




NORTHSTAR
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WILLEM DE FESCH

Concerti Grossi and Violin Concerto

La Sfera Armoniosa 

Lidewij van der Voort violin

Mike Fentross conductor

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WILLEM DE FESCH (1687-1761)

[1] Concerto Grosso in D Major, Op. 10 No. 4	12:52
[2] Concerto Grosso in C Major, Op. 3 No. 1	7:54
[3] Concerto Grosso in E Minor, Op. 3 No. 5	6:59
[4] Violin Concerto in C Minor, Op. 5 No. 5	9:25
[5] Concerto Grosso in A Minor	6:45
[6] Concerto Grosso in C Major, Op. 10 No. 3	8:34
[7] Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 10 No. 5	7:35

Total time: 60:09

The seventeenth century courtyard in Alkmaar where I am fortunate enough to live is just a stone's throw away from where Willem de Fesch was born. How close can you get to the composer who roamed those streets over three hundred years ago? However difficult, I do my best to envision him in front of me. I follow him on foot crossing the cheese market, on horseback (Willem was boisterous, but I keep up with him) to the Amsterdam theatre, by horse and carriage to the Antwerp cathedral and lastly by boat to England. What's going on within my 'neighbour's head'? I don't know, I sometimes wonder the same thing about my 21st century neighbour. Fortunately, we still have his music, which now, three hundred years later, has been brought back to life. How I would like to spend an evening in the pub with this fascinating, passionate, quick-tempered, humorous, sensitive man and ask him all about his music and his adventures.

Mike Fentross

Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi grew up with the sunny sparkle and the dynamics of the water in Venice. The music of German Händel got its true sparkle after he had lived under the Italian sun for long enough. Their Dutch contemporary Willem de Fesch did not enjoy such blessings. The shimmer of the Italian Baroque, which his contemporaries almost experienced firsthand, was only known to this lesser-known Dutchman by 'hearsay', so to speak. De Fesch was born in Alkmaar in 1687, a place where powerful westerly winds blow frequently. His crib stood close to an old canal and a market full of cheeses. A decor that could hardly have been more Dutch. Yet he deserves an honorable place alongside such greats as Vivaldi and Handel, as his work sounds at least as colorful, playful, inventive and sparkling as that of his contemporaries. As if he, too, had once been shone upon by the radiant Mediterranean sun.

How did he come by his talent and knowledge? The inhabitants of his native region would probably answer with the expression: 'Willem did not get it from a stranger'. His father Louis, like his ancestors, was a musician at the Episcopal Court of Liège, Belgium, until he moved to wealthy republican Amsterdam in around 1680. Possibly because that city offered more safety and security than the restless southern Netherlands in those days.

A little while later, Louis opted for the more northern flourishing trading city of Alkmaar. The organ builder Van Hagerbeer completed the magnificent organ of the Grote Kerk there in 1647. The renowned Alkmaar artist Caesar van Everdingen painted the immense organ shutters. Why would Louis de Fesch choose Alkmaar? Because his wife has friends there? Is he simply following the example of earlier Flemish and Brabant immigrants? Does he perhaps belong to the city musicians? Does he contribute to the musical life of the local elite

and their collegium musicum? Even biographer Robert Tusler has failed to answer those questions.

The ties with Liège nevertheless remain, the family returns. As a child Willem sings in the choir of Cologne's court chapel under the direction of his teacher Carl Rosier, whose strength as a violinist and composer encompasses both the beauty of the passionate Italian inspired baroque and its refined French counterpart.

Young Willem De Fesch must certainly have learnt a lot from him. Sometime after 1700 his parents and him return to Amsterdam. By then the city had become an epicentre of music publishers. Many an Italian composer publishes his work there. Vivaldi performs there and in 1729 Pietro Locatelli even opts to move there.

In 1708 Willem De Fesch is appointed as violinist in the orchestra of the Amsterdam City Theatre. Not a large ensemble, due to the small size of the orchestra pit. Eventually, he becomes the leader of this orchestra, that accompanies operas. He composed a lot of music for stage performances himself, such as the concerts in C and A minor on this CD, which, like most of his other 'Amsterdam' compositions, have never been published. Much of it was lost in the fatal theatre fire of 1772. The two concerts Opus 3 from 1718 on this CD have however been published in print.

Judging by his music, De Fesch himself must also have been a violin virtuoso. He gained an international reputation as a soloist, especially in Antwerp, where he was in great demand. In 1725 he was appointed Kapellmeister of Our Lady's Cathedral in Antwerp. A time at which he probably no longer

wrote orchestral music. His *Missa Paschalis* however, was born there in 1730.

Thanks to the reports of that church council, we were able to find out more about his personality: temperamental. He regularly clashes with his patrons, mostly because of his attitude towards the choirboys. Willem sometimes gives them an earful and would even blackmail them. When he is asked to sign a document in which he declares to improve his life in 1730, he quits in order not to lose face.

He moves to London, which becomes his next place of employment in 1731. The fact that that city is the centre of the music world certainly has something to do with that. Opera is so popular there that there is fierce competition between the companies, including Händel. They fight almost literally for the best voices, in which respect De Fesch's wife certainly has something to offer. What's more, a good violinist, conductor and composer can always find a job there. De Fesch soon performs his own compositions in the largest concert halls. Possibly because he already contacted his London associates whilst still in Antwerp. Now and then he is also concertmaster in the 'best orchestra in the world': that of Händel.

When the former christened his dramatic English-language oratorio 'Esther' in 1732, the first work in that genre, De Fesch seemed to want to emulate him. In 1733 'Judith', the second, equally English-language oratorio by hand of Willem de Fesch is published. Unfortunately, only one aria of this work has survived. As far as we know, orchestral works only started to appear again in 1741: *Opus 10*, also on this CD.

Following this release, he is audibly matured enormously compared to the works written twenty years earlier. This is also evident in his second oratorio 'Joseph', which has been preserved.

De Fesch became particularly popular in London with his summer open-air concerts in the Marlybone Gardens, where Händel also showed himself. De Fesch spent his last years in relative silence. His friend Thomas Hollis describes an outing on horseback in a diary entry from July 1760. Everyone strongly advises De Fesch against spurring this restless riding animal, but he is remained a temperamental man, who throws caution to the wind. After spurring it on, the animal reacts by tossing his rider off and running away. He falls, dislocates a shoulder, breaks an arm and bruises a thigh.

On January 1, 1761, Hollis writes in his diary that it seems that 'my poor old friend' De Fesch, is now dying, suffering from his ailments. He notes: "I almost wish it for him". On January 3, Hollis writes that his 'old master and friend' died last Saturday morning. He then praises him as "an excellent musician and a worthy man".

Hans Visser

Mike Fentross

Artistic director & conductor

Basso continuo: theorbo, baroque guitar

Conductor/lutenist Mike Fentross has largely earned his credits as an early music specialist. He is working all over Europe as a conductor, soloist and basso continuo player and he is professor of lute and basso continuo at the Royal Conservatory The Hague. In 2006 he founded the baroque orchestra La Sfera Armoniosa.

Mike Fentross conducted in many festivals and concert halls like the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Festival van Vlaanderen, Festival d'Ambronay, Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht, Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci, Paradiso Amsterdam, Monteverdi Festival Cremona, Festival de Musica Portico de Zamora, Festival Musica Antiqua Brugge, Vantaa Early Music Festival, Bayreuth Barock and Muziekcentrum Vredenburg in Utrecht. For two times he had the honour to conduct in the presence of Queen Beatrix of Holland. In 1988 Mike Fentross graduated at the Royal Conservatory The Hague where he studied with lute pioneer Toyohiko Satoh. In 1994 he won the Van Wassenaer Competition in Amsterdam with violinist Helene Schmitt. He played chamber music with musicians as Yo Yo Ma, Ton Koopman, Janine Jansen, Marion Verbruggen, Sonia Prina, Maria Bajo, Wilbert Hazelzet, Bruce Dickey, Lucy van Dael, Andrew Lawrence King, Philippe Jarousski, Eduardo Lopez Banzo, Skip Sempe and Gerard Lesne. Mike has recorded more than 75 cd's.

He studied conducting with Stefan Pas. As conductor he debuted in 1999 with La Dafne from Marco da Gagliano in a production of the New Opera Academie in Amsterdam. In 2006 he conducted in the presence of Queen Beatrix the modern world premiere from the opera *L'Ipermestra* from Cavalli in a prestigious jubilee production from the Utrecht Early Music Festival and in 2008 he conducted a second unearthed Cavalli opera *La Rosinda* in a production from the Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci Potsdam. In 2009 he conducted for the first time in the big hall from the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and in the same year he was musical director in the production *Granida* performed in the presence of Queen Beatrix. About his debut as conductor from the Dutch Chamber Choir in 2010 in the Concertgebouw the press wrote: Conductor Mike Fentross rivalled Caravaggio with the score of the *Maria Vespers*. His first time conducting the Nederlands Kamerkoor was a resounding success.

Mike doesn't only conduct Early Music, in 2004 he conducted *Pierrot Lunaire* from Arnold Schoenberg. The press wrote: There was great enthusiasm for Mike Fentross as conductor of a double bill consisting of Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* and Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. Mike Fentross gave a performance of *Pierrot lunaire* that 'appeared to come from another planet'.

In 2012 Mike made his Austrian debut in the Haydn Festival Eisenstadt with great success in a program with coloratura soprano Simone Kermes and in the same year he conducted the pre jubilee concert for the Concertgebouw in a

program with solo violinist Lucy van Dael and singers Henk Neven and Andreas Scholl. In 2013 he conducted the Fairy Queen with his orchestra and the Netherlands Chamberchoir.

Since 2013 he is regularly conducting the baroque orchestra and choir of the Royal Conservatory. In 2014 he was invited by Paradiso Orchestra to conduct Beethovens Eroica. In 2016 he conducted the Netherlands Chamber Choir in a Bach, Faure program live broadcast on national radio.

Lidewij van der Voort grew up with baroque music. While studying modern violin in Amsterdam it became clear to her that early music would also become her artistic future. She specialised with Sigiswald Kuijken in Brussels and with violinists such as John Holloway, Enrico Gatti and Roy Goodman. For years she was first violin of the European Union Baroque Orchestra and soon played, often as concertmaster, with the major European baroque orchestras: Academy of Ancient Music, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Musica Antiqua Köln, Anima Eterna, De Nederlandse Bachvereniging, B'Rock, The King's Consort, La Sfera Armoniosa, and Capriccio Sravagante. Among her musical partners are Rachel Podger, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Jos van Immerseel and Richard Egarr and Skip Sempé.

Lidewij van der Voort was co-founder of the Dutch baroque orchestra Holland Baroque Society, where she was concertmaster for many years and won several prizes. She mainly focuses on the 17th century at the moment with her newly founded ensemble FLUX, with her duo with the lutenist Fred Jacobs and with ensembles such as Vox Luminis.

Lidewij plays on an Amsterdam violin by Hendrik Jacobs from the late 17th century.

Elise van der Wel (1992) studied violin at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague with Theodora Geraets. She specialized in early music with her study on baroque violin with Kati Debretzeni and Walter Reiter. She took masterclasses with David Rabinovich, Lucia Swarts, Petra Mülleijans and Kristin von der Goltz.

Elise performed with many early music ensembles such as the Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Capriola di Gioia (België), Dutch Baroque, the Luthers Bach Ensemble, Collegium Marianum and the Apollo Ensemble. Elise is member and cofounder of Le Concert d'Apollon, an orchestra specialized in French baroque music. She is also member of the Castello Consort, an ensemble specialized in 17th century music.

Siebe Henstra began his career as a harpsichordist at the age of 16 when he built his first harpsichord. Immediately after high school he studied harpsichord with Ton Koopman and Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam.

As a continuo player he is a member of, among others, the Dutch Bach Society, the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, the Leonhardt Consort, La Petite Bande, the Ricercar Consort, Tokyo Baroque and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He also forms a duo with cellist Lucia Swarts and is a permanent member of the Nederlandse Bachvereniging where he plays both the organ and the harpsichord. Conducted by conductors such as Gustav Leonhardt,

Frans Brüggén and Jos van Veldhoven, he has contributed to numerous CD, radio, TV, record and opera productions and to the website www.allofbach.com.

In Edinburgh (1982) and in Amsterdam (1987) he won prizes at various harpsichord competitions.

Since 1988 Henstra has been principal study teacher in harpsichord at the Utrecht Conservatoire. Since October 2017 he also fulfils this role at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague.

The Ricercar label has released CDs with 17th century Italian harpsichord music and Weckmann's complete keyboard works. He also made a recording for the MIM in Brussels with clavichord works and collaborated on the recording of Sweelinck's complete works, among others awarded with an Edison 2003, Deutsche Schallplatten Kritik Preis and a 10 in Luister.

The French **Edouard Catalan** (1992) began his cello studies at the age of seven, studying under Pierre Champagne at the Arras Conservatory. At the age of fifteen he joined the cello class of Marc-Didier Thirault at the conservatory of Reims, simultaneously starting his studies of baroque cello under the guidance of Pauline Warnier.

After obtaining his diplomas in modern cello (2009) and baroque cello (2010), he began his further studies in baroque cello in 2012. This time under the guidance of Hervé Douchy at the Brussels Conservatory. Catalan has previously

worked with Jérôme Pernoo, Marie-Thérèse Grisenti, Benjamin Chenier, Hélène Dufour, Fabrice Bihan, Xavier Gagnepain, David Zelik, and Jaap Terlinden.

Edouard regularly works with conductors such as Leonardo García Alarcón, Guy van Waas and Sigiswald Kuijken, and ensembles such as Les Agréments, La Petite Bande, Scherzi Musicali, The New Baroque Times and the Collegium Musicum de Bruxelles. He is also one of the founders of the ensemble BarrocoTout.

Octavie Dostaler-Lalonde is a versatile musician whose repertoire spans from the late 17th to the 20th century. Her main focus is historical performance practice. She researches and uses techniques and instruments related to the time of the music she plays.

After studying modern cello under Denis Brott and Carole Sirois at the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal, Octavie received the Prix avec Grande Distinction in 2011. Given her interest in historical performance practices, she continued with a study of baroque cello under Susie Napper in Montreal and under Viola de Hoog in Amsterdam. As a young musician, Octavie regularly won prizes both regionally in Quebec and nationally in Canada. As a baroque soloist, she received the second prize at the international "Concours Corneille" in France in 2016.

Octavie currently forms a duo with fortepianist and harpsichordist Artem Belogurov, with whom she regularly performs both at home and abroad.

In Europe Octavie performs with groups such as Ensemble Masques, Vox Luminis, Camerata RCO, Amsterdam Corelli Collective, Terra Nova and the Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht. As an eager chamber musician, she was co-founder of several ensembles: Postscript, Ensemble Lexikon and AKOR.

Femke Huizinga graduated in 2012 with honours in baroque violin and baroque viola with Antoinette Lohmann at the Utrecht Conservatory. Femke plays with leading orchestras such as the Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Anima Eterna, The Northern Consort and La Sfera Armoniosa. She was leader of the violas in the European Union Baroque Orchestra in 2011. Her passion for the sound of gut strings and her curious approach brought her to numerous summer courses and master classes throughout Europe between 2004 to 2014. This allowed her to further specialize in historical performance practice with experts as diverse as Elizabeth Wallfisch, John Holloway, Thomas Albert, Richard Gwilt, Anton Steck and Josue Melendez. Between 2015 and 2017 she was selected to participate in the Young Bach Fellowship of the Dutch Bach Society.

As an enterprising chamber musician she is co-founder of string trio Gesto Antico, and duo La Corella. She has been a guest at festivals for early music in Utrecht, Saintes, Trieste and Antwerp.

Femke is also fascinated by innovative concert forms to let her beloved classical music speak to a wider audience. In doing so, she experiments with the Arcade

Ensemble, which brings the social and communicative power of music into society in an innovative way.

Finally, Femke also teaches violin privately, because the interaction between teaching and performing always leads to surprising and valuable insights.

Joseph Tan received his bachelor's degree in baroque violin from the University of Austin Texas in 1994 under Eugene Gratovitch. He continued his studies at Oberlin College, where he obtained his master's degree under Marilyn McDonald in 1997. Eager to learn, he chose to deepen his historical performance practices even further by specializing at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, where he studied under Monica Higgett, Elizabeth Wallfisch, and Pavlo Beznosiuk, and obtained his artistic diploma in baroque violin in 2001.

Joseph Tan's specialized in historical violin and viola playing with a focus on chamber music and orchestral works from the 17th to the early 20th century. His main interest lies in late 18th and early 19th century music and ways of playing.

Joseph is a regular player in various ensembles and orchestras at home and abroad. He plays the violin in Les Musiciens du Prince, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Ensemble 1700, La Chambre Philharmonique, Harmonie Universelle, Anima Eterna Brugge and Carmel Bach Festival.

Judith Verona Martín (1985) was born in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain. At the age of eight she started playing the violin. She received her Bachelor

Degree at the Conservatory of Aragon with Enrique Palomares. Further studies followed with Kees Hulsman at the Tilburg Conservatory and with Antoinette Lohman (baroque violin).

She also participated in many masterclasses with the Casals Quartet, Nicolás Chumachenko, Kees Koelmans and Anner Bijlsma.

As an orchestral musician she played in the Philharmonic Orchestra of Gran Canaria, The World Orchestra of jeunesses musicales, The Valencia Symphony Orchestra and she plays in Early music ensembles such as Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht, Musica Poetica, La Sfera Armoniosa, Orquesta Barroca de Tenerife, The Bach Orchestra of the Netherlands, Lutheran Bach Ensemble and De Nederlandse Bach Vereniging.

Ewa Żołyniak-Adamska is a graduate from the Feliks Nowowiejski Music Academy in Bydgoszcz (Poland), where she studied violin with Vadim Brodski and Baroque violin with Irmgard Schaller and Daniel Deuter. In 2019 she completed her another master degree at Conservatorium van Amsterdam, where she studied Baroque violin and viola with Antoinette Lohmann.

She has performed with many orchestras and ensembles playing both modern and historical instruments. Aside performing, she is also active as a violin teacher.

Zdenka Prochaskova is Czech in origin and studied violin and viola at the Utrecht Conservatory.

As a viola player and violinist she regularly performs with various orchestras and chamber music ensembles in the Netherlands and abroad. She has her own ensemble, CORDEVENTO, with whom she has performed in venues such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Philharmonie Cologne and at the Early Music Festival Utrecht.

Besides many performances, Zdenka also teaches violin to children and adults who play at various levels. She teaches at the Vivaldi Music Lessons school in Delft.

Esther van der Eijk studied viola with Else Krieg and Jürgen Kußmaul in the Netherlands, She continued her studies at the Scuola di musica di Fiesole with Antonello Farulli in Italy. After graduating, she played in the Radio Symphony Orchestra for several years, but the Early Music continued to call to her, to such an extent that she specialised in the Historical Performance Practice with violinist Lucy van Dael and toured Europe with the European Union Baroque Orchestra in 2000.

Esther has played with many different national and international groups since. In 2005 she co-founded the Holland Baroque Society and, as a member of the artistic team, is responsible for the Society's adventurous concerts.

Esther plays on a beautiful viola from 1700 (Pieter Rombouts) which is made available to her by the National Musical Instrument Fund.

Severiano Paoli graduated in double bass from the Instituto Musicale L. Boccherini (Lucca) with M. Gabriele Raghianti. He then perfected himself at the Prince Claus Conservatory (Groningen) and with Wolfgang Güttler (Berliner Philharmoniker). He also took part in masterclasses with Thierry Barbè (head double bass player of the Opera Orchestra in Paris), Rinat Ibragimov (London Symphony Orchestra), Dorin Marc (Munchner Philharmoniker), Catalin Rotaru. Besides all that, he studied early music practice with Margaret Urquhart (Royal Conservatoire The Hague, Conservatorium van Amsterdam) and Robert Franenberg (Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Nederland Bach Vereniging). He collaborates with various orchestras and ensembles including Orfeo 55 (Metz), Capriola di gioia (Bruges), Auser Musicians (Pisa), the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra (Amsterdam), the North Pole Orchestra (Drachten), the Festival Puccini Orchestra (Torre del Lago), l'orchestra Bruno Maderna (Forli), Orchestra Arche (Pisa), Camerata Strumentale Città di Prato. He has worked with the ensemble Auser Musici for the recordings of the opera "Il Bajazet" by Francesco Gasparini for Glossa Music during the Opera Barga Festival in 2014, and at the modern premiere of Il Girello by Jacopo Melani in 2017.

Paoli is a member of the Renaissance music ensemble of the late XIX century with a baroque setup, a 5-string bass in Viennese tuning, with bows by bowmaker Marco Pasquino. He also plays on a G violone with Gianluca Pierozzi and a bow by Coen Engelhard.

Mike Fentross conductor and basso continuo
Lidewij van der Voort concertmaster- solo violin 1
Femke Huizinga violin 1
Joseph Tan violin 1
Elise van der Wel violin 2 (concertino)
Judith Verona Martín violin 2
Ewa Żołyniak-Adamska violin 2
Zdenka Prochaskova viola
Esther van der Eijk viola (concertino)
Siebe Henstra harpsichord
Edouard Catalan cello (concertino)
Octavie Dostaler-Lalonde cello
Severiano Paoli double bass

This Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited using the 'High Quality Musical Mastering' principle with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



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RECORDING
by **BERT VAN DER WOLF**



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at www.spiritofturtle.com**

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