Ensemble Hesperi

PROMOTERS PACK 2027/2028

"I was hugely impressed by the virtuosity and musicality of these accomplished young musicians, and their boundless energy, their well-researched programmes, and their relaxed rapport with their audiences make me sure that they will become an established and admired ensemble in the very near future – another great 'find' by the St Magnus Festival!"

D James Ross, Early Music Review

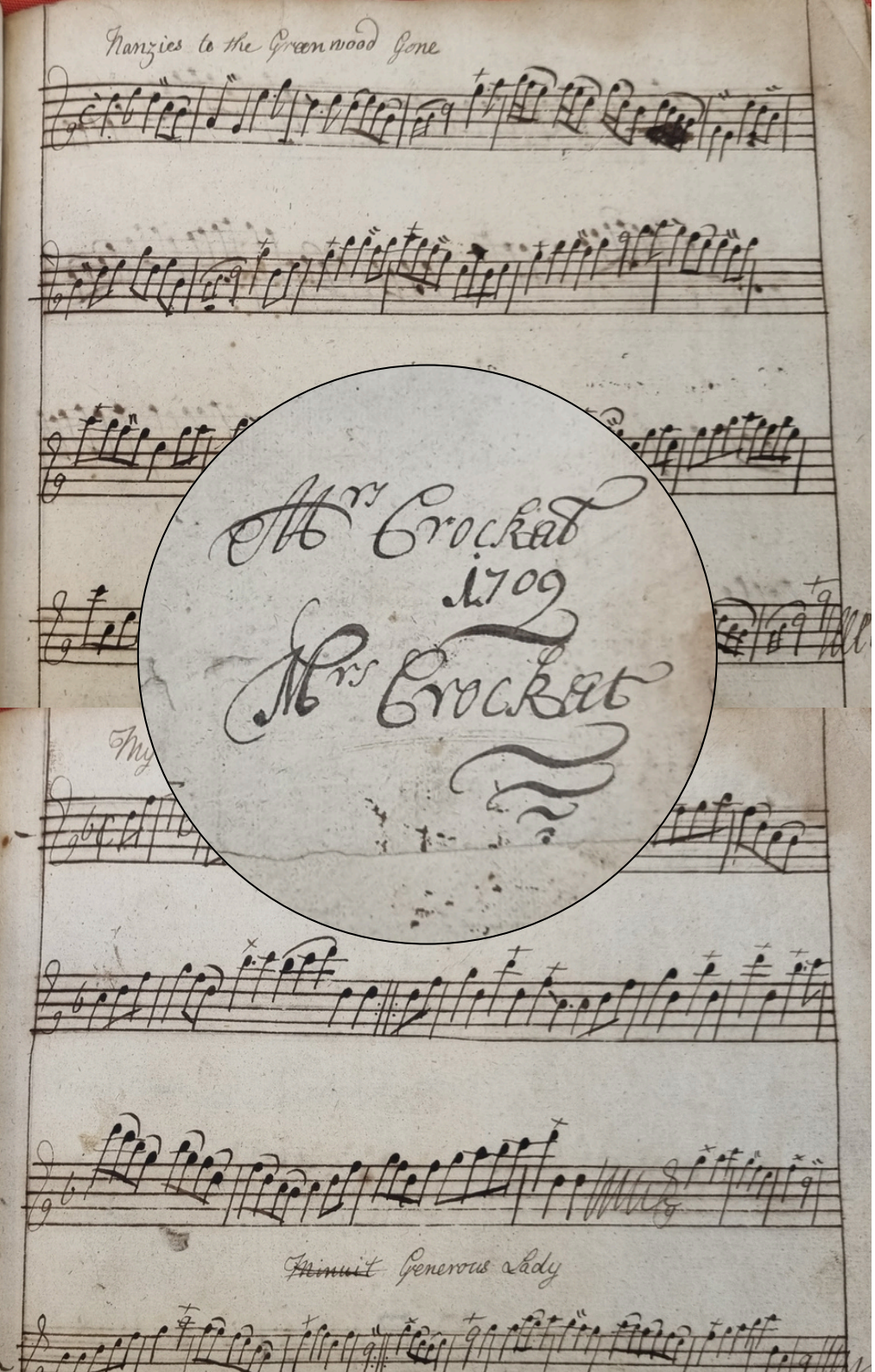
About Us

Ensemble Hesperi is a dynamic period ensemble and charity, championing rarely-heard historical music of the British Isles, particularly the music and culture of eighteenth-century Scotland. The members of Ensemble Hesperi, **Mary-Jannet Leith (Recorders), Magdalena Loth-Hill (Baroque Violin), Florence Petit (Baroque Cello) and Thomas Allery (Harpsichord),** who met during their studies at London's Royal College of Music, are passionate about bringing forgotten musical stories to life for diverse audiences. Whether performing as a quartet, or collaborating with friends for larger projects, their performances embody the true spontaneity of chamber music.

In 2021, the ensemble was delighted to win first prize at the London International Festival of Early Music Young Ensemble Competition, and third prize at the prestigious International Van Wassenaer Competition in Utrecht. In the same year, Hesperi released its debut album "Full of the Highland Humours", and was selected as City Music Foundation artists. In 2024, the ensemble released a critically acclaimed album with BIS Records, "A Gift for your Garden", featured as record of the week on BBC Radio 3's Essential Classics.

Since 2019, Hesperi has created a number of research-led performance projects, often in collaboration with heritage organisations and historic houses. Funded by a Lottery grant from Arts Council England, Hesperi's debut project, "The Pheasant's Eye", celebrated Scottish eighteenth-century music, featuring special choreography from Highland dancer Kathleen Gilbert. A number of projects since have been supported by the Continuo Foundation: "From Caledonia to the Capital", telling the stories of Scottish composers who settled in eighteenth-century London; "Then I play'd upon the Harpsichord", an immersive concert exploring the musical tastes and talents of Queen Charlotte; and "Baroque Bridges", a recent collaboration with the South African Buskaid Soweto Strings Ensemble.

Hesperi appears regularly on BBC Radio 3's Early Music Show and In Tune programmes, and performs at leading festivals and venues across the United Kingdom and Europe, including St Magnus International Festival, Buxton International Festival, Kings Place, St Martin-in-the Fields, Barber Institute, National Centre for Early Music, York, Brighton Early Music Festival, LIFEM, Petworth Festival, Lichfield Festival, King's Lynn Festival, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Snape Maltings, Festival Alte Musik Knechtsteden, and Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht Fringe.



Concert Programmes for 2027/2028

Mrs Crockat's Music Book

In 1709, the mysterious Scotswoman Mrs Crockat was learning music from a beautiful book of handwritten tunes for recorder and harpsichord. Her leather-bound volume, now held in the Montagu Music Collection at Boughton House, is just one of many surviving volumes owned by musical women across eighteenth-century Scotland.

In this programme, **we'll recover the voices of these Scottish women lost to history through their very own music books**: Elyza Fraser and Mary Bristow of Castle Fraser, both serious musicians and violin and harpsichord players; Elizabeth Katherine Jane Anne Brodie of Brodie Castle and Mary Eleanor Bowes, Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne, both of whom wrote their own music - and, of course, Mrs Crockat herself!

"Mrs Crockat's Music Book" will feature performances of music known to these musical women, curated from the amazing collections of historic Scottish houses and private archives. We'll play **Scots tunes** enjoyed by Mrs Crockat and her female contemporaries in the drawing rooms of Scotland's historic castles; favourite **theatre music** they encountered in London and beyond; and, of course, **trio sonatas, keyboard works and solos** from their collections **by the most popular composers of the day** – Handel, Purcell, Corelli, and many more.

This programme is flexible in instrumentation, and can be performed either with our core quartet, or with additional performers, such as a soprano and a Baroque guitarist - or even as a duo of recorder and harpsichord.

A Gift for your Garden

The Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), one of the most prolific composers of all time, created a much-envied garden at his Hamburg residence later in life. In 1742, he wrote to his friend Uffenbach on the subject of his new love of flowers: “I am insatiable where hyacinths and tulips are concerned, greedy for ranunculi, and especially for anemones.” Telemann was part of a lively network of plant exchange across Germany and beyond, and he often begged his long-suffering musical friends and correspondents to send rare specimens for his growing collection.

In London, the Scottish composer James Oswald was also no stranger to the mid-eighteenth-century craze for plants. In 1755, he published two collections of “Airs for the Seasons”, likely inspired by the gardens of his patron, Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, and his wife, Princess Augusta. Her impressive collection of exotic plants at Kew Palace formed the founding collection of today’s world-famous Kew Gardens.

Our programme presents a cornucopia of music by **Telemann** and his horticultural correspondents: a sonata from his astonishing Paris Quartets; a folky trio sonata and two virtuosic solo fantasias, alongside trio sonatas by **Handel** and a rarely heard galant work by **Johann Gottlieb Graun** - all framed by charming airs by **Oswald** depicting Telemann’s floral favourites.

This programme was released in late 2024 on the internationally renowned label BIS Records, featured as Record of the Week on BBC Radio 3's “Essential Classics”, and received excellent reviews in both Gramophone and Diapason magazines.

Handel in the Strand

This programme brings the spirit of eighteenth-century musical London to life. In the early 1700s, London was quickly becoming the most important musical hub of Europe, attracting the great Handel himself, as well as a multitude of European musicians who seized the opportunity to earn their living in London's thriving theatre district.

The eighteenth-century Strand was a vibrant and colourful thoroughfare, home to many of London's music shops, print houses, and instrument makers. Opposite Somerset House, notorious printer John Walsh first published **Handel's** trio sonatas and **Corelli's** ever-popular Op. 5 violin sonatas. Only streets away, Scottish musicians like **James Oswald** and **Robert Bremner** set up their own successful music shops on the Strand, feeding the craze for Scottish music in the capital.

Like today, the Strand was moments away from London’s theatre district. On the stage, we find star recorder player **James Paisible** performing virtuoso compositions between acts. At the Theatre Royal, Handel employed the best singers and instrumentalists of the day, including star soprano and keyboard composer **Elisabetta de Gambarini**, and the unrivalled oboe player and composer **Giuseppe Sammartini.**

Finally, this programme showcases trio sonatas by two leading contemporaries of Handel, sadly overshadowed today: the harmonically adventurous **Michael Festing,** and Master of the King’s Music **William Boyce,** whose lyrical style and unique voice encapsulates the English Baroque.

Educational Workshops

At Ensemble Hesperi, we believe that live classical music should be accessible to all, and we always seek to communicate the music we love to new audiences through a welcoming and energetic stage presence. Our historical instruments provide a great way to delve into the sounds and history of the musical past, and we can design bespoke workshop and playing sessions for different age-groups, abilities and group sizes.

Our members are experienced workshop leaders and teachers, delivering workshops in care homes, SEND schools and community centres through Live Music Now. In 2023, we delivered a week-long course for the Aldeburgh Young Musicians Programme, introducing Early Music to talented students age 10-18. Since 2024, we have been an Ensemble in Association at the University of York, where we deliver a programme of coaching and workshops for undergraduate students.

Lecture Recitals

Our recorder player Mary-Jannet Leith is an experienced researcher and academic lecturer, specialising in eighteenth-century British musical culture. She is able to deliver fascinating lecture-recitals or pre-concert talks related to our programme, or to your festival theme.

Please contact us to discuss your ideas for workshops and talks; we would love to work with you to develop additional experiences and value for your audiences.

"Hesperi's ensemble playing is immaculate, their instruments blending seamlessly together...This was a delightful concert; there was a feeling of enormous enjoyment from the players coupled with tightly disciplined playing, all based on serious scholarship."

Andrew Petch, Shropshire Music Festival

Booking Ensemble Hesperi

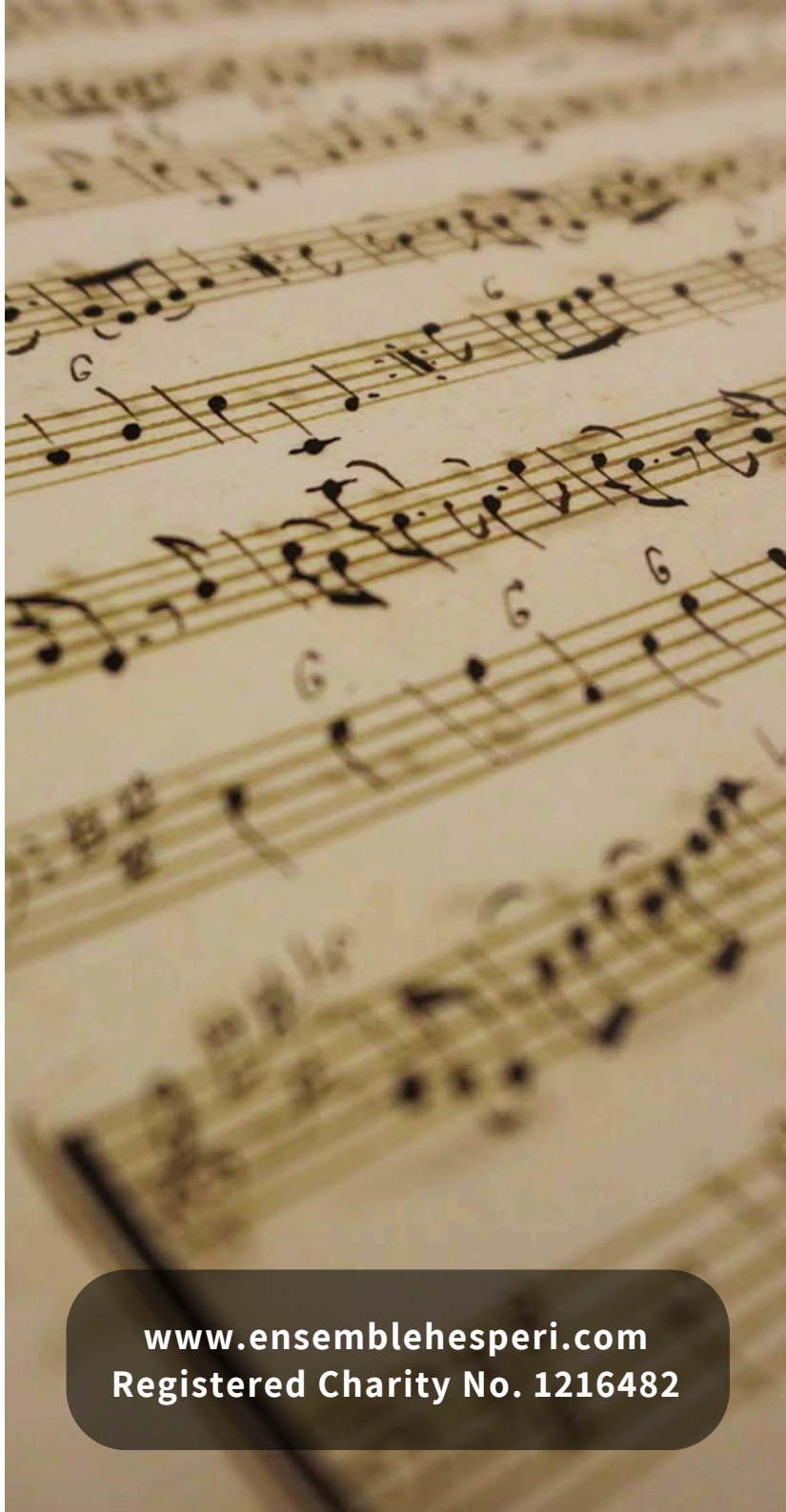
Please feel free to contact us by e-mail or phone to discuss further details of our performances, programmes, and workshops. In addition to our three programmes for 2027/2028, we can always work with you to create tailored programmes to suit the theme of your festival or concert series. We also work regularly with instrumental and vocal colleagues for larger projects, directed from the harpsichord.

Harpsichord Provision
For performances within the UK mainland, we can provide our own excellent harpsichord, a copy of a 1667 anonymous French instrument, built by leading British harpsichord maker Alan Gotto (2016). The harpsichord incurs no additional transportation costs.

Fees
Our performance fees (excluding expenses for travel and accommodation) vary on the type of concert, location, and length of programme, so please do contact us directly for a tailored quote. Indicative fees for the upcoming 2027/2028 season are:

Lunchtime Concert (1 hour): £1,500
Evening Concert: (2x 45 minute halves): £2,000
Workshops/Lecture Recitals: By negotiation

Contact
Artistic Manager: Dr Mary-Jannet Leith
ensemblehesperi@gmail.com
07895 110 469



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