

# Florilegium and Rowan Pierce

Thursday 1 May 2025, 7.30pm,  
Firth Hall

PERFORMANCE  
VENUES  
CONCERTS

**JS Bach** - Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor BWV1067

**Handel** - Aria Sweet Bird from L'Allegro il penseroso ed il moderato

*Interval*

**Handel** - Concerto Grosso Op.3 No.3

**JS Bach** - Cantata Ich habe genug BWV82a

## Rowan Pierce

Rowan Pierce was a Britten Pears young artist, Samling artist, a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a Harewood Artist at English National Opera. Rowan made her BBC Proms debut at the Royal Albert Hall in 2017 with the OAE and returned in 2019 for Handel Jephtha and 2023 for Mendelssohn Elijah, both with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Nominated for The Time Sky Arts Award for opera in 2020 her operatic roles have included Drusilla (L'incoronazione di Poppea), Theodora (Theodora), Galatea (Acis & Galatea), Iris (Semele), Dorinda (Orlando), Belinda (Dido and Aeneas), Elsie (Yeoman of the Guard), Tiny (Paul Bunyan), Papagena (The Magic Flute), Barbarina (The Marriage of Figaro), Miss Wordsworth (Albert Herring), Princess (L'enfant et les sortilèges). She performed the roles of Quivera and Orazia (The Indian Queen) with Opéra de Lille, Opéra de Luxembourg, Opéra de Caen and Antwerp Opera under Emmanuelle Haïm. Rowan made her Glyndebourne Festival debut as Oberto (Alcina) in 2022 and sung the same role for the Staatstheater Stuttgart in the same year. In 2022/23 she made her Covent Garden, Royal Opera House début singing Papagena and in 2024 played the role of Dede in Oliver Mears' new production of Leonard Bernstein's opera A Quiet Place at the Linbury Theatre, ROH.

Festival and recital performances have included collaborations with Florilegium, Holland Baroque, Christopher Glynn, Dame Ann Murray, Sholto Kynoch and Malcolm Martineau in the Oxford Lieder Festival and Roger Vignoles in the Leeds Lieder Festival. She appeared in the 2019 Edinburgh International Festival with the English Concert as Amore (Gluck's Orfeo) and returned to the festival in 2021 with the RSNO, she also gave recitals with Philharmonia Baroque on a tour in New York in 2021.

## Florilegium

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 their formation in 1991 they have 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).

Florilegium were Ensemble-in-Residence at London's Wigmore Hall for four seasons, performing several series of concerts each year and becoming actively involved in the Hall's education work. They are currently Ensemble in Association at the Royal College of Music in London, working regularly each term with students on both period and modern instruments in the area of baroque chamber music.

Their recordings for Channel Classics have been awarded many prizes including Gramophone Award nominations, 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 their 25th 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. They have followed this with a recording of Telemann: Concertos & Cantata 'Ihr Völker hört' with the mezzo soprano Clare Wilkinson. This CD received Gramophone's "Editor's Choice" and was shortlisted in the Gramophone annual awards in the category best baroque chamber music CD. Their recent CD releases include three early Haydn symphonies entitled "Morning, Noon and Night" and a series of three CDs using a unique collection of original 17th and 18th century flutes from a private collector in Germany.

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## JS Bach

### Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor BWV1067

Dance music often inspired composers, not the least of whom was Bach. Although the influence of dance is most obvious in his suites for keyboard and suites for orchestra, dance-like gestures and forms are present in Bach's works of every genre, including some of his sacred choral music.

But here we really are only concerned about the dance and his orchestral suites. In this case, composers like Bach and Handel wrote what was called "stylized dances," which were intended for listening, not for dancing. This meant that the dances followed their particular stylistic norms, but allowed for more musical elaboration and ornamentation than would have been possible in a floor dance. - **Bach Choir of Bethlehem**

The Suite in B minor opens with an Overture, a French label that indicates the movement's underlying inspiration.[...] Including a flute in the instrumentation allows Bach to fold elements of concerto form into the fugal section of the overture, with the strings doing the contrapuntal heavy lifting and the flute-led concertante passages charting the movement's harmonic course. Six shorter movements, most of them dances, each of them characterful, follow. Like the Overture, several of them have French origins, such as the Rondeau, or the Bourée and the Menuet, both of which were fashionable dances at the court of Louis XIV. [...] The suite closes with the Badinerie - along with the Air from his Suite No. 3, one of Bach's greatest orchestral hits - a brief, high-spirited movement and a real showpiece for the ensemble's flutist. - **LA Phil**

### Cantata Ich habe genug BWV82a

Ich habe genug, BWV 82, was composed for the festival of the Purification of the Virgin Mary on 2 February 1727 [...] The centerpiece of the cantata, the so-called "Schlummerarie" (Slumber Aria), appears to have been especially popular within Bach's family circle; it was included in the second "Notebook for Anna Magdalena" begun in 1725.

At the center of the Feast of the Purification of Mary is the gospel according to Luke 2, 22–33 with the story of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, and the associated meeting with the old man Simeon. According to a prophecy Simeon "should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Now he recognizes in Jesus the promised Messiah, takes him in his arms and utters the words: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation..." This, "Simeon's song of praise," is the point of departure for the cantata libretto. In the first aria the narrator of the text embodies the figure of Simeon and then, in the following recitative, assumes the role of a present-day Christian who takes Simeon, filled as he is with longing for the hereafter, as a role model.

Bach's music hardly requires any explanation. With incomparable artistry and beauty it portrays the inner development of the text. As Craig Smith writes: "The first aria for is a poignant and gravely beautiful movement that treats the end of Simeon's long life with a mixture of melancholy and resignation. The second aria with strings is a lullaby both for the death of Simeon but for the sleeping Christ Child. The whole cantata treats the idea of the departure of Simeon and the birth of Jesus as part of the same Godly plan. The final aria is a joyous affair but in the minor mode to preserve the seriousness of the text." - **Emmanuel Music**

## Handel

### Aria Sweet Bird from L'Allegro il penseroso ed il moderato

After settling in London in 1711, Handel became known mainly as a composer of operas, composing over the next 30 years 40 operatic works. In the custom of the day, these operas were generally settings of Italian librettos and in the Italian style of singing.

In the 1730s, however, the taste of English audiences for Italian opera palled, and Handel turned to the composition of oratorios, extended settings for the concert hall of Biblical texts or other religious stories. Composed early in 1740, L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato was based on Milton's poetry.

The first two parts of the oratorio consist of dramatic dialogs between Milton's poems – L'Allegro sung by a tenor and Il Penseroso by a soprano. The third part was an attempt by Jennens to unite the two poems in a singular "moral design" in a third poem, Il Moderato, sung by a bass.

"Sweet Bird" comes from the middle of Part I, and is Penseroso's request to the "most melancholy enchantress of the woods" to sing its song. As with the Rameau arietta, the flute impersonates the bird, but its species is unidentified. The flute part is of virtuoso difficulty, and the work is, in effect, a demanding duet for the flute and a coloratura soprano.

Again the aria is in the da capo A-B-A form. In the first section, the flute is heard at some length before the singer's entrance to suggest the bird's warbling. The bird's song is dropped from the short middle section, in the minor mode over steadily pulsed chords, as the singer continues her solitary walking. The flute and soprano then resume their duet. - **Sebago-Long Lake Music Festival**

### Concerto Grosso Op.3 No.3

In 1734 John Walsh published a set of six Concerti grossi by Handel as Opus 3. The origin and scoring of these works were equally various. The third of the set, which makes use of a solo flute or oboe, a solo violin and string orchestra, with the usual basso continuo, has its sources in one of the so-called Chandos Anthems, composed in 1717 and 1718 at Cannons, Edgware for James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon, created Duke of Chandos in 1719, and in a movement from a keyboard suite. It opens with the briefest of introductions, followed by a lively Allegro, in which solo instruments are contrasted with the body of the orchestra, the ripieno players. There is a short slow movement in which the solo wind instrument provides a characteristic melody, leading to the busy fugal movement with which the concerto ends. - **Naxos**

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