



Il Pomo d'Oro/ Edgar Moreau

Saturday 1 June 2019 7.30pm,
Milton Court Concert Hall

Handel Concerto grosso in F major, Op 6 No 2

Tartini Cello Concerto in A major

Durante Concerto No 2 for strings in G minor

Platti Cello Concerto in D major WD650

interval 20 minutes

Hasse Sinfonia in G minor, Op 5 No 6

Corelli Concerto grosso in B flat major, Op 6
No 11

Boccherini Cello Concerto in D major, G479

Il Pomo d'Oro
Edgar Moreau cello

Part of Barbican Presents 2018–19

Programme produced by Harriet Smith; printed
by Trade Winds Colour Printers Ltd; advertising by
Cabbell (tel 020 3603 7930)

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Welcome

A warm welcome to tonight's concert, the last of Il Pomo d'Oro's four appearances at the Barbican this season.

This Italian period-instrument ensemble made an indelible impression on its Barbican debut in 2015 led by its inspirational young director Maxim Emelyanychev. Their reputation was then cemented by their thrilling readings of *Seise* earlier this season and *Agrippina* last night.

But the players are equally at home in purely instrumental repertoire, and have previously recorded some of the pieces

that feature on this evening's menu with cellist Edgar Moreau. Though he's still only in his mid-twenties he has already made a considerable impression on the music world.

Tonight's programme is notable for its refreshing mix of the well-known and the more obscure – from Handel's great *Concerti grossi*, Op 6 to works by underrated figures such as Platti and Durante.

It promises to be a thrilling evening. I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys,
Head of Music

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Concerto grosso in F major, Op 6 No 2

1 Andante larghetto · 2 Allegro · 3 Largo · 4 Allegro, ma non troppo

Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770)

Cello Concerto in A major

1 Allegro · 2 Larghetto · 3 Allegro assai

Francesco Durante (1685–1755)

Concerto No 2 for strings in G minor

1 Affettuoso – Presto · 2 Largo affettuoso · 3 Allegro

Giovanni Benedetto Platti (1692–1763)

Cello Concerto in D major, WD650

1 Allegro · 2 Adagio · 3 Allegro

interval: 20 minutes

Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783)

Sinfonia in G minor, Op 5 No 6

1 Allegro · 2 Andante sempre · 3 Allegro

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713)

Concerto grosso in B flat major, Op 6 No 11

1 Preludio: Andante largo · 2 Allegro · 3 Adagio · 4 Andante largo
5 Largo · 6 Giga

Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805)

Cello Concerto in D major, G479

1 Allegro · 2 Adagio · 3 Allegro

From Corelli to Boccherini

The rise of the virtuoso Baroque concerto

Tonight's concert presents virtuoso cello repertoire of the 18th century. Yet the father figure behind the programme is not a cellist, but a violinist: Arcangelo Corelli, whose genius as a performer and composer ensured the primacy of the violin family of string instruments in modern Western classical music. His contemporaries enthusiastically embraced his pure musical style, as did his successors, many of whom are represented on tonight's programme. The familiarity of Corelli's style, notes Baroque scholar Michael Talbot, 'is paradoxically ... a result of its very originality as perceived by his contemporaries'.

Corelli's innovations and his remarkable commercial success earned him a unique place in music history books. He was the first to achieve fame exclusively as a composer of instrumental works (at a time when opera was the most fashionable genre), and the first composer whose instrumental works were admired and studied as classics long after musical style had moved on. It was the success of Corelli's music, above all, that established the standard string ensemble set-up that we know today: two violins, viola, cello and double bass. Charles Burney, writing in 1789, captured the esteem in which Corelli's concertos were held throughout the 18th century: '[they] seem to have withstood all the attacks of time and fashion with more firmness than any of his other works. The harmony is so pure, so rich, and so grateful; the parts are so clearly, judiciously, and ingeniously disposed; and the effect of the whole, from a large band, so majestic, solemn and sublime that they preclude all criticism, and make us forget that there is another Music of the same kind existing.' It is not much of an exaggeration to state that Corelli laid the foundations for the wonderful corpus of 18th-century string music, from which tonight's programme is drawn.

Before tackling the concerto genre, Corelli found success with the trio sonata. In some ways, the *concerto grosso* can be regarded as an amplified or expanded trio sonata: a trio of two violins and cello is coupled with a larger string ensemble.

Robert Philip suggests that this scheme was inspired by the Italian polychoral tradition, in which choirs of varying sizes performed both antiphonally and in combination. A shrewd businessman, Corelli may also have been attracted to the *concerto grosso* because of its flexible performance possibilities. As his similarly named contemporary Giuseppe Torelli noted in a preface to his own concertos: where 'solo' is written, one instrument should play; elsewhere, three or four players per part are acceptable. Yet the novel possibility of placing multiple players on the same line of music clearly had more expansive potential. This was spectacularly realised in 1687, when, as lavish entertainment for the British ambassador to Rome, Corelli amassed an ensemble of 150 strings. Fellow violinist and composer Francesco Geminiani recorded Corelli's unusually strict – and influential – approach to string ensemble performance: '[he] regarded it as essential to the ensemble of a band, that their bows should all move exactly together, all up, or all down; so that at his rehearsals, which constantly preceded every public performance of his concertos, he would immediately stop the band if he discovered one irregular bow.'

The *concerto grosso* heard tonight – the 11th of Corelli's Op 6 set – opens in a manner that clearly recalls his trio sonatas: over a gentle walking bass, the two violin parts indulge in beautiful harmonic suspensions. This instantly recognisable style somehow sounds as fresh and appealing today as it evidently did in the late 17th century. The following Allegro is notable for the virtuosity of the cello writing. In the fourth and fifth movements Corelli seems to move the first violin parts – both solo and *ripieno* – into the spotlight, thus departing from the trio-sonata model, in which the violins tend to have equal prominence. This is another influential aspect of his style: during the 18th century the first violin became the principal melodic voice of the orchestra. In the final two movements the melodic writing is based upon scale figures and triads. That this sounds so natural and violinistic to us is yet more evidence of

Corelli's profound influence on later composers. It is ironic, then, that this melodic style was not originally conceived for string instruments at all. Somewhat surprisingly, as Michael Talbot notes, it seems to have been borrowed from Bolognese trumpet writing. The 'natural' trumpet of Corelli's day lacked the valves that became standard only in the 19th century and was restricted to playing notes of the harmonic series. In practice, this means the notes of the major triad, and in the upper register, something close to the major scale. Perhaps, then, the fact that that trumpet-style melodic writing sounds natural is not so ironic after all. Talbot goes as far as to describe early Italian concertos as 'trumpet sonatas without a trumpet' – a bizarre thought indeed, from today's perspective.

Handel gave his 12 concertos the same opus number as Corelli's in homage to his great predecessor. Yet these are not in any way imitative works but rather reveal Handel's own compositional voice, which is a unique synthesis of diverse styles. Anthony Hicks writes that many movements 'blend inextricably the majesty of the French manner with Italianate fluency'. The regal French manner had been developed in the 17th century by Lully's Versailles ensemble, the *Vingt-quatre violons du Roi*, and had been imitated in courts all over Europe. The second of Handel's Op 6, which opens tonight's concert, certainly begins with an aristocratic air, though one of a rather contemplative nature. As the music progresses, Handel also reveals his genius as a contrapuntist. The finale begins as an energetic fugue, before giving way to more relaxed material, which clearly recalls Corelli. These two ideas are presented in alternation, then finally combined, as if Handel is blending Italianate fluency with Germanic ingenuity.

Giuseppe Tartini, like Corelli, first established his name as a violinist. Though almost entirely self-taught, he saw fit to establish himself as a pedagogue. From 1727 onwards, students from all over Europe came to study with him, anticipating

the music conservatoire culture of the 19th century and beyond. Tartini's compositional style was also forward-looking: in writing concertos for a single instrument – rather than a group of instruments, as in the *concerto grosso* style – he paved the way for the Classical concertos of Haydn, Mozart and others. His Cello Concerto in A major sets the scene for the cello repertoire heard throughout this programme, showcasing the instrument's capacity for lyricism and virtuosity. At a time when the cello was used primarily as a continuo instrument, this was nothing less than ground-breaking. The jovial outer movements frame an intensely beautiful *Larghetto*. So yearningly expressive is Tartini's writing that it is difficult, today, not to hear pre-echoes of later cello concertos, most obviously those by Haydn, but even those of much later figures such as Dvořák.

In his day, Francesco Durante was known primarily for his church music. Though, like Corelli, he did not seek a career in the lucrative world of opera, he achieved a dramatic musical language that clearly reflects its influence. This is amply apparent in the concerto heard tonight: a sense of dialogue permeates the entire piece. The opening *Affettuoso* begins innocuously enough, the musical language clearly betraying the influence of Corelli. But it isn't long before Durante allows himself chromatic indulgences that would have made Corelli blush. The material from the *Affettuoso* is taken up in the *Presto*, but imbued with a much more impassioned character. As a church musician, Durante would have been well-versed in 'learned counterpoint'; this is evident in the *Presto*, which presents various themes in combination. The result is a thrilling mix of dramatic expression and contrapuntal ingenuity, which anticipates the fugal writing of Haydn and Mozart. The ensuing *Largo* is also highly reminiscent of Corelli, though it includes moments of delightful chromatic piquancy. Durante's penchant for chromaticism is confirmed in the final *Allegro*, in which all sections of the ensemble engage in an almost argumentative discourse.

Even by 18th-century standards, Giovanni Benedetto Platti was something of a musical polymath: he played the violin, oboe, flute, harpsichord and cello. His affinity with the last of these is obvious in the D major Concerto heard tonight. From the outset, we are aware of the nascent style known to us as 'Classical'. The prominent repeated notes recall the Mannheim School – that is, the symphonies of Johann Stamitz – while the graceful gestures prefigure the music of Muzio Clementi. The second movement features expressive chromaticism, as in the concerto by Durante. Platti creates a real sense of musical drama, in which the lone cello takes on a role of an almost operatic kind. The accompanying ensemble seems in a way to represent the listener, responding in sympathy to the cello. This sense of dialogue continues in the Allegro, which provides a tautly energised conclusion. In all, this music is both masterfully crafted and intensely expressive; this concert offers an all-too-rare opportunity to hear music by this unjustly neglected composer.

Like so many ambitious German musicians of the 18th century, Handel among them, Johann Adolf Hasse established his reputation in Italy. During the third quarter of the century, he was the most successful composer of *opera seria* in both Italy and German lands. And, in common with the music of Tartini and Platti, his works seem on the brink of Classical style. The Sinfonia in G minor

has an intrinsically dramatic nature and brings to mind the music of Johann Christian Bach and even early Mozart. In the context of tonight's programme, though, what is notable is the prominence of triadic and scalic writing, reflecting the legacy of Corelli.

Following Corelli's *Concerto grosso* in B flat major, we conclude with music from a unique character in Western music history: Luigi Boccherini. Though he is known today primarily as a composer (and player) of virtuosic cello music, he was in fact extremely prolific in other areas too, writing almost 100 string quartets and an even greater number of string quintets. The quality of these works leads Christian Speck to argue that Boccherini is the most important exponent of Italian instrumental style during the era of Viennese Classicism. In the context of tonight's programme, then, Boccherini represents a late flowering of the Italian instrumental tradition established by Corelli. Like the concertos of Tartini and Platti, Boccherini's Cello Concerto in D major possesses a powerfully expressive middle movement. The overall impression, though, is of the composer's sheer enjoyment of his own virtuosic ability, with writing that is often extremely high in the cello's range – as if Boccherini is demonstrating that the cello can be as successful a solo instrument as the violin.

Programme note © Tom Wilkinson

About the performers



Edgar Moreau

Edgar Moreau cello

The French cellist Edgar Moreau won First Prize and six special prizes in the 2014 Young Concert Artists International Auditions. He also won Second Prize and the Prize for the Best Performance of the commissioned work at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, when he was just 17. He has since received many other awards.

He made his orchestral debut at the age of 11 with the Teatro Regio Orchestra in Turin. He has appeared as a soloist with the Musica Viva Orchestra, Polish Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra, Malaysian, Moscow and St Petersburg Philharmonic orchestras, Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, Mariinsky Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra and Hong Kong Sinfonietta, among others.

He is a committed chamber musician and has worked with the Talich, Pražák, Modigliani and Ébène quartets, Renaud Capuçon, Nicholas Angelich, Jean-Frédéric Neuburger and Khatia Buniatishvili. He has performed at the Warsaw Easter Festival, Saint-Denis, Radio France Montpellier, Colmar, Verbier, Annecy, Lugano, Edinburgh Evian and Lucerne festivals, at La Folle Journée in Nantes, Gstaad's Sommets Musicaux and the Mozartfest in Würzburg, as well as at the Vienna Musikverein. He has also given recitals

with his regular pianist – Pierre-Yves Hodiou – at the Mariinsky Theatre, Berlin Philharmonie, Auditorium du Louvre and in Brussels, Antwerp and Ferrara.

Recent highlights include concerts with the Orchestre de Paris under Lahav Shani, Gürzenich Orchestra under François-Xavier Roth, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Renaud Capuçon and Khatia Buniatishvili, Brussels Philharmonic under Michel Tabachnik, Orchestre National de France under Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Mikko Franck, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Jakub Hrůša. He has given chamber-music concerts at the Cologne Philharmonie, Schubertiades in Schwarzenberg and Ludwigshafen, appeared in the Fazioli Concert Hall Series in Sacile and performed in Tokyo, Amsterdam and Geneva.

He was born in 1994 in Paris and began playing the cello at the age of 4 and the piano at 6. From 2008 to 2013 he studied with Philippe Muller at the Paris Conservatoire and he currently studies with Frans Helmerson at the Kronberg Academy. He has taken part in masterclasses with such eminent cellists as Gary Hoffman, Lynn Harrell and David Geringas and has participated in many academies, including the Verbier Festival Academy and Kronberg Academy's Chamber Music Connects the World Project with Gidon Kremer, Yuri Bashmet and Sir Andrés Schiff.

Edgar Moreau is an exclusive Warner Classics artist; his first CD for the label, *Play*, was released in 2014 and featured miniatures for cello and piano. He followed this with *Giovinello* – 18th-century cello concertos recorded with Il Pomo d'Oro (which won an ECHO Klassik award). His most recent discs are a sonata recital with David Kadouch and cello concertos by Offenbach and Gulda with Les Forces Majeures and Raphaël Merlin.

Edgar Moreau plays a David Tecchler cello, dated 1711.

Il Pomo d'Oro

Il Pomo d'Oro is an orchestra founded in 2012 with a special focus on opera, but equally committed to instrumental performance in various formations. Its musicians are among the finest period-instrumentalists to be found worldwide. The ensemble has worked with conductors Riccardo Minasi, Maxim Emelyanychev, Stefano Montanari, George Petrou, Enrico Onofri and Francesco Corti. The orchestra's leader Zefira Valova has also directed it in various projects. Since 2016 Maxim Emelyanychev has been its chief conductor.

It is a regular guest in prestigious concert halls and at festivals all over Europe. It has toured widely its 2016 recording with Joyce DiDonato, *In War & Peace*, conducted by Emelyanychev, which won an ECHO Klassik Award and a Gramophone Award.

Il Pomo d'Oro has released several operas: Handel's *Tamerlano*, *Partenope* and *Ottone* and Vinci's *Catone in Utica*. It has also recorded recitals with the countertenors Jakub Józef Orliński, Franco Fagioli, Max Emanuel Cencic and Xavier Sabata, mezzo-sopranos Ann Hallenberg and Joyce DiDonato and sopranos Francesca Aspromonte and Emöke Barath. Among its instrumental albums are Haydn's violin and harpsichord concertos, as well as a cello disc with Edgar Moreau which received an ECHO Klassik

Award in 2016. Further instrumental recordings feature the violin concertos and harpsichord concertos of J S Bach with Shunske Sato and Francesco Corti as soloists.

The most recent additions to its discography are *Handel Arias* with Franco Fagioli, *Prologue*, a disc of 17th-century opera prologues with Francesca Aspromonte, *Serse* with Franco Fagioli in the title-role, *Anima Sacra* with Jakub Józef Orliński, Alessandro Stradella's opera *La Doriclea* and *Voglio cantar* with Emöke Barath, to mark Barbara Strozzi's 400th anniversary.

In 2016 it became an ambassador of El Sistema Greece, a humanitarian project which aims to combat refugee children's loss of home and identity by offering them musical education and encouraging creativity, as well as giving concerts, workshops and music lessons.

The name of the ensemble comes from Antonio Cesti's eponymous opera of 1666. Composed for the wedding celebrations of Emperor Leopold I and Margarita Teresa of Spain, *Il Pomo d'Oro* was probably one of the largest, most expensive and most spectacular opera productions in the still young history of the genre, involving 24 different stage designs, a horse-ballet featuring 300 horses, a fireworks display of 73,000 rockets and numerous special effects.

Il Pomo d'Oro

Violin 1

Zefira Valova
Edson Scheid

Cello

Ludovico Minasi
Cristina Vidoni

Violin 2

Stefano Rossi
Heriberto Delgado

Double Bass

Nicola Dalmaso

Viola

Giulio D'Alessio

Harpsichord

Federica Bianchi