

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI: Baroque Revolution

Wednesday 11 June 2025, 7pm

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Classical music has always had reinvention at its core. Throughout our programme, we at the Southbank Centre – alongside our Resident Orchestras and Resident Artists – capture that trailblazing spirit with works that broke the mould across the ages and brand-new approaches to timeless classics.

However you choose to experience the endlessly inventive world of classical music, we're so glad that you're doing it here with us. Welcome to Classical Music: Spring/Summer 2025.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

Repertoire

Ruffo La gamba; La disperata; La piva from *Capricci in musica a tre voci*

Cavalieri Sinfonia from *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo* & Ballo del Granduca from *La Pellegrina*

Hume The Lady Canes delight – almaine

Gibbons Fantasia a 3, No.12

Holborne Heigh ho holiday – galliard & The Night watch – almaine

Anonymous Variations on a ground (ca.1610)

Holborne Lullabie – galliard

Scheidt Galliard Battaglia (Battle Suite), SSWV.59

R Johnson (2) The Nobleman

Brade Scottish dance

R Johnson (2) The Satyrs' dance

Frescobaldi Canzon terza, à due canti, F.8.14c

Falconieri Ciaccona from *Canzone*, Bk.1

Zéspedes Guaracha (Ay que me abraso)

Kapsberger Variations sur La Folia

Marini Passacaglia a 4, Op.22 No.25

Merula Ciaccona, Op.12 No.20

Anonymous Folias criollas

Performers

Hespèrion XXI

Jordi Savall *director, treble viol*

Xavier Díaz-Latorre *theorbo, guitar*

Andrew Lawrence-King *arpa doppia*

Philippe Pierlot *treble & bass viols*

Xavier Puertas *violone*

David Mayoral *percussion*

With the support of the Departement de Cultura of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the consortium Institut Ramon Llull.

This performance lasts approximately 1 hour and 25 minutes with no interval.

As helpful as it is to divide cultural epochs into neat categories, some of the most fascinating creations appear at the blurred boundaries between, when composers are experimenting with sounds that will come to characterise the new era while continuing to use older forms. The works on this programme epitomise this phenomenon, our composers bestriding the Renaissance and Baroque and, with a foot in both camps, drawing our gaze towards a wide vista of traditions and possibilities. It is not just style that is wide-ranging here, but location, with musical cross-currents intermingling across Europe and beyond, together forming a great cultural wave – a 'Baroque Revolution'.

Vincenzo Ruffo was rooted in the traditions of the Renaissance, but his madrigals employed a new form of notation (*note nere* – literally 'black note'), and his *Capricci in musica a tre voci* were the first known instrumental works to be described as 'capricci'. Ruffo began his career in Verona before taking on roles including stints as choirmaster of Savona and Milan cathedrals, publishing his *Capricci* in 1564. The pieces are full of notational and technical complexities; we hear three performed as a suite: 'La gamba', 'La disperata' and 'La piva', a lively dance inspired by peasant dances accompanied on the bagpipes.

Medici court composer Emilio de' Cavalieri was a great innovator, credited with writing the first oratorio, *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo* (1600) – from which we hear the stately, imitative Sinfonia – as well as acting as producer of the earliest surviving opera, Peri's *Euridice*. Both Peri and Cavalieri were among the composers and poets who contributed to the *Intermedi della Pellegrina* of 1589, a collection of six vignettes on classical themes performed at the wedding festivities of Ferdinando de' Medici and Christina of Lorraine. Cavalieri oversaw the *intermedi* – the most lavish yet produced – with meticulous care, keeping accounts detailing expenses for costumes, scenery and music. He also contributed the vibrant *Ballo del Granduca*, a piece that became independently influential, inspiring similar works from Italian composer Banchieri, Dutch composer Sweelinck, and the Austrian-Italian composer and lutenist Giovanni Kapsberger – a darling of Roman nobility whose 'academies' were described as 'wonders of Rome'. We hear Kapsberger's *Variations sur La Folia* later in the programme, alongside an

anonymous work based on 'la folia' – one of the most ancient and frequently set of all European themes.

If Kapsberger, who also played the theorbo and guitar, was 'team lute', then Scottish composer Tobias Hume was most certainly 'team viol', championing its importance on the Elizabethan music scene – where the lute had tended to dominate – arguing that the viol 'shall with ease yeelde full various and as devicefull Musicke as the Lute'. Hume's 1607 collection *Captaine Humes Poeticall Musicke*, dedicated to Queen Anne, is thought to be the first music composed specifically for the lyra viol, a small member of the viol family. From this volume comes 'The Lady Canes delight', an almaine or allemande – a stately dance.

Orlando Gibbons was a celebrated court musician for over two decades, including roles as organist at Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal. He was famed for his keyboard skills, lauded by the French ambassador as 'the best finger of that age', and produced a rich array of consort music, including fantasias in two to six parts. With its distinct sections, his Fantasia a 3, No.12, is a finely-wrought example of his style.

In his two published volumes, *The Ciththarn Schoole* and *Pavans, Galliards, Almains*, Antony Holborne described himself as 'gentleman and servant to her most excellent Majestie' Elizabeth I. Details about his life are sketchy, but his use of different languages suggests a good education, and his music shows a thorough compositional approach executed in careful detail. His shorter, livelier pieces have proven to be the most enduring, among them *Heigh ho holiday* (galliard), *The Night watch* (another almaine) and *Lullabie* (galliard). The galliard was a popular 17th-century dance of five steps covering six beats in a bar, the fourth elongated. German composer Samuel Scheidt's *Galliard Battaglia* was dedicated to the court cornettist at Halle, where he worked as court organist and Kapellmeister.

Royal lutenist and composer Robert Johnson II (as opposed to the Scottish composer of the same name) became associated with court masques and music for the theatre, especially Shakespeare; *The Satyrs' dance* was written as incidental music to Ben Jonson's *Oberon* (1621). William Brade was a prolific English composer and string player who divided his time between the Brandenburg court and King Christian IV's court chapel in Copenhagen, and later the Brunswick court. He demanded a pay rise from 400 to 1000 thalers a year, threatening to leave for Hamburg if his wishes were not met. His employer, Count Ernst III, denounced this 'mischievous, wanton fellow'. The *Scottish dance* comes from Brade's 1617 volume of dances derived from English masques, its folk inflections in refreshing contrast with some of the more restrained dance styles of the era.

Girolamo Frescobaldi was a great Italian keyboardist described in one contemporary account as a child prodigy who was paraded 'through various principal cities of Italy'. Frescobaldi's *Il Primo Libro delle Canzoni*, from which we hear a Canzon,

was published in two editions in Rome in 1628 and revised and reissued in Venice in 1634, framing his years as a Medici composer. A canzona is an instrumental form with its origins in vocal music, characterised by lively rhythms, imitation and distinct sections. The canzone compiled in these volumes consist of music for one to four instrumental parts; we hear an example of two-voice writing.

Andrea Falconieri was a widely travelled composer and lutenist also in the orbit of the Medicis, eventually becoming maestro di cappella at Naples, where the main printed volume of his output, *Il primo libro di canzone, sinfonie, fantasie, capricci, brandi, correnti, gagliarde, alemane, volte* for 1-3 parts, was issued in 1650. Falconieri's Ciaccona on this programme comes from this volume and is founded on a recurring ground bass.

It is thought that the chaconne may have its origins in South America at the end of the 16th century, quickly spreading to Europe following Spanish exploration and colonisation of the 'New World'. A fine instance comes from Mexican composer, singer and viol player Juan García de Zéspedes, a composer who spent much of his career at Puebla Cathedral, where in 1654 he was assigned the tasks 'of teaching plainchant, polyphony, and viols to the young choirboys that are sopranos and to the other cantors who are worthy of instruction, and that he give lessons every day at the Church'. He became maestro de capilla, but was later chastised for emphasising instrumental music at the expense of his duties. His *Guaracha* for two parts (*Ay que me abraso*) is characterised by sophisticated, hypnotic rhythms and recurring harmonic patterns, attributes shared with the *guajira* style that would become popular in Cuba.

Biagio Marini's *Passacaglia* from his Op.22 features unusual harmonic patterns and chromaticism. He came from Brescia and was employed as a violinist in St Mark's, Venice, where he may have worked under Monteverdi, before embarking on a career that took him across Italy and Germany. Marini was an innovator, using distinctive new violin techniques, while the division of his Op.22 sonatas anticipates the multi-movement sonatas that would become the norm. Tarquinio Merula's chequered career took him back and forth to Cremona via Warsaw and Bergamo. He was particularly influenced by Venetian styles and was a progressive composer in a range of genres; from his volume of *Canzoni* published in Venice in 1637 we hear the Ciaccona in the lively Italian style.

Programme notes © Joanna Wyld, 2025

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