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**West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2021**  
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presents

**Bantry and Beyond**

*Solos*

**10. Twelve Fantasies**

Filmed at the Henry Wood Hall, London

**Alina Ibragimova**

**Telemann**

*12 Fantasies for solo violin TWV 40:14-25*

Georg Philipp Telemann [1681-1767]

**12 Fantasies for solo violin TWV 40:14-25 [1735]**

|            |                  |                    |
|------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Largo   | Allegro          | Allegro            |
| Allegro    | Presto           | 9. Siciliane       |
| Grave      | Andante          | Vivace             |
| 2. Largo   | Allegro          | Allegro            |
| Allegro    | 6. Grave         | 10. Presto         |
| Allegro    | Presto           | Largo              |
| 3. Adagio  | Siciliane        | Allegro            |
| Presto     | Allegro          | 11. Un poco vivace |
| Grave      | 7. Dolce         | Soave              |
| Vivace     | Allegro          | Un poco vivace     |
| 4. Vivave  | Largo            | Allegro            |
| Allegro    | Presto           | 12. Moderato       |
| 5. Allegro | 8. Piacevolmente | Vivace             |
| Presto     | Spirituoso       | Presto             |

Telemann in many ways lived the ideal life for a composer and musician. He was head-hunted while studying law at university for the chapel choir and went on to be the most famous composer of his day. He consistently managed to draw a good income (despite the effort of his gambling-addicted wife) and died at eighty-six. He also ticks many of the boxes that performers and composers today would be familiar with to get funding – favouring accessibility over elitism and safeguarding his compositions as intellectual property. He was a man of enormous energy and output. While a student in Leipzig, he founded a college orchestra, the Collegium Musicum, worked as cantor for the Church of St Thomas and played the organ at St Matthews. As a professional musician he was pivotal in bringing music to the enthusiastic middle classes with public concerts in coffee houses, performing private ceremonial and court music in public concerts and writing works that could be played by skilled amateurs. He also founded a musical journal in Hamburg. He was canny in his career choices, travelling widely in his early years, then choosing positions that would allow him the greatest scope to compose and publish. He was immensely prolific as a composer and his contemporary reputation was higher than either Bach or Handel.

Purely solo music was very rare in the Baroque period, where the main instrument almost always had a continuo accompaniment. It is almost inevitable, therefore that the Fantasies should be compared to Bach's solo works for violin – Partitas and Sonatas, several of which can be heard in later concerts in this Festival. Telemann's Fantasies were published fifteen years after Bach's solo works, but it's unknown if Telemann was familiar with them. Regardless, they do not seem to have influenced his approach, being more similar to his friend's Cello Suites – clever, melodic and charming – than the Partitas and Sonatas. Although Bach's Partitas and Sonatas are better known and preferred today, at the time Telemann's works probably enjoyed greater success, being more accessible. Bach indeed, was regarded in the modern and cosmopolitan cities of Germany like Hamburg, as an out-dated and old-fashioned composer, by audiences whose tastes were increasingly moving away from complex polyphonies to simpler, though sophisticated melodies, that would later characterise the classical era. When Bach was appointed Cantor and Musical Director at Leipzig, he was only the third-choice candidate – Telemann, the first choice, used the Leipzig offer to leverage higher pay from his post at Hamburg.

But in comparing the two, we should realise a drastic difference in styles, ethos and target audience between the two friends. Bach's solo violin works were intended for professional virtuosos, who wanted to grapple with complex counterpoint and technical challenges. Telemann, favouring accessibility for both listener and performer, opted for sparser texture and greater melodiousness, which were urbane, modern and easier for non-professionals to master. A contemporary critic, in comparing the two composers generally, thought Bach too clever and over-elaborate, while considering Telemann's tunefulness and harmonic directness more appealing.

Evidence of Telemann's wide stylistic interests can be found in the Fantasies – Italian sonata form, French dance, folk music, German polyphony. Each Fantasy consists of between two and six short sections, tempos and keys vary widely. Fantasies have their roots in improvisation, and Telemann seems to have seized it as an excuse to for variety in form. The style is generally more 'vocal' than Bach's, with less daring counterpoint. Telemann was a compositional innovator and the Fantasies demonstrate a link in the evolution towards classicism. He continued to compose into old age and when he died in 1768, Joseph Haydn, the 'father' of the Classical Period, was already establishing himself throughout Europe.

*Helen Dawson*