

## Nicola Matteis c. 1650- c. 1714.

### Passagio Rotto

Very little is known about Matteis' early life other than he was probably born in Naples around 1650 and came to England at the beginning of 1670.

His fame gradually grew as a virtuoso violinist and he was credited as changing the English taste for violin playing from the French style, elaborate and highly ornamented, to the newer more lyrical, expressive Italian style.

He published a substantial amount of music, primarily instrumental, under the title 'Ayres for the violin' as well as a few songs.

His compositions have been described as 'Lively, well-crafted and expressive'.

He gave precise instructions in the prefaces to his published music, knowing that many of his customers would be amateurs, including bowing, explanation of ornaments and tempo markings.

These have proved to be a valuable resource to scholars in the reconstruction of the performance practice of the time.

He married a wealthy widow in 1700, with whom he had a son also called Nicola, and in 1714 bought a manor in Norfolk in an attempt to escape the demands of living in London.

He lived a life of luxury, but according to the contemporary diarist Roger North, 'an excess of pleasures threw him into a dropsy, and so he became poor. And dyed miserable!'

Passagio Rotto (broken passages) comes from The Second Part of Ayres for the Violin.

## Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750

### Sonata for violin and continuo in E minor BWV 1023

*I. (no tempo indication) II. Adagio ma non tanto III. Allemande IV. Gigue*

There are several works attributed to Bach for violin and continuo (not to be confused with the Sonatas for solo violin!) but only two, the ones in G major and the one in E minor performed here are confirmed to be by him.

It is not certain who he wrote them for, either for himself, an accomplished violinist, or for his friend Johann Georg Pisendel, the leading violinist of Central Germany at the time.

The E minor Sonata was thought to be written sometime between 1714-17, but was only first published in 1867!

It opens with a flurry of semiquavers on the violin, and after a series of lively figurations, this short movement leads straight into the poignant, lilting Adagio.

An energetic Allemande is followed by a Gigue, featuring some syncopated rhythms,

giving the movement an almost jazzy, swinging feel at times, and despite the minor key, a happy-go-lucky mood!

## Johann Paul von Westhoff 1656-1705

Sonata for violin and continuo in A major *La Guerra*.

*I. Adagio con una dolce maniera - Allegro II. Tremulo Adagio III. Allegro ovvero un poco presto IV. Adagio V. Aria ( Adagio assai) VI. La Guerra cosi nominata di sua maestà VII. Aria ( Tutto Adagio) VIII. Vivace IX. Gigue.*

Westhoff was born in Dresden. He became a pupil of Heinrich Schutz and in 1674 joined the Dresden Hofkapelle as musician and composer, where he remained a member for more than 20 years. During this period he travelled throughout Europe, visiting Hungary, Italy, France, Holland and Austria as one of the most famous violinists of his time and composed some of the earliest known music for solo violin.

He left Dresden in 1697 and after briefly teaching contemporary languages at Wittenberg University, in 1699 became chamber secretary, musician and teacher of French and Italian at the Weimar Court.

In Weimar he met JS Bach, who was a colleague, and proved a considerable influence on the latter composer. He died in Weimar in April 1705.

His surviving music includes seven works for violin and basso continuo and seven for solo violin, all published in his lifetime.

His Suite for Solo Violin of 1683 is the earliest known multi-movement piece for solo violin and together with his Six Partitas were a forerunner of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin.

## Johann Sebastian Bach

Sonata for violin and continuo in C minor BWV 1024

*I. Adagio II. Presto III. Affetuoso IV. Vivace*

There is some doubt as to whether this was written by Bach or more probably by J G Pisendel. It was first published in 1867.

The opening Adagio features some poignant passage work for the violin. The Presto includes a striking descending sequence and a dramatic final cadence. A deeply expressive Affetuoso is followed by a Vivace, with notable moments where the violin and continuo play short phrases in unison, brief moments of unanimity.