

Duo Hesperī



Mary-Jannet Leith – Recorders
Thomas Allery – Harpsichord

"After their delightful, infectious and fascinating concert, Thomas and Mary-Jannet received a long, standing ovation... none of us would have minded a two-hour-long concert by Hesperī!"

Kate Vents, Utrecht Early Music Fringe Festival

"Mary-Jannet Leith's playing on several different recorders not only had astonishing ease and fluency; it disclosed such depth and breadth of rhythm, phrasing, dynamics and instrumental colour that made every piece come across as a masterpiece, aided by Thomas Allery's delicate precision harpsichord playing throughout the performance."

Alan Cooper, Aberdeen Lunchbreak Series

Duo Hesperī is a young, innovative Early Music duo, specialising in the folk-inspired music of eighteenth century Scotland. Harpsichordist Thomas Allery and recorder specialist Mary-Jannet Leith, are dedicated to showcasing the infinite colours and possibilities of their instruments to new audiences. Presenting programmes through the lens of colourful characters from the musical past, they seek to explore the unusual musical links between Scotland, London, and Italy during the 18th century. Soon after forming at the Royal College of Music in 2012, Ensemble Hesperī won the Audience Prize at the Fenton House Early Keyboard Ensemble Competition. More recently, Mary-Jannet and Thomas were selected for Brighton Early Music Festival's young artists' scheme for 2016-2017, recording a full concert for broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in November 2017. They also appeared as 'Future Baroque' artists at the 2017 London Festival of Baroque Music, and performed twice on the continent during 2017, at the Brugge and Utrecht Early Music Fringe Festivals. Their performance at Utrecht won the Audience Award from over 70 performances from young European ensembles, and they returned to present a concert at Utrecht in 2018, which was recorded for later broadcast on Dutch radio. The duo was also selected for 'Live Music Now' in 2018 and enjoys presenting a varied programme of outreach activities for those who have no access to live classical music. In 2019, the ensemble is touring a new Arts Council England-funded project, 'The Pheasant's Eye', featuring a unique collaboration between Baroque music and Highland dance.

Programmes

'From Caledonia to the Capital': Musical Delights from the Scottish Baroque

We present a programme of Scottish Baroque music, exploring the colourful lives of composers who migrated and settled in London during the eighteenth century. Many Scottish Composers such as James Oswald, John Reid, and the eccentric Earl of Kellie 'Fiddler Tam', moved to or visited London to seek their musical fortunes in the capital. But this was a dangerous time for Scots to be in London: during the Jacobite Rebellions, Scots were insulted in the streets and theatres, and Scottish musicians, led by Oswald, stuck close together, forming a mysterious society called 'The Temple of Apollo'. Though many of their compositions are still 'Baroque' in form, their style represents a fascinating 'fusion' of Italian virtuosity, catchy dance rhythms and soaring melodies from traditional Scottish folk music. A highlight of this programme is Oswald's 96 'Airs for all Seasons': these charming character pieces are named after plants and flowers, transporting the listener to the soundscape of the Scottish Highlands.

'London's Musical Coalman': inside Thomas Britton's Attic

We paint a picture of London's vibrant musical scene in the early 1700s, through the lens of the extraordinary coal merchant Thomas Britton, one of London's first concert promoters. His musical evenings, hosted in his small coal-loft in Clerkenwell, attracted the best performers and composers of the day, including Handel himself. At this time, musicians were pouring into London from across Europe to enjoy the rich opportunities for theatre work and private patronage. The Italian style of composition, pioneered by Corelli, was the height of fashion, and Italian musicians, struggling to make ends meet at home, increasingly settled in London, introducing the capital to Italian opera, chamber music, and virtuosic solo repertoire. Our programme features music by several of the musicians who performed in Britton's long-running concert series, including Handel, Pepusch, Banister, and of course Italian virtuosos such as Bononcini, Handel's rival, and the enigmatic Sammartini brothers. We also take musical inspiration from the vast list of music and instruments Samuel Pepys recorded on Britton's death in 1714.

Education and Workshops

We enjoy bringing our music to new audiences through fun and lively educational workshops in schools and local communities. As experienced teachers and educators, we can design bespoke workshop sessions for different age-groups, abilities and group sizes. Our instruments (recorders and harpsichord) are a great way to delve into the sounds and history of the 18th century, and we love to demonstrate how our instruments make different sounds, alongside interactive activities including singing. We also work with a fantastic Highland dancer, Kathleen Gilbert, who has choreographed many of the dance movements in our 'Caledonia to the Capital' programme, and has presented Highland dance workshops for our audiences at leading UK festivals.

Booking and Contact

Please contact us to discuss further details of performances, programmes, and workshops. Our performance fees include harpsichord provision and tuning, but vary depending on the type of concert, location, and length of programme.

We can provide our own excellent harpsichord, a copy of a 1667 anonymous French harpsichord, built by leading British maker Alan Gotto (2016).

www.ensemblehesperi.com

ensemblehesperi@gmail.com

07895 110 469

