

NEW WORLDS

2021-22

THE ENCHANTED FOREST

Wednesday 27 October 2021 | 7.30pm

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Thursday 28 October 2021 | 7.30pm

Milton Court Concert Hall, London

NEW WORLDS

2021-22

A New Created World

Haydn's *The Creation* with Laurence Cummings

■ 28 September 2021 | Barbican Hall, London

The Enchanted Forest

Handel, Rameau and Geminiani with Josette Simon OBE

■ 27 October 2021 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

■ 28 October 2021 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

South America

from Rome to Peru with VOCES8

■ 24 November 2021 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

■ 25 November 2021 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Travelogue

a voyage across Europe with Anna Dennis

■ 16 February 2022 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

■ 18 February 2022 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Exile

Haydn in London with Ann Hallenberg

■ 9 March 2022 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

■ 10 March 2022 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

St John's Passion

JS Bach's masterwork in its rarely heard 1725 version

■ 15 April 2022 | Barbican Hall, London

La Turquie

Ottoman Empire at Versailles with Peter Whelan

■ 18 May 2022 | West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

■ 19 May 2022 | Milton Court Concert Hall, London

Genius

Mozartian fireworks with Richard Egarr and Robert Levin

■ 1 July 2022 | Barbican Hall, London

Josette Simon OBE *narrator*
Nick Harrison *narrations (author)*
Academy of Ancient Music
Laurence Cummings *director & harpsichord*

Wednesday 27 October 2021 | 7.30pm
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Thursday 28 October 2021 | 7.30pm
Milton Court Concert Hall, London

THE ENCHANTED FOREST

Handel Overture & Dances from Alcina
Rameau Suite from Dardanus

interval 20 minutes

Geminiani The Enchanted Forest

barbican
Associate Ensemble



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

from
John McMunn

chief executive

Good evening and welcome to our season's first exploration of *New Worlds*: a journey into the magical realm, with dances from Handel's *Alcina* and Rameau's *Dardanus* setting the stage for Geminiani's music to the pantomime *The Enchanted Forest*.

After the full immersion of our season opening performance of *The Creation* a few weeks ago, tonight we retreat into the theatre of the mind. And to assist us, I am delighted to welcome Josette Simon OBE, who will narrate the performance, as well as author Nick Harrison, who has carefully and cleverly stitched the various works we will hear into a coherent and transporting sequence. Leading it all is Laurence Cummings in his first performances at West Road Concert Hall and Milton Court as Music Director of the AAM.

From here, the season follows similar themes of discovery and exploration – to *South America* in November, across 17th-century Europe with the first Master of the King's Music (*Travelogue*) in February, into the depths of physical and emotional *Exile* in March, and to a distinctly Ottoman-tinged Versailles (*La Turquie*) in April.

Thank you for joining us, and I hope you thoroughly enjoy the ride.



A handwritten signature of John McMunn in black ink. The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being prominent.

We are AAM



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AAM is Associate Ensemble at the Barbican Centre, London and the Teatro San Cassiano, Venice; Orchestra-in-Residence at the University of Cambridge, Milton Abbey International Summer Music Festival and The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; and Research Partner to the University of Oxford. The 2021–22 season sees Laurence Cummings join the orchestra as Music Director.

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George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Dances *from Alcina*

Ouverture – Musette – Menuet

Il Ballo: Gavotte, Sarabande, Menuet, Gavotte

Entrée des songes agréables

Entrée des songes agréables effrayés

Entrée des Songes funestes

Le combat des Songes funestes et agréables

Tamburino

Dance does not play a large part in Handel's stage output, but it enjoyed a short burst of activity during the 1734-5 season, when the Covent Garden Theatre engaged the leading French choreographer and dancer Marie Sallé. Still in her 20s, Sallé had a few months earlier enjoyed success at Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre in two ballets in which she had abandoned the heavy encumbrances of 18th-century dance costume (which included a mask) for looser and lighter clothing that allowed her more freedom. Accordingly, her dancing was admired for its expressive mime and facial gestures, but also for an art that was 'conceived with as much finesse as lightness'. She danced in all of Handel's opera productions in the 1734-5 Covent Garden season, including the last of them, *Alcina*.

Alcina was one of the peaks of his operatic achievement, completing a trio of superb operas (the others being *Orlando* and *Ariodante*) based on characters and episodes from Ludovico Ariosto's great magical epic poem of 1516, *Orlando furioso*. At the heart of *Alcina* is the sorceress Alcina, who lures men to her enchanted island, there to transform them cruelly into stones, trees or wild animals. A young knight named Ruggiero, however, has attracted her love, thereby escaping the fate of the others. He falls for her in turn, but in the end recognises the need to break free of her ensnaring powers.

The music in tonight's concert comes from four different places in the opera. The imposing Ouverture in French style (two sections, one slow and one fast) is linked to two short dances, here with no choreographic function. The sequence of courtly dances that comes next is from early in Act 1 when, as we view for the first time Alcina's enchanted palace, the stage directions inform us that 'Pages and Damsels, who bring in different Habits, other young Knights and Ladies, with Chaplets of Flowers on their Heads, form the Chorus and a Dance'. The group of *entrées*, or entries, is a dramatic sequence from the end of Act 2: Alcina, now abandoned by Ruggiero, has called on her spirits to prevent his escape, but they have ignored her. She departs in a rage, 'throwing away her Magick Wand, when divers spectres appearing, form a Dance'. It seems the kind of *ballet d'action* scene designed for Sallé's choreographic gift, yet the music was actually an unused dream sequence originally composed for Handel's previous opera, *Ariodante*. The *Tamburino* comes from the very end of the opera, where, as usual, we find general rejoicing.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764)

Dances *from* Dardanus

Ouverture

Air en rondeau

Menuet I – Menuet II

Tambourins

Sommeil

Chaconne

Rameau's operatic career began late with the tragedy *Hippolyte et Aricie*, which in 1733 shot the 50-year-old then known primarily as a keyboard composer and theorist to the height of operatic fame. Within six years he was on his fifth work for the stage, the five-act *Dardanus*, by which time he had won recognition as the leading French musical dramatist of the day. But although *Dardanus* ran for 26 performances following its premiere at the Paris Opéra in November 1739, it was considered only a partial success. Criticism fell not so much on the music as its plot, and the work was drastically revised for later revivals, after which opinion settled on widespread admiration for the work as one of its composer's finest dramatic inventions. More than one 18th-century admirer now saw fit to describe Rameau in admiring terms as 'the composer of *Dardanus*'.

The story is set in ancient Phrygia, and tells how Dardanus, son of Jupiter and founder of the royal house of Troy, comes to marry his enemy's daughter Iphise, who loves him but has initially been promised in a political marriage to Anténor, one of her father's military allies.

Dance had played a major part in French *tragédie lyrique* ever since the model was established the previous century by the great Jean-Baptiste Lully. Like his, Rameau's operas are full of set-piece *divertissements*, celebrations and colourful *entrées*, but whereas Lully's dances had been polished and courtly, occasionally dramatic but uniformly scored and rarely melodically memorable, Rameau's were boldly tuneful, harmonically exciting and shot through with dazzling glints of orchestral colour. They also became an even more vital part of the action. As one contemporary put it: 'no-one knew as well as he how to devise an expressive dance, how to summon up each in their turn a white procession of priestesses, a horde of demons, a tumult of warriors, or the innocent, flrid games of shepherds.'

Tonight's suite of excerpts starts with the Ouverture – French-style, of course. The Air en rondeau and pairs of Menuets and Tambourins are from Act 3, where they appear among celebrations of the impending union between Iphise and Anténor. The Air would have been familiar to many in the audience, as under the title *Les niais de Sologne* it had

already been the subject of a set of virtuoso harpsichord variations in Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin* of 1724. Two great Lullian French stage conventions complete the selection. The delicate *Sommeil*, or slumber piece, was a tradition that went back to Lully's *Atys* of 1676; Rameau uses it here to show Dardanus descending into a sleep from which he will wake, inspired by his dreams, to go out and win back Iphise. And the *Chaconne* – a triple-time dance comprising short repeated sections – was a common way to signal the end of the action, offering a last hurrah for the dancers (Marie Sallé among them, by the way) and celebrating the release of tension that follows the happy resolution of the plot.

interval 20 minutes

Francesco Geminiani (1687–1762)

The Enchanted Forest

Part I

- 1 Andante
- 2 Allegro moderato
- 3 Andante
- 4 Allegro moderato
- 5 Andante – Adagio
- 6 Allegro moderato
- 7 Andante spiritoso
- 8 Adagio
- 9 Allegro
- 10 Grave
- 11 Allegro moderato

Part II

- 12 –
- 13 –
- 14 Allegro moderato
- 15 Andante – Allegro – Andante – Adagio –
Affettuoso – Allegro – Allegro moderato
- 16 Andante
- 17 Allegro
- 18 Affettuoso

A year before Rameau's *Dardanus* took the stage, an Italian writer remarked that 'all Europe knows what a capacity and genius the French have for dancing, and how universally it is admired and followed'. Considering, too, the integral importance of dance in French dramatic music, it is no surprise that there developed a liking for entertainments expressed entirely in dance and mime with accompanying instrumental music. Such productions also often borrowed from opera the use of lavish costumes and designs, as well as cleverly devised stage transformations and other special effects. One of the main movers in this regard was the architect, stage designer, *trompe-l'oeil* innovator, architect and impresario Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni (1695–1766). Servandoni – a master of public spectacle who worked as a scene-painter on Handel's London operas in the 1720s, as a stage decorator at the Paris Opéra from 1724 to 1742, and designed the ill-fated wooden

‘Temple of Peace’ for the Royal Fireworks in Green Park in 1749 – devised a number of these pieces from the late 1730s onwards, including in 1754 a *pantomime* entitled *La forêt enchantée*, premiered on 31 March in Paris at the Théâtre du Palais des Tuileries. ‘All that is noblest and most surprising that the arts of painting, perspective and stage machinery can provide is deployed in this spectacle,’ wrote one reviewer.

For the music, Servandoni took the unusual step of commissioning a score not from a Frenchman, but from the Italian-born, London-based composer Francesco Geminiani. Geminiani was a virtuoso violinist, a composer of sonatas and *concerti grossi* very much in the mould of his teacher Arcangelo Corelli, and a writer of musical treatises, the most famous being *The Art of Playing the Violin* of 1751. His concertos were popular in Paris, and engaging him was perhaps an attempt by Servandoni to elevate to international level the status of the music from that of the anonymous, presumably local composers he had employed hitherto.

The story relates an episode from *Gerusalemme liberata*, Torquato Tasso’s epic poem of the the First Crusade, published in 1593, somewhat in imitation of *Orlando furioso*. The Christians, attacking Jerusalem, must cut wood from a nearby forest to build their siege engines, but a spell cast by a Saracen sorcerer has left every tree possessed by malign spirits, such that no Christian hero, however bold, dare enter. Eventually the knight Rinaldo attempts the task, and is surprised to find that the enchanted wood offers him birdsong, sweet-smelling flowers, and nymphs playing musical instruments. Eventually he comes across a myrtle, but as he raises his axe a vision appears of the sorceress Armida, whom he had previously loved. He hesitates to strike, but overcomes his reticence – as well as the transformation of the false Armida into a giant wielding 50 swords – to kill her and thus break the enchantment.

Geminiani had never written music for the stage, and in *La forest enchantée* stuck with what he knew, which is to say that he served up a sequence of short movements that – for the most part, and save in places for the addition of flutes, trumpets and horns to his usual string orchestra – could have come straight out of one of his existing concertos (at least one of them actually did). When the score was subsequently published in London in a concert version entitled *The Incharnted Forest*, he offered no explanation other than ‘expressive of the same ideas as the Poem of Tasso’, and the only passage that seems to respond evidently to the action is the fragmentary music and subsequent triumphal celebration towards the end that must have accompanied the story’s climactic encounter. Beyond that it is a hard task to say for sure which scenes individual movements were intended to evoke – though the veiled music of the opening is perhaps suggestive of enchantment, and pleasant aspects and dancing nymphs can presumably be heard elsewhere in the score.

It should be noted that Geminiani never admitted to any descriptive element in any of his concertos or sonatas, not even the occasional songbird or tempest. But this was not necessarily a problem for his listeners. Baroque music is well populated with instrumental concertos and suites where the descriptive element is clear and obvious (works such as Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* or Telemann's *Don Quichotte* come immediately to mind), but also with pieces whose programmatic titles appear to have little or no apparent connection with the music. When a composer like Bach could take music designed for a secular civic function and reposition it in a sacred cantata, or a violin sonata by Biber could serve on his say-so as a representation of the Crucifixion but then be adapted by another composer as a depiction of the victory of the Christians over the Turks at the Siege of Vienna, one has to concede that perhaps to the audiences of the time what mattered was how you heard the music, how you imagined it, and possibly how the players interpreted it. Tonight's concert, with its invisible action and consequent opportunities to let the imagination fly, is a good opportunity for us all to make that same effort.

Programme notes © Lindsay Kemp

Laurence Cummings

director & harpsichord



Photo: Robert Workman

Laurence Cummings is one of Britain's most exciting and versatile exponents of historical performance both as a conductor and a harpsichord player. Appointed AAM's Music Director from this season, he is also currently Artistic Director of the Internationale Händel-Festspiele Göttingen, Musical Director of the London Handel Festival and Music Director of Orquestra Barroca Casa da Música in Porto.

Frequently praised for his stylish and compelling performances in the opera house, his career has taken him across Europe where he has conducted productions at houses including Opernhaus Zurich (*Belshazzar*, *King Arthur*), Theater an der Wien (*Saul*), and Opera de Lyon (*Messiah*). In the UK he has been a regular at English

National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Garsington Opera, as well as conducting at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre (*Berenice* and *Alceste*), Opera North (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*), Buxton International Festival (*Tamerlano* and Mozart's *Lucio Silla*) and for Opera GlassWorks (*The Rake's Progress*).

Equally at home on the concert platform, he is regularly invited to conduct both period and modern instrument orchestras worldwide, including Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The English Concert, Handel and Haydn Society Boston, Croatian Baroque Orchestra, La Scintilla Zurich, and numerous international chamber and symphony orchestras. At home he has conducted the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Hallé Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Ulster Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

His recordings include discs with Emma Kirkby and Royal Academy of Music on BIS, Angelika Kirschlager and the Basel Chamber Orchestra for Sony BMG, Maurice Steger and The English Concert for Harmonia Mundi and Ruby Hughes and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment on Chandos, as well as a series of live opera and concert performances recorded at the Göttingen International Handel Festival and released on Accent. He has also released numerous solo harpsichord recital and chamber music recordings for Naxos.

He was an organ scholar at Christ Church Oxford where he graduated with first class honours. Until 2012 he was Head of Historical Performance at the Royal Academy of Music which led to both baroque and classical orchestras forming part of the established curriculum. He is now the William Crotch Professor of Historical Performance.

Josette Simon OBE

narrator

Josette Simon's prolific career encompasses extensive theatre, film and television credits. Her theatre work, primarily for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre and the Donmar Warehouse, includes productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Don Carlos*, *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Peer Gynt*, *Golden Girls*, *The Party*, *The War Plays*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *The Maids*, and *After the Fall* for which she won the Evening Standard, Plays and Players, Drama Circle, London Theatre Critics' Best Actress Awards, and Olivier Best Actress nomination.

She has been seen in numerous television dramas, including roles in long-running series such as *Death in Paradise*, *Merlin*, *New Tricks* and *Silent Witness*, and the award-winning *Broadchurch*. More recently she was seen in *The Mallorca Files* and *The Girlfriend Experience*. She stars in *Anatomy of a Scandal*, soon to be released. On the big screen, her most recent films include *The Witches*, *Sasha & Jo Are Getting Married* (short) and *Wonder Woman*. Her early roles included Dr Ramphel in Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* and Jo in *Milk and Honey* (1988) for which she won the Atlantic Film Festival, Canada, Creteil Film Festival and France Best Actress Awards, and Toronto Film Festival Best Actress nomination.

An unmistakable voice on the radio, productions include *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, *Words and Music*, *Mirandolina*, *Medea*, *Twelfth Night*, *Something Understood*, and readings on *Poetry Please* and *Book of the Week*. On the concert platform performances include *The Fairy Queen* (with The Sixteen, conducted by Harry Christophers) and *King Arthur* (with Les Arts Florissants, conducted by William Christie).

Josette was awarded the OBE for Services to Drama in 2000, an Honorary MA for Services to the Arts, and a Pioneers and Achievers Award for Services to the Arts. She was also made an Associate Artist of The Royal Shakespeare Company.



Photo: Michael Shelford

Nick Harrison

narrations (author)



Since receiving his Play & Screenwriting MA in 2014, Nick has had three plays successfully produced around London: *The Eighth Wonder Of The World* (Tunnel Shaft, The Brunel Museum); *The Devil To Pay On Brook* (Handel House) and *Regarding X* (The Royal Vauxhall Tavern).

In 2019, Nick was one of ten selected from hundreds to attend a specially curated open day for under-represented screenwriters at renowned literary agency, David Higham Associates. Nick has been longlisted for this year's international Page Turner Screenplay Award.

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Associate Ensemble at the Barbican Centre, London

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