University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Alison Balsom
& Scottish Ensemble

Saturday, April 13, 2013, 7:30 p.m.

University Auditorium

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Program

Concerto grosso No. 12 in D Minor, La Follia

Francesco Geminiani

Oboe Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 7, No. 3 (1712)

Tomaso Albinoni

(arr. Balsom)

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Violin Concerto in D Minor (1823)

Felix Mendelssohn

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Soloist: Jonathan Morton, violin

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9, RV 230

Antonio Vivaldi

(from L’estro armonico)

(arr. Balsom)

Allegro
Larghetto
Allegro e piano

INTERMISSION

Seraph

James MacMillan

Serenade for Strings, Op. 48

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo — Allegro moderato

Valse: Moderato — Tempo di valse
Élégie: Larghetto elegiac
Finale (Tema russo): Andante — Allegro con spirit

Alison Balsom records exclusively for EMI Classics

Scottish Ensemble records for Linn Records, Signum Records, and EMI Classics

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Program Notes  

**Concerto Grosso No. 12 in D Minor, La Follia**  
Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762)

Even though Italian violinist Francesco Geminiani was one of the most accomplished violinists of his day, and a skilled composer, he did not become a household name. No wonder, living in the shadow of such renowned composers of his day as Alessandro Scarlatti, Arcangelo Corelli, Antonio Vivaldi and George Frideric Handel!

Known to his students by the expressive nickname Il Furibondo (The Madman), Geminiani was the author of dozens of concertos for string ensembles as well as several important theoretical treatises on violin playing, harpsichord accompaniment and an instruction manual for guitar.

Geminiani’s Concerto Grosso No. 12 in D minor, known popularly as *La Follia* (the folly) is an arrangement of a solo violin work by Corelli, his teacher. Violinist and Baroque expert Andrew Manze, who has recorded Geminiani works for Harmonia Mundi, has suggested that this Concerto’s theme and 24 variations is more than a mere arrangement of the original Corelli work: “They are explorations, expansions, the end product of a process of musical evolution.”
Oboe Concerto in B-flat, Op. 7, No. 3
Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni (1671–1751) /arr. Balsom

Venetian composer Tomaso Albinoni was an accomplished singer and violinist, though his wealthy father was uninterested in having his son pursue a career in music and forbade him from joining the guilds that would allow him to perform professionally. Indeed, Tomaso Albinoni remained an amateur musician, composing as a hobby, until his father’s death in 1709. Luckily, his father’s will released him from running the family paper business, which allowed him to pursue music full time.

Albinoni went on to develop a reputation as a composer of opera — he wrote more than 40 — though he is now remembered almost exclusively for his instrumental music. This is not surprising, since much of his vocal music was destroyed late in World War II when the library in Dresden, which housed many of his scores, was destroyed by Allied bombing.

Albinoni was enamored with the oboe and is said to be the first Italian to compose oboe concertos, a set of eight, Op. 7, completed around 1715. The version of Op. 7 that we hear on this program was arranged for trumpet by the featured soloist, Alison Balsom.

Note the unrelenting march of the orchestra in the Allegro opening movement. The second movement Adagio features the soloist soaring above melancholy chords in the orchestra. The bouncy Finale is a romp for the orchestra and soloist alike.

Violin Concerto in D Minor
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)

German composer Felix Mendelssohn was a child prodigy. In his short life he wrote hundreds of works: no surprise since he began piano lessons at age 6, composition lessons at 10 and by his mid-teens he was writing accomplished works that have since joined the classical repertory.

One of the most famous of his compositions is his Violin Concerto in E Minor, written in 1844. It is often called “Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto” on programs because the work on tonight’s program, written when he was only 13, was dismissed as “juvenilia” and never published in his lifetime. Violinist Yehudi Menuhin would bring this “other” violin concerto to the attention of music lovers. Apparently, a rare book dealer had showed the score of the Concerto in D to Menuhin, who had already been a champion of Mendelssohn’s well-known Concerto in E minor. Menuhin bought the manuscript, bought the rights from the Mendelssohn family, prepared it for publication, and gave its premiere performance in New York City in 1952.

Menuhin wrote of the work: “The Concerto in D Minor is full of invention and not in any way inhibited by too-strict traditional concepts. It exhibits, in fact, a remarkable freedom and elasticity of form.”

The orchestra opens with a bold declaration, followed by lengthy interplay between string sections. The violin entrance is understated, yet quietly dramatic. Note in particular that the brief cadenza that ends the first movement is almost presented in the style of a recitative in an opera, rather than a full-blown display of technique that is more common. The melancholy Andante movement begins with a long introduction. Haunting harmonics leave this movement in a state of suspended animation. The Finale is an impressive display, which begins with the violin soloist introducing a madcap dance. The “elasticity of form” that Menuhin refers to is in evidence in this movement as a cadenza appears early in the movement, as well as another on display later on.
Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9, RV 230 (from *L’estro armonico*)
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) /arr. Balsom

At age 25, Antonio Vivaldi was ordained and, that same year, he was appointed “master of violin” at an orphanage in Venice. It was for the orchestra at this orphanage — made up of mainly young women — that Vivaldi wrote a vast number of his works.

Vivaldi’s output was astonishing, including hundreds and hundreds of works. He was also influential: as much as anyone of his day, he helped codify the form of the concerto.

His first printed collection of concertos, 12 concertos published under the title *L’estro armonico*, came out in 1711; it was an immediate sensation, spreading the Italian composer’s name throughout Europe. Indeed, the concerto on this program even made it to Weimar and into the hands of J.S. Bach who transcribed it for harpsichord.

On the face of it, Vivaldi’s Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9 is a typical Baroque concerto, with a fast-slow-fast arrangement of three movements. Still, it has quite singular qualities. The first movement, *Allegro*, begins with a quirky statement from the orchestra punctuated by rests, followed by the soloist at full bore. The melancholy *Larghetto* that follows is as poignant as any slow movement in Op. 3. The soloist lets loose in the *Finale*, with plenty of lightning-speed pyrotechnics from the soloist.

Seraph
James MacMillan (b. 1959)

James MacMillan is the most accomplished Scottish composer of his generation. He came to the attention of the classical establishment with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra’s premiere of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* at the Proms in 1990, and he has since had various works performed by major orchestras and leading artists around the world. His 1992 percussion concerto for renowned Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie — *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* — is among the most-performed contemporary works in the modern repertory, having received more than 400 performances worldwide.

*James MacMillan provided the following note for the February 17, 2011 premiere of Seraph at London’s Wigmore Hall, with soloist Alison Balsom and the Scottish Ensemble performing, and is used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes.*

*Seraph* is a concertino for trumpet and strings, containing three short movements. The first movement is fast, and based on two main ideas. Firstly, we hear brusque, angular chords accompanying a jaunty trumpet melody that contains dotted rhythms, running semiquavers and fast repeated notes. The second idea is more lyrical, incorporating rising 4ths and falling 3rds.

The second movement, an *Adagio*, has its leading cantabile melodic material on solo violin or tutti strings, while the solo trumpet seems to ruminate introspectively with oppositional and contrary lines. The movement subsides in a quasi-improvisatory duet between solo trumpet and violin.

The last movement, *marcato e ritmico*, is based on a closely worked canonic idea, which first appears on low strings, giving a somewhat ‘ungainly’ sensation at the outset, and a more fulsome arching melody marked *cantabile e sonore*. The trumpet part is peppered with little military fanfares. Eventually the music settles down to a cadenza-like passage, where the soloist is accompanied by *tremolando* strings, before the principal canonic theme is recapitulated on the violins and violas.
A seraph is a celestial being or angel, usually and traditionally associated with trumpets. This work is dedicated to Alison Balsom.

**Serenade for Strings, Op. 48**  
Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-93)

Few composers in history have experienced as many personal obstacles in their careers as Russian composer Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. His childhood was filled with upheavals, from constantly moving with his family to surviving a host of illnesses, not to mention his mother's death when he was 14. He came late to a career in music, becoming a celebrated composer in spite of seven years at the St. Petersburg School of Jurisprudence on a path to becoming a civil servant. After choosing music as a career, he continually found it necessary to do menial odd jobs in order to make ends meet. Later on, as his career slowly began to take flight, Tchaikovsky was criticized by some for not being Russian enough in his music. Critics also suggested that he was technically lacking, able to write a great tune but unable to develop it. (Indeed, his first piano concerto was rejected by its first intended soloist.) The composer's marriage was a sham and quickly fell apart, and it is said he could never really come to terms with his homosexuality and eventually committed suicide as a result.

In spite of all these difficulties, Tchaikovsky persevered. He is now as popular as ever with concert-going audiences. His works are always among the most-performed lists by American orchestras, the Russians have embraced his music with a vengeance, and his music for the ballet *The Nutcracker* is as ubiquitous at Christmas time as department store Santas and reruns of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The *Serenade for Strings*, from 1880-81 — the same year as his *1812 Overture* — was first performed in Moscow in 1882 and was immediately embraced by music critics and the public alike. The work is also said to have greatly impressed Tchaikovsky's former composition teacher, Anton Rubinstein, founder of the Moscow Conservatory.

The first movement was inspired by Mozart, one of Tchaikovsky's favorite composers. "I don't just like Mozart, I idolize him," he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck, a devoted patron who supported the composer for 14 years, later in his life. The second movement, an upbeat waltz, was so well received at the premiere that it was immediately repeated. In the expressive third movement, marked *Elegie*, Tchaikovsky's melodic gifts are on full display. The *Finale*, which begins without pause, shows his love for Russian folk tunes. The *Serenade for Strings* so inspired choreographer George Balanchine that, in 1934, he created a ballet, *Serenade*, based on Tchaikovsky's music, which became a cornerstone of the New York City Ballet's repertory.

— Program notes by Dave Kopplin
Biographies

Alison Balsom, trumpet

“What really makes this performer so magnetic and distinctive is the quality of the notes that tumble so effortlessly from whatever trumpet she holds in her hands, and whatever music she plays.”

— The Times, Jan. 2012

Twice crowned Female Artist of the Year at the Classic BRITs, Alison Balsom has cemented an international reputation as one of classical music’s great ambassadors and is ranked among the most distinctive and ground-breaking musicians on the international circuit today. Balsom has also been honored with numerous awards by Gramophone, Classic FM and ECHO Klassik.

In 2009, Balsom headlined one of classical music’s most celebrated concerts — The Last Night of the BBC Proms — which reached its biggest ever global television audience of an estimated 200 million. In December 2010, Balsom went on to make her U.S. television debut with the Orchestra of St Luke’s on The Late Show with David Letterman — a platform few classical artists have gained access to.

The 2011-12 season saw Balsom make return visits to China where she performed with Lorin Maazel and the National Symphony Orchestra and to the Los Angeles Philharmonic with whom she made her Hollywood Bowl debut. Other season highlights included concerts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2012-13, Balsom will embark on major international tours of Europe, China and the U.S. with the Wiener Symphoniker, kammerorchesterbasel, Concerto Köln, Scottish Ensemble and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Balsom’s highly distinctive sound earned much recognition in her early career when she mainly reached her audience through radio broadcasts under the auspices of the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme. While represented by the Young Concert Artists Trust, Balsom caught the ear of EMI Classics with whom she records exclusively. Her internationally celebrated Bach Trumpet and Organ disc of 2005 was quickly followed by Caprice which won her further critical acclaim. Balsom’s third album, featuring the great pillars of the trumpet repertoire, the concertos of Haydn and Hummel, firmly established her as one of the world’s leading trumpeters. Italian Concertos, which is made up of Balsom’s own arrangements of Italian Baroque Concertos, became EMI Classics’ biggest selling album of 2010.

In addition to transcribing and arranging existing works for her instrument, Balsom is increasingly active in commissioning new works for the trumpet. Her world premiere performance of James MacMillan’s Seraph at Wigmore Hall, in February 2011, went on to become the title track of her 2011 release for EMI Classics. Her
latest album, *Sound the Trumpet*, sees Balsom perform a variety of works by Purcell and Handel with Trevor Pinnock and The English Concert on period instruments.

Balsom studied trumpet at the Guildhall School of Music, the Paris Conservatoire and with Håkan Hardenberger. She was a concerto finalist in the BBC Young Musician competition in 1998 and, she received the Feeling Musique Prize for quality of sound in the 2001 Maurice André International Trumpet Competition. Balsom performs a wide range of recital and concerto repertoire, from Albinoni to Zimmermann and performs on both modern and baroque trumpets.

For further details, please visit www.alisonbalsom.com

**Scottish Ensemble**

“If there’s a different way of doing things, the Scottish Ensemble will find it.”

— *The Scotsman*

Redefining the string orchestra, the Scottish Ensemble inspires audiences in the U.K. and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. Known both in the U.K. and internationally for its versatility and ambitious programming, the Ensemble reaches out to create rich partnerships across boundaries of genre, geography and musical style.

Founded in 1969 and based in Glasgow, the Scottish Ensemble is the U.K.’s only professional string orchestra, built around a core of 12 outstanding string players, who perform together under artistic director Jonathan Morton. The Ensemble’s distinctive programming style habitually blends music from different ages, offering new perspectives and making unexpected connections. Performing standing up, the individual players bring an energetic and passionate dynamic to every performance, both in the concert hall and in the Ensemble’s comprehensive program of education and outreach activities. Its work in this area ranges from large scale creative projects for nursery pupils, to specialist coaching for young musicians, to working with young offenders.

Committed to developing the string repertoire, the Ensemble regularly seeks out unusual pieces, and has commissioned a rich catalogue of new works from some of the brightest voices working in music today. In recent years, these have included composers such as Sir John Tavener, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, Steve Martland, John Woolrich, Craig Armstrong, Luke Bedford and Thea Musgrave.

The Ensemble’s first-class reputation attracts collaborations with world-class soloists including, most recently, trumpeter Alison Balsom; tenor Toby Spence; violinist Anthony Marwood; cellist Pieter Wispelwey; and violist Lawrence Power. The Ensemble also welcomes collaborations with musicians from different traditions, performing alongside Scottish folk musicians Catriona McKay, Chris Stout, and Aly Bain; DJ Alex Smoke; Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto; and American bassist Edgar Meyer.

Alongside concerts in major venues in Scottish cities, the Ensemble exploits its flexibility by performing in more intimate, unconventional or remote spaces across Scotland. In addition, the Ensemble also enjoys an established annual series at London’s Wigmore Hall and has appeared at the BBC Proms and St Magnus, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh International Festivals. Recent invitations to tour abroad include an invitation from the Scottish Government to celebrate St. Andrew’s Day in Brussels, concerts in Turkey and Austria, and tours of China and the U.S. The Ensemble’s extensive recording catalogue includes EMI Classics’ top-selling CD of 2010: *Italian Concertos* with Alison Balsom.
As one of Creative Scotland’s Foundation Organizations, the Scottish Ensemble is proud to contribute to Scotland’s cultural stature and creative identity.

For further details, please visit www.scottishensemble.co.uk.

Jonathan Morton, Artistic Director, Scottish Ensemble

Jonathan Morton is artistic director and leader of the Scottish Ensemble, and enjoys a varied career as a chamber musician, leader, soloist and teacher. His versatility finds him equally at home in the core classical repertoire, 20th and 21st century music, and in collaborations with musicians from different musical traditions. His eclectic and engaging programming has won praise from audiences and critics alike, offering fresh perspectives on familiar repertoire as well as introducing little-known gems and championing new works.

As a soloist, Morton has performed works by composers Gavin Bryars, David Horne, Arvo Pärt, Astor Piazzolla, Benjamin Britten and Toru Takemitsu in many prestigious venues, including Wigmore Hall, Edinburgh International Festival and Aldeburgh International Festival. He premiered John Woolrich’s *Capriccio* at the 2009 BBC Proms, and Joe Cutler’s violin concerto in 2010 in Scotland. As a chamber musician, he has collaborated with the Nash Ensemble, the Schubert Ensemble and the Academy of St Martin’s in the Fields amongst others, and has appeared in numerous festivals and venues, including the Internationales Kammermusik Festival in Nuremberg, the Schoenberg Institute in Vienna, the Barge Music Festival in New York, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Sogakudo in Tokyo. As a leader, Morton has performed with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, the Nash Ensemble, the Goldberg Ensemble and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Morton was a tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music until 2009.

Born in Belgium, Morton took up the violin at the age of 4. At 13, he was personally invited by Lord Menuhin to study at his acclaimed school in Surrey and, less than two years later, performed as soloist under Menuhin’s baton. As a 16-year-old, he appeared in Europe’s leading recital halls, made his radio debut on Classic FM, and made his first CD recording with the pianist Carole Presland, playing works by Szymanowski, Debussy, Suk and Lekeu. His first recording as director of Scottish Ensemble is a critically praised CD of works by Finzi and Walton for the prestigious Wigmore Live label. He also directs the Scottish Ensemble on Alison Balsom’s EMI Classics album, *Italian Concertos*.

Directing the Scottish Ensemble has given Morton the opportunity to work closely with many acclaimed artists including Michael Collins, Toby Spence, Alison Balsom, Gwilym Simcock, Pekka Kuusisto, Jane Irwin, Raphael Wallfisch, Steven Osborne, Lawrence Power and Pieter Wispelwey.

Morton plays a Nicolo Amati violin, made circa 1640.

Scottish Ensemble

Artistic Director/Violin: Jonathan Morton
Violin 1: Cheryl Crockett, Tristan Gurney, Sophie Mather, James Toll
Violin 2: Xander van Vliet, Joanne Green, Laura Ghiro, Alastair Savage
Viola: Catherine Marwood, Andrew Berridge, Zoe Matthews
Cello: Alison Lawrance, Naomi Boole-Masterson
Double Bass: Graham Mitchell
Harpsichord: Robin Bigwood