LAWO
CLASSICS
GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL
NEUN DEUTSCHE ARIEN
DANIEL SÆTHER
ENSEMBLE C4

The German composer Georg Friedrich Händel was born in Halle in 1685. In 1703, he moved to Hamburg, where he played the violin and later the harpsichord at the Oper am Gänsemarkt, Germany's first public opera house. Three years later he would embark on a four-year trip to Italy, meeting preeminent Italian composers such as Arcangelo Corelli, Allesandro Scarlatti and Domenico Scarlatti. The Italians greatly admired this young organ and harpsichord virtuoso whom they nicknamed *il sassone* ("the Saxon"). It was not merely his playing but also his compositional style that caught their attention, a so-called "mixed style" - not purely Italian, but an amalgam of Italian, French and German styles. A feature of Händel's compositional style was his propensity to recycle a number of themes both from other people's works and from his own, a modus operandi commonly referred to among Händel researchers as *borrowings.* After 1712 he relocated permanently to England, where he first composed Italian operas, and then from the 1740s English oratorios. When he passed away in London in 1759, he had been an English citizen for 32 years.

*Nine German Arias* (HWV 202–210) are somewhat out of the ordinary flowers in Händel's lush compositional bouquet. Firstly, the collection is a rare example of him composing to lyrics in his mother tongue. (Italian, Latin and English otherwise completely dominate his vocal music.) Secondly, the arias are composed with unusual poetic *akkuratesse* or precision, with a consummate balance between words and tones. (More on the poet Brockes later).

Thirdly, the composer never looks to arouse overwhelming emotions in the listener, as is often the aim of other baroque music. He appeals as much to our reason as to our emotions. The ethics that are expressed in the poetry gain their aesthetic consequence in Händel's music.

So how then can the *Nine German Arias* be described? The collection consists of nine individual arias for vocalist, obligato melody instrument and *basso continuo,* but are notable for also being shrouded in mystery. The arias are handed own in the form of an undated composition score written in Händel's own hand, and with several corrections of varying degrees of illegibility. They were not published during Händel's lifetime. The first printed edition did not appear until 1921, and it was in that context that the modern numbering system and modern work title *Neun deutsche Arien* ("Nine German Arias") were introduced.

Nor had Händel specified which singing voice or melodic instrument he specifically had in mind. Modern performance convention nevertheless dictates the use of soprano, with alternating violin, oboe and flute (traverso or recorder), depending on the design of the melody part and the prevailing *affect* in each individual aria. As so often in Baroque music, it is up to the performers to decide on the instrumentation. In Ensemble C4's recording, the arias are sung by the countertenor, with alternating recorder, violin and viola da gamba. The poems are in a three-part A-B-A form, which would suggest da capo arias, the predominant form of arias in 18th-century Italian cantatas and operas. Händel structures all of his arias here in da capo form, with one notable exception, namely the two-part aria no. 8, *In den angemengen Büschen.* He most probably modelled the arias on his own secular, Italian solo cantatas, of which he wrote over 70 pieces. Indeed, the main themes in two of the German arias are taken from his cantatas, in what could be called a case of self-borrowing: No. 1, *Künft'ger Zeiten eitler Kummer,* has its theme from the cantata *La bianca rosa* (HWV 160c), while No. *9, Flammende Rose* derives from the cantata *Sento là che ristretto* (HWV 161a–c). There are also similarities with his opera arias, namely the melody of aria No. 7, *Die ihr aus dunklen Grüften,* which is very akin to that of the aria *Forte e lieto a morte andrei* from *Tamerlano* (HWV 18).

The opera *Tamerlano* from 1724 also brings to mind another aspect of *Neun deutsche Arien,* namely the dating. We cannot be exactly sure when this collection of arias was written, or what the reason was. Was it a commissioned work? Was it intended for a specific performance? Or is this something that Händel composed on his own initiative? Research today would suggest that the pieces were most likely composed around 1725, with the reason being that the earliest possible year it could be is 1724, based on the type of manuscript they were written on, as well on the melodic-thematic similarity to opera arias in *Giulio Cesare, Tamerlano* and *Rodelinda* from that year. The latest it could be is 1727, because in that year a man of letters in Hamburg wrote the following: "The world-famous virtuoso, Herr Hendel [sic], has set them [Brockes' poems] to music in quite an extraordinary way". When it comes to his motivation for the compositions, research has provided fewer answers. It is in itself startling that Händel, who at this time was a well-established opera composer in London, would bother to write German arias at all. The works *may* have originated from the poet himself, in view of the performance in Hamburg, and the fact that he is the only one to have described a contemporaneous performance of the arias.

What cannot be denied in any case is that Händel took the poetry seriously. The arias are clearly not hastily assembled commissioned works conveniently re-using previous musical material (which Händel could possibly be accused of in other contexts). On the contrary, they rank among his most thorough and delicate vocal compositions. Stylistically they are genuinely modern for their time, as they meet all the requirements for the naturalness, the close relationship between music and text, as well as their elegance, all of which the critics and music theorists of the time demanded.

The texts, written by the aforementioned Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680–1747), are also genuinely modern. Brockes belonged to a wealthy patrician family in Hamburg and was one of Germany's most well-known and prolific poets in the first half of the 18th century. Brockes may well have already met Händel when he was studying law in Hän-

del's hometown of Halle, from 1700 to 1702, as we do know that the poet held weekly house concerts for students. After his *grand tour* through Europe, Brockes settled down in his hometown of Hamburg, where he became a senator. He became somewhat of an overnight sensation in 1712 after publishing his first published poem *Jesus, Suffering and Dying for the Sins of the World.* This passion oratorio, widely referred to as the "Brockes-Passion", was set to music by a number of German composers, including Händel himself in 1719. Brockes' magnum opus is nevertheless *Earthly Pleasure in God,* an epic poem cycle published in nine volumes between 1721 and 1748, and it is from this collection that the *Nine German Arias* are taken. Brockes broke with the conventions of baroque poetry of the seventeenth century by being the first German writer to treat nature as a principal subject, with poems depicting "divine nature" and the pleasure man derives from it. This poetry must be understood in the context of discourse around theology and poetics at the time. For Brockes, the wonders of creation are *themselves* proof of God's existence.

The extended title of this poetry collection is *Earthly Pleasure in God, consisting of Physical and Moral Poems.* What makes this a bona fide Age of Enlightenment work is that the author here tries to justify faith in reason, as opposed to revelation. Aria No. 9, *Rose aflame, ornament of the earth,* can serve as an example of the "physical" as proof of God. Here we meet the poet in an enchanting garden with beautiful roses. Full of wonder at the creation, he looks around and states: "Eyes that see your excellence/ must, astonished at your grace, / confess that a finger of God made you.". The "moral" mentioned in the title of the collection is expressed in Aria no. 7, *You who from dark caves.* The text is rich in baroque contrasts - between high and low, light and dark, right and wrong. Beware those who spend their time here on earth digging "for the idle treasures of Mammon", when they should rather raise their heads and encounter the exquisite treasures found in the light of the day! The poet concludes that although these joys are not material, they are "not for counting and shutting in chests", and for that reason are no less valuable.

This seventh aria also contains a clear stylistic departure from the aria collection, which is generally characterised by its mildly harmonic and melodic tonality. However at the beginning of part B, an example of the negative form appears in the text: "Do not say: it is only colour and shining". This is indeed the only time Händel implements a strict imitation between instrument and singing voice, with dissonant harmonics throughout. Even though this part could be categorised as "old-fashioned" counterpoint, Händel deliberately breaks the classical rules of contrapuntal writing. Expressing this negative notion from the text through music is an example of his shrewdness as a composer.

How then does one summarise the main features of Händel's musical adaptation of Brockes' moral nature poems? Compared to the formal, more complex and technically virtuosic opera arias of the same period, it is clear that the composer here is striving for a sense of simple clarity. He generally eschews long melismas (many notes sung on one syllable), and repetitions of single words are rare. Contrapuntal parts are, notwithstanding the example above, effectively absent. All of the arias, with the exception of No. 4, open conventionally with an instrumental *ritornello* before the singer begins, and indeed they also all end with *ritornelli*. In order to make the presentation of the text as clear and comprehensible as possible, Händel leads in with the entire text of the A sections uninterrupted, before dividing up the lines of the verses. Conversely, the B parts are musically condensed, with more fragmentation of the text. Aria No. 6, *Meine Seele hört im Sehen* (My soul hears by sight), stands out in terms of its treatment of the lyrics. This is a so-called "Devisenarie", a German term also used in English. Here the singer first makes a "statement" in the form of the aria's first verse line, followed by a short instrumental interlude. Only after this does the main part of the aria begin. The previously mentioned Aria no. 9, *Rose aflame* stands out for a couple of reasons, namely that the melody instrument is tacit throughout the whole B section, and the aria contains the collection's longest melisma. This is a device that Händel generally preferred to steer clear of in the *Nine German Arias,* but in the verse line "Bewitching splendour of shining gardens!" he obviously couldn't help himself. The syllable "zau" in the word "bezaubernde" (bewitching) is adorned with as many as 48 notes in a row, which is almost twice as many notes as he had used to present the entire text of the A section.

The piece that concludes Ensemble C4's recording is by the Venetian Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), whose music was probably played more over Europe than any other contemporary composer. An outstanding violin virtuoso, Vivaldi set new technical standards for violin playing, and with his *concerti,* published by major publishing houses in Amsterdam, he laid the foundations for the instrumental concertos of the Baroque era. His music was particularly widespread in Germany, where it formed part of the standard repertoire at the court in Dresden. Johann Sebastian Bach also transcribed several of his concertos for keyboard.

Vivaldi's Op. 1, *Suonate da camera a trè* (RV 63), consists of 12 trio sonatas for two violins and basso continuo. The collection was probably written in 1703, the same year that Vivaldi was ordained a priest, and published in Venice two years later. The twelfth sonata is a variation set on the popular dance "La Follia", which is performed by Ensemble C4 with the melodic instruments recorder and violin. The piece is unique in Vivaldi's substantial musical output. This is not only the earliest of his twenty-two known instrumental variation sets. It is also his only self-standing variation set, i.e., one which is not formed as a single movement as part of a larger composition, but which in itself constitutes an independent work.

**– Sjur Haga Bringeland**
(translated by Paul Holden)

## NEUN DEUTSCHE ARIEN

**Künft'ger Zeiten eitler Kummer**
Stört nicht unsern sanften Schlummer;
Ehrgeiz hat uns nie besiegt.
Mit dem unbesorgten Leben,
das der Schöpfer uns gegeben,
Sind wir ruhig und vergnügt.

***Vain concerns for the future***
*Do not disturb our gentle slumber,*
*Ambition has never vanquished us.*
*With the carefree life*
*The Creator has given us*
*We are content and satisfied.*

**Das zitternde Glänzen der spielenden Wellen**
versilbert das Ufer, beperlet den Strand.
Die rauschenden Flüsse, die sprudelnden Quellen
bereichern, befruchten, erfrischen das Land
und machen in tausend vergnügenden Fällen
die Güte des herrlichen Schöpfers bekannt.

***The shimmering gleam of dancing waves***
*Silvers the shore, brings pearls to the sand.*
*Rushing rivers bubbling springs*
*Make the land rich, fertile and fresh,*
*And in a thousand delightful ways*
*Reveal our glorious Creator's goodness.*

**Süsser Blumen Ambraflocken,**
euer Silber soll mich locken,
dem zum Ruhm, der euch gemacht.
Da ihr fallt, will ich mich schwingen
himmelwärts, und den besingen
der die Welt hervorgebracht.

***You amber petals of sweet flowers,***
*Your silver sheen attracts me*
*To Him who, to His glory created you.*
*As your petals fall, I shall soar*
*Heavenwards, praising Him*
*Who brought forth the world.*

**Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle**
ruhiger Gelassenheit!
Selbst die Seele wird erfreut,
wenn ich mir nach dieser Zeit
arbeitsamer Eitelkeit
jene Ruh' vor Augen stelle,
die uns ewig ist bereit.

***Sweet quiet, gentle source***
*Of peaceful serenity I*
*Even my soul rejoices*
*When I, after all this time*
*Of futile work)*
*Contemplate the peace*
*That awaits us for eternity.*

**Singe, Seele, Gott zum Preise,**
der auf solche weise Weise
alle Welt so herrlich schmückt.
Der uns durchs Gehör erquickt,
Der uns durchs Gesicht entzückt,
Wenn er Bäum‘ und Feld beblümet,
Sei gepreiset, sei gerühmet!

***Sing, my soul in praise of God,***
*Who in so wise a manner*
*Makes all the world so beautiful.*
*Let Him who delights our ears)*
*Let Him who enchants our eyes*
*When He brings trees and fields into bloom,*
*Be praised and magnified!*

**Meine Seele hört im Sehen,**
wie den Schöpfer zu erhöhen,
alles jauchzet, alles lacht.
Höret nur,
Des erblüh'ndend Frühlings Pracht
ist die Sprache der Natur,
die sie deutlich durchs Gesicht,
allenthalben mit uns spricht.

***My soul hears, through seeing,***
*How all things rejoice and laugh*
*To magnify the Creator.*
*Hark! The Spring's blossoming splendour*
*The blossoming splendour of the spring*
*Is the language of nature*
*Which, through sight*
*Speaks clearly to us everywhere.*

**Die ihr aus dunklen Grüften**
den eitlen Mammon grabt,
seht, was ihr hier in Lüften
für reiche Schätze habt.
Sprecht nicht: es ist nur Farb und Schein.
man zählt und schließt es
nicht im Kasten ein

***You who from dark vaults***
*Dig out useless mammon,*
*Behold what riches await you*
*Here in the open air.*
*Do not say: it's merely light and colour.*
*It cannot be counted and*
*locked up in coffers.*

**In den angenehmen Büschen,**
wo sich Licht und Schatten mischen,
suchet sich in stiller Lust,
Aug‘ und Herze zu erfrischen.
Dann erhebt sich in der Brust
mein zufriedenes Gemüte,
Und lobsingt des Schöpfers Güte.

***In these pleasant bushes***
*Where light and shade intermingle,*
*Our eyes and hearts strive to refresh*
*Themselves in silent joy.*
*My contented soul*
*Is then uplifted*
*And praises the Creator's goodness.*

**Flammende Rose, Zierde der Erden,**
glänzender Gärten bezaubernde Pracht!
Augen, die deine Vortrefflichkeit sehen,
müssen, vor Anmut erstaunend, gestehen,
dass dich ein göttlicher Finger gemacht.

***Flaming rose, earth's adornment***
*Bewitching splendour of gleaming gardens!*
*Eyes which behold your excellence*
*Must, amazed at such loveliness, confess*
*That a divine finger created you.*

BARTHOLD HEINRICH BROCKES
(1680-1747)

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY
RICHARD STOKES

**Ensemble C4** is a Norwegian baroque ensemble comprising of three permanent members:

Daniel Sagstuen Sæther, countertenor
Caroline Eidsten Dahl, recorder
Ingrid Økland, baroque violin

Ensemble C4 is based in Oslo and works primarily in Norway. With its association with several freelance musicians, the ensemble remains flexible in both its musical expression and size. Since 2015, it has presented several new concert programmes per year and has consequently built up a large repertoire of music taken from the period from approximately 1575 till 1800.

With extensive concert experience and great synergy, the ensemble has developed a playful and virtuosic style that thrills audiences and has received critical acclaim. *Neun deutsche Arien* is the ensemble's first CD release.

**Countertenor Daniel Sæther** studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Academy in Den Haag. He has performed as a countertenor in Norway and abroad since 2011 with a wide-ranging repertoire from early music to contemporary. From 2018–2020 he was awarded the Norwegian government grant *Statens Arbeidsstipend* to work with contemporary music for countertenor on baroque instruments and document this in concerts and recordings. In the summer of 2023, Daniel featured as *Cesar* in the Trygve Brøske's contemporary opera *Kommandanten* held at the Oscarsborg open air Opera.

Sæther is a founding member of *Ensemble Freithoff* and *Christian IV Consort* (now known as *Ensemble C4*), both of which perform chamber music in Norway with a focus on Renaissance and Baroque music.

In 2020, Sæther released the album *Unexpected Songs* (LWC1204) for which he was nominated as Singer of the Year at the German Opus Klassik awards in 2021. His second solo album in 2022 *Vintersong* (LWC1236) achieved nominations in four categories.

**Caroline Eidsten Dahl (recorder)** is one of Norway's most active recorder players and enjoys playing both old and new music with her different ensembles. She has a busy touring schedule, performing regularly throughout Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, both as a chamber musician and a soloist. Caroline has until now released four solo-CDs on LAWO Classics, each to high acclaim. In 2023, Caroline received the three-year Norwegian Government Grant for Artists.

**Ingrid Økland (violin)** is a baroque violinist, and also plays viola d'amore and baroque viola. She has been awarded the Norwegian Government Grant for Artists for 2023-25. Ingrid has studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music, the University of Stavanger, the Royal Danish Music Conservatory as well as the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg. She has studied baroque violin with several notable teachers such as Antoinette Lohmann, Lucy van Dael and Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen-Pilch. She performs regularly with Oslo based ensemble *Barokkanerne*, is chairwoman of the *Barokk-kooperativet* network, and is a violinist with *Ensemble C4,* with whom she is an active chamber musician on Oslo's early music scene.

**Kate Hearne (cello)** is an award-winning musician, equally at home on both Baroque cello and recorder. She plays with an array of different ensembles throughout Europe, performing everything from baroque to contemporary music. She is especially interested in new meetings and artistic collaborations, and the result this fusion of different genres brings. She is known for her versatility as a performer and love of storytelling through music and is currently working on several innovative projects for babies, children, and young people. She lives with her family in Sweden's Northernmost town, Kiruna.

**Henrikke G. Rynning (viola da gamba)** studied cello at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo. She subsequently took a Bachelor's then Master's degree in Baroque Cello at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague and the Conservatory of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, followed by a master's degree at the Haute Ecole de Musique de Genève in Switzerland, majoring in viola da gamba. Henrikke is active as both a cellist and a gambist, and collaborates with a number of ensembles both in Norway and in Europe. She has performed in several productions at the Norwegian Opera & Ballet in Oslo, the Opéra Garnier in Paris, the operas of Amsterdam, Geneva and Versailles, as well as at Carnegie Hall with the ensemble *Cappella Mediterranea.*

**Jadran Duncomb (baroque lute / theorbo)** is a lutenist from Oslo. After studying guitar at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo as well as at the Royal College of Music, he decided to specialise in lute with Rolf Lislevand in Trossingen, Germany and plays regularly as a soloist and chamber musician around the world. His solo releases with the French label Audax Records have received several accolades, including the Diapason D'Or for *Bach – Works for lute.* He is an artistic director with Oslo-based period instrument ensemble *Barokkanerne*.

**Christian Kjos (harpsichord/organ)** studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music with Knut Johannessen as well as at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland with Jesper Christensen. Since his days as a student he has worked on a freelance basis as a harpsichordist and continuo player in several of the country's leading ensembles and orchestras. For a number of years Christian has played an intrinsic role on the artistic council of Oslo-based period instrument ensemble *Barokkanerne*. He has played with Concerto Copenhagen (CoCo) under the direction of baroque oboist Alfredo Bernardin on several occasions, as well as under the orchestra's permanent artistic director, harpsichordist Lars Ulrik Mortensen. Christian received a Doctorate from the Norwegian Academy of Music with his artistic research project *Releasing the 'Loudie' – harpsichord accompaniment in G. F. Händel's continuo cantatas,* and he has been awarded the Norwegian Government Grant for Artists for the period 2022–2024.

## GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL (1685–1759)

**Neun deutsche Arien, HWV 202-210**

01 I. Künft'ger Zeiten eitler Kummer, HWV 202__06:28
02 II. Das zitternde Glänzen der spielenden Wellen, HWV 203__05:08
03 III. Süßer Blumen Ambraflocken, HWV 204__06:48
04 IV. Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle, HWV 205__05:20
05 V. Singe, Seele, Gott zum Preise, HWV 206__04:29
06 VI. Meine Seele hört im Sehen, HWV 207__05:21
07 VII. Die ihr aus dunklen Grüften, HWV 208__05:20
08 VIII. In den angenehmen Büschen, HWV 209__03:26
09 IX. Flammende Rose, Zierde der Erden, HWV 210__05:07

## ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)

**Trio Sonata in G minor, RV 63**
**Transposed and adapted for treble recorder and violin**

10 I. Adagio__00:47
11 II. Andante__00:27
12 III. Allegro__02:14
13 IV. Adagio__00:49
14 V. Vivace – Allegro – Larghetto__01:35
15 VI. Allegro__00:43
16 VII. Adagio__00:47
17 VIII. Allegro__01:58


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