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## **A “virtual” Coffee Concert recorded at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford**

**Sunday July 11, 2021 at 11:15**

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Virtual Coffee Concerts are pre-recorded at the Holywell Music Room in Oxford and are streamed from our YouTube channel at 11:15 on Sunday mornings. (These recordings are available for a limited time after release but, of course, there will be more to come.)

### **Maria Włoszczowska (violin)**

- **Biber: Passacaglia for Solo Violin**
- **Telemann: Fantasia for Solo Violin no 7 in E flat major, TWV 40:20**
- **Pisendel: Preludio from Sonata in A minor for Unaccompanied Violin, JunP IV.2**
- **Matteis: Alia Fantasia**
- **Bach: Violin Sonata no 3 in C major, BWV 1005**

Polish violinist Maria Włoszczowska performs as a soloist, chamber musician and guest concertmaster worldwide. She is recognised for her versatile musicianship, having won the First Prize and Audience Prize at the XXI Leipzig International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in 2018, as well as numerous prizes at the XV International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition.

Maria gave her debut recital at the Wigmore Hall with pianist Alasdair Beatson in 2016. She has appeared as soloist with several international ensembles since, including the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Concerto Budapest and several of Poland's symphonic and chamber orchestras. She regularly performs at festivals around Europe where her chamber music partners have included

Robert Levin, Philippe Graffin, Nobuko Imai, Amy Norrington, Paolo Giacometti, Bengt Forsberg, Matthew Hunt, Alasdair Beatson, Dinis Sousa and the Doric String Quartet amongst others.

Recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Emily Anderson Prize, the Hattori Foundation Senior Award and Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prize, Maria based herself in the UK after studying at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles with Leonid Kerbel, the Royal Academy of Music in London and completing her studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Hungarian violinist and conductor András Keller.

More information:  
<https://www.mariawloszczowska.com/>

## **Passacaglia for Solo Violin by Heinrich Biber (1644-1704)**

Born in the town now known as Stráž pod Ralskem, approximately 50 miles/80 Km north-east of Prague, Biber was a virtuoso violinist and one of the most inventive seventeenth-century composers for the instrument. The eighteenth-century English music historian Charles Burney described his violin sonatas as "the most difficult and most fanciful of any music I have seen of the same period."

Biber entered the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1670 and became Hauptkapellmeister (head music director) there in 1684. He rarely travelled but his reputation spread throughout Europe. He was ennobled by the Viennese emperor Leopold 1st in 1690.

The Passacaglia appears as an appendix to Biber's Mystery Sonatas, a sequence of fifteen sonatas for violin and continuo, thought to date from around 1676, depicting the 'mysteries' (stages in the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary) which are the focus for meditation during the saying of the Rosary.

The descending four-note scale on which the Passacaglia is based, repeated sixty-five times in all, is heard on its own at the beginning and at four other points during the piece, marking the work off into distinct sections. Each section becomes increasingly elaborate, and this cumulative effect also characterises the work as a whole, which reaches heights of both extraordinary virtuosity and expressive intensity.

## **Fantasy for Solo Violin no 7 in E flat major, TWV 40:20 by Georg Phillip Telemann (1681-1767)**

**1. Dolce; 2. Allegro; 3. Largo; 4. Presto.**

Telemann was one of the most astonishingly prolific composers of his age or, indeed, any other age. In an article published at the time of his tercentenary in 1981, the scholar Nicholas Anderson estimated that he "probably wrote more music than Bach and Handel put together".

Telemann's known output includes over a thousand church cantatas, and over a hundred sonatas. Like Bach, he was interested in combining elements from the various national characteristics current in his day, drawing not only on French and Italian styles but also on less cultivated music from further east. In his first post, as Hofkapellmeister to Count Erdmann von Promnitz, based in Moravia, he was strongly attracted to the sound of Polish and Moravian folk

music in what he described as "its true barbaric beauty".

His set of twelve Fantasies for solo violin were published in 1735 in Hamburg, where he had been director of music at the city's five main churches since 1721. He described them as falling into two groups; one consists of fantasies "with fugues", the other consists of "galanteries" – pieces in a lighter, more courtly style. However, the distinction between the two groups is not so clear-cut as this might suggest.

Most pieces in the set have three movements, but no 7 has four (as do nos 1 and 6), arranged in the slow-fast-slow-fast sequence common in Italian music of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

## **Preludio from Sonata in A minor for Unaccompanied Violin, JunP IV.2 by Johann Georg Pisendel (1687-1755)**

Pisendel studied with the great Italian player and composer Giuseppe Torelli, and was widely recognised as the leading German violinist of his generation. He met JS Bach in Weimar, on his way to study law at Leipzig University, where his reputation as a musician quickly grew. In 1712 he became a member of the court orchestra in Dresden, where he was based for the rest of his life. He continued to travel, however, and a stay in Italy from 1716 to 1717 had a particularly profound effect on his career. While in Venice he studied, and became friends, with Vivaldi, and he took back to Dresden copies of several works which he made from Vivaldi's manuscripts. As a result, Dresden became a major centre of the vogue for Vivaldi's music in Germany.

Only a handful of works firmly attributable to Pisendel are known; they include seven violin concertos, four concerti grossi, two sonatas for violin and continuo, and this sonata for solo violin, which comes from a manuscript now in the Saxon State Library, Dresden. A number of writers have noted a similarity to JS Bach's solo violin works, though the question of who influenced whom seems to be still open to debate.

Pisendel left no heading for the opening movement – though its highly ornate, improvisatory character clearly demands a slow basic tempo, leading some later editors to add the marking “Largo” – so “preludio” is as good a heading as any.

## **Alia Fantasia by Nicola Matteis (c1670s-1737)**

Nicola Matteis junior was the son of the Naples-born violinist and composer of the same name who settled in London sometime around 1670 and established a reputation there as a virtuoso. The younger Nicola studied the violin with his father, and there is at least one account of the two of them performing together, the father accompanying his son on the guitar.

Nicola junior soon built a career of his own in London. However, sometime around the turn of the century he moved to Vienna, eventually becoming musical director for the Emperor.

As a composer he was largely taken up with writing music for short ballets inserted into operas by composers attached to the imperial

court. He also left a few sonatas for one or two violins, a violin concerto, and a pair of fantasias for solo violin.

The fantasias come from a manuscript thought to date from between 1700 and 1720 and also in the Saxony State Library. They are attributed solely to “Sigr. Matteis”, without indicating father or son. The second and much shorter of the two is headed “Alia Fantasia”, which simply means “Another Fantasia”. In a single movement, it is mostly written out as a series of chords, to be elaborated on by the player in semi-improvised fashion. Matteis breaks the pattern to end the Fantasia with a pair of spectacular, fully-notated downward flourishes.

## **Violin Sonata no 3 in C major, BWV 1005 by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

### **1. Adagio; 2. Fuga; 3. Largo; 4. Allegro assai.**

When Bach arrived in Cöthen (about 30 miles/48km north-west of Leipzig) in December 1717 to take up the post of Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold, he entered a rather different musical environment from the one he had left in Weimar. There his energies were focused mainly on large-scale organ music and church cantatas. Leopold's private chapel, by contrast, followed a strict Calvinist tradition which left little scope for church music. Secular music, on the other hand, flourished at his court. He himself was an accomplished musician who sang, and played the violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord.

Although the proportion of Bach's instrumental music that dates from his time at Cöthen is probably less than was once thought, it certainly includes his three sonatas and three partitas for solo violin. They were evidently written for a virtuoso player, perhaps Joseph Speiss, leader of the Cöthen orchestra, but their technical demands reveal Bach's own intimate knowledge of violin technique. According to his son, Carl Phillip Emanuel, "in his youth and up to the approach of old age, he played

the violin with a pure and penetrating tone...He perfectly understood the possibilities of all the violin family".

Bach often suggests a more complex texture than is actually the case, implying a number of separate parts through his ingenious use of multiple-stopping (playing on more than one string at a time) and alternations between high and low registers. The unaccompanied Sonatas and Partitas challenge a player's powers of interpretation as well as technique, and form one of the foundations of the violin repertory.

Like the Telemann Fantasy, Bach's solo violin sonatas all follow the slow-fast-slow-fast pattern. The C major Sonata begins with an adagio marked by a persistent, gently rocking rhythm, followed by a remarkably intricate fugue based on a Lutheran chorale melody. The simpler texture of the following largo relaxes the tension, before the racing, non-stop figuration of the final movement.

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