

AUSTRALIAN BRANDENBURG ORCHESTRA

“...what stands out at concert after concert is the impression that this bunch of musicians is having a really good time. They look at each other and smile and laugh... there's a warmth and sense of fun not often associated with classical performance.”

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, led by charismatic Artistic Director Paul Dyer, celebrates the music of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with excellence, flair and joy. Comprising leading specialists in informed performance practice from all over Australia, the Brandenburg performs using original edition scores and instruments of the period, breathing fresh life and vitality into baroque and classical masterpieces – as though the music has just sprung from the composer's pen.

The Orchestra's name pays tribute to the Brandenburg Concertos of J.S. Bach, whose musical genius was central to the baroque area. Celebrating their 28th anniversary in 2017, the Brandenburg continues to deliver exhilarating performances.

The Brandenburg has collaborated with such acclaimed and dynamic virtuosos as Andreas Scholl, Philippe Jaroussky, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Emma Kirkby, Andreas Staier, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Genevieve Lacey, Andrew Manze and more.

Through its annual subscription series in Sydney and Melbourne, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra performs before a live audience in excess of 52,000 people, and hundreds of thousands more through national broadcasts on ABC Classic FM. The Orchestra also has a regular commitment to performing in regional Australia. Since 2003 the Australian

Brandenburg Orchestra has been a member of the Major Performing Arts Group, which comprises 28 flagship national arts organisations supported by the Australia Council for the Arts. The Orchestra began regular touring to Queensland in 2015.

Since its beginning, the Brandenburg has been popular with both audiences and critics. In 1998 *The Age* proclaimed the Brandenburg “had reached the ranks of the world's best period instrument orchestras”. In 2010 the UK's *Gramophone Magazine* declared “the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is Australia's finest period-instrument ensemble. Under their inspiring musical director Paul Dyer, their vibrant concerts and recordings combine historical integrity with electrifying virtuosity and a passion for beauty”.

The Australian proclaimed that “a concert with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is like stepping back in time, as the sounds of period instruments resurrect baroque and classical works with reverence and authority”.

The Brandenburg's 20 recordings with ABC Classics include five ARIA Award winners for Best Classical Album (1998, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2010). In 2015 the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra was the recipient of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Group Award and in 2016 the Helpmann Award for Best Chamber Concert.

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DMITRY SINKOVSKY PROGRAM NOTES

“The French ... aim at the Soft, the Easie, the Flowing, and Coherent: ... if sometimes they venture to vary it ... still the Air seems to be as natural and consistent as if they had attempted no change at all; there is nothing bold and adventurous in it ... But the Italians pass boldly ... they venture the boldest Cadences, and the most irregular Dissonance.”

FRANÇOIS RAGUENET, 1702

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in a period when Italian composers and performers dominated Europe, the arts in France were under the personal control of King Louis XIV. This was a deliberate strategy – art, dance, music, all served to convince his own subjects of his power and glory and the rest of Europe of France's political supremacy. The music of France was required to be strictly French, and Italian music was regarded as a foreign influence to be repelled. French critics praised their own music as beautiful, charming, delicate, intelligent, and natural, but Italian music was bizarre, noisy, angry, violent, and 'unnatural', although they did concede that it could be gay, lively, and vivacious.

Although Vivaldi's concertos were widely disseminated from the 1710s, it was not until the 1730s that French composers started writing their own 'Italian' concertos. This concert features the concertos of Aubert and Leclair, two French composers who sought to combine French and Italian musical styles, Vivaldi and Locatelli, two Italians who remained resolutely Italian, and a German, Telemann, who synthesised musical influences from all over Europe into his own original style.



JACQUES AUBERT (1689 - 1753)

Ciaccona from Concerto for four violins in D Major Op. 26, No.3

Aubert was born in Paris into a family of violinists, and was prominent in French musical circles in the first half of the eighteenth century. His first position was as a violinist in the service of the Prince of Condé, a member of the French royal family. In 1722, while he was working for the Prince, he composed music for an extravagant spectacle to entertain the young French king Louis XV, and performed in it himself:

'As if by a magic art, Orpheus appeared ... in the midst of a grotto set amongst two groves of oleanders and orange trees. The grotto was formed by vaulted trellises, interwoven with garlands of all kinds of flowers. Orpheus (represented by Monsieur Aubert) played the violin, and attracted to the sound of this instrument, most of the animals which the king had just seen in the menagerie [which included storks, ostriches and beavers] came out of the two groves to listen to him.'

Shortly afterwards Aubert was granted a place in the King's elite orchestra, the *24 Violons du Roi*, where he worked for the next twenty years. During that time he composed a large number of instrumental works including sonatas, suites, eight operas, and ten concertos each for four violins, of which this is one.

What to listen for

Like many other French composers in this period Aubert was greatly influenced by the Italian concerto style, and also like them attempted to marry what he considered to be the best elements of both styles. His melodies had what he considered were French attributes, being 'graceful', with 'beautiful simplicity', but he added Italian gaiety, variety, and vivacity in form and rhythm. Aubert used the up-to-date Italian structure of three movements, but remained typically French in using a dance form as one of the movements. In this concerto, which was published in 1739, the dance form he chose was a *ciaccona* (chaconne), which in France at this period was a dance commonly performed on stage. Musically, a *ciaccona* took the form of a set of variations, and here, French control and elegance when the ensemble play together alternates with flashy Vivaldi-like episodes by the first violin and cello.

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681 -1767)

Concerto for Violin 'per Signor Pisendel' in B-flat Major, TWV 51:B1

Largo
Vivace
Sempre piano
Allegro

In the first half of the eighteenth century Telemann was thought of as the leading German composer (ahead of his friends Handel and J S Bach), and he was certainly the most commercially successful. He was enormously prolific, producing literally thousands of works for the church, theatre and chamber, including around thirty operas, hundreds of church cantatas, and a new oratorio every Easter for over forty years.

Telemann was a child prodigy: he had some singing lessons and learnt the organ for two weeks, then taught himself to play the violin, recorder, and zither. He gathered enough understanding of the rules of musical composition by transcribing scores that he was able to compose an opera at the age of twelve. His widowed mother discouraged his musical activities, fearing that he would end up as a musician, and took away his instruments, but Telemann continued to compose and practise in secret. When he was twenty he went to Leipzig to study law, however his musical talents were soon recognised and by just one year later he was composing regularly for the main city churches, had set up a forty member student orchestra which gave public concerts, and was musical director of the Leipzig opera house.

Telemann worked as music director in a number of courts throughout Germany and Poland, but most of his career was spent as director of music with responsibility for the five main churches in Hamburg, one of the top jobs in the German-speaking musical world.

Telemann's employers were mostly civic, not aristocratic, so he was largely free to compose as he liked, in whatever style he wished. Writing primarily for public concerts, he intentionally set out to compose works of simplicity and 'lightness' (his word) which would appeal to audiences with varying levels of musical sophistication, and could be played by both amateur and professional musicians. Telemann continued to compose well into his eighties and developed a distinctive style which he described as combining French 'liveliness, melody, and harmony, the Italian flattery, invention, and strange passages; and the British and Polish jesting in a mixture filled with sweetness.' Telemann received a bad press from German music critics in the nineteenth century, an impression that lingered well into the twentieth. What had made him so successful in his own time – the apparent ease with which he produced so many compositions (he is the most prolific composer in history according to The Guinness Book of World Records),

the relative simplicity of some of his best-known music, and his assimilation of other musical styles – made him seem facile, trivial, and unoriginal in an age in which artists were supposed to wrestle with their art. It was only towards the end of the twentieth century that Telemann began to be recognised as an original and enormously creative musical mind who looked forward to the new century and the influence of the Enlightenment. Telemann is now regarded as an important link between the late Baroque and early Classical styles.

What to listen for

Telemann wrote around one hundred and twenty five concertos, including twenty for solo violin. He composed this particular concerto when he visited Dresden for royal wedding celebrations in September 1719. It was for his friend Johann Pisendel, who had played in Telemann's student orchestra in Leipzig, but who by now was the leading violinist in Germany and concertmaster of the Dresden orchestra, the finest orchestra in Europe.

Telemann described virtuosity as 'putting the soloist through inconveniences and awkward leaps', but he was composing here for the greatest player of the age and so the solo violin part is much more technically challenging than in many of his works.

The first movement is an elegant *Largo*, with a wistful singing solo line. This is followed by a complex brisk movement in a minor key, drawing on the soloist's skill to negotiate leaps and fast runs. The third movement again has the solo violin in lyrical mode, with the orchestra accompanying. This is reminiscent of Vivaldi's slow movements, but Telemann's treatment of the underlying harmonies and rhythms make it distinctively his own. An exciting *Allegro* with flamboyant solo passages finishes the work. Telemann was dissatisfied with his first version of this movement and wrote at the end of the manuscript, 'The last Allegro is rather a scrawl, better one follows. Author.' It is the revised movement which is now normally heard.

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678 - 1741)

Concerto for two Horns in F Major, RV 538

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

Vivaldi composed over five hundred concertos, most of them written for the all-female orchestra at the Pietà, the orphanage for girls where he worked in Venice. The horn was one of the few instruments the girls did not play, however, probably because it was strongly associated with the military and with hunting, which was a strictly male preserve. As with many of Vivaldi's works, we do not know when this concerto was composed or for what occasion, however the unavoidable hunting connotations of the horns' arpeggiated figures in the first and third movements suggest that it may have

been commissioned as a courtly entertainment by one of Vivaldi's noble patrons, as only the wealthy aristocracy could afford to hunt.

Vivaldi was one of the first composers to realise the possibilities of the horn as a solo instrument, and he included horns in the orchestration of nearly all his operas and composed ten concertos with solo horn parts.

What to listen for

Vivaldi boasted that he could compose a concerto quicker than a copyist could write out the score and the instrumental parts. This was at least partly due to his use of *ritornello* form, a compositional strategy which enabled him to build a whole movement around a *ritornello* (or refrain) for the orchestra, alternated with episodes for the soloist, and then varied in infinite and often very complex ways.

Vivaldi used *ritornello* form in nearly all of the fast outer movements of his concertos, including in this one, although here the variations are reasonably straightforward. Horns were usually used in pairs in this period, and most of the time they imitate each other, giving an echo effect appropriate for an instrument associated with an outdoor and distant activity. This effect is heightened when the rest of the orchestra drop away to enable the solo instruments to be more clearly heard.

The nobleman for whom Vivaldi wrote this concerto must have had excellent musicians at his disposal: the challenging horn parts were unusually virtuosic for their time, as was the unexpected cello solo in the slow second movement, where the horns do not play.

JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR (1697 - 1764)

Violin concerto in D Major, Op. 7, No. 2 Concerto for Violin

Adagio – Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio

Allegro

Jean-Marie Leclair was born in Lyon, and was trained as a dancer and violinist by his father, who was a bass viol player and a dancing master. Leclair worked as a dancer and dancing master himself until he was thirty years old, when it became clear that his major talent was playing the violin. In 1727 he made his debut at the Concert Spirituel in Paris, France's first public concert venue, and his performances of his own sonatas and concertos were enthusiastically received. Regular performances there followed, interspersed with trips to London, Amsterdam and Kassel, where he performed in a concert with Locatelli.

By 1733 Leclair's increasing number of publications and his growing popularity as a performer led to an appointment in the court of King Louis XV. Although 'his delicate

and brilliant playing was greatly applauded' when he played his own concertos for the Queen's entourage, a quarrel over who would direct the King's orchestra led Leclair to relinquish his position in 1737. He spent the next few years in the Netherlands and provincial France employed by a number of wealthy patrons including the Princess of Orange and the Infante of Spain, and moved back to Paris in 1748 to become composer and musical director of the private theatre of the Duc de Gramont. In the last years of his life he became increasingly misanthropic and isolated, and he was found one morning in his garden, murdered. His ex-wife, his nephew and his gardener were all suspected, but no one was ever charged.

Leclair is considered to be the founder of the French violin school and his influence on violin playing in France lasted throughout the eighteenth century. He was the first French composer to fully embrace the new flashy brilliance of Italian violin technique, although his published works for violin were not initially well received: they 'appeared at first [to be] a kind of algebra capable of rebuffing the most courageous musicians.' His concertos present real challenges for the performer compared with other French violin compositions of the same period.

What to listen for

This concerto, published in 1737, follows the standard Italian three movement form and shows a strong influence of Vivaldi, particularly in the *Allegro* movements with their repeated note passages, sequences, and abrupt changes. Leclair was particularly original in the way he composed the interplay of the solo violin with the rest of the orchestra, and in this concerto the solo violin emerges frequently from the orchestral texture. Leclair was himself a virtuoso violinist, and the first and third movements of this concerto are highly virtuosic, although all three movements retain the elegance of the courtly French dances on which they were based. Extended passages require the soloist to play two, three or even all four strings at once, often at a fast tempo, and there are tirades (rushing scales), difficult arpeggio figures, leaps, and extremes of range. These were all characteristic of Italian violin technique and show how well Leclair had absorbed the variety and brilliance of the Italian style. These demands are not confined to the solo violin – all parts have their moments of virtuosity.

INTERVAL

PIETRO LOCATELLI (1695 – 1764)

Concerto Grosso in E-flat Major,

Op. 7, No 6 'Il pianto d'Arianna' (Ariadne's Lament)

- I Andante – Allegro – Adagio – Andante – Allegro**
- II Largo**
- III Largo andante**
- IV Grave**
- V Allegro**
- VI Largo**

While Leclair's playing was said by someone who heard them both at Kassel to be 'like an angel', Locatelli played 'like a devil'. Born in Bergamo in northern Italy, Locatelli travelled to Rome at the age of sixteen to study the violin with the fine players associated with the great violinist and composer Arcangelo Corelli. During the 1720s he toured extensively throughout Europe, creating a sensation with his spectacular style of playing.

In 1729, at the age of only thirty-four, he retired to Amsterdam where he remained for the rest of his life, giving private concerts (one observer commented that 'he never will Play any where but with Gentlemen') and supervising the publishing and sales of his compositions. An Englishman who heard him in 1741, when this concerto was published, wrote 'he is so afraid of People Learning from him, that He won't admit a Professed Musician into his Concert'.

What to listen for

Although the solo violin is very much to the forefront in this concerto, Locatelli did not favour sheer virtuosity for its own sake: on the contrary, the work is full of highly evocative music designed to move the listener to excitement, sorrow and anger. The title refers to the Greek legend of the Cretan princess Ariadne, abandoned on the island of Naxos by the hero Theseus, a favourite theme for musical settings going back at least to Monteverdi. In the rapidly changing, intensely expressive movements of Locatelli's concerto it is not difficult to hear the sea, the crags of the rocky island, and Ariadne's heart beating with anguish. At times the solo violin 'speaks' in impassioned recitative, then sings eloquently of a woman's journey through despair to anger and finally resignation.

PIETRO LOCATELLI (1695 – 1764)

Introduzioni teatrali Op. 4, No 5 in D Major

Allegro
Andante sempre piano
Presto

'Locatelli must surely be allowed by all to be an earthquake ... What bow strokes! What fire! What energy! He plays with so much fury upon his fiddle, that in my humble opinion, he must wear out some dozens of them in a year. ... He has the most affected look just before he begins to play, that I ever saw in my life ...'

An English amateur who heard him in Amsterdam in 1741

Locatelli is often regarded as the founder of modern instrumental virtuoso playing, and his stage demeanour anticipated that of Paganini. As a player, he was revolutionary. While some critics commented unfavourably on a lack of beauty in his tone, he experimented with new kinds of articulation and extended the range of the violin into an extreme high range unheard of until then, expanding the boundaries of violin technique in ways that still challenge players today.

What to listen for

Locatelli's energy is very evident in his six *Introduzioni teatrali* ('theatrical introductions') published in 1735. These pieces are short sinfonias similar to an opera overture of the period, although there is no evidence that they were composed for that purpose as Locatelli did not write any compositions for the stage. This work is composed in one long movement, with an affecting middle section in a minor key bookended by short powerful fast sections with a strong rhythmic drive.

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)

Concerto for Violin in E minor '*Il favorito*', Op. 11, No. 2, RV 277

Allegro
Andante
Allegro

Vivaldi was an inveterate name-dropper and assiduous self-promoter, and boasted to acquaintances that he was in regular contact with nine important royal personages, to whom he sent scores and dedicated publications. One of them was the Austrian Emperor Charles VI, to whom Vivaldi dedicated this concerto. The title, 'The Favourite', was not attached to the original score but added only when it was published. Vivaldi went through a period of putting fanciful titles on his concertos in the 1720s, when he was at his most prolific and when most of his concertos were published, but the reasons behind the titles are mostly not known. This one could have been a particular favourite of Vivaldi or of Charles VI, or have been well regarded by audiences, or perhaps Vivaldi was marketing himself as the Emperor's favourite.

What to listen for

Il favorito is widely regarded as one of Vivaldi's most beautiful works, a masterpiece, due to the brilliance of the solo violin part and the grandeur of the complex first movement. Using the *ritornello* form structure, Vivaldi varied not just the melodic material but the texture of the solo episodes, which are sometimes accompanied only by continuo, sometimes by violins in unison, and sometimes by just the upper strings playing in parts. In the wistful *Andante* second movement we hear the transparent texture of solo violin with upper strings alone and no bass, one of Vivaldi's favourite devices in his slow movements. Increasingly virtuosic solo episodes in the last movement call for a very high level of technical skill by the solo violinist. The dotted rhythms are reminiscent of the 'hunt' theme from the last movement of the 'Autumn' concerto from *The Four Seasons*.

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