MEDITERRANEAN
WITH DANIEL PINTENO
Feel the fervour of southern Spain
In 1737 the castrato Farinelli, the greatest singer in Europe, was appointed by King Philip V of Spain, as ‘my servant, who answers only to me or to the queen, my very beloved wife, for his unique talent and skill in the art of singing’. Philip gave him an extremely generous salary, ‘a decent and suitable Lodging for his person and family as well in all my Royal Seats as in any other place where he may be ordered to attend on my Person’, two mules for city travel and six mules for the country, and various other perks. Farinelli had to sing to the king every night, as a cure for his depression, and as artistic director of the opera theatres at Madrid and Aranjuez he mounted fabulous productions of Italian opera, employing Italian singers and Italian orchestral players.

Farinelli was the most famous and best paid of the many Italian musicians who arrived in Spain in the first half of the eighteenth century, in response to the new enthusiasm for Italian music among the Spanish elite. This was driven in large part by Philip V (who was in fact French). He wanted to project an image of himself at home and abroad as a modern cosmopolitan ruler, and adopting the latest fashionable Italian music bolstered that image.

Vicente Basset, however, is little known. He was described as a Venetian musician, and currently servant of His Excellency the Viceroy of Sicily, hence his description of himself as ‘Venetian musician and currently servant of His Excellency’ the Viceroy of Sicily, so it appears that he composed the collection before he moved to Madrid. It was published in Amsterdam between 1716 and 1718, soon after Vivaldi’s L’estro armonico which almost certainly inspired it.

What to listen for

Vivaldi gave three of his concertos the title ‘La notte’, or night. This one for solo flute, dating from 1729, is an extended arrangement of the first, a chamber concerto (for a small number of instruments with no orchestra) written about ten years earlier. Along with his Four Seasons concertos, it is the most programmatic of Vivaldi’s music, that is, it is instrumental music which depicts a story or scene.

In the Baroque period certain keys were associated with particular affects or emotions. G minor represented fear, agitation or revenge, and was a deliberate choice by Vivaldi for a concerto which was intended to conjure up silence, mystery and disturbing nocturnal visions. Nothing is known about why it was composed or for whom, however the virtuosic flute part pushed the boundaries of contemporary flute playing technique and Vivaldi must have intended it for an excellent flute player.
**PROGRAM NOTES**

**What to listen for**

The concerto is atypical of Vivaldi’s usual compositional style in many respects. All of the ‘night’ concertos have six movements (instead of the usual three), and are characterised by sudden changes of tempo, bizarre twists and turns in harmonic direction, and unexpected shifts between major and minor. The first movement of this concerto begins with the orchestra in unison in a dotted rhythm, which though similar to a French overture is full of foreboding. The second fast movement, titled ‘Ghosts’ by Vivaldi, is marked by rushing ascending scales. A large (slow) movement provides a calm interlude of rest before another agitated Presto. In the second Largo, ‘Sleep’ is represented by long, soft notes which barely seem to change in an unusually static harmony.

**FÉLIX MÁXIMO LÓPEZ (1742–1821)**

**Overture con tutti instrumenti in B-flat Major**

Allegro moderato
Andante
Allegro

Félix Máximo López is probably best known as the subject of a painting by the famous Spanish portrait painter Vicente López-Portaña, which now hangs in the Prado Museum. López spent most of his career as an organist at the royal chapel in Madrid, starting as fourth organist in 1775, during the reign of Charles III. Promotion was only possible when the incumbents of positions higher up the hierarchy died, so it was not until 1805 that he became first organist. López composed many works for organ and keyboard, as well as vocal works, and some were published during his lifetime, however only a very few pieces by him have survived.

**What to listen for**

This work is variously described as either an overture or a sinfonia. It could have been intended as an overture, probably to a comic opera, judging by the style of the first movement which alternates quick running melodic patterns with held repeated notes. Alternatively it could have been a concerto symphony, however by 1780, when López composed this piece, it had become standard practice for a symphony to have four movements, whereas this work has only three.

The first movement opens with military style fanfare motifs for horns, and extended solo passages for a pair of oboes. This was innovative writing for the period, when it was still quite new to feature wind instruments in this way. Unexpectedly, a contrasting middle section for solo violin has the character of a concerto as does the slow second movement, where again the solo violin dominates while other strings are relegated to an accompanying role. The third movement of a Classical symphony, such as those by Mozart or Haydn, is a minuet, but unusually here López incorporates a minuet into the fast final movement, which is a lively gigue.

**ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)**

**Concerto for Violin in D Major from L’estro Armonico, Op. 3, No. 9**

Allegro
Larghetto
Allegro

Vivaldi died penniless and unknown in 1741, yet only thirty years earlier he had been the most famous instrumental composer in Europe after the publication in 1711 of his Opus 3, a collection of twelve concertos that he called L’estro armonico. It was the largest and most expensive collection of music published up to that time. L’estro armonico means frenzied or passionate harmony, an appropriate title given the sheer energy and vigour of Vivaldi’s style expressed in forceful rhythms and endless variety, which along with the concertos’ originality in terms of musical form made them so fascinating.

This seminal work provided a model for concerto composition that was followed and built on by other composers from France to Germany to Italy for years to come. J S Bach developed his compositional style by studying and transcribing six of these concertos; this particular concerto was the basis for his harpsichord concerto BWV 972. Other composers transcribed them for instruments as varied as the carillon, harp, glass harmonica and unaccompanied violin.

Vivaldi wrote about two hundred and thirty concertos for solo violin, most of them thought to have been written for the exceptionally fine female players at the Pietà, the orphanage for girls in Venice for whom Vivaldi worked on and off for most of his career. Vivaldi was himself a virtuoso violinist, and much of his writing for violin is extremely technically demanding. Johann Uffenbach, a traveller from Germany and a keen amateur musician, was astounded at his technical feats:

Vivaldi played a solo accompaniment – splendid – to which he appended a cadenza which really terrified me, for such playing has never been nor can ever be; he came with his fingers within a mere grass-stalk’s breadth of the bridge, so that the bow had no room – and this on all four strings with imitations and at incredible speed.

**CHARLES AVISON (1709–1770)**

**Concerto Grosso after Scarlatti in D Major, Op. 6, No. 6**

I Largo
Il Con fuira

‘Of the lowest Class … VIVALDI ... whose Compositions being equally defective in various Harmony and true Invention, are only a fit Amusement for Children; nor indeed for these, if ever they are intended to be led to a just Taste in Music.’

Charles Avison, An Essay on Musical Expression, 1752

Charles Avison was an English organist, composer, teacher, and concert manager. According to the eighteenth century music
Avison lived most of his life in Newcastle upon Tyne, and probably because of this his compositions were limited to accompanied keyboard sonatas and string concertos. The four movement concerto grosso or ‘grand concerto’ was the main type of orchestral music composed in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, long after it had been superseded in Europe by the Vivaldian three movement solo concerto. Although Europeans would have considered it old-fashioned, it was an ideal form to use when composing for provincial orchestras, as the difficult solo sections could be played by professional musicians and the easier tutti sections by the gentleman amateurs who made up the rest of the ensemble. There was a great demand for pieces of this type in the middle of the century, and Avison was one of the most prolific and accomplished composers of them, writing no less than ninety-two!

What to listen for

This concerto is one of a set of concertos published in 1758, and which Avison based on enormously popular keyboard pieces by the Italian composer Domenico Scarlatti. Each concerto has the usual concerto grosso movement form of slow–fast–slow–fast, and typically contrasts the full orchestra against a small group of soloists. Despite what Avison wrote about the music of others, his own concertos are full of baroque exuberance and energy. In this concerto only the first two movements will be played. The second movement tests all players, particularly the solo violinist, as they play ‘con furia’—furiously—twice through the entire movement, as directed in the score.

GAETANO (CAYETANO) BRUNETTI (1744–1798)
Sinfonia in C Minor Il Maniatico, L. 322

I Introduzione: Largo, Andantino
II Allegro
III Quinteretto Allegretto
IV Allegro Spinitoso – Andantino – Allegro Spinitoso

An Italian, Brunetti was one of the leading composers in Spain in the second half of the eighteenth century. He moved to Madrid at the age of eighteen and played as a violinist in the royal court orchestra (like López, he had to wait for those further up the hierarchy to die before he could advance to a more senior position), and from 1770 he was also violin teacher to King Charles III’s adult son, the Prince of Asturias. The Prince was particularly interested in art (he was Goya’s patron) and was an accomplished violinist, with an appetite for new music, and when he became king he established a new royal chamber orchestra, with Brunetti as director. Most of Brunetti’s four hundred and fifty compositions were chamber pieces or symphonies composed for this orchestra, but he also introduced music by other European composers who wrote in the early Classical style favoured by the king. Haydn was a particular favourite.

Brunetti was an imaginative composer, but because very few of his compositions were published in his lifetime he has remained largely forgotten since the eighteenth century.

What to listen for

Brunetti wrote this symphony in 1780. It is programmatic, in that it sets out to musically depict a narrative. Its Spanish title, Il Maniatico, means ‘the maniac,’ or perhaps more accurately ‘the obsessive person’, as the explanation that Brunetti wrote in his introduction to the score makes clear:

This is a symphony which describes as much as one can by using only instruments, without the help of words, the fixation of a delirious person on an objective, and this part is performed by a solo cello, to which are joined the other instruments, rather like friends, who are committed to freeing him from his delirium, presenting him with an infinite variety of ideas, an infinite variety of motifs. The maniac remains fixed on his primary objective for a long time, until he meets a cheerful motif that can persuade him, and makes him unite with the others. After a momentary relapse, finally, carried along by a joint impulse, it concludes with all happily united.

After a slow introduction, the ‘mania’ (Brunetti wrote the word over the first entry of the solo cello), is represented by fast repetitive minor seconds. The cellist is isolated from the rest of the orchestra, stuck in musical detail, ‘obsessed’ with repeating this one small interval. The orchestra has the rational melody, whereas the cellist’s part consists of the fixed inflexible repetition of detail. The maniac’s motif appears again in the second movement, but then is absent for most of the third movement until foreshadowed by an unsettling change to the minor: the obsession is still present after all. During the first section of the last movement, which is in three parts, the solo cellist, seemingly rehabilitated, joins with the other cellists. A relapse back into obsession occurs in the minor middle section of the movement, as the rest of the orchestra, disheartened, start to join in, until finally all is resolved in a bright major key.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1676</td>
<td>Facco born near Padua, Italy</td>
<td>Bacteria discovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1678</td>
<td>Vivaldi born in Venice</td>
<td>Roman Catholics banned from English parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>1703</td>
<td>Vivaldi is ordained as a priest and appointed violin teacher at the Pietà girls’ orphanage in Venice</td>
<td>Fire brigade founded in Edinburgh</td>
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<tr>
<td>1709</td>
<td>Avison born</td>
<td>Cast iron produced for the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1711</td>
<td>Vivaldi’s L’estro armonico Opus 3 published; Facco working in Sicily</td>
<td>Handel mounts first London opera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1713</td>
<td>Vivaldi’s first opera performed, in Vicenza</td>
<td>The Guardian newspaper founded in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1716</td>
<td>Facco’s concerto collection Pensieri adiarmmonici published</td>
<td>Beijing becomes the largest city in the world</td>
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<tr>
<td>1717</td>
<td>Leaves the Pietà to mount productions of own operas throughout Italy</td>
<td>Handel composes Water Musick</td>
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<tr>
<td>1723</td>
<td>Contracted by Pietà to produce two concertos a month</td>
<td>British parliament makes it an offence punishable by death to black one’s face to hunt deer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1725</td>
<td>Vivaldi’s Four Seasons published</td>
<td>Catherine I becomes Empress of Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1729</td>
<td>Vivaldi writes La notte concerto</td>
<td>Domenico Scarlatti arrives in Madrid as music master to Portuguese princess Maria Barbara, on her marriage to future king of Spain Ferdinand VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1737</td>
<td>Basset working in Madrid; Vivaldi leaves Venice for Vienna</td>
<td>Farinelli moves to Madrid employed by King Philip V; he never sings in public again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Vivaldi dies in poverty in Vienna</td>
<td>Rule, Britannia! first performed at home of Prince of Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>1742</td>
<td>López born</td>
<td>Messiah first performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1744</td>
<td>Brunetti born</td>
<td>Canaletto paints the Grand Canal in Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1753</td>
<td>Facco dies</td>
<td>British parliament extends citizenship to Jewish people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1762</td>
<td>Basset dies</td>
<td>Native American Cherokee chief visits George III in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Avison dies</td>
<td>Captain Cook drops anchor in Botany Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>López attains position of fourth organist at Madrid royal chapel</td>
<td>Mozart composed five violin concertos in Salzburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>López composes Sinfonia; Brunetti composes II Maniatico symphony</td>
<td>Goya paints Christ Crucified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Brunetti dies</td>
<td>Platypus discovered by Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>López dies</td>
<td>Napoleon dies; caffeine identified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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