

**J. S. Bach** *Partita no. 2 in D Minor*  
(1720)

1. Allemanda
2. Corrente
3. Sarabanda
4. Giga
5. Ciaccona

Composed during Bach's time as *Kapellmeister* to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen (his final post before his ultimate move to Leipzig in 1723), the *Partita no. 2 in D Minor* is the best known of Bach's six works for unaccompanied violin. Leopold's Calvinism meant he did not require elaborate music for his worship, and Bach focussed on producing secular works – the orchestral and cello suites, violin sonatas (and partitas), and his Brandenburg Concertos.

The first half of the *Partita No. 2* consists of clear statements of the four core dances of the Baroque suite: stately Allemanda, 'running' Corrente, somber Sarabanda, and dashing Giga. Each of these is in binary form with two repeated halves, and movements one, two, and four maintain a single melodic line – avoiding explicit harmony. After a two-octave arpeggio fall at the end of the Giga, the performer pauses, and begins the Ciaccona.

**Charlotte Spruit** is a Dutch soloist and chamber music specialist pursuing a master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music. In 2022 she won the first prize, audience prize, and Genuin Classics prize at the Leipzig International Bach Competition, and has since been supported by the Young Classical Artists Trust. Charlotte was recently named one of Classic FM's 30 Rising Stars 2024.

**Sergio Bucheli**, studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Royal Academy of Music, supported by ABRSM and The Rolling Stones. Sergio is the principal lutenist of The English Concert and La Nuova Musica, a "New Ensemblist" with Arcangelo, and a player with Fretwork.

**The Concert Series continues Thursday 18 April with a song recital by tenor Richard Dowling, accompanied by guitarist Michael Butten.**

"On one staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings," Johannes Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann. "If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind."

It is the Ciaccona that gives *Partita no. 2* its reputation, the declamatory theme spun into around sixty-four continuous variations over 257 bars. The movement lasts as long as all the prior sections combined and Bach sustains the form with a middle major-key section, astonishing rhythmic diversity, and a kaleidoscope of harmonic possibilities and technical devices – all while bringing every four-measure phrase to a close with a cadential motion on D.

As Joshua Bell described, "it is not just one of the greatest pieces of music ever written, but one of the greatest achievements of any man in history. It is a spiritually powerful piece – emotionally powerful, structurally perfect."

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## SPRING CONCERTS AT THE OLD LIBRARY

2024, Concert 1 (March)

**Charlotte Spruit** *violin*  
**Sergio Bucheli** *lute*

**Wednesday 20 March, 7.30pm**

**G. P. Telemann** *Fantasia no. 1 in B-flat Major*  
**J. G. Pisendel** *Sonata in A Minor*  
**N. Matteis** *Selection from Ayres for the Violin (Book I)*

Interval

**R. de Visée** *Suite in G Major*  
**J. S. Bach** *Partita no. 2 in D Minor*

Spring Concerts at the Old Library are presented by Wild Arts, the charity behind the Roman River and Essex Summer Opera Festivals. Wild Arts make music fresh, enjoyable, and available to everyone, while providing opportunities to exceptionally talented singers and players, and spearheading positive environmental change.

**G. P. Telemann** *Fantasia no. 1 in B-flat Major* (1735)

1. *Largo*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Grave*

Georg Philipp Telemann was in his mid 50s when he composed his fantasias for solo violin. Professionally, he was perhaps at his height – Kantor of the Johanneum Lateinschule, and director of Hamburg’s five largest churches – and yet, as he struggled to support ten children and an unfaithful and gambling-addicted wife (her debts would at times outweigh the composer’s annual income), it becomes tempting to see the ‘fantasies’ as something of an escape.

The fantasia had begun as a composition of free-form counterpoint, an excuse for fugal complexity rather than the vehicle for improvisational virtuosity that it would become by Chopin’s *Fantasia-Impromptu* a century later. Both approaches may be found in Telemann’s work – a tension between freedom and the constraints of the musical fashions of the time.

*Fantasia no. 1* opens with a highly improvisatory *Largo* movement, an almost spontaneous outburst of expression, and yet the movement seems more than anything to be a prelude to the constraints of the *Allegro* fugue that immediately follows. In the latter, the player makes notable use of ‘double stopping’ (sounding more than one string to create a sense of multiple voices). The technique will be used repeatedly across tonight’s concert.

The *Grave* third movement shifts to the relative key of G minor, with

paired notes sounding as sorrowful sighs before the previous fugue is repeated. While Telemann divided his fantasias between those with fugues and those in the Galant style, the light and loose feel of the Galant is clear across both groups, especially when compared to Bach’s *Partita*, which concludes tonight’s concert.

**J. G. Pisendel** *Sonata in A Minor* (c.1716)

1. [*Largo*]
2. *Allegro*
3. *Giga*

Telemann, Albinoni, Vivaldi, and Bach all dedicated works to Johann Georg Pisendel. Having been taught by Torelli, and holding the illustrious position of concertmaster of the Court Orchestra in Dresden, Pisendel was one of the leading violinists of his day. As a composer, his works were few in number but high in quality.

Although the date of the *Sonata in A Minor* is uncertain, it was most likely written around the time of his 1716 trip to Italy (where the composer studied with Vivaldi), and prior to his meeting J. S. Bach in 1717 – the work serves as a reference for Bach’s later solo sonatas and for the *Partita no. 2*.

The work is of two halves. Structurally, it begins with the *largo* prelude and *allegro* typical of the *sonata da chiesa* (literally “church music,” and also the form of Telemann’s *Fantasia*), before breaking into a *gigue* and variations more akin to the *sonata da camera* (“chamber music,” and a form of dance suite). While this contraction would later become the norm, in Haydn’s writing especially, Pisendel is ahead of the curve.

Stylistically, Pisendel draws on more Italianate *passaggi* (a form of melodic ornamentation) and distinctive Lombard rhythms (dotted rhythms that open with the short, accented note), both challenging the French style which had until then dominated Dresden’s musical scene.

**N. Matteis** *Selection from Ayres for the Violin (Book I)* (1676)

Often credited with changing English musical taste from the French style to the Italian, Nicola Matteis was the first of many Italian instrumentalists to, in the words of contemporary critic Charles Burney, “polish and refine [English] ears, and make them fit and eager for the sonatas.” Though subsequently outshone by Corelli and mostly forgotten, the performer and composer rose from poverty in Italy to enjoy great success on the London scene, and by 1700 had married a rich widow and retired to Norfolk.

Matteis’s *Ayres* consist of five volumes of short musical movements, arranged into suites of between two and twelve for the performers to mix and match (as Matteis did in his performances and as Charlotte does here). The majority of these movements are dances (*Sarabandes*, *Gigues*, *Courantes*, *Allemandes*, *Gavottes*, *Minuets* and *Bores*) or fantasias, and all are constructed from the repetition and sequential treatment of short motivic fragments. The stylistic emphasis is on contrast – of tempi, rhythms, dynamics, and bowing; on ornamentation (added by the performer); and on a feel of the violin as a human voice. As Corelli asked of his pupils, “non udite lo parlare?” (“can you hear it speak?”)

Though Matteis wrote little about his writing process, in one treatise on *The False Consonances of Musick* he gave three pieces of advice, and the third may be taken as a guide to his *Ayres*: “Be sure that your Tune be not too Long and tedious, nor yet too Short but of a Medium; and remember to Compose so as it may be easy & commodious for ye hand.”

## Interval

**R. de Visée** *Suite in G Major* (1682)

Very little is known about the life of Robert de Visée. Likely trained by the Italian Francesco Corbetta and named for his Portuguese hometown of Viseu, he was a composer, lutenist, guitarist, theorbist, and viol player at Versailles under Louis XIV and Louis XV. In 1719 he was named *Maître de Guitare du Roi* (“Guitar Master of the King”) to the ten-year-old Louis XV.

De Visée published two sets of suites for guitar, the *Livre de guitare dédié au roi* in 1682 and the *Livre de pièces pour la guitare* in 1686. These were followed 28 years later by a third and final collection, the *Pièces de théorbe et de luth*, published in 1716. Similarly to Matteis’s collections, most of these pieces are short dance movements – *allemandes*, *courantes*, *gigues*, *sarabandes*, and *tombeaus* – and de Visée continued Corbetta’s musical blend of the Italian and French styles, while focussing more on lyricism and melodic flow. With smoother contours, balanced phrasing, and distinctive anacrusis, the general feel is that of a refinement of expression befitting the French court.