of the counterpoint of the previous two centuries. In 1700, a few years after his appointment as Kapellmeister, Fux went to Rome to study with Pasquini and returned equipped to compose some 18 operas, 10 surviving oratorios, and other large scale music for the church. In 1701, he also published a collection of seven instrumental suites or partitas titled *Concentus musico-instrumentalis*. These fall into the genre of the Overture-Suite – a term that includes a mix of languages, reflecting

the mix of cultural influences that came to bear on the music. The D Minor Suite, given the dates 1722-6 in the surviving manuscript, is the most frequently played in the collection and is scored for strings plus oboes, bassoon, and continuo. It opens with a stately French overture, followed by a short minuet – it is one of two dance movements in the suite – then a slow Aria, sonorously sustained by the oboes. A sprightly fugue comes next, containing many of the thumbprints of the Italian concertos of the day. A gracefully lilting Gigue is followed by a reflective Aria.

Georg Friedrich Händel

Born in Halle, Germany, February 23, 1685; died in London, England, April 14, 1759

“Son pur felice al fine ... Bel contento già gode quest'alma” (Act I, Sc. 4) from *Flavio, re di Longobardi*, HWV 16 (1723)

Flavio, re di Longobardi was the final opera of the 1723 season presented by the Royal Academy of Music at the King's Theatre in London's Haymarket. The Academy was a group of 73 subscribers who had been underwriting regular seasons of Italian opera, with Händel as music director, since 1719. Händel finished the score of *Flavio* just one week before its premiere. It had a run of eight performances and was revived just once, in 1732. *Flavio* then had to wait until July 1967 for its second revival, in Göttingen, Germany. The Act 1, Scene 4 aria “Bel contento” is sung by the young Guido, who is in love with Emilia, both of them siblings of royal counsellors to Flavio, King of the Lombards. In parallel storylines, two young couples are shown to be subject to the dictates of their elders, sometimes with fatal consequences.

“Deggio morire, o stelle” (Act 3) from *Siroe, re di Persia*, HWV 24 (1728)

This was the second last opera Händel was to write for the Royal Academy of Music before its demise after nine seasons. It was premiered on February 17, 1728 and written to a libretto by the fashionable writer Metastasio (1698–1782), whose librettos were set by all leading composers of 18th century opera seria. In *Siroe*, as with the majority of operas at the King's Theatre, two rival prime donne are an essential ingredient in the storyline, which is loosely based on the life of the early 7th century Persian King Khosrau II. Khosrau is in prison, fearful for his life at the hand of his eldest son, when he sings the highly expressive, apprehensive aria “Deggio morire, o stelle” (Must I die, oh stars). It is scored for five-part strings, in B-flat minor.

“Se potessero i sospir' miei” (Act I) from *Imeneo*, HWV 41 (1738-41)

Imeneo was first performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields in the 1740-1 season. Together with *Deidamia*, also premiered that same season, it was the last of a long string of Italian operas Händel would write for London. From this point on, oratorio became the focus of his attention. *Imeneo* is a romantic comedy set in ancient Athens, one of the shortest of Händel's works for the stage. Its subject matter concerns the love of Tirinto and Imeneo for Rosmene. In the first scene of the opera, Tirinto expresses the loss of his beloved Rosmene who has been captured by pirates.

“Vieni, d'empietà mostro ... Vile! Se mi dai vita” (Act 3, Sc. 5) from *Radamisto*, HWV 12 (1720, rev. 1720-1)

The first and most successful of Händel's Italian operas written for the Royal Academy of Music, *Radamisto* was premiered on April 27, 1720 at the King's Theatre in the presence of the Academy's most prominent sponsor, King George I. As the 18th century music historian Charles Burney puts it: “The composition of this opera is more solid, ingenious, and full of fire, than any drama which Händel had yet produced in this country.” Present day music historian Richard Wigmore puts it a different way: “As usual in Baroque opera, ancient history [Tacitus's *Annals of Imperial Rome*] is merely the pretext for a tale of lust, treachery, sadistic threats, and heroic endurance *in extremis*.” Händel's score informs us that these machinations take place in Thrace, in Asia Minor, ‘in the 12th year of Claudius, the 53rd year of our Saviour.’ In the Act 3, Scene 5 *accompagnato* and the following aria, Radamisto is defiant against the tyrant Tiridate, King of Armenia, who has just condemned him to death.

Overture from *Ottone, re di Germania*, HWV 15 (1722-3)

Händel wrote more than 70 vocal works for theatre and concert performance, most of them including at least one overture. These continued to be played in concert well after the works to which they formed a prelude had fallen from favour. In the 1750s, an enterprising English publisher, John Walsh, commissioned 60 of them “from all his operas and oratorios, set for the harpsichord or organ.” *Ottone* brought Händel one of his greatest successes in the theatre, in no small part due to the superb cast of singers he had assembled and his skill in dealing with their demands. Its overture opens in a characteristically imposing manner in the style of a French overture, then leads to a sprightly Allegro which had its origins in a concerto that Händel composed c. 1722.

“Chi mi chiama alla gloria? ... “Se parla nel mio cor” (Act 1, Sc. 5) from *Giustino*, HWV 37 (1736)

Based on a highly successful Venetian libretto which Vivaldi and others had already set, Händel’s *Giustino* was among his least successful operas. Its plot revolves around the rescue of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I by an illiterate Bulgarian peasant, who eventually married into the Emperor’s family and succeeded him as Justin I. Along the way we encounter the visual spectacle of supernatural creatures, fights with first a bear then a sea monster, a shipwreck, a mountain split open by a flash of lightning, and a beheading. After a dream in which he is spoken to by the goddess Fortuna, *Giustino* harnesses the power of flamboyant coloratura to demonstrate his resolve to fulfil his destiny in the brilliant Act 1 aria, “Se parla nel mio cor.”

“Inumano fratel ... Stille amare” (Act 3, Sc. 6) from *Tolomeo, re d’Egitto*, HWV 25 (1728)

Nicola Francesco Haym, author, cellist, and all-round man of the theatre, adapted many texts as librettos for Händel, including the three act opera seria *Tolomeo, re d’Egitto* (Ptolemy, King of Egypt). It was the last of Händel’s operas for the Royal Academy in its 1728 season, though there were two later revivals. The opera reaches an emotional climax towards the end of Act 3 as the persecuted Prince Ptolemy of Egypt once more rejects Elisa. Believing himself fated to die at the hand of his brother and rival, Alessandro, and full of self-pity, he rails at the world and defiantly drinks what he assumes is a deadly poison. The pulsing strings seem to depict the drops of poison in the dramatic and poignant scena, “Stille amare.”

Johann Gottlieb Graun

Born c. 1702–3 in Wahrenbrück, Saxony; died October 27, 1771, in Berlin

Symphony in B-flat Major, GraunWV A:XII:27

Little known today and overshadowed in his lifetime by the prominent operatic achievements of his older brother Carl, Johann Gottlieb Graun was nevertheless a prolific composer of instrumental music and a violinist of distinction. None of his music was published in his lifetime. Graun was concertmaster in Merseburg, where Bach entrusted his son, Wilhelm Friedemann, to his training. Later, Graun became leader of the Berlin court opera orchestra where he led many of the operas his brother wrote for the music loving Frederick the Great. Shortly before his death, composer and writer J. A. Hiller noted that “the concertmaster’s great strength on the violin and his excellence in composition are universally known. The compositions of Herr Graun consist of unusually fiery concertos for one and two violins ... of very many magnificent symphonies and of several overtures.” The opening movement of today’s B-flat Symphony is indeed ‘unusually fiery,’ rich in musical ideas, volatile and dynamic in the North German manner. A contrasting slow movement is highly expressive and leads to a galant finale, elegantly fashionable in style with its melody-dominated musical textures.

Georg Friedrich Händel

“Ombra cara di mia sposa” (Act 2, Sc. 2) from *Radamisto*, HWV 12 (1720, rev. 1720-1)

In this celebrated Act 2, Scene 2 aria, the longest in *Radamisto*, Händel is writing in his most affecting lyrical vein. “Ombra cara” is sung by Radamisto to his beloved wife Zonobia, accompanied by sombre strings. Believing her

dead, he vows to avenge her and then join her in heaven. When he heard the aria sung in concert among other, lighter material, Charles Burney said that Händel's aria seemed "the language of philosophy and science, and the rest, the frivolous jargon of fops and triflers."

"Privarmi ancora ... Rompo i lacci, e frango i dardi" (Act 2, Sc. 6) from *Flavio, re di Longobardi*, HWV 16 (1723)

In his Act 2, Scene 6 tour de force, "Rompo i lacci" (I break the bonds), Guido now unleashes furious torrents of scales as he finds himself torn between love for Emilia and filial duty in a plot to kill her father. His dilemma is dramatically expressed in a contrasting middle section where voice and oboe together plead that God may release him from his anguish since he cannot survive without her love.

- Program notes © 2017 Keith

Horner

Philippe Jaroussky

Countertenor

Just over 35 years old, Philippe Jaroussky has established himself as one of the major singers in the international musical world as confirmed by the French Victoires de la Musique (Revelation artiste lyrique in 2004, and Artiste lyrique de l'année in 2007 and 2010), the Echo Klassik Awards in Munich in 2008 (Singer of the Year), and in 2009 in Dresden.

An impressive mastery of vocal technique allows performances full of nuance and vocal acrobatics. Philippe Jaroussky's vast repertoire of the Baroque era ranges from the refinements of the Italian Seicento with Monteverdi, Sances, and Rossi to the staggering brilliance of Händel and Vivaldi; the latter being one of the most performed composers by Mr. Jaroussky recently. Lately, he has also explored very different repertoire of French melodies accompanied by the pianist Jérôme Ducros.

Philippe Jaroussky has had the pleasure of collaborating with some of the best Baroque ensembles, including Freiburger Barockorchester, Il Pomo d'Oro, Accademia Bizantina, Les Arts Florissants, Le Concert d'Astrée, L'Arpeggiata, Concerto Köln, l'Ensemble Matheus, Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, Orfeo 55, Le Cercle de l'Harmonie, Europa Galante, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, I Barrochisti, Apollo's Fire, Anima Eterna, and the Venice Baroque Orchestra.

His impressive discography includes collaborations with the Edition Vivaldi de Naïve with Jean-Christophe Spinosi and the Ensemble Matheus. His album *Heroes*, of Vivaldi's opera arias recorded with Ensemble Matheus, received Disque d'Or in 2007, a Diapason d'Or, a 10 by Classica-Repertoire, a Choc du Monde de la Musique, a Grammophone award, and a Timbre de Platine from Opera International.

Mathieu Lussier

Associate Conductor

The accomplished and multifaceted Mathieu Lussier is a long-time friend and collaborator of Les Violons du Roy and of its founding conductor, Bernard Labadie. As Associate Conductor, he has led the ensemble in more than 75 concerts throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In recent years he has carved out a reputation as an important new voice from the podium specializing in Baroque and Classical repertoire as well as the great neglected works of 19th-century France. His first recording at the head of Les Violons du Roy appeared in September 2014, and he received in 2015 the Jean-Marie Beudet Award in Orchestra Conducting from the Canada Council for the Arts.

Previously, he was artistic director of the Lamèque International Baroque Music Festival and made his conducting debut in the fall of 2015 at the head of Orchestre symphonique de Montréal as well as with Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières.

As a soloist, he has been tirelessly and passionately introducing audiences to the modern and Baroque bassoon all over North America and Europe. He has appeared with such ensembles as Les Violons du Roy, Arion Baroque Orchestra, Tafelmusik, the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, and Apollo's Fire. He continues to pursue

a career in chamber music with Ensemble Pentaèdre in Montreal and in summer 2014 was appointed Assistant Professor at Université de Montréal.

Mathieu Lussier is also a composer, with a catalogue of more than 40 works heard regularly in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

Les Violons du Roy

The chamber orchestra Les Violons du Roy, which has a core membership of 15 players, was brought together in 1984 by founding conductor Bernard Labadie and specializes in the vast repertoire of music for chamber orchestra, performed in the stylistic manner most appropriate to each era. Although the ensemble plays on modern instruments, its approach to the works of the Baroque and Classical periods has been strongly influenced by current research into performance practice in the 17th and 18th centuries; in this repertoire Les Violons du Roy uses copies of period bows.

Les Violons du Roy is well known throughout Canada thanks to numerous concerts, recordings, broadcasts, and regular presence at music festivals. The group has given dozens of performances in Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and United States, among others in the company of such renowned soloists as Magdalena Kožená, David Daniels, Vivica Genaux, and Alexandre Tharaud, including two guest appearances at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. A recent highlight was its acclaimed performance at the Berlin Philharmonie with Magdalena Kožená during its January 2014 European tour, which also included stops in London, Brussels, and Paris.

Since 1995, Les Violons du Roy also makes regular stops in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, including Händel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with La Chapelle de Québec at Carnegie Hall and the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

The 31 recordings made by Les Violons du Roy have been acclaimed by critics and earned many distinctions and awards at the national and international levels.

Les Violons du Roy made its Royal Conservatory debut on February 5, 2012, and Philippe Jaroussky on November 1, 2011.