

RED PRIEST

Piers Adams – recorders
David Greenberg – violin
Angela East – cello
David Wright – harpsichord

Spring Baroque Carnival

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Concerto in E major: “La Primavera”

Allegro – Largo – Allegro

GIOVANNI PAULO CIMA (17th Cent.)

Sonata a Tre

DARIO CASTELLO (c.1590-c.1630)

Sonata Seconda for violin

JACOB VAN EYCK (1590-1657)

Variations on ‘The English Nightingale’ for recorder

DIEGO ORTIZ (fl.1550)

Two Ricercadas

SALVATORE LANZETTI (1710-1780)

Amoroso for Cello

GEORG PHILLIP TELEMANN (1681-1767)

‘Gypsy Carnival’ Sonata in A minor

Largo – Vivace – Affetuoso - Allegro

INTERMISSION

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

A Bach Carnival

Allegro (from Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 in G major, BWV 1048)

Andante (from Flute Sonata in E minor BWV 1034)

Prelude and Fugue in C minor (BWV 847)

Arioso (from Harpsichord Concerto in F minor, BWV 1056)

Toccatina and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565)

NEIL GOW (1727-1807)

Niel Gow's Lament

GEORG FREDERICK HANDEL (1685-1759)

Aria Amoroso

ARCANGELO CORELLI (1653-1713) / RED PRIEST (1997-)

Carnival Variations on “La Folia”

Program notes

Baroque music revels in the extravagant. The very word “Baroque” implies bizarre, irregular and over the top, and the leading musicians of the day were true pioneers, riding the seas of change with wild abandon, ever searching for new musical ideas to titillate the ears and move the souls of the public. Only in retrospect has the mythology of highbrow, rule-bound men of quill and parchment been created; the reality was much more down to earth, the majority of composers living boozily, philandering, bohemian lives, intent on maximising their profits through, if necessary, dubious means. Boundaries between high art and street music were yet to be fully established and composers were free to draw inspiration from myriad sources, resulting in a wild and colourful carnival of musical styles.

The life of **Antonio Vivaldi**—the original Red Priest of Venice—is a case study in baroque extravagance. Indeed he was described by the English composer William Hayes as a man with “too much mercury in his constitution,” a characteristic in plentiful display in his *Spring* concerto—a joyful, bucolic romp, from its opening invocation of birdsong to the rustic concluding May Day dance, which imitates the sounds of bagpipes.

The Baroque era as we now define it began a century before Vivaldi, notably with the operas of Claudio Monteverdi, and from this dramatic new style of writing sprang a torrent of instrumental and vocal works as composers explored new means of musical expression, away from the confines of church and banqueting hall. Their style became known as the *Stilus Phantasticus*—music without rigid form or structure, prone to considerable eccentricities and flights of fancy. One of the very earliest examples of this genre is the sonata by the Milanese organist **Giovanni Paulo Cima**, composed in 1610. In this short piece elements of dance, song and operatic gesture are combined in a freewheeling, unpredictable fashion. The *Sonata Seconda* by the Venetian **Dario Castello**, “wind-master” in St Mark’s cathedral, carries the style to its logical conclusion, producing some of the most freakish and fantastic chamber music of the era.

One of the most popular compositional forms in the baroque era was that of variation, in which simple melodies are transformed through repetition, often into elaborate, virtuoso fantasias. A master of this art was the blind Dutch recorder virtuoso, **Jacob Van Eyck**, who is represented here with his well-known set of variations on *The English Nightingale*—one of a large opus of compositions which he would perform in the open air to the visitors of St John’s Church in Utrecht, where he was a city-sponsored busker and a major tourist attraction! Most commonly, the variation format would also involve a *ground bass* or *basso ostinato*—a constantly repeating bass-line over which the variations would develop—a technique used to wonderful effect in the spirited pair of dances by the late Renaissance viol virtuoso **Diego Ortiz**.

One of the most cosmopolitan composers of the Baroque era was **Georg Phillip Telemann**, who spent much time travelling and absorbing the culture and music of Eastern Europe in particular. It is no surprise therefore to find folk elements in his music, and indeed the sonata presented here—one of several he composed for the line-up of our ensemble—has the spirit of a wild gypsy carnival.

The great **Johann Sebastian Bach** was a master of stylistic alchemy. He studied music from all over Europe, from the fanciful virtuosity of 17th century Italy to the

refinement of the French courts, blending all into his own unique voice. Bach was a prolific and creative arranger of the works of other composers and here we turn the tables on him with 4-part adaptations of some of his best loved works—including the third *Brandenburg Concerto*, in which we have tried to bring out the bucolic, “hoe-down” nature of the theme, and the *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor* in which elements fantastic and formal are woven into a work of gothic proportions.

The search for music of the past can often have the sense of a treasure hunt, as one ploughs through dusty museum collections, occasionally chancing across a true gem along the way. The works of cellist **Salvatore Lanzetti** and folk violinist **Neil Gow** – with whose gorgeous *Lament* we prelude an arioso movement by **George Frederick Handel**—represent the tip of the iceberg of musical jewels frozen in time.

Our closing fantasia on one of the most famous of all grounds, *La Folia*, takes the idea of musical transformation to its natural conclusion, adding to **Arcangelo Corelli’s** version in ways which may not fit the currently accepted boundaries of “authenticity,” but we hope will be taken as it is intended, in the true, carnivalesque spirit of the Baroque!

Piers Adams 2013