

J.F. FASCH: QUARTETS AND CONCERTOS

ENSEMBLE MARSYAS

Peter Whelan **bassoon**
Pamela Thorby **recorder**



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Heartfelt thanks to Brian Clark at Prima La Musica for preparing the editions and for his invaluable guidance and generous advice during this project. Thanks also to Johannes Pausch for his edition of the Recorder Concerto.

Instruments

Oboes by Pau Orriols (La Geltrú, 2006) after T. Stanesby (London, c.1730).

Bassoon by Peter de Koningh (Hall, 2006) after J.H. Eichentopf (Leipzig, c.1720).

Alto recorder in F by Luca de Paolis after Denner.

Recorded at Wigmore Hall, London, UK, 9-11 August 2013

Produced and engineered by Philip Hobbs

Post-production by Julia Thomas

Design by gmtoucari.com

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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Quartet in B-flat major,
FWV N:B2

1. Andante.....2:17
2. Allegro.....2:22
3. Largo..... 1:51
4. Allegro.....3:48

Horn Quartet in F major,
FWV N:F3

5. Andante.....0:57
6. Allegro.....2:15
7. Andante..... 1:39
8. Allegro.....2:08

Quartet in G minor,
FWV N:g2

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Bassoon Concerto in C major,
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Recorder Quartet in B-flat major,
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24. Allegro.....1:45
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Quartet in D minor,
FWV N:d2

27. Largo.....2:05
28. Allegro.....2:06
29. Largo.....1:44
30. Allegro.....1:50

Total Running Time: 72 minutes

Although Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758) is now a fairly minor figure in the history of music, during his own lifetime his works were highly treasured and actively sought after. Of the pieces on the present recording, none survives in what remains of the court library of Anhalt-Zerbst, where Fasch worked as Kapellmeister for thirty-six years but rather they are mostly found in the major repositories of eighteenth-century music, Dresden and Darmstadt. As we shall see, Fasch had direct contact with both of these places and he seems to have established a musical exchange network which, while keeping him up to date with the latest musical fashions, also helped increase the popularity of his own pieces.

Fasch was born into a family of lawyers and clerics. His father died when he was only eleven years old. According to an autobiography published in 1757 (the year before his death), he was heard singing by a relative who had connections with the court at Weissenfels and young Fasch was recruited into the musical ensemble there. Not long after, he became one of Johann Kuhnau's first pupils at St Thomas, Leipzig and later read law at university. This, of course, was not unusual for musicians of the period, with families insisting that their children find a profession for life. It is unknown who financed Fasch's studies. While in Leipzig, he became involved in what we would today call a 'semi-professional' musical group (then known as Collegium Musicum) which gathered socially and played the latest music. He later founded a second such group in the city, comprising mainly university students. To his delight, when he copied out parts for an overture suite which he had composed but headed with Telemann's name, none of the musicians guessed the truth. Soon this group was providing music for university events and Fasch was commissioned to provide works, despite his own protestations that he lacked even basic knowledge of compositional techniques. In 1711, he wrote an opera for the prestigious Peter-Paul Fair in Naumburg.

At this point in his career, Fasch wanted to follow his Leipzig friends Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel and Johann David Heinichen by travelling to Italy which was then considered the 'go to' destination for hopeful young musicians. The Italians were masters of the virtuoso concerto and, above all, opera. Unfortunately for Fasch, the Duke of Gotha was not prepared to pay for such a venture, but he did give the young composer some money and letters of recommendation to travel to other German courts. Bitterly disappointed (at least, according to the autobiography), Fasch came up with a convincing plan B; he set out to visit his former prefect from St Thomas, Christoph Graupner, who had by then become Kapellmeister at the court of Hessen-Darmstadt, taking in as many of the courts with musical establishments on the way as he could. He spent more than three months with Graupner, studying composition and, presumably, playing violin in the court ensemble (he even wrote out some violin parts for his teacher's church cantatas).

After several years employed in administrative roles (though with some musical activity), the next important station in Fasch's career was Prague, where he was employed as a composer by Count Wenzel Morzin, whose ensemble included elite musicians from that part of the world. Their repertoire included the latest Italian works, including Vivaldi's Op. 8 set (featuring the famous 'Four Seasons'). Indeed, the two years he spent in Prague could in some ways be considered the trip to Italy that Fasch never realized; the Morzin financial ledgers are full of payments to his agents south of the Alps for the procurement of the newest music.

In 1722, Fasch's life changed. His friend, Stölzel (who had also worked in Prague), wrote from Gotha to tell him that the position of Kapellmeister at the neighbouring court of Anhalt-Zerbst was vacant. He arrived to take up the job in late September that year. Not long afterwards, news reached

him that Johann Kuhnau (who had been in charge of music in Leipzig since Fasch's school days) had died; Fasch was encouraged by a member of the city council to apply for the position. There were other contenders for the job, not least the most famous composer of the day, Telemann and Fasch's former mentor, Graupner. Both were offered the job, but their current employers persuaded them not to accept by offering improved salaries and conditions. Of the remaining candidates, Fasch appears to have been the favourite, but he was not prepared to fulfil the requirement to teach Latin and seems to have withdrawn. As is well known, the position was eventually offered to Johann Sebastian Bach (more famous in those days as an organist than a composer).

Fasch remained (not altogether happily, it must be said – much of his responsibilities involved writing several cantatas per week and he did not share the court's religious views) in Zerst until his death in December 1758. Court politics aside, it seems that Fasch was appreciated by his employers; in the mid-1720s they paid the equivalent of his salary to the Dresden court in order that Fasch could spend several months there to keep abreast of the latest musical developments. We know from markings on Fasch's autograph scores that Heinichen used his masses and psalm settings in services in the Saxon capital (as well as notating timings and the general reception of the works, he also re-wrote passages – sometimes extensively – suggesting that Fasch may have been taking lessons in composition). Surviving sources in Dresden's famed Schranck II manuscripts collection also prove that Fasch took (or later sent) music to his colleague, the violinist Pisendel, who had performing materials written out by the court copyists. Indeed, a letter was published in a 1728 musical journal in which Fasch proposed the establishment of a music exchange network; specifically, he thought the sharing of complete sets of cantatas for the church year would give chapel masters more time for their other composing duties, but the scheme – which does seem to have been

realized – might also have included other works before the publishing house Breitkopf and Härtel began selling music through their catalogues. It is surely no coincidence that the majority of Fasch's surviving music is located in Darmstadt and Dresden.

It has often been suggested that the quartets Fasch wrote for two oboes, obbligato bassoon and continuo must have been written for a specific ensemble (or, at least, a specific bassoonist, so virtuosic are some of the lines) but no evidence has been found thus far to corroborate such a theory. Of course, five of Jan Dismas Zelenka's sonatas are for the same line-up, so perhaps Dresden suggests itself as the most likely candidate. This theory is supported by the fact that three of the four Quartets recorded here (in B-flat major, F major and G minor) survive uniquely as sets of performance materials in the Dresden collection, two of the three with markings by Pisendel. There are sources for the Quartet in D minor in both Darmstadt and Dresden. Of the four, the two minor key works are the most virtuosic in conception; the bassoonist in particular is severely stretched. They are, perhaps coincidentally, the most musically intense of all the works recorded here with the overlapping rising arpeggios and sighs at the beginning of the G minor and the whirlwind bassoon figure in the last movement of the D minor being especially effective. The major key works, in contrast, seem more 'gallant'; graceful melodies and gently undulating harmonies lend the music a more modern feel. One could almost say that while the minor key Quartets really showcase the virtuosity of the performers, in some ways the major key works might have been designed as background music for a court dinner.

The four-movement Quartet in B-flat major for recorder, oboe, violin and continuo is among one of Fasch's most popular works. From the imitative opening which neatly introduces each of the instruments in turn, through to

the G minor second 'Largo' with its accented chromatic lines and senza basso passages, there are catchy tunes and contrapuntal ingenuity in equal measure. The last movement in particular demands virtuosity from all concerned.

It seems likely that the Quartet in F major for horn, oboe, violin and continuo might have been inspired by similar works by Stölzel; the Hofkapelle library in Dresden includes a set of eight such works (copied in pairs). It might seem strange to combine a horn with oboe and violin, but in fact the natural horn was renowned as much for the suave quality of its sound as for its ability to carry across the hunting field.

Perhaps the least Baroque of the works on this programme, the Bassoon Concerto in C major comprises three movements. The central 'Largo' is framed by an 'Allegro' on either side, each of whose themes involve scales, arpeggios and trills. Fasch must have been aware of the virtuosic potential of the bassoon at least since his time in Prague; Vivaldi sent Count Morzin scores of concertos for the instrument and his band included the composer Antonín Reichenauer who also wrote solos for bassoon. The surviving materials for this particular work were written in the 1730s or 1740s by Graupner (further evidence of the constant circulation of manuscripts).

The Concerto in F major for recorder and strings is among the latest additions to the catalogue of Fasch's works. It survives as a set of manuscript parts in the portion of the Harrach Collection (named after a wealthy family with a residence in Vienna and estates in the Czech Republic) that is in the New York Public Library, where until only a few years ago it was identified as a 'Concerto in D minor by Rasch'. The parts were oddly bound and the outside of the viola part was uppermost; it was the only part with what looked like a composer's name written on it, and the presence of C-sharps suggested that

the music was in D minor. Only when that portion of the collection came under closer scrutiny did the true identity of the piece – which is full of characteristic Fasch-isms – become confirmed. An extremely virtuosic work, the second of the three movements is in the same dramatic quasi-recitative style as the same movement of the Bassoon Concerto.

In his later years, Fasch struggled with debt; the source of it has not yet been identified, but correspondence with the Zerbst Church Charitable Association shows that he was anxious that his surviving children (among them Carl Fasch, who was C.P. E. Bach's colleague at the court of Frederick the Great in Berlin and who would establish the first great choral society in Germany, the Berlin Sing-Akademie) should not bear the burdens of his financial woes. Invariably his ducal employer approved each of the loans in glowing terms of Fasch's loyal service, showing how much the man and his music were appreciated in his own lifetime. This selection of his finest chamber music demonstrates why.

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ENSEMBLE MARSYAS

Josep Domènech Lafont & Molly Marsh **oboe**

Alec Frank-Gemmill **horn**

Sophie Gent & Huw Daniel **violin**

Alfonso Leal del Ojo Chamorro **viola**

Sarah McMahon **cello**

Thomas Dunford **theorbo**

Philippe Grisvard **harpichord**

Formed to explore the virtuoso wind music from the eighteenth century, the Edinburgh based Ensemble Marsyas counts amongst its members some of the finest historical instrumentalists working in Europe today. Having first met whilst studying in Basel and performing with the European Union Baroque Orchestra, the core members of the ensemble went on to win first prize and audience prize at the 2007 Brugge International Competition playing the music of Zelenka. Each member has since established themselves at the forefront of their profession and have individually been awarded accolades by both critics and the recording industry alike. Their debut recording of Zelenka's sonatas (Linn) was awarded Pizzicato's Supersonic Award and was named 'Chamber Choice' by BBC Music Magazine.

Ensemble Marsyas is in demand at prestigious festivals across Europe and future plans include appearances at the Wigmore Hall, Festival di Musica Antica delle Camelie (Ticino, Switzerland) and East Neuk Festival with fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout, as well as a continued collaboration with Gramophone Magazine's 'Label of the Year', Linn.



Photography by Dawid Barbour



PETER WHELAN BASSOON

Principal bassoon with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra since 2008, Peter Whelan was described by the Philadelphia Enquirer as 'an absolute master of fleet facility with a solidly plush tone of wondrous immediacy'. Equally at home on modern and historical instruments, Whelan performs diverse repertoire spanning over four centuries and is in constant demand as a soloist and chamber musician. He has received glowing responses from audiences and critics across the globe, including a Gramophone Award for his recording of the Vivaldi Bassoon Concertos with La Serenissima.

As a concerto soloist, Whelan has performed in many of Europe's most prestigious venues, including the Musikverein (Vienna), Lingotto (Turin), St John's Smith Square (Lufthansa Festival) and the Cadogan and Wigmore Halls. He has recorded the Weber Bassoon Concerto with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and a solo disc of mixed bassoon repertoire with Ensemble Marsyas, both for Linn. His recording of Mozart's Bassoon Concerto with Arcangelo will be released on the Hyperion label in 2015.

In addition to being the founder and artistic director of Ensemble Marsyas, Whelan has also collaborated with the Belcea Quartet, London Winds, Robert Levin, Anthony Marwood and Monica Huggett, and performed with Tori Amos on her album *Night of Hunters* (Deutsche Gramophone). Whelan has also worked with many of Europe's finest orchestras and directors including the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (Sir Simon Rattle), London Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra, the English Baroque Soloists (Sir John Eliot Gardiner), Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Les Musiciens du Louvre and Oper Zürich.

Whelan is Professor of Baroque bassoon at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and gives masterclasses at conservatories across the UK and Europe.

PAMELA THORBY RECORDER

Described by BBC Radio 3 as 'the queen of the recorder', Pamela Thorby is unique amongst recorder players in the breadth and variety of her work. Thorby's ability to assimilate many styles of music and her love of improvisation have led to work with leading jazz, folk and pop artists and her stylish virtuosity can be heard on many film soundtracks and numerous recordings of music ranging from the Medieval period to the present day. Thorby was the driving force behind the Palladian Ensemble with whom she recorded ten acclaimed albums for Linn.

She has toured internationally as a concerto soloist, chamber musician and orchestral principal, most recently with the Dunedin Consort, English Concert, Theatre of the Ayre, Concerto Caledonia and Brecon Baroque.

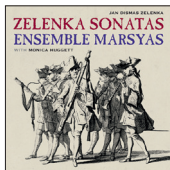
Recent recordings include J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos with John Butt's Dunedin Consort (Linn), *Deo gracias Anglia* (Medieval English carols) with Alamire, Purcell's *Revenge* with Concerto Caledonia (bringing together improvisers and songwriters from diverse musical backgrounds under the direction of David McGuinness) and an appearance as soloist with virtuoso bassoonist Peter Whelan on La Serenissima's recording of Vivaldi Concertos entitled *Gods, Emperors and Angels*.

Through her teaching at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Thorby has been at the forefront of raising standards and expectations for the recorder in the UK over the last twenty years. She is Professor of Recorder at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Photography by Jim Poyner



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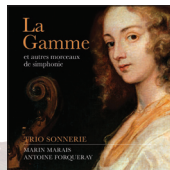
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Zelenka: Sonatas



**Peter Whelan
& Ensemble Marsyas**
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Weber: Wind Concertos



Trio Sonnerie
La Gamme



**Peter Whelan,
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