

**YORK**  
EARLY MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

**Florilegium**

**A Celebration of Johann Sebastian Bach**

**National Centre for Early Music**

**14 July 2021 7.30 pm**

---

**Online Premiere**

**18 July 2021 7.30 pm**

## **Florilegium**

**Ashley Solomon** *flute, director*

**Bojan Čičić** *violin*

**Reiko Ichise** *viola da gamba*

**Steven Devine** *harpsichord*

### **A Celebration of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**

Organ Trio Sonata in E minor, BWV 526

(arranged by Florilegium)

*Vivace*

*Largo*

*Allegro*

Trio Sonata in G major, BWV 1038

*Largo*

*Vivace*

*Adagio*

*Presto*

Sonata for viola da gamba and harpsichord in G minor, BWV 1029

*Vivace*

*Adagio*

*Allegro*

Trio Sonata *from* The Musical Offering, BWV 1079

*Largo*

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Allegro*

Johann Sebastian Bach contributed to the genre of the trio sonata in three different aspects: by writing sonatas for two melodic instruments and continuo, sonatas for a melodic instrument and obbligato harpsichord, and finally sonatas for the organ. In Berlin, 21 manuscripts of the six sonatas BWV 525-530 exist and they probably originate from the Leipzig years around 1727-29. Forkel maintains that the collection was used for pedagogic reasons: 'Bach composed them for his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, who had to practise them in order to become a great organist. No praise can compete with their beauty.' The fascinating impression the sonatas make can be proved by the fact that every generation of musicians since has adapted and rearranged them. Mozart arranged three movements for violin, viola and cello. A manuscript dating around 1800 proves that a version of all the sonatas for two harpsichords exists. Versions for piano were commonplace in the twentieth century: Bartók arranged BWV 530 in 1930, Kabalewskij arranged BWV 526 in 1933. We have made some small alterations and changed the key in our arrangement of the trio sonata in tonight's programme (BWV 526).

When Bach had an opportunity to take over the leadership of the most important collegium musicum in Leipzig in 1729 he did so without a moment's hesitation. The weekly concerts by the student music association in the coffee house of Gottfried Zimmermann gave him exactly the artistic freedom he lacked in his post as cantor. For over ten years he presented mainly chamber music to an educated audience, experimenting with new instrumental genres. He was able to promote his own pupils (and his sons) as soloists. With one or two exceptions, there is no record of what exactly was performed at the 500 or so concerts. But the dating of the scores gives reason to believe that many sonatas, concertos and suites were created in this period. This Trio Sonata in G major for flute, violin and continuo was probably performed at a coffee house concert and there are existing scores of this work in Bach's own hand. Yet there is something remarkable about this particular work at a time when Bach was trying to highlight the harpsichord as a solo instrument. The Sonata has a very basic continuo part. What's more, the part displays great similarities to that of the violin sonata BWV 1021. As the authenticity of that piece is not disputed, and whilst the melody line is totally different to that of BWV 1038 it is possible that it was completed as an exercise in composition for a pupil, and almost certainly makes use of the incipit theme 'Gute Nacht' from the Motet, BWV 227 – *Jesu meine Freude* – in the third movement.

Bach's Sonata in G minor BWV 1029, the only one of the gamba sonatas containing just three movements, in some ways resembles a concerto in the Italian style; this has led many writers to suggest that it was originally a concerto grosso (a seventh

Brandenburg Concerto in fact), and even to reconstruct it as such. However, when one remembers that Bach frequently composed in concerto form with no orchestra involved (for example the Italian Concerto) and considers how perfectly the sonata works as a duo, this theory becomes less convincing. The opening movement, marked Vivace with its jagged, bustling subjects and episodes, might remind us of the Brandenburg concertos; but the slow movement is something else altogether, an extraordinary creation in which the two instruments seem to float apart through a rarefied world, barely acknowledging each other's presence until well into the movement. The final Allegro also confounds expectations: the fugue-like opening theme, shared equally by all of the voices is countered by a tender, singing second subject – a clear foreshadowing of the contrasting subjects of Classical and Romantic sonata forms.

Bach's *Musical Offering* was conceived during a visit to Frederick the Great's court in Potsdam in 1747. Frederick had wished for this particular visit for many years. By all accounts Bach (who was quite old) was made to play on Frederick's large collection of Silberman fortepianos, and later all the organs in Potsdam. Frederick eventually offered Bach a theme on which to extemporise, and of course Bach's genius came to the fore. After his return to Leipzig, he composed Frederick's subject in three and six parts, added several intricate pieces in strict canon on the subject and a trio sonata. This large-scale trio sonata was supposed to flatter the monarch by featuring the flute and the so-called royal theme contained in it is used in several different ways, sometimes concealed, sometimes very clear. In the opening Largo Bach uses the theme right at the beginning as the bass line, it is quoted as a cantus firmus in the first Allegro, there is a free allusion to the first half of the theme in the flute and violin in the Andante and it is treated as a fugue in varied form in the finale. In this extraordinary work the art of musical composition and the logic of development almost go beyond the bounds of musical reality. Bach added a preface, had the work engraved in copper and printed with the title 'Musicalisches Opfer'. The King was presented with a sumptuous copy bound in valuable leather, handed it to his sister and never looked at the work again.

There are many theories surrounding the invention of the work. Some think that the number symbolisms and ratios accord with celestial patterns; others think that Masonic ritual may be at the heart of the composition (perhaps Frederick and Bach were Masons). Whatever the reasons, all the parts of the *Musical Offering* immediately put the listener in contact with another world. Only Bach could take such a theme and invent such diversified yet unified music.

Regular performances in some of the world's most prestigious venues have confirmed **Florilegium's** status as one of Britain's most outstanding period instrument ensembles. Since it was formed in 1991 the ensemble has established a reputation for stylish and exciting interpretations, from intimate chamber works to large-scale orchestral and choral repertoire, working as an instrumental ensemble and also in collaboration with some outstanding solo singers and choirs.

Concert venues have included Sydney Opera House, Esplanade (Singapore), Teatro Colon (Buenos Aires), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Konzerthaus (Vienna), Beethoven-Haus (Bonn), Handel-Haus (Halle) and Frick Collection (New York). Among the numerous residencies Florilegium has held was Ensemble-in-Residence at London's Wigmore Hall from 1998 to 2000, performing several series of concerts each year and becoming actively involved in the Hall's education work. Since September 2008 Florilegium has been Ensemble in Association at the Royal College of Music, working regularly each term with students on both period and modern instruments in the area of baroque chamber music.

Florilegium's recordings for Channel Classics have been awarded many prizes including two *Gramophone* Award nominations, three *BBC Music Magazine* awards, numerous Editor's Choice from *Gramophone*, and half a dozen Diapasons d'Or and Chocs de la Musique in France; their Bach Cantatas disc with Johannette Zomer was awarded an Edison Award, Dutch music's most prestigious prize. In 2014 Florilegium's twenty-fifth recording of the complete Bach Brandenburg Concertos was awarded a Dutch Luister 10 Award, Classical CD Choice 'CD of the Month' and was Classic FM 'Featured Album'. It has followed this award-winning release with a recording of Telemann: Concertos & Cantata 'Ihr Völker hört' with the mezzo soprano Clare Wilkinson. The CD received *Gramophone's* Editor's Choice and was shortlisted in the *Gramophone* annual awards in the category 'Best Baroque Chamber Music CD'. It was voted Recording of the Month for *BBC Music Magazine*. More recent CDs include Handel's German Arias and Trio Sonatas with the Canadian soprano Gillian Keith, and two further double CDs of Telemann's *Essercizii Musici* and music from the Court of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. This recent CD was inspired by James Gaines's novel *An Evening in the Palace of Reason* and includes music by C.P.E. Bach, Quantz, Graun, Benda, Fasch and Muthel.

[florilegium.org.uk](http://florilegium.org.uk)

**YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL** is directed by Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation (registered charity number 1068331)

Artistic Advisors: John Bryan, Steven Devine, Lindsay Kemp, Peter Seymour

**National Centre for Early Music**  
**St Margaret's Church**  
**Walmgate**  
**York YO1 9TL**

[ncem.co.uk/whats-on/yemf/](http://ncem.co.uk/whats-on/yemf/)

