

# LA SERENISSIMA | GREAT ITALIAN CONCERTOS

## TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2021

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### La Serenissima

**Adrian Chandler** violin, director  
**Tabea Debus** recorder

#### Zavateri (1690-1764)

Introduzione in G for strings & continuo

**Vivaldi** Concerto for violin, strings & continuo in E minor, RV 281

#### Dall'Abaco (1675-1742)

Concerto XII for strings & continuo in D, Opus 6

**Vivaldi (1678-1741)** Concerto for soprano recorder, strings & continuo in C, RV 443

### Interval

#### Sammartini (c. 1700-1775)

Concerto for recorder, strings & continuo in F

**Vivaldi** Concerto for violin, strings & continuo in A, RV 353

#### Brescianello (c. 1690-1758)

Overture-Suite for strings & continuo in D

### Personnel

#### La Serenissima

**Adrian Chandler** violin, director  
**Tabea Debus** recorder

**Oliver Cave, Simone Pirri, Joanne Green**  
Violin 1

**Guy Button, Hatty Haynes, George Clifford, Naomi Burrell** Violin 2

**Thomas Kirby, John Crockatt,**

**Daniel Shilladay** Viola

**Vladimir Waltham, Carina Drury** Cello

**Carina Cosgrave** Bass

**Robin Bigwood** Harpsichord

### Forza azzurri!

Music by Dall'Abaco, Brescianello, Sammartini, Vivaldi and Zavateri

Looking at the variety of Italian baroque instrumental music on offer to today's listener, one could be forgiven for thinking that Vivaldi had faced little competition during his lifetime. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Whilst the volume of music that flowed from Vivaldi's pen was unusually plentiful, many other composers were needed to fulfil the needs of the regional courts and churches throughout Italy. Even abroad, no court was complete without its resident Italian *maestro* or group of Italian string players, a situation that encouraged composers such as Dall'Abaco, Brescianello and Sammartini to pursue careers

north of the Alps.

Born in Milan to the French oboist Alexis Saint-Martin, Giuseppe Sammartini spent his early career working alongside his brother, Giovanni Battista, as an orchestral oboist. His fine reputation as a player was further enhanced by a lack of serious competition. This state of affairs was noted by the visiting flautist and theorist Johann Joachim Quantz, who wrote that Giuseppe was the only good wind player at the Teatro Regio Ducale.

Soon after Quantz's visit, Sammartini left Milan for Brussels before moving on to London in 1729 where he remained until his death. His fame as a virtuoso spread quickly, and presently he was in demand both as an oboist and as a composer of instrumental music with

many of his sonatas and concertos being sent to the London printing presses. It is the recorder concerto however, that is probably his best-known work. This concerto survives in a non-autograph source in Stockholm's Statens Musikbibliothek, evidence of a former trend for Italian repertoire that became so popular with many contemporary Scandinavian music-societies.

In contrast to Sammartini's northern choice of abode, Brescianello and Dall'Abaco opted to stay closer to Italy. Dall'Abaco, a pupil of Torelli, joined the Bavarian court in c1704 but, following Maximilian II Emanuel's defeat to the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Blenheim (1704), he fled with the Elector to Belgium, and thenceforth – following another defeat by Marlborough at the Battle of Ramilies (1706) – to France. This prolonged exile exposed Dall'Abaco to a large amount of French music whose influence can be found in his 6 published sets of sonatas and concertos. His general style, however, remains predominantly Italianate as shown by the final concerto of his Opus 6, its fiery energy paying tribute to the concertos of Albinoni and Vivaldi.

The Treaty of Rastatt (1714) marking the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession signalled a return to Munich for Dall'Abaco. Whilst the Elector arrived from the north, his wife, the Electress Therese Kunegunde arrived from Venice with an entourage that included the violinist and composer Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello.

Brescianello's stay in Munich didn't last long. Following the death of Johann Christoph Pez (1716), *Oberkapellmeister* of the Württemberg court (Stuttgart), Brescianello successfully applied for the post of *Director musices*. Even though his initial brief was to take charge of the court's chamber music, Brescianello, perhaps with one eye on the post of *Oberkapellmeister*, decided to dedicate his 'opera pastorale' *Tisbe* to Duke Eberhard Ludwig in January 1718; he eventually succeeded to his preferred position in 1721.

Although Brescianello's fortunes ebbed and flowed in tandem with those of the court (he

lost his post completely between 1737 and 1744), he remained in nearby Ludwigsburg until his death in 1758.

He was not a prolific composer, but his surviving output is of an exceedingly high quality; it is mostly Italianate but also incorporates elements of the French style as well as a thorough harmonic outlook popular amongst the German courts.

His employer, Eberhard Ludwig, Duke of Württemberg, had fought on the side of the Austrians, British and Dutch against the French and Spanish during the War of the Spanish Succession, so it is unsurprising that the music of his court tended to look towards Italy rather than France. That said, Eberhard was no stranger to the French style; his visit to Louis XIV at Versailles shortly before 1700 had made a profound impression upon him, perhaps later prompting Brescianello to compose a collection of 6 orchestral suites and a stand-alone chaconne in the French style. The present suite in D major is set apart from the others by virtue of a massive concluding *Ciaccona* instead of the customary *Giga* or *Gigue*. Otherwise, the work conforms to the layout of its fellow suites with the *Ouverture* being followed by a collection of dance movements.

Bologna, in the year 1690 was witness to the birth of two violinist composers; whilst Brescianello found modest fame outside his native Italy, Lorenzo Gaetano Zavateri, another pupil of Torelli, chose to pursue his career in Livorno, Venice, Ferrara and Bologna. His surviving oeuvre suggests that he was first and foremost a violinist, and a composer second. That said, his two published sets – one of sonatas and one of concertos – show considerable skill; his Opus 1 concertos (c1735) received praise from Padre Martini for their 'well refined intelligence'. The set comprises one concerto for 2 violins, 5 for solo violin, and 6 for strings and continuo alone. The opening *Introduzione* was probably intended for the theatre, its arresting slow movements and energetic allegros being perfectly designed to quieten a rowdy audience.



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Without a doubt, the quantity of instrumental music composed by Vivaldi (interestingly perhaps yet another pupil of Torelli) is staggering. To have composed around 500 concertos and 100 sonatas is even more impressive when one considers that Vivaldi prioritised his career as an impresario and composer of operas over everything else.

As well as writing works for his own private use, he also supplied many concertos to the Ospedale della Pietà (the Venetian foundling institution with which he was associated for much of his life) and to the theatre, where his concertos provided *entr'acte* entertainments.

The theatre is an unlikely destination for the violin concertos presented here, both of which lack the rubric '*senza cembali*' (without harpsichords), a term commonly found amongst his operatic concertos where the presence of more than one harpsichord was standard (elsewhere it was unusual). It is more likely that they were either written for himself or for the Pietà where his legendary violin technique was passed on to his famous pupils.

Both works were probably written during the 1730s and survive today as part of Vivaldi's personal manuscript collection, now held in the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin. The manuscripts show Vivaldi's compositional processes with numerous corrections and alterations: the slow movement to the concerto in A was initially intended to open with a tutti

introduction (solo is written above the start of the second phrase) whilst the concerto in E minor shows his inclination to tinker with works that have already been finished. Not only does this work feature an alternative ending, but it also includes (unusually) an autograph copy of the *cembalo* part whose opening is marked *piano* instead of the arresting *forte molto* found in the first page of the autograph score.

Vivaldi also was known to experiment with changes in instrumentation. The manuscript for the concerto for sopranino recorder clearly shows the heading *Concerto per Flautino* written in the centre of the upper margin; to the right of this is written presumably at a later date) *Gl'istromenti trasportati alla 4a bassa* allowing the concerto to be played down a 4th on a larger recorder.

The destination for this concerto was almost certainly the Pietà; this institution evidently possessed a player capable of playing Vivaldi's three virtuoso *flautino* concertos and C minor concerto for treble recorder. If a player of this talent had worked on the freelance circuit, it is likely that someone else would also have composed concertos to add to their repertoire. The fact that Vivaldi's concertos survive in their own bubble, suggests that their intended soloist was a player with little access to outside movement, such as a member of the Pietà's *figlie di coro*.

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## La Serenissima

La Serenissima is the UK's leading exponent of the music of eighteenth-century Venice. Praised for its 'all-too-rare ability to make one's pulse race afresh with every new project (Gramophone), La Serenissima has uncovered a plethora of neglected music, making it available to all through live performance, recording and outreach. Uniquely, the group's entire repertoire is edited from source material.

Founded in 1994 by violinist Adrian Chandler, La Serenissima is recognised for its outstanding recording catalogue, which is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and international radio; advertising (*Versace*, 2018) and film (*Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, 2020). The group has won two Gramophone Awards: for *The French Connection* (2010) and *The Italian Job* (2017); in 2018 *Vivaldi X2* topped the UK Classical Chart. In 2020 *Extra Time* received exhaustive radio play from all major UK radio stations and clocked up over 250,000 streams

in the first 2 weeks of release, with Gramophone remarking that ‘the music-making is top-drawer and joyous’. 2021 saw the release of *Settecento* with YCAT artist Tabea Debus. Future releases include the complete Brescianello Opus 1, works by Dall’Abaco, Sammartini, Vivaldi and Zavateri, Tartini sonatas (celebrating Tartini 250+1) and an all-sacred Vivaldi disc, *Vivaldi’s Women*.

La Serenissima performs across the UK and internationally. It has given the first UK performance of Brescianello’s opera *Tisbe* (2018) and the modern premiere of Caldara’s opera *Lucio Papirio Dittatore* (2019). The group performed at Valletta International Baroque Festival in 2020 before the Covid-19 pandemic halted its live concerts for over a year. During this time, the group generated recording and digital outreach activity with support from Arts Council England (*Culture Recovery Fund Round 2*), Continuo Foundation and other generous donors. In 2021, the group has performed in Wigmore Hall’s live-stream series and to socially-distanced audiences and looks forward to a postponed residency at the iconic venue. Other engagements during 2021 include appearances in Beverley Early Music Festival, Bury St Edmunds, Cheltenham Music Festival, Edinburgh, Longborough Festival Opera and Saffron Hall.

La Serenissima is proud to have as its Honorary Patron, His Excellency The Italian Ambassador to the UK.

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### **Adrian Chandler** Director / Violin

Born on Merseyside in 1974, Adrian Chandler is recognised internationally as a leading interpreter of Italian baroque music with an ‘avant-garde approach that would have awed Hendrix’ (The Guardian). His ‘electrifying playing’ and ‘real richness of sound’ (Classical

Music) have captivated listeners for over 25 years.

Adrian founded La Serenissima in 1994, whilst a student of Rodney Friend at the Royal College of Music, channelling his love affair with Vivaldi into a lifetime’s mission. With La Serenissima, he has performed a host of recitals, concertos and operas for major festivals including Bruges, Buxton, Cheltenham, Lake District Summer Music, Lichfield, Spitalfields and York, as well as for concerts in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malta, Mexico and Spain. His performances have been broadcast by BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, Scala Radio and by radio stations throughout the world.

Adrian has driven La Serenissima’s highly acclaimed recording work, creating an extensive catalogue encompassing music by Albinoni, Bach, Brescianello, Caldara, Corelli, Dall’Abaco, Legrenzi, Locatelli, Lotti, Montanari, Navarra, Pisendel, Porta, Sammartini, Scarlatti, Tartini, Telemann, Torelli, Valentini, Vandini, Veracini, Vivaldi, Composer X and Zavateri. These recordings have been widely praised through repeated award nominations, regular focus from specialist and broadsheet press and radio, and frequent rave reviews. He has accepted two Gramophone Awards for La Serenissima albums *The French Connection* and *The Italian Job*.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council awarded Adrian a fellowship at Southampton University to research the development of the North Italian violin concerto 1690 – 1740; he subsequently held a two-year post at Southampton as Turner Sims Professor. During the 2020 UK lockdown, Adrian edited a Vivaldi violin concerto daily: the campaign reached fans, musicians, scholars and Vivaldi enthusiasts across the globe via social media.

Adrian has guest directed a range of other groups throughout his career, demonstrating versatility in working with musicians on both period and modern instruments; during 2021-22 he directs projects for Concerto Copenhagen (Denmark) and Deutsche Philharmonie Merck (Germany).

A lifelong Everton fan, Adrian devised the concept for the album cover of *Extra Time* which showcased an array of Italian composers' names emblazoned on his club's football shirts.

### **Tabea Debus** Recorder

Described by The Times as a *charismatic virtuoso*, Tabea Debus is constantly exploring the horizons of music for recorder and has performed widely in Europe, Asia and the USA. Highlights include concerts at Wigmore Hall, Early Music Festivals in London and York, Baroque at the Edge, and collaborations with La Serenissima and The English Concert. Her keen interest in contemporary music for recorder has led to numerous commissions and premieres including with LSO Soundhub, the Barbican's *Sound Unbound* and *Diaries of the*

*Early Worm* by Gareth Moorcraft, which won a 2020 Ivors Academy Award. Tabea was selected by YCAT in 2018, and subsequently joined the CAG roster (New York). She is a frequent guest on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* and *Early Music Show* and has released five solo discs.

In 2020, Tabea won the CAG Innovation Award, and she has been awarded the Soloists Prize at the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and 1st prize at The SRP/Moeck International Solo Recorder Competition the previous year. Passionate about outreach work, Tabea teaches recorder at Wells Cathedral School, has collaborated with Music Masters, Jackdaws Music Education Trust, and the RAM's Open Academy, and has led workshops at the Royal Academy of Music and Cambridge University.

[tabeadebus.com](http://tabeadebus.com)

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This programme has been recorded thanks to support from Arts Council England, Culture Recovery Fund (Round 2) and Continuo Foundation and will be released on the Signum label in March 2022.

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