

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra June 23 programme notes

Join us as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra perform five bright, vibrant and irresistibly playful pieces. You'll enjoy well-known orchestral gems like Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (*A Little Night Music*) and Bach's lively *Brandenburg Concerto*, and be introduced to the soothing sounds of the oboe d'amore – oboe of love in Italian!

Thelma Handy *violin/director*

[Thelma Handy](#) was appointed Joint Leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2007 and has directed the Orchestra and appeared as soloist on many occasions. Previously she toured worldwide as a member of the English Chamber Orchestra and worked extensively with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the London Mozart Players and the London Symphony Orchestra.

She has made guest appearances as leader with many orchestras including the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, City of Birmingham Symphony, Manchester Camerata and the Real Filharmonía de Galicia.

Handy plays regularly with the French baroque group Orfeo 55 and is a member of the [Pixels Ensemble](#), with whom she has premiered many new works. She is the Artistic Director of the Wirral Chamber Music Festival which she co-founded in 2020. In 2017 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Liverpool.

Jonathan Small *oboe d'amore*

[Jonathan Small](#) started playing the oboe at the age of 11 and went on to win a scholarship to study with Michael Winfield at the Royal College of Music where he received the Joy Boughton Oboe Prize. From 1980 to 1984 he was principal oboe at the Scottish Opera, during which time he was a founding member of the [Paragon Ensemble](#).

As well as being the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's principal oboe – a position he has held since 1984 – he has also appeared as a concerto soloist at home and abroad and has played with many of the UK's major orchestras. He enjoys a seasoned reputation as a highly individual performer and teacher whose eloquent, inspired playing combines individuality with unceasing scholarship.

During his career with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, he has taken part in recordings of numerous symphony and concerto cycles, encompassing much of the greatest orchestral repertoire, with conductors including Vasily Petrenko, Sir Charles Mackerras, Libor Pešek, Vernon Handley, Gerard Schwarz and Marek Janowski. He is also a founder member of the Orchestra's contemporary Ensemble 10:10 and a senior tutor of oboe at the [Royal Northern College of Music](#) in Manchester.

Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No.3*

The [Brandenburg Concertos](#) remains one of [Johann Sebastian Bach's](#) most famous collections of music. But it started its life not as one entity, but as individual pieces composed over the course of more than a decade.

The six concertos were written for Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, and date from between 1708 and 1721. They weren't known by their current name until the middle of the 18th century. They are in 'concerto grosso' form, popular in the Baroque era, where there are two groups of

instruments – one small, called a ‘concertino’ and one larger – which perform either together, singly or which play imitating lines.

Over the three centuries since they were composed, the Third Concerto has become perhaps the most well-known and frequently performed. It is also the shortest of the six and is particularly notable for its unusual form and instrumentation. It was originally written for three violins, three violas, three cellos and continuo. Its first and third movements are fast and are in ‘ritornello’ form (a recurring musical theme which forms the heart of the piece). The slower and much briefer second movement in E minor uses what is called a ‘Phrygian half cadence’, which was a survivor from earlier Renaissance harmony and consists of just two chords, allowing one or more instruments to improvise a cadenza or to play a movement from another of Bach’s works.

Watch a performance of Bach’s [*Brandenburg Concerto No.3 in G major*](#).

Bach *Concerto in A for Oboe d’amore*

Bach seems to have had a particular fondness for the sound of the now rarely heard oboe d’amore and is known to have composed several works for, or including, the wind instrument. But for many years this [*Concerto in A for Oboe d’amore*](#), dating from 1738, was thought lost.

In the 20th century, researchers and scholars, understanding the busy composer had answered demand for regular new compositions by transcribing some of his violin and oboe pieces for the harpsichord, pored over those existing works and decided the probability was his *Harpsichord Concerto No.4 in A major* had started life for the oboe d’amore – and the score was reconstructed for its original instrument.

It is in three movements – a nimble opening allegro, a relatively brief larghetto which is expressive and almost melancholy, and concluding with an allegro ma non tanto (fast, but not TOO fast). The piece explores the instrument’s distinctive tone and range, with its initial entry in the opening movement being in its lowest ‘voice’, and later in the lively ‘allegro ma non tanto’ finale an extended solo passage in its highest register.

Listen to Bach’s [*Concerto in A for Oboe d’amore*](#).

Introducing the Oboe d’Amore

The oboe d’amore is slightly larger than a regular treble oboe with a wider reed, and a more mellow and resonant tone which echoes a human alto voice. While an oboe is a C major instrument, the oboe d’amore is pitched below that and – like the cor anglais – is made with a bulb bell at its base.

It was invented in the early 18th century and its earliest use is dated to 1717. Bach was a big fan of the instrument and wrote several works for it, as did his contemporary and fellow German Baroque composer Georg Telemann. The oboe d’amore then fell out of favour until the late 19th and early 20th century when it was rediscovered by composers like Richard Strauss, Ravel, Debussy and Delius.

Marianna Martines *Overture / Symphony in C*

A contemporary and friend of both Mozart and Haydn, [*Anna Katharina ‘Marianna’ Martines*](#) was born in Vienna in 1744. Her father was the major-domo of the city’s papal nuncio, and the Martines family lived – along with their lodger Pietro Trapessi, a celebrated opera librettist and the poet laureate of the Austrian Empire who went by the name Metastasio – on the city’s Michaelerplatz. Above them in the attic of their apartment building lived a struggling young composer called Joseph Haydn.

It was Trapessi who first spotted the young Marianna’s talent and arranged for her to have keyboard lessons with Haydn and singing lessons with another of the building’s residents, the singing teacher

and composer Nicola Porpora. She was also enrolled in composition lessons with the court composer Giuseppe Buono.

Along with performing, singing and teaching, the multi-lingual Martines was a prolific composer whose 200-odd works ranged from masses and motets to oratorios and songs for solo voice, making her famous across Europe.

Her *Symphony in C major* – described by its composer as *Overture in C* – dates from around 1770 and holds the distinction of being the first known symphony written by a woman. The playful work, in three movements and in the popular Italian classical style of the time, showcases Martines' talent for orchestration and her grasp of form and harmony. It opens with a charming and colourful allegro con spirito which has distinctive rhythmic patterns and lively interplay between the various orchestral sections. The second movement, an andante ma non troppo, is delightfully expressive with the strings creating some tender lines and lyrical writing for the orchestra's wind section. And the piece concludes with a sprightly allegro spiritoso, written in a minuetto dance style.

Enjoy Martines' [*Overture in C*](#).

Mozart *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*

In 1787, [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#) was in the midst of a particularly creative and fruitful part of his career. The year would conclude with the 31-year-old being appointed official court chamber composer to Emperor Joseph II, following the death of Christoph Gluck.

But ahead of that, Mozart was on a roll. In 1786 his opera buffa *The Marriage of Figaro* had received a warm reception when it was premiered at Vienna's Burgtheater, and over the following months he also produced his *Symphony No.38* (the 'Prague' Symphony), several concertos – including his landmark *Piano Concerto No.24* – and started work on what would become *Don Giovanni*.

[*Eine kleine Nachtmusik's*](#) formal title is actually *Serenade No.13 in G*, but it was the note Mozart made next to it in the margin of his detailed catalogue – and which translates as 'a little night music' – which has stuck.

While it was composed in 1787, the hugely popular and much-loved *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* was only published after Mozart's death. Its surviving four movements (Mozart's own records suggest there should have been a fifth – a minuet – which has evidently become lost) are an exuberant, melodic delight from those famous opening bars on.

Listen to Mozart's [*Eine kleine Nachtmusik*](#).

The Year 1787

January 11: Astronomer William Herschel discovers two moons of Uranus, naming them Titania and Oberon.

May 13: The 'First Fleet' leaves Portsmouth carrying 700 convicts and 300 crew and guards to establish a penal colony in Australia.

May 28: Mozart's father Leopold dies.

May 31: Lord's holds its first cricket match and Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) is formed.

August 10: Mozart completes his *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

October 29: *Don Giovanni* is premiered in Prague.

December 7: Delaware ratifies the new United States Constitution, becoming the first US State.

December 23: Captain Bligh sets sail for Tahiti commanding HMS Bounty.

Dittersdorf *Concerto in A for Oboe d'Amore*

Austrian [Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf](#) (born plain old Johann Carl Ditters in 1739) was a virtuoso violinist and a busy and popular composer who was much in demand in the late 18th century. He eclipsed even his contemporary Haydn for the sheer volume of symphonies he composed – at least 120 to Haydn's 106 – and his prolific output also embraced operas (including his 1786 hit *Der Apotheker und der Doktor* or *The Pharmacist and the Doctor*), oratorios, sacred music and numerous keyboard and chamber works.

His charming *Concerto in A for Oboe d'Amore* is in three movements – a moderato, adagio second movement and presto finale.

Listen to Dittersdorf's [Concerto in A for Oboe d'Amore](#).

About the Music

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750): Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048

1. [Allegro]
2. [Cadenza]
3. Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach: Concerto for oboe d'amore in A major, BWV 1055R

1. [Allegro]
2. Larghetto
3. Allegro ma non tanto

Marianna Martines (1744-1812): Overture/Symphony in C major

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Menuetto
4. Presto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91): *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K525

1. Allegro
2. Romanze: Andante
3. Menuetto: Allegretto
4. Rondo: Allegro

Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-99): Concerto for oboe d'amore in A major, L43b

1. Moderato
2. Adagio
3. Presto

The Eighteenth Century was a period of epochal change in what we now call 'classical music'. In the Renaissance and early Baroque periods, this kind of intricate, 'artfully' wrought music would be heard only in two kinds of venue: the court of a ruler or wealthy aristocrat, or the church. Then, as now, it was expensive to produce, and only the very wealthy had the cash, or the kind of venues necessary for the performance of larger ensemble pieces.

But by the Eighteenth Century a new social class was beginning to emerge: the prosperous, educated middle class. Brimming over with energy, aspiration and, perhaps most importantly, confidence, this new class was less inclined to defer to the high and mighty, and it didn't see any

reason why, when it came to entertainment, it shouldn't have access to what their 'betters' had. Musical education was encouraged, and competence in playing an instrument was a badge of honour. But only the very wealthiest of the middle classes could possess the kind of private concert halls the nobility enjoyed. So, a new kind of venue began to appear in cities across Europe: the public concert hall, built by public subscription and maintained by ticket sales – or at least that was the idea.

The music in this concert is fascinatingly poised between those two worlds: the old world of 'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate', and the new, more democratic environment in which a man, and sometimes even a woman, of relatively modest origins could rise to new social heights. In the earlier part of his career, Johann Sebastian Bach was frequently employed as a 'Kapellmeister' – the master of music in a court chapel, very much at the ruler's beck and call. But as music director at St Thomas Church in Leipzig he took on a higher social status, responsible to the town council, and could even be invited to play and compose for such a stellar figure as King Frederick 'The Great' of Prussia, not as a liveried servant, but as almost an intellectual equal.

The six so-called 'Brandenburg' Concertos were presented in 1721 to Christian Ludwig, Margrave (Military Governor) of Brandenburg-Schwedt. At this time, there were two competing kinds of concerto: the solo concerto, for a virtuoso individual musician competing on equal terms with an ensemble or orchestra, and the 'Concerto Grosso' (Great Concerto) in which a team of soloists worked sometimes with, sometimes against a large ensemble. The Brandenburg Concertos are firmly in the Grosso camp, though in the case of No.3 the soloist-orchestra relationship is especially intricate. The three violins, violas and cellos can each function as soloists, but more commonly as a trio of soloists, with the other instruments interacting or standing in bold contrast. If that sounds forbiddingly abstract, the result is dynamic and joyous. Unlike in the other five concertos, Bach doesn't mix strikingly contrasted solo instruments here, but his exploitation of the subtle gradations in tone colour between the solo teams is glorious.

Wonderful as he was at drawing out the colour and expressive power of particular instruments, Bach would also frequently arrange his concertos for other instruments – especially if an opportunity arose for performance. The Concerto for oboe d'amore survived only as a harpsichord concerto, but with a little editorial help its (almost certain) original state could easily be recreated. The oboe d'amore (its name translates, rather beautifully, as 'oboe of love') was very popular in the Baroque age, but in the later Eighteenth Century it began to disappear. It is slightly bigger and lower-pitched than the familiar oboe, and its egg-shaped bell helps create a more mellow, even melancholy tone. Bach used it often, and this Concerto shows why: there's brilliance and agility, as one might expect in a concerto, but the central slow movement draws out the instrument's singing quality and warmth of tone.

Having a lively mind could be a source of frustration and pain for a woman in the Eighteenth Century, even for such a high-born woman as Viennese composer, pianist and singer Marianna Martines. But Martines was lucky in having a father who encouraged her talents, and even luckier in having as her neighbour the composer Joseph Haydn, who soon became her teacher and musical mentor. And she soon made a very favourable impression on a family friend: the poet and go-to opera librettist Pietro Metastasio, who offered her valuable advice and support. Both Haydn and Mozart thought highly of Martines as a composer, and this Overture/Symphony gives plenty of proof as to why. Although Haydn's influence can be heard, it's full of vitality, beautifully worked out and based on strong, memorable thematic material. Why Overture/Symphony? At this stage (in the 1770s) the symphony was beginning to emerge as a form from the baroque orchestral suite or, as it was sometimes called, overture, and the terms were to some extent interchangeable. The formal layout and intellectual concentration are however thoroughly symphonic.

Formally, Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* looks similar, but according to Mozart's own catalogue there was an extra movement, another minuet, placed between the opening Allegro and the Romanze. If so, no one has a clue what happened to it. The name 'A little night music' is delightful, but in referring to it in this way, Mozart was probably simply designating it as 'a small serenade' – serenade suggesting a suite or 'overture' that could be performed at an evening event (confusing, isn't it). It's hard to believe now that this music we listen to in respectful silence might have been intended as background music for a society party. It's so full of life and character that the thought of expensively dressed people talking over it and missing its brilliance and loveliness is slightly painful. But as the novelist L.P. Hartley put it, 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.'

They certainly did: in such a milieu an individual might proudly announce himself as Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf without provoking the slightest hint of a titter. This remarkably accomplished composer was actually born Carl Ditters, son of a military tailor in the Austrian army. But when Count Philipp Gotthard von Schaffgotsch, Prince-Bishop of Breslau, enticed him into becoming court composer, part of the deal involved him acquiring a noble title, which usually meant adding a 'von' (from) and a place name. When Dittersdorf wrote his Concerto for Oboe d'amore, probably in the 1770s, the instrument was already beginning to vanish from the concert scene, but the oboe's sweeter, more lyrical sister was a gift to a composer who put melody above the kind of taut, dynamic development of compact motifs pioneered by Haydn. It may be less of a mental work-out, but it's certainly very appealing.