

PROGRAM NOTES

With a fascinating choice of recorder music from the Renaissance, Baroque and Modern eras, the Boreas Quartett Bremen and Han Tol promise an evening full of contrasts in their *Il flauto magico* program. The musicians combine the warmth and magical color of renaissance music with the rhetorical and virtuosic qualities of the baroque period. Highlights of modern times expand this program's musical spectrum to a range of almost 500 years, taking the listener on a trip through the history of the instrument.

In his famous diary written around 1670, the English diplomat Samuel Pepys described how he went to the theater one evening and heard the enchanting sound of a recorder consort: "It is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything else..." This paints an ideal picture for Han Tol and the Boreas Quartett Bremen, and it is their goal to create that very sentiment in the souls of the listeners that attend their concerts.

Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Joseph Bodin de Boismortier were contemporaries who represent the three leading nations in music during the baroque era. Vivaldi, a Venetian, invented and proposed the new style of the Concerto, an ideal vehicle to display the virtuosity and flamboyance that was so characteristic of, as he was called, the Red Priest. Bach, the German master, explored the boundaries of composition in his magnum opus, *Art of Fugue*, a tour de force in which he was able to combine intricate harmonies full of expression and drama with lingering ethereal melodies, yet always operating within the very strict rules of counterpoint. Boismortier, our ambassador for French repertory, shows us how talented composers of the day were able to adapt Italian forms and flavor them with French elegance through the expressive use of delightful ornaments that exhibit their flawless rhythmic instinct. The title of the piece though, as well as the movements, carry their Italian names, and this surprisingly illustrates the unabated influence of the Italians.

Although King Henry VIII had taken Italian musicians, such as the Bassano brothers, under his wing, his actions on the political and religious scene of the day lead to a separation between England and the Continent during the first half of the 16th century. However, English music continued to thrive in Europe, and a part of this program is dedicated to some of the most astonishing repertory that evolved during the reign of Henry's daughter, Elisabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603. The collection of variations on the *In Nomine* melody by Christopher Tye, organist and composer, displays enormous diversity of character and style within its compositional principles. These variations are set around a melody in long notes, audible in the tenor voice of the ensemble, which Tye had taken from a mass by John Taverner (d. 1540), in which he shows his inventiveness and ability to breathe new life and charisma into the archaic theme. Prince Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553), Elisabeth's short-lived half brother and predecessor, addressed Tye, who was awarded a degree of Doctor in Music in 1545, as follows:

England one God, one truth, one Doctor hath
For Musick's art, and that is Doctor Tye,
Admired for skill in musick's harmony.

The listener will certainly approve of these remarks while savoring the unexpected harmonic and rhythmical turns in his heavenly *O Lux*. It makes us sad to realize that so much of his music was lost!

Holborne was active at Elisabeth's court and highly regarded by Dowland, who dedicated one of his compositions to "the most famous, Anthony Holborne." In 1599 Holborne published *Pavans, Galliards, Almains*, the largest surviving English collection of consort music. The dances are most likely arrangements from works originally written for the lute. And this leads us inevitably to Dowland, who also made the consort setting of the *Lachrimae* pavan with the lute in mind. Neither Dowland nor Holborne were church-trained musicians, but rather virtuosi on plucked instruments, producing secular music for a growing group of refined music lovers. The English composer Thomas Simpson left his homeland to work in Heidelberg and Copenhagen. We have paired his playful and lively *Galliard* that uses the famous *Lachrimae* melody with Dowland's pavan.

Almost all the Renaissance recorder types are heard here, copies of original instruments by the Schnitzer family of Nuremberg. During the first half of the sixteenth century many members of this family were active as instrument builders. They included Sigmund Schnitzer, who gained great renown outside Germany and was particularly famous for his “great oversized pipes.” They are perfectly fit for an interpretation by Eustache du Caurroy of the famous *Jeune Fillette* song. This melody was the basis for countless variations and it is played by one of the members of the group in a solo version to allow for better recognition in the virtuosic settings that follow.

Hans Leo Hassler was a German composer and organ builder, also from Nuremberg. His virtuoso keyboard variations use the famous *La Monica* tune, identical to *Une jeune fillette*. In arranging this work (that fits a recorder consort perfectly), we follow a widespread period practice of arranging and adapting pieces from a different instrument to one's own.

Who is more accomplished to offer a commentary about Sören Sieg's composition than Mr. Sieg himself? “*Ixsha*, in Xhosa [an African dialect], means time. An African proverb says: ‘The Europeans have the clock, the Africans have the time.’ I tried to capture this African feeling of time in this work: relentless repetition, joyful variation, endless floating: time slows down and goes in circles until it nearly stands still. So enjoy the flow, take your time and forget the clock!”

We wish you a great concert!

—Han Tol