



Festival soloist **Corey Jamason** in conversation with Elizabeth Blumenstock:

Corey performs in the 2024 concertos opener on Sunday June 16 as orchestral "continuo" harpsichordist, and as a soloist in Handel's "Cuckoo and Nightingale" concerto for chamber organ (without pedals), two oboes, and strings.

For more information and to buy tickets for all Festival concerts visit: bmf-cdm.org

EB: How did you come to play the harpsichord?

CJ: From a young age, I always had a very strong reaction to Baroque music, perhaps more than to other music. I grew up as a piano student, attempting (and failing) to imitate Glenn Gould. I loved Bach on the piano then, and I still do. While I was an undergrad I was introduced to the harpsichord by Anthony Newman, and I was hooked! Suddenly a new world opened up to me with all sorts of possibilities for interpreting this music that simply aren't there on the piano. I still feel a unique sense of joy every time I sit at a harpsichord to play, a feeling of gratitude.



—
EB: Had you not pursued your current career, what other career might you have chosen?

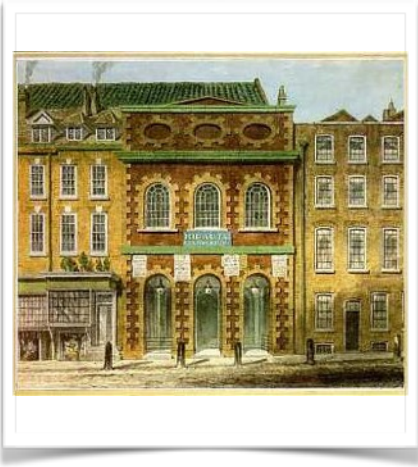
CJ: That is a tough one to answer, so many possibilities. I suppose if I wasn't a musician my first choice would be to study art history. I'm obsessed with it!

—
EB: Which country, as yet unseen by you, would you most like to visit, and why?

CJ: There are so many places I would love to visit. I've travelled a fair amount in Europe but there are still many places I would like to visit there. I suspect if I had my choice I'd love to visit Japan, mostly because I so love the food culture there.

—
EB: What are the three most beautiful things you have seen and/or heard?

CJ: That is another tough one! There are so many possibilities, as we musicians essentially surround ourselves with beautiful things every single day. A few choices would be Kathleen Ferrier singing Brahms' *Sapphische Ode*; a painting by Domenichino in the Vatican Museum, *The Last Communion of St. Jerome*, that is perhaps not 'beautiful' (terrible might be a better description), but one that affected me deeply; and lastly, an area in Florida where I spent a great deal of my childhood on the quiet, swampy rivers. These places always made me feel like I was in another time



King's Theatre, Haymarket, London, where "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" was first performed in 1739.

and place, prehistoric somehow, with alligators and strange trees and flowers and birds everywhere. All so enchanting.

EB: Corey, you are joining us for the opening concert of the Festival this year, with quite a delightful little chamber organ concerto. I'm sure our audience are curious to know why Handel's piece has ended up with the nickname "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale." Can you enlighten us?

CJ: This piece is so much fun! It was first performed by Handel himself during the premiere performance of his oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, and it certainly must have made a strange contrast with the serious subject matter of that oratorio. The second movement of the organ concerto begins in great spirits in Handel's inimitable style. But after several opening phrases, everything suddenly stops and the organ begins frolicking and developing birdsong-like material, sounding very much like a cuckoo and a nightingale, hence the title. Handel being Handel, the amazing improviser then blends the new birdsong ideas with the musical material he introduced earlier. It is so ingenious and silly!

EB: Thank you Corey. Looking forward to it!

"All the Pleasures!" June 16-23, 2024, at beautiful venues in Newport Beach & Corona del Mar, Orange County, CA.

Subscriptions, tickets & full details at bmf-cdm.org