

La Serenissima

Saturday 4 October 7:30pm



Adrian Chandler Director

Raffaele La Ragione Mandolin

Violin 1

Oliver Cave

Abel Balazs

Rebecca Harris

Violin 2

Camilla Scarlett

Valentin Sanchez Pinero

Guy Button

Viola

Thomas Kirby

George White

Cello

Vladimir Waltham

Carina Drury

Jan Zahourek Double Bass

Robin Bigwood Organ/
Harpsichord

Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello

Ouverture -Suite for Strings & Continuo in F

Vivaldi

Sinfonia in G for Strings and Continuo in G, RV 149

Anon.

Canzoni da Battello for Mandolin & Continuo

Vivaldi

Concerto for Mandolin, Strings & Continuo in C, RV 425

Interval

Vivaldi

'Paris' Concerto VI for Strings & Continuo in G minor, RV 154

Anon. arr. Adrian Chandler

Canzoni da Battello for Mandolin & Continuo

Diogenio Bigaglia

Concerto for Mandolin, Strings & Continuo in G

Being one of Europe's finest violinists, it is unsurprising that the bulk of **Vivaldi's** concertos were written for the violin. Despite this, unlike other violinist composers such as Giuseppe Tartini, Vivaldi harboured a keen interest in more esoteric instruments. The Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian foundling hospital which provided Vivaldi with stints of employment throughout his life, owned a veritable treasure-chest of such instruments which were brought to the fore for important occasions such as the visit of the crown prince of Saxony-Poland, Friedrich Christian, on 21 March, 1740. In addition to a serenata (Il coro delle muse) by Gennaro d'Alessandro, the Pietà's maestro di coro, Vivaldi composed three concertos and a sinfonia to add to the proceedings. All the instrumental pieces show Vivaldi's imaginative approach to instrumental colour, whether through the use of special effects such as the combination of pizzicato and bowed strings in the sinfonia, or through his use of instruments such as the lute and mandolin.

Although not written for the aforementioned occasion, Vivaldi famously composed two concertos for mandolins. This instrument was commonly used for recreation by members of the upper class (Vivaldi's Ferrarese patron, Guido Bentivoglio, played the mandolin at one time), and also (in Venice) to accompany nocturnal serenades, taking part in the performances of Canzoni da Battello which would be sung and played from gondolas in the city's canals.

Whilst the use of French horns and even timpani could be used in such situations (according to Charles Burney) it is difficult to imagine Vivaldi's mandolin concertos being performed from a gondola. It is more likely that both these works were written for the Pietà, particularly as he had already used the instrument here in his sole surviving oratorio of 1716, *Juditha Triumphans*. Both the concertos

for one and two mandolins probably date from the 1730s and survive, side by side, in Vivaldi's personal collection of manuscripts, now housed in the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin. Despite the appearance of these manuscripts being fair copies, the solo concerto shows considerable alterations made at a later date (including a suggestion that all the accompanying violins play pizzicato) implying that this work may have been in the Pietà's repertory for a period of time.

The surviving oeuvre of works for mandolin from this period, particularly in the north of Italy, is relatively small. Contemporary players of the mandolin probably assimilated sonatas (and maybe even concertos) for other instruments into their repertoire. Such a work is the concerto in G by **Bigaglia**, an arrangement of a work that was initially conceived by the composer as an oboe concerto in B flat. On this occasion however, the slow movement can claim to be a genuine composition for mandolin as it was also used in Bigaglia's mandolin sonata.

Although the music of Bigaglia is largely unknown today, he enjoyed a degree of success in his lifetime. He was born in Venice seven days after Vivaldi but where Vivaldi came from musical stock, Bigaglia's parents were both members of prominent Muranese glassmaking families.

Around the time that Vivaldi started training for the priesthood, Bigaglia was already becoming fully ordained. He took his vows on 11 March 1694 at the abbey of S. Giorgio Maggiore where he was to spend much of his life, eventually rising to become Prior of the abbey in 1713. Much of Bigaglia's music has perished over the course of time but what remains (in particular the large-scale works for chorus and orchestra) show a composer of immense skill and imagination. Little is known about his musical career, though one would imagine that he was at least familiar with

Vivaldi's music if not directly acquainted with his fellow-priest, particularly as S. Giorgio Maggiore gazes across the water to Vivaldi's place of work, the Ospedale della Pietà.

Another composer who may have met Vivaldi in Venice, was Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello who worked as a valet for the exiled Electress Therese Kunegunde during the early 1710s.

Following the Treaty of Rastatt (1714) that concluded 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 Oberkapellmesiter, 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. Like the other works in the set (apart from the D major suite that concludes with a massive Ciaconna) the F major suite is made up of a French overture followed by a suite of dances, finishing with a lively Giga or Gigue.

© Adrian Chandler, September 2025

Recognised for 'whipping up a storm with Vivaldi', **La Serenissima** is 'one of Britain's best-loved chamber orchestras' (*The Telegraph*). The group 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 by founder and violinist, Adrian Chandler OSI.

Established in 1994, La Serenissima is



recognised for its outstanding recording catalogue, which is regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and international radio; as well as in worldwide advertising (Beats, 2022) and film ('Portrait of a Lady on Fire', 2020). The group has twice won the Gramophone Award for 'Baroque Instrumental' for The French Connection (2010) and The Italian Job (2017). La Serenissima topped the UK Classical Chart in 2018 with album Vivaldi x2. The ensemble's growing online following is evidenced by more than a 1.3 million monthly Spotify listeners; their 2015 recording of 'The Four Seasons' is now 'potentially the most streamed interpretation ever' (Gramophone).

The group creates digital outreach resources for everyone, available on YouTube, and opportunities for young professional instrumentalists from across the globe via Emerging Artist Chairs. 'Discovering Vivaldi', a 50-minute podcast, was enabled by Culture Recovery Funding in 2022 – helping La Serenissima to reach audiences in different ways.

La Serenissima has performed throughout the

UK and internationally in concert series and festivals including London Festival of Baroque Music, MustonenFest (Estonia), Handel-Festspiele (Germany), Valletta International Baroque Festival (Malta) and International Cervantes Festival (Mexico). The group has given the UK premiere of Brescianello's opera *Tisbe* (2018) and the modern premiere of Caldara's opera *Lucio Papirio Dittatore* (2019). The group's 'exquisite playing' (The Guardian) has graced two Monteverdi opera productions at Longborough Festival Opera since the pandemic.

La Serenissima celebrated its 30th Anniversary at London's Wigmore Hall during 2024-5 with a Residency entitled 'The A-Z of the Italian Baroque'. A new recording of Vivaldi's Opus 8 including *The Four Seasons*, marked the 300th Anniversary of the Amsterdam publication in 2025. La Serenissima is proud to have as its Honorary Patron, His Excellency The Ambassador of Italy to the UK.

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). As a violinist, his 'electrifying playing' and 'real richness of sound' (Classical Music) have captivated listeners for over 30 years.

Adrian founded La Serenissima in 1994, whilst a violin 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 neglected Italian baroque composers from Ariosti to 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 a 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 regularly speaks on international radio - even giving an interview *in Italian* to Radio:24 to launch *Forza Azzurri!* in 2022. He was interviewed for BBC Radio 3's programme celebrating the 300th anniversary of The Four Seasons in 2025 and was invited to contribute his thoughts to Hannah French's book *The Rolling Year: Listening to the Seasons with*

Vivaldi, published by Faber.

Adrian has guest-directed concerts abroad, including recent projects for Concerto Copenhagen (Denmark) and Deutsche Philharmonie Merck (Germany). Adrian made his conducting debut with La Serenissima in July 2025, in the presence of His Majesty King Charles III at a concert for Music in Country Churches, following a walking accident which injured his right shoulder; he is expected to return to the stage as a violinist from December.

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. He was awarded the honour of 'Cavaliere' of the Order of the Star of Italy for his services to Italian baroque music in 2022.

Born in Naples in 1986, **Raffaele La Ragione** has devoted himself from a very young age to the study of the mandolin, exploring its original repertoire from early music to contemporary works. His education at the Milan Conservatory, where he graduated under Ugo Orlandi, and at the University of Bologna, where he earned a degree from the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy in Arts, Music and Performing Arts, soon led him to deepen his interpretative research, participating in seminars (Fondazione Cini in Venice), giving lectures, masterclasses and publishing contributions on the literature dedicated to his instrument. Numerous recordings for labels such as Arcana, Warner, Erato and Brilliant Classics, together with the recognition received from international critics, testify to a profound and innovative artistic research.

His concert career has taken him to perform in Italy, Europe, and Asia, as a guest at festivals and prestigious concert seasons (MiTo Festival,

Ravenna Festival, Istanbul Musik Festivali, Festival de Musique de Menton, St. Martin in the Fields, Settimane Barocche, Bremen Musikfest, Osor Music Evenings), collaborating with renowned orchestras and ensembles, including I Solisti Veneti (Claudio Scimone), Il Pomo d'Oro (Francesco Corti), the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra (Myung-Whun Chung), La Serenissima (Adrian Chandler), the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, the Greek National Opera, the Orchestra dei Pomeriggi Musicali di Milano and La Toscanini in Parma.

His discography includes numerous projects dedicated to the original mandolin repertoire, among which: *Serenata Napoletana – Music for Mandolin and Piano*, *Nicola Maria Calace – Je Reviendrais*, *Franco Margola – Music for Mandolin and other chamber Music*, *Calace – Music for Mandolin Quartet and Mozart – Don Giovanni*. In 2020 he released 'Beethoven and his Contemporaries', produced to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, which

was enthusiastically received by international critics. Two years later he recorded 'Mandolin on Stage – The Greatest Mandolin Concertos' with the orchestra Il Pomo d'Oro conducted by Francesco Corti, a tribute to the great 18th-century mandolin concertos by Vivaldi, Hummel, Paisiello and Lecce, performed on three different period instruments. The album received numerous awards and a nomination for the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik as Best Early Music Recording.

Forthcoming releases include the album 'Serenata a Napoli' with Samoan tenor Pene Pati and 'Il Pomo d'Oro' for Erato, as well as an album dedicated to French Romantic music for mandolin, born from the collaboration with the

Fondazione Palazzetto Bru Zane, with pianist François Dumont and soprano Sandrine Piau, to be released on Arcana in 2026.

Driven by constant musical curiosity and the desire to explore new languages, he has also taken part in cross-genre projects: he collaborated with writer Alessandro Baricco in the visionary Traviata da Cortile and, since 2018, with Renzo Arbore and the Orchestra Italiana, participating in tours throughout Italy and in television productions for Rai1, Rai2 and Rai5.

Alongside his concert career, he is Mandolin Professor at the "Gaetano Donizetti" Conservatory in Bergamo.

Irina Kulikova

Saturday 11 October 7:30pm

Irina Kulikova has established herself as one of today's leading guitarists. She presents an evening of sublime music for the guitar including classics by composers Sor, Mangore and Aguado. These are interspersed with works dedicated to her by a range of composers.



London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble

Thursday 27 November 7:30pm

The LMP are joined by tenor Mark le Brocq and pianist Anna Tilbrook to present a programme that includes Vaughan Williams's 'On Wenlock Edge' and Shostakovich's Piano Quintet in G minor.



info@turnersims.co.uk

turnersims.co.uk

Box Office 023 8059 5151



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



University of
Southampton

Turner Sims is part of the University of Southampton and gratefully acknowledges the support of Arts Council England

