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LES CONTRE-SUJETS

**GERMAN CELEBRITY COMPOSERS:
FROM CONCERTO TO OPERA**

SATURDAY 12 JANUARY - 12 NOON



TEATRU MANOEL







Les Contre-Sujets

German Celebrity Composers: from concerto to opera

Saturday 12 January - 12 noon
Verdala Palace, Buskett





The Valletta Baroque Festival

Since its launch in 2013, the Valletta Baroque Festival has treated audiences to a unique event featuring some of the best soloists and ensembles in the baroque music scene. Taking as its main venue one of the oldest working theatres in the world, Teatru Manoel, this prestigious two-week festival also plays out within many wonderful baroque and historical venues, such as St. John's Co-Cathedral and the Verdala Palace. This year's musical programme has once again secured some of the best contemporary exponents of Baroque music from the international and local sphere to contribute to the celebration of Malta.

Front Cover Image

Detail from the composite portrait of the Van Lennep Family by Antoine Favray (1706-1798) from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Partners



Sponsors





Programme

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)

Trio 2. Sonata a Cembalo Obligato Viola di Gamba e Cembalo, in Essercizii musicali – TWV 42:G6

Andante – Allegro – Largo – Presto

Cantata "Pastorella venga bella" a soprano, cembalo obbligato e basso continuo – TWV 20:62

Aria – [Recit.] – [Aria]

Wilhelm Friedemann BACH (1710-1784)

Duetto a Due Cembali. – Fk 10

[Allegro moderato] – Andante. – Presto.

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Cantata Lucrezia. O Numi eterni! - soprano e basso continuo - HWV 145

Georg Philipp TELEMANN

Trio 8. Sonata a Flauto dolce Cembalo obl. e Cembalo, in Essercizii musicali – TWV 42:B4

Dolce – Vivace – Siciliana – Vivace.

* Titles and movements based on historical sources

Musicians

Samuel Rotsztejn, recorder

Ayako Yukawa, soprano

Mathias Ferré, viola da gamba

Takahisa Aida, harpsichord

Kazuya Gunji, harpsichord



Programme notes

This programme is a celebration of three great German composers who knew each other: Georg Philipp Telemann was George Frideric Handel's lifelong friend as well as Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's godfather. C P E Bach's brother, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach had settled in Halle, where he met Handel, who was born there, and invited him to meet his father, the great Johann Sebastian Bach. Unfortunately, this meeting never took place.

Nowadays, the audience surely knows Handel and sometimes Telemann. But rarely does the audience know Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Hopefully, this is going to change thanks to the particular pieces we gathered for you!

Telemann's trios are humbly entitled musical exercises: virtuosic, indeed. Yet the real *tour de force* of these pieces belongs to Telemann who succeeded in composing exceptional music for unusual combinations of instruments. Around 1740 in Europe, the harpsichord mostly served as accompaniment in chamber music, with chords improvised by the harpsichordist. Here, like in some of Johann Sebastian Bach's pieces, the harpsichord holds a solo role: everything is written. Similarly, the bass viola da gamba is not, by definition, a *dessus* instrument, meaning that it usually plays the bass line of any piece. Whereas here, the viola da gamba plays a *concertante* part. Hence, these trios push the boundaries of the sonata closer to the concerto!

Telemann's cantata was misattributed to Handel: the musical language is almost the same! Dramatic, surprising, expressive, sophisticated, reminding us of both Handel's and Telemann's finest cantatas. The omnipresent *concertante* harpsichord gives the illusion of a minute orchestra accompanying the singer. With mere tools of a chamber cantata, Telemann manages to create the impression of an intimate opera aria.

This is precisely why we associated this cantata with the famous cantata *La Lucrezia* composed by the young Handel in his twenties, when he shone in Italy. The genius is already there: Handel manages to write an intensely dramatic work with few instruments! The melodies and contrasts are genuinely inspired, opera-like and perfectly serve the themes: hatred, revenge and passionate feelings leading to the suicide of the most notorious Roman heroine.

There are many things to say about Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Despite being the most talented of Bach's sons, he tried to live an independent entrepreneur life as a musician at a time when musicians depended entirely on patrons and so he failed, ending his life in poverty, lying and pretending he had written some of his father's works and finally losing the scores for good. His music is often as tormented and refined as his soul. This duet for two harpsichords, which sounds like the transcription





of a concerto, is a bridge between the baroque and the classical eras: one can already hear Mozart, even though this piece was misattributed to Johann Sebastian Bach! It is one of those pieces for which you do not have to concentrate too hard in order to understand and appreciate it: it flows naturally to the heart and when it is over, you simply wonder when it started.

Lyrics

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)

Cantata "Pastorella vengha bella" – TWV 20:62

Aria – [Recit.] – [Aria]

Pastorella vengha bella
rendi amore per amor;
Giovenetta vezzosetta,
dona mi cara cor per cor.

Così alla bella Nicea
Tirsi fedel dicea,
quel Tirsi amante, quel Tirsi fedele
de tante volto, e tante per sua ninfe
crudele
sparse invan sospiri, e querele.
Quel Tirsi si fra timor, e fra speranza
di quella fiera bella che delude la sua
costanza,
chi è de pietà con quest'accenti
amorosi e dolenti.

Solo per voi tra mille mille
care pupille
arde il mio cor.
Deh rispondete,
con dolci faville
e meno rigor
a tanta fe', a tant amar, a tanto amor.

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

*Cantata Lucrezia. O Numi eterni! -
soprano e basso continuo - HWV 145*

O Numi Eterni!
O Stele, stelle!
Che fulminate empi tiranni, Impugnate

a' miei voti
Orridi Strali:
Voi con fochi tonanti
Incenerite il reo Tarquinio e Roma. Dalla
superba chioma
Omai trabocchi il vacillante alloro S'apra
il suolo in voragini
Si celi, con memorando esempio Nelle
viscere sue l'indegno e l'empio.

Già superbo del mio affanno Traditor
dell'onor mio
Parte l'empio, lo sleal.
Tu punisci il fiero inganno Del fellon, del
mostro rio Giusto Cie, parca fatal!

Ma voi forse nel cielo
Per castigo maggior del mio delitto,
State oziosi, o provocati Numi:
Se son sorde le stelle
Se non mi odon le sfere
A voi Tremende Deità
Deità dell'abisso mi volgo
A voi, a voi spetta
Del tradito onor mio far la vendetta.

Il suol che preme,
L'aura che spira
L'empio romano
S'apra, s'infetti.
Se il paso move,
Se il guardo gira,
Incontri larve,
Riune aspeti.

Ah! Che ancor nell'abisso
Dormon le furie,
I Sdegni e le vendette.





Giove dunque per me non ha saette.
E pietoso l'Inferno?
Ah! Ch'io già son in odio al Ciel, a Dite:
E se la pena non piomba sul mio capo
A' miei rimorsi è rimorso
Il poter di castigarmi.

Questi la disperata anima mia puniscan,
sì

Ma il ferro che già intrepida stringo

Alla salma infedel porga la pena.

A voi, a voi, padre, consorte, a Roma,
Al mondo presento il mio morir;
Mi si perdoni il delitto esecrando
Ond'io macchiai involontaria il nostro
onor,
Un'altra più detestabil colpa,
Di non m'aver uccisa pria del misfatto,
Mi si perdoni.

Già nel seno comincia a compir
Questo fero l duri ufficzi
Sento ch'il cor si scuote
Più dal olor di questa caduta
invindicata
Che dal furor delle vicina morte.

Ma se qui non m'è dato castigar il
tiranno
Opprimer l'empio con più barbaro
esempio
Per ch'ei sen cada estinto
Stringerò a' danni soi mortal saetta.
E furibonda e cruda nell'Inferno farò
La mia vendetta.

Artist Biography

Les Contre-Sujets

Les Contre-Sujets, formed in 2012 in Paris, is a Baroque ensemble which focuses on original interaction with the audience and exploring new concert formats.

In 2014, the ensemble was a finalist at the Göttingen Händel Competition and was selected for the summer residencies of La Cité de la Voix in Vézelay (France).

Since then, the ensemble has been selected by the EEEmerging project for two years and has consequently held residencies in the Early Music Centres of Ambronay (France), York (Great-Britain), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Pavia (Italy).

Les Contre-Sujets have also been invited to the Fringe concerts of the MAfestival (Bruges) and Oude Muziek festival (Utrecht). They have played live on the radio at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, have been elected Young Ensemble 2017 by Vincent Dumestre (dir. of *Le Poème Harmonique*) for the season of La Chapelle Corneille in Rouen (France), and have been invited to radio broadcasts.

In 2017, *Les Contre-Sujets* were among the 10 finalists of the International Young Artists Competition of York, and were laureates of the Fondation Royaumont, which





allowed them to attend a summer academy with Bertrand Cuiller, Sophie Gent and Jocelyn Daubigny to work on J.S. Bach's Brandenburg concertos.

In 2019, the ensemble was invited to perform in the 40th Festival d'Ambronay and designed a unique interactive quizz-concert with QR codes.

Long-term explorations of *Les Contre-Sujets* include poetry, gastronomy, synaesthesia and a Japan tour.

Find out more about our ensemble on Facebook and Instagram: @lescontresujets.

Samuel Rotsztejn, recorder

Samuel Rotsztejn is a recorder player, an engineer and mathematics teacher of graduate students in Paris. His favourite colour is yellow and he enjoys playing chess. His solar sign is Cancer and his rising sign is Capricorn. He was born on the same day Georg Philipp Telemann was appointed director of the five churches of Hamburg, only not the same year.

Ayako Yukawa, soprano

Ayako Yukawa graduated with a PhD in singing from the Kunitachi college of music in Tokyo, Japan in 2010 in the class of Rie Akiyama. She then attended the CRR of Paris in 2016, working with Stéphane Fuget, Fusako Kondo and Doris Lamprecht. In 2018, she was a laureate of Fondation Royaumont in France, under the direction of Christophe Rousset, Stéphane Fuget, Rita Dams and Roberta Salsi. In 2009, she was awarded the first prize of the Japan-France competition in Tokyo and in 2012 and 2014, she was a winner of the Japanese song competition in Sōgakudō and a finalist of the Competition of Classical music in Japan. In 2012, she was awarded the highest prize of Le Brillant French singing competition in Tokyo; in 2017, she won the second prize, the prize of high school students and the prize of the orchestra La Camerata in the international singing competition in Mâcon and was a finalist of the French lyrical singing competition in Toulouse. As regards opera, in France and Japan, she was Polinice (*Eteocle e Polinice* by Legrenzi), Scorbio (*Le nozze in sogno* by Cesti), Orfeo (*Euridice* by Peri), Armida (*Rinaldo* by Handel), Aristeo (*L'Orfeo* by Rossi), Vénus (*Psyché* by Lully), Tito (*Il Tito* by Cesti), Penelope (*Il ritorno d'Ulisse* by Monteverdi), Mrs. Quickly (*Falstaff* by Verdi), Ottone et Arnalta (*L'incoronazione di Poppea* by Monteverdi) and Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart) under the direction of Stéphane Fuget, Maxime Pascal, Ryo Terakado, Yoshio Watanabe, Chikara Iwamura. She premiered contemporary compositions by Takashi Fuji, Yōichi Nakajima, Minoru Yamato and she sang as a soloist of oratorios in France and Japan under the direction of Michel Piquemal, Adam Vidovic, Yoshio Watanabe, Hiroshi Nagai. She also gives numerous recitals especially French symphonic poems in Tokyo, Minsk, Paris, Lyon and Normandy.





Mathias Ferré, viola da gamba

Mathias Ferré studied viola da gamba among various instruments and topics at La Sorbonne, CNSM of Paris, CNSM of Lyon, Koninklijk Conservatorium of Brussels and Schola Cantorum of Basel, with teachers such as Marianne Muller, Philippe Pierlot, Paolo Pandolfo, Wieland Kuijken, Rainer Zipperling, Vittorio Ghielmi and Christophe Coin. He performed in numerous festivals such as La Folle Journée de Nantes, Musique 3 in Brussels, Oude Muziek in Utrecht, Le Paris baroque, Le vent sur l'arbre, Lyon's festival, Regensburg's festival, with ensembles Ricercar Consort, Scherzi Musicali, les Arts Florissants, le Poème Harmonique, Le Concert Étranger, Il Delirio Fantastico, Correspondances. Mathias Ferré recorded Bach's violin concertos with l'ensemble baroque atlantique in 2013, and Richard Jones' sonatas with the beggar's ensemble in 2017. In 2003, he won the first prize of the Rotary Club in Angoulême, in 2013 the first prize in Maurizio Pratola competition in Italy and the prize F.J. Aumann in H.I.F. Biber competition in Austria, in 2017 he was selected for the Ambronay European Academy directed by Paul Agnew, in 2018 he won the first prize, the audience prize and the radio prize in 2018's Van Wassenaer competition with the beggar's ensemble that he founded.

Takahisa Aida, harpsichord

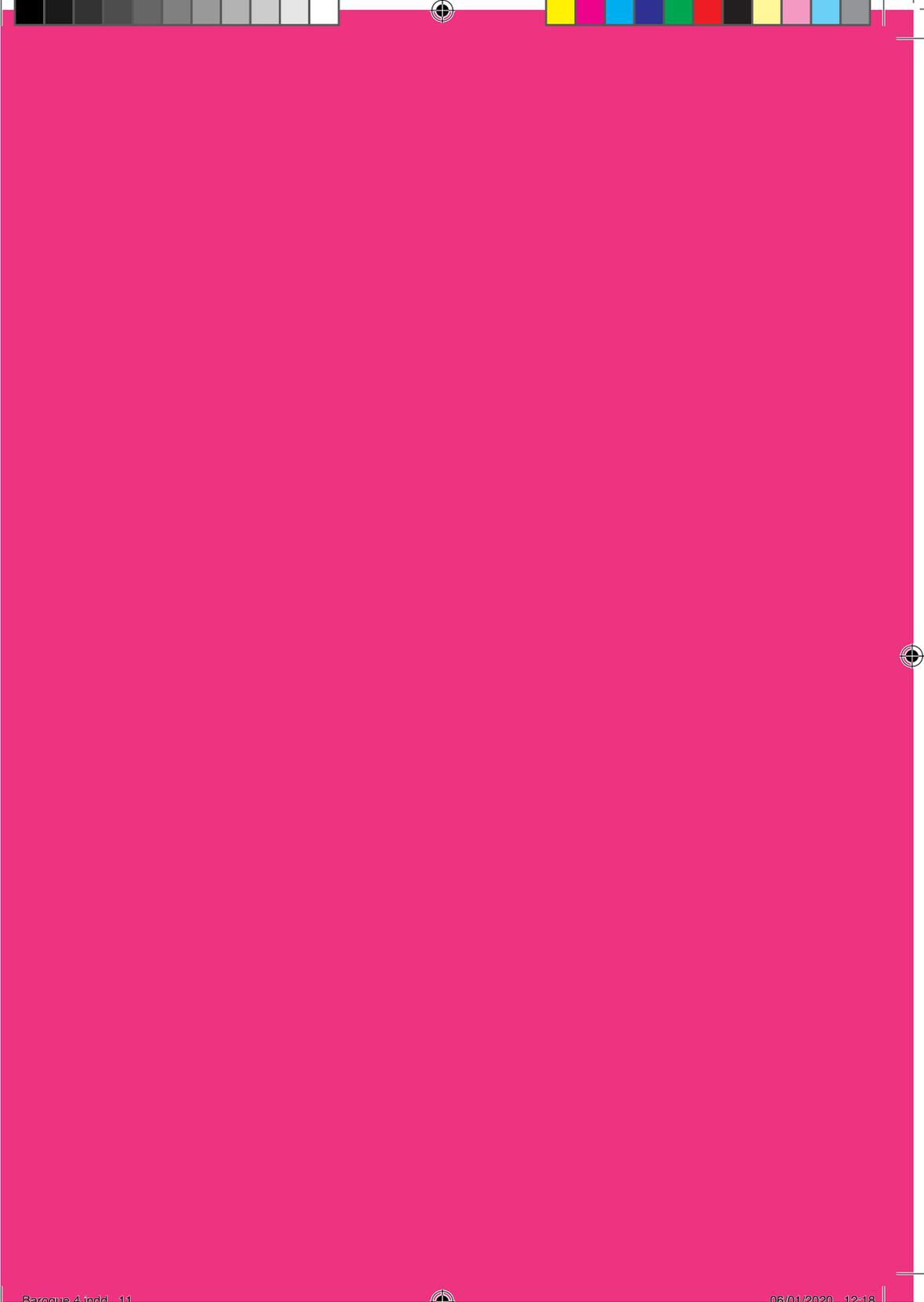
Takahisa Aida studied the harpsichord at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts in the class of Masaaki Suzuki. He is the first prizewinner of the 23rd Yamanashi International Early Music Competition. Passionate for French music, he entered the CNSM of Paris where he obtained his master with highest honours in 2014 and a diploma in chamber music in 2015. He regularly performs in Europe and Japan as soloist and continuo player with les Contre-Sujets, Artifices, Salmanazar and numerous ensembles. He has studied with Noëlle Spieth, Blandine Rannou, Béatrice Martin, Olivier Baumont, participated in master classes with Pierre Hantaï, Bertrand Cuiller... He is currently professor at the Abbeville Conservatory.

Kazuya Gunji, harpsichord

Kazuya Gunji studied the harpsichord at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts in the class of Masaaki Suzuki.

He attended the CNSM of Lyon where he graduated with highest honours. In 2010, Kazuya won the first prize of harpsichord at the International Competition Musica Antiqua in Bruges. Kazuya Gunji performs both as soloist and continuo with orchestras and ensembles such as Opéra National de Lyon, Opéra de Toulon, Orchestre d'Auvergne, Orchestre de chambre de Paris, Het Noord-Nederlandse Orkest in the Netherlands, Gumma Symphony Orchestra in Japan, Bach Collegium Japan, ensemble Artifices, ensemble Nulla Dies Sine Musica and ensemble Capella Sanctae Crucis.







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