

GRACE & SPLENDOUR

the French and Italian world of JS Bach

Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor,
Overture Suite no. 3 in D major,
and music by Rameau,
Vivaldi, and Muffat

RESTORATION
NEW ZEALAND BAROQUE ENSEMBLE

Bronwen Pugh, Graham McPhail, Alison Salmons
Emma Goodbehere, Robert Petre

with guest violinist
LUCINDA MOON

WAIRARAPA: Colombo Martinborough, 107 Todds Road, Martinborough
Friday 7 December 2018, 7.30pm. Winery open from 6pm.

PALMERSTON NORTH: Te Manawa Museum, 326 Main St, Palmerston North
Saturday 8 December 2018, 7.30pm

WELLINGTON: Hall of Memories, National War Memorial, Buckle Street
Sunday 9 December 2018, 7.30pm

Tickets \$30 (concessions \$20)

Seating at all venues is limited – bookings essential
Book at Eventfinda www.eventfinda.co.nz. Service fees apply

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Image: John Drawbridge Wave (private collection, Auckland)

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Concerto no.12, *Propitia Sydera*, G major

Georg Muffat

Sonata: Grave – Allegro

Aria

Gavotta

Borea

Grave – Ciacona

Sinfonia, *La verità in cimento*, G major

Antonio Vivaldi

Allegro

Andante

Presto

Violin Concerto, BWV 1041, A minor

Johann Sebastian Bach

solo violin, **Lucinda Moon**

[Allegro]

Andante

Allegro assai

--- interval ---

Overture Suite no. 3, BWV 1068, D major **Johann Sebastian Bach**

Ouverture: [Majestueusement] – Vite – [Majestueusement]

Air

Gavottes

Bourrée

Gigue

Concert no. 6, G minor

Jean-Philippe Rameau

L’Egyptienne

L’Enharmonique

Menuets

La Poule

RESTORATION

Bronwen Pugh, Graham McPhail *violins* • **Alison Salmons** *viola*

Emma Goodbehere *cello* • **Robert Petre** *harpsichord*

with guest violinist **Lucinda Moon**

The French and Italian world of JS Bach

‘**Grace and splendour**’ is a phrase used by Georg Muffat in the introduction to his collection of 12 concerti, *Auserlesene Instrumental-Musik*, published in 1701. In this, and in his earlier publications, Muffat includes detailed instructions on how to perform his music – instructions which are immensely valuable to us today in our quest to recover the original style and character of baroque music.

Muffat exhorts his readers to play each concerto with all due ‘grace and splendour’ (in the original German, *Zier und Pracht*). ‘Grace’ is a word with connotations of poise, elegance and refinement, but in the baroque period was also used for the detailed systems of ornamentation appropriate to the particular type of music being performed, some of them improvised, others specified in the notation. ‘Splendour’ might suggest the trappings of grandeur, with trumpets blazing, or the drama and magnificence of the operatic stage, but to us, ‘splendour’ is more importantly the majesty and noble demeanour of this music, designed for the rituals and entertainments at the courts of rulers and patrons.

Taken together, the words ‘grace and splendour’ can also be seen as encapsulating the two opposing aesthetics of the baroque era, each with its army of entrenched supporters throughout Europe: the ‘grace’ of the French court with its array of dance forms and its subtle and flexible palette of inflected rhythms, and the ‘splendour’ of the Italian opera with its flamboyant display of virtuosity, stylized emotion and drama. Georg Muffat knew both these national styles intimately, having studied and worked with the greatest master in each – Jean-Baptiste Lully at the court of Louis XIV in France, and Arcangelo Corelli in the palaces of his noble patrons in Italy. Muffat used a combination of these styles in all his published works, mixing Italian sonata forms and intensely chromatic interludes with the nobility and poise of the French dance style.

In this sense, Muffat’s compositions were a direct model for his much better known, slightly younger contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach, like Muffat a native of Germany, studied and acquired a profound understanding of the conflicting yet complementary styles of both France and Italy, combining them with his genius for counterpoint, harmony and melodic line to create works of enduring emotional power that continue to speak to us centuries after his death and the disappearance of the cultural world in which he lived.

We see our aim as musicians to reconnect with this baroque world as far as we are able, to re-imagine the cultural context in which its music was originally produced, and thus enable it to move us with its most powerful voice. We live now in the 21st century and cannot escape the history and aesthetic of our own time. However, we believe that in our performances we should not capitulate to that 21st century aesthetic, which is driven by an anachronistic demand for self-expression, and which can paradoxically miniaturize and impoverish the music the more it tries to emulate modern excesses of speed and volume.

This programme, then, aims to provide a perspective on two familiar works by JS Bach, one in the Italian concerto form, the other a French suite of dances, by surrounding them with a purely Italian operatic sinfonia by Vivaldi, and a set of pieces by the most illustrious French composer of the 18th century, Rameau. As well as providing a general stylistic context for Bach, all these works are linked by specific points of similarity.

We begin with the **Muffat concerto**, mysteriously entitled by him *Propitia Sydera* (Auspicious Star). The meanings of the idiosyncratic titles for these concerti are unknown, though they may relate to the occasions of their first performances at the courts where Muffat was employed. In these works, Muffat encapsulates the contrasted national styles that inspired the genius of JS Bach, and this particular concerto also has even closer similarity to Bach's Suite BWV 1068 in the correspondence of the movements. In the Muffat concerto, the first two movements are in the Italian mode derived from Corelli: an opening *Sonata* in two sections, the first slow and serious, the second more lively. This is followed by the lyrical *Aria* (or *Air* as Bach would name it) – literally, a song, but here in the form of a *minuet*. The rest of the concerto consists of classic French dances (although Muffat uses their Italian names): *gavotte*, *bourrée* and the final *chaconne* which forms the typical grand finale. This has a stately theme followed by a monumental set of 30 variations between recurrences of the theme and episodes of contrasted mood and interplay between the solo violins. Just before the *ciacona*, to drive home his point, Muffat inserts a short Italian-style *grave* introduction.

There is no such subtle mixture of styles with **Vivaldi's *Sinfonia***, the overture to his opera *La verità in cimento* (Truth put to the Test) – music that is unequivocally *all'italiana*. Everything in the opening movement is overstated in the most direct and explicit language. This is sheer operatic display: a flurry of semiquavers, arpeggios in unison, bariolage and strongly accented chords. The very short last movement is a quirky little folk dance. In between lies the jewel: a simple lyrical *andante* melody in the minor key over a slow pulsed bass. In many respects, this *Sinfonia* might have been the simple Italian model for the next, much more complex work in the programme.

Bach's violin concerto in A minor is one of his best-known and most loved instrumental works. Here Bach takes the Italian form and style and makes of it a work of unsurpassed genius. It is also a showcase for the solo violinist, who must display a mastery of figuration and rhythmic control in the first and last movements. In the slow movement, over a constantly repeated pulsed bass figure, Bach writes a most beautiful solo line, decorated with exquisitely spun Italian fioriture ornamentation. The last movement is based on one of the Italian forms of the lively dance, the *giga* or *gigue*, to which is added an element of virtuosity with passages of bariolage and exuberant display. But Bach the German contrapuntalist is not content with such mastery: beneath all this exuberance the dance is constructed almost imperceptibly as a fugue in four parts, with counter-subjects, three sets of entries, and contrasted episodes for the solo violin.

We are accustomed to hearing these works played by much larger groups, but even a so-called 'baroque orchestra', with several string players per part and a continuo line reinforced by a double bass at 16-foot pitch, is probably more than Bach intended. All the evidence seems now to point to most of these works being composed for just one player per part. The advantages of this approach are clearly heard in the transparency of texture, the flexibility of rhythm, and the equal balance between the parts. The **Overture Suite BWV 1068** has come down to us in a form that calls for larger forces, with trumpets, oboes and timpani, which would have made it suitable for grander occasions. However, Bach writes almost no independent music for these extra parts, which simply double and reinforce the strings. This suggests that he composed the work originally for strings alone, and in fact there is an early manuscript which specifies a solo or *concertante* violin. This is the version we play.

Those familiar with this work may notice other stylistic differences, particularly in allowing Bach to speak in his most persuasive French voice, as he clearly intended in this *Suite*. The first movement is his version of the standard French *Ouverture* as perfected by Lully and endlessly imitated by composers throughout Europe. It has a strong majestic opening in a slow processional duple beat, characterized by sharply dotted rhythms and flourishes of very fast notes. This moves into a more lively middle section (which is nevertheless at exactly the same basic tempo), here with episodes for the solo violin, before returning to the opening majestic duple. The very famous and beautifully decorated *Air* (not, despite its popular name, played on the G string) follows. The paired *Gavottes* are played *en rondeau*: they are joyful poised court dances with characteristic swung rhythms, and like the following *Bourrée*, should give no hint of nervous rushing or country-dance abandon. The final *Gigue* is Bach at his lively best – rhythmically inflected, exuberant, lifted, yet contained – as is the dance itself.

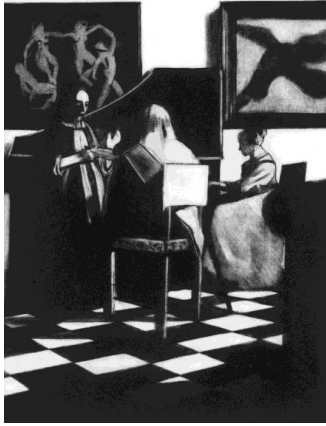
Rameau has gained fame as the French composer *par excellence* of grand opera, full of spectacle, virtuoso singing, massed choruses and dances – ironically, he was accused in his own day of an Italian extravagance. But earlier in his career he also wrote and published some of the greatest music of the baroque for chamber ensembles and solo harpsichord. Many of these pieces he later arranged for orchestral forces in his operas, and other contemporary composers also made their own arrangements, such as the collection of *Six Concerts* in five parts, arranged (possibly by Jacques-Joseph-Marie Decroix) towards the end of Rameau's life in the 1760s. We play the last of these *Concerts*, four pieces originally composed by Rameau for solo harpsichord. *L'Egyptienne* (the Gypsy) is in the showy Italian *moto perpetuo* style of running scales and arpeggios. *L'Enharmonique* (enharmonic modulations which were daring and modern at the time) demonstrates Rameau's command of expressive harmony and French *sensibilité*. The paired *Menuets* are the quintessential French dance, serene, noble and elegant. *La Poule* (the Hen) is a piece of pure programmatic fun to finish.

Notes by Robert Petre



RESTORATION

New Zealand baroque ensemble



Restoration is a group of musicians dedicated to exploring and bringing to life the music of the 17th and 18th centuries. They use historical instruments and playing styles to recreate the spirit of the baroque era, with its subtlety, flexibility, rhythmic energy and rhetorical inflections – a vivid and expressive language so different from that of our own time.

Restoration takes its name from that colourful era, the restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 – the music of this time is central to the group's repertoire, which extends from Purcell, Bach and Handel, to Haydn and Mozart and beyond. The name also suggests the art-restorer's process of revealing the original colours and dramatic impact of a treasured art-work.

Since returning to New Zealand from postgraduate study and professional experience overseas, founding members **Bronwen Pugh** and **Robert Petre** have worked for many years with local baroque specialists and visiting artists from the UK, Europe, USA, and Australia. They have toured throughout New Zealand, and appeared in festivals including the NZ International Festival of the Arts. They have also specialized in exploring the rich and intricate relationship of baroque dance and music, with local dancers and international experts, giving performances and workshops. They founded and directed St Pauls Baroque, an orchestra in residence at St Pauls Cathedral in Wellington, and they and many of their regular colleagues are members of NZ Barok, New Zealand's baroque orchestra based in Auckland. Restoration's recording of the complete *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* by Jean-Philippe Rameau was released to critical acclaim, and their CD, *Musick al'Italiana*, recorded in London for the Meridian label, was very well reviewed in both New Zealand and the UK.

'One of our best national assets for historically aware and keenly researched musical performances' (Radio NZ Concert *The Critic's Chair*)

'Unusual repertoire, authentic performance practice, fine musicians: an early music buff's seventh heaven' (Dominion Post)

'Sounds of the utmost subtlety ... Restoration have built up a large audience for their performances ... audible sighs of musical satisfaction' (Dominion Post)

'A very polished and accomplished concert ... it was good to hear so much unfamiliar music so stylishly and enthusiastically performed' (Music in New Zealand)

'The intelligence and musical sensitivity of this group produced an evening of magical beauty' (Christchurch Press)

'An intriguingly planned concert, redolent with style and assurance' (Music in New Zealand).

LUCINDA MOON

baroque violin



LUCINDA MOON grew up in Australia, and has been based there since her return in 1995 from extensive study and performance in Europe. She also has an important connection with New Zealand and particularly Wellington, where she was born, and with New Zealand's musical heritage. Her father, Donald Munro, founded the NZ Opera Company in 1954, and her mother, Jean McCartney, was principal viola in the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra and other ensembles. The family were close friends of Douglas Lilburn, who composed several works for Jean and Donald.

After graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts, Lucinda travelled to the Netherlands to study baroque violin with Sigiswald Kuijken at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague. On her return to Australia she was appointed concertmaster of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, which she led through its national and international concert series and numerous recordings from 1995 to 2008. Currently based in Adelaide, Lucinda performs and records with Accademia Arcadia, the Elysium Ensemble, John O'Donnell, Latitude 37, Van Diemen's Band, and is musical director of newly-formed Genesis Baroque. In 2017, Lucinda was guest director and soloist with NZ Barok as part of their Auckland concert series.

Lucinda's playing is distinguished by a dedication to the historical style and soul of baroque music, a complete technical mastery, a most beautiful violin sound, and an understated approach that is yet wonderfully expressive. In recent years she has made a special study of the solo violin works of J.S. Bach and performed them in recitals in Australia and New Zealand to critical acclaim.

... Lucinda Moon's complete understanding of the style, her command of phrasing and line, made absorbing listening ...

... Lucinda Moon's playing is both deeply informed by scholarship and understanding of the style, while retaining spontaneity and freedom that reveals the improvisatory spirit in which much of this music was written ...

... In the hands of Lucinda Moon, the baroque violin is an instrument of seemingly limitless subtlety and freedom ...

Acknowledgements

Cover image: John Drawbridge *Wave* (Private collection, Auckland).
John Drawbridge *The Concert (Vermeer with Matisse)*, courtesy of the Drawbridge Estate.

Design: Sue Hobbs, minimum graphics

A note on the Drawbridge images

John Drawbridge is unquestionably one of New Zealand's most significant and influential artists of the 20th century. His series of paintings and prints reworking images by 17th century European masters seems to us to resonate fittingly with our own work as New Zealand musicians exploring our heritage of 17th and 18th century European music. Both acknowledge the designs and techniques of the historical past and their influence on our art and culture in contemporary New Zealand. Restoration initially approached John Drawbridge in 1993 for permission to use his mezzotint *The Concert (Vermeer with Matisse)* in publicity material for our *Voix et Violon* programme. He kindly agreed, and also provided his own framed print for display in the foyer of the venue. We are grateful to Cameron Drawbridge and Tanya Ashken for their permissions, and for assistance with this ongoing connection.

Contact Restoration:

info@restorationensemble.co.nz

021 2565691

PO Box 12392, Wellington 6144, New Zealand

www.restorationensemble.co.nz