



Magdalena Consort

director: Peter Harvey

Programmes for 2014/15

The Magdalena Consort, founded in 2008 by baritone Peter Harvey, is acclaimed for its virtuoso chamber performances of sacred vocal music from Monteverdi to Bach.

The group's bold commitment to using the forces for which these works were originally written guarantees an exhilarating concert. Peter Harvey and his small group of high-calibre soloist colleagues sing choral movements and arias alike - performing Bach cantatas, for instance, with one voice per part - supported by players from the UK's top period instrument orchestras. The energy and intelligence of the Magdalena Consort's interpretations have delighted audiences across Europe.

These are examples of the kinds of concerts we present; imaginative programmes can be devised around many kinds of theme, from the liturgical & historical to the poetic & even scientific.

Listen to us performing live on the audioplayer at www.magdalenaconsort.com.



Tewkesbury Abbey (Cheltenham Festival)

*The single-voices of the ensemble yielded an unusual clarity and flexibility...
With soloists of this quality, vocal excellence was a given, and most striking was the trust
and communication on display between the performers in this highly ornamental and
delicately spun music.*

New Statesman

Small forces (single-strings) & four singers

De profundis

J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Nach dir, Herr, verlangst mich* (BWV 150)
Johann Schelle: Motet: *Aus der Tiefen*
J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Weinen, klagen, sorgen, zagen* (BWV 12)
~ * ~
Johann Kuhnau: Motet: *Gott, sei mir gnädig nach deiner Güte*
J. Christoph Bach: Aria: *Es ist nun aus* (funeral 'aria' for 4 voices)
J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Aus der Tiefen* (BWV 131)

Gillian Keith: soprano
Robin Blaze: counter tenor

James Gilchrist: tenor
Peter Harvey: director, bass

2 violins, 2 violas, cello, violone, oboe, bassoon & organ

Bach's earliest cantatas - from the time he spent in Mühlhausen and Weimar - have a freedom of form not found in his later works and contain some of his most poignant music, suffusing a yearning for death with an ecstatic beauty. *Aus der Tiefen* is considered one of his finest achievements, while the opening chorus of *Weinen, klagen, sorgen, zagen* will be familiar as the basis of the *Crucifixus* from the *B minor Mass*. The music is placed in the context of music by two of Bach's predecessors at Leipzig, Schelle and Kuhnau, and by Johann Christoph Bach, who was greatly admired by his nephew, Johann Sebastian.



Bachkirche Arnstadt (MDR Musiksommer)

*The four voices wove together magically, creating a genuine moment of devotion,
nuanced and delicately intuitive.*

Kultúra, Hungary

Chamber forces & two singers:

French chamber airs and cantatas - for bass and soprano

by Rameau, Campra, Clérambault & Lambert

To mark the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Rameau's death, we are offering a programme of secular French cantatas and airs. These were a staple fare for composers, performers and aristocratic audiences alike when the doors to the Opéra were closed; indeed, they presented opportunities for composers to display their talents for vivid dramatic expression - but which demanded neither great spaces nor huge financial commitments...

Peter Harvey is a fluent speaker of French and is in his element with this national style, having made countless recordings with groups such as La Chapelle Royale, Le Concert Spirituel and La Grande Ecurie et la Chambre du Roy. His recording of the Rameau cantatas elicited the following review in BBC Music Magazine:

"This sensitively recorded offering from London Baroque is excellent... The production... is carried mainly by the singing of Peter Harvey. His beautifully rounded baritone has absolutely the right level of dark lyricism for the more sombre moments - the air in the latter part of Les amants trahis is particularly memorable... this is a superb presentation of this treasurable repertoire." BBC Music Magazine, September 2007 ****

Julia Doyle: soprano
2 violins, viola da gamba, harpsichord

Peter Harvey: bass

Larger forces & four singers:

The Recreation of the Soul

J.S. Bach: Sinfonia to: *Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats* (BWV 42)

J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Jesu, der du meine Seele* (BWV 78)

J.S. Bach: Passacaglia & Fugue (BWV 582) for grand organ
(if available) or arranged for single strings

~ * ~

J.S. Bach: Motet: *Lobet den Herrn* (BWV 230)

J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben* (BWV 147)

Julia Doyle: soprano
Robin Blaze: counter tenor

James Gilchrist: tenor
Peter Harvey: director, bass

Strings, flute, trumpet, 2 oboes, bassoon & organ

The practical, theoretical and mystical come together in Bach's deep understanding of numbers. To his already complex works he delighted in adding further layers of meaning through numerological symbolism. Certain numbers held special significance for him, for example: 12 (apostles), 10 (commandments), 14 (the sum of B-A-C-H using the number alphabet), and, above all, 3 (and its powers). The well-known chorale from Cantata 147, *Jesu, joy of man's desiring*, with its lilting triplet accompaniment, is thus shot through with symbolism of the Trinity.

Bach stated that 'true music' was for 'the honour of God and the recreation of the soul'. This programme presents two of his best-loved cantatas with other pieces which reveal his delight in numbers, and shows that this highly-wrought music has a visceral and emotional appeal transcending any intellectual considerations.

Advent & Easter: Larger forces & eight singers

Wachet auf!

J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (BWV 140)

J.S. Bach: Motet: *Singet dem Herrn*

~ * ~

J.S. Bach: Motet: *Komm, Jesu, komm*

J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Wachet! betet!* (BWV 70)

Elin Manahan Thomas, Julia Doyle: soprano

Robin Blaze, Clare Wilkinson: alto

Charles Daniels, Nicholas Mulroy: tenor

Peter Harvey: director, bass, Robert Davies: bass

Strings, 3 oboes, bassoon & organ

The cantatas that Bach wrote for the Advent season are colourful and highly characterised. Along with one of Bach's most instantly-recognisable melodies, *Wachet auf* contains a soprano and bass 'love-duet' – a representation of the mystical marriage between the Church and Christ. *Wachet! betet!* includes some of his most daringly apocalyptic writing for strings, bass voice and a 'last trumpet'. These cantatas are performed with an extra singer – or ripienist – on each part, and they are coupled with two double choir motets, the yearningly beautiful *Komm, Jesu, komm* and the exuberant *Singet dem Herrn*.

St John Passion

J.S. Bach: *Johannespassion* (BWV 245) Version IV: 1749

James Gilchrist: Evangelist

Peter Harvey: director, Christus

Julia Doyle: soprano

Clare Wilkinson: alto

Nicholas Mulroy: tenor

Robert Davies: bass

Strings, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, bassoon, lute & organ

Curiously, the St John Passion - one of Bach's best-known works - is almost always performed in a version that he himself never heard. In this Passiontide concert, with the 1749 setting of St John's account of the Crucifixion, the Magdalena Consort presents the *Johannespassion* as it was last performed in St Thomas' Church, Leipzig, on Good Friday in the year before Bach's death. The eight singers and the chamber orchestra – the forces for which Bach wrote the work – bring all their virtuosic energy into play in a highly focused approach to this musical drama.

English music

Dido and Aeneas

Henry Purcell: *Welcome to all the pleasures*
Matthew Locke: *The instrumental musicke used in the TEMPEST*
~ * ~
Henry Purcell: *Dido and Aeneas*

Example cast including:

Lucy Crowe: Dido, Queen of Carthage

Peter Harvey: director, Aeneas, Trojan Prince

Elin Manahan Thomas: Belinda, Dido's sister & handmaid

Strings (can vary in number), 2 lutes/guitars, harpsichord

This programme aims to put *Dido and Aeneas* in context by playing music written by Purcell's predecessor as the king's 'Composer for the Violins', Matthew Locke. The music for *The Tempest* is a vivid foretaste of Purcell's sound-world, with characterful dances and passages of astonishing, highly-charged chromatic harmonies. *Welcome to all the Pleasures* is the first of Purcell's Odes for St Cecilia's Day, and contains some ravishing music within its relatively short span, including one of his most beautiful airs on a ground bass - *Here the deities approve*. It shares this form with one of the most celebrated airs of all, *Dido's Lament*: the emotional crux of what is widely considered to be the first English opera. Of Peter Harvey's recording of *Aeneas*, Simon Heighes remarked in the International Record Review: "Unusually, the outstanding vocal honours belong to Aeneas. Peter Harvey makes real dramatic capital out of this tricky and underwritten part, and brings us the most plausible fellow we've heard in ages." This interpretation gives credibility to the relationship between the two main protagonists as the drama unfolds.



Peter Harvey in rehearsal with Gillian Keith, Daniel Taylor and James Gilchrist

Larger forces & ten singers

Vespers of 1610

Claudio Monteverdi: *Vespro della beata vergine*

Elin Manahan Thomas, Julia Doyle: soprano

Jeremy Budd, Nicholas Mulroy: high tenor

James Gilchrist, Charles Daniels: tenor

Peter Harvey, Eamonn Dougan: baritone

Stuart Young, Robert MacDonald: bass

2 violins, cello, violone, 3 cornetti, 3 sackbuts, lute, harp & organ

Peter Harvey: director

Performing this piece with the forces the composer most probably intended - employing ten soloists rather than a choir - gives a tremendous clarity and energy to the music, which is characteristic of the Magdalena Consort's sound: "Clear and gloriously powerful", as the *New Statesman* commented.



Monteverdi Vespers in Tewkesbury Abbey

The Magdalena Consort's performance of the *Vespers* was one of the highlights of the 2012 Tetbury Festival.

Chamber forces: single strings, oboe & two singers

Bach and his predecessors: The Pillars of the Baroque

Heinrich Schütz: *Es steh Gott auf* (SWV 356)
Dieterich Buxtehude: *Sonata to Jesu meine Freude* (BuxWV 60)
Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe (BuxWV 38)
Joh. Heinrich Schmelzer: *Sonata: Lamento sopra la morte Ferdinandi III*
Dieterich Buxtehude: *Ich halte es dafür* (BuxWV 48)
~ * ~
J.S. Bach: *Cantata: Ich habe genug* (BWV 82)
J.S. Bach: *Cantata: Selig ist der Mann* (BWV 57)

Elin Manahan Thomas: soprano
Peter Harvey: bass

2 violins, viola, cello, violone, oboe, bassoon & organ

This programme spans the century between the towering figures of German baroque sacred music - Heinrich Schütz and JS Bach, born exactly one hundred years apart. The first half of the programme - all from the seventeenth century - ranges from the exuberant rhythms of *Es steh Gott auf* to the engaging simplicity of *Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe*; from the heartfelt grief of the Schmelzer *Lamento* to the plangent fervour of Buxtehude's motet for soprano and bass, *Ich halte es dafür*. The cantatas which form the second half contain some of Bach's finest music: *Ich habe genug* - for which Bach and his wife, Anna Magdalena, clearly had a special affection, and *Selig ist der Mann*, which takes the form of a dialogue between Christ and the Soul - a recurring theme - where the anxious Soul is reassured by a confident, even militant Christ. Peter Harvey's recordings of the solo bass cantatas have been selected by BBC Radio 3's Building a Library and also by the equivalent programme on Radio France.



Peter Harvey sings with the voice of humanity

Gramophone

Forthcoming recording:

Appearing 2013 on the Channel Classics label:

The Recreation of the Soul

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J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Jesu, der du meine Seele* (BWV 78)
J.S. Bach: Cantata: *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben* (BWV 147)

Elin Manahan Thomas: soprano
Daniel Taylor: counter tenor

James Gilchrist: tenor
Peter Harvey: director, bass

www.channelclassics.com

Enquiries

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