

Scottish baroque ensemble 'Laudonia' launch a six concert tour

This exciting newcomer to the early music scene will celebrate the musical journey of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik on their Grand Tour, which comes to Edinburgh on September 2nd.

Scotland's dynamic new baroque ensemble, Laudonia, will be performing a 'Grand Tour' this September, celebrating the musical journey of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik. Joining them for this remarkable project is one of the leading names on the early music scene, the Croatian-born star violinist Bojan Čičić.

Laudonia, whose name comes from the Latin description for the Lothians, was co-founded by internationally renowned Scottish soprano Susan Hamilton, along with Austrian Arts Manager Christoph Crepaz.

The tour is celebrating the journey of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, the famous politician, judge and composer who left Penicuik in October 1694 and returned four years later, having experienced some incredible musical adventures across Europe, which created some of the best music of its time to emerge from Scotland. While Sir John is more renowned for his legal and political contributions to Scottish life, he also stands as a significant composer in his own right. Sadly, much of his

musical output was lost in a fire that struck Penicuik House in 1899. However, his five vocal cantatas have survived and provide a glimpse into his musical genius.

At a time when political and cultural links are particularly relevant, Laudonia bring together some of Scotland and Europe's leading musicians to work on this exciting project, inspired by Sir John's Grand Tour in the 1690s. Following his route through Europe, from Penicuik in Midlothian to Rome, Susan Hamilton has curated a unique program for soprano, trumpet, strings, and bass continuo, featuring compositions that he might have encountered during his travels, written by composers he met, and some he studied with on his journey. This includes Clerk's emotional cantata *Leo Scotiae Irritatus*, Corelli's passionate violin sonata in D minor *La Follia* and the ethereal concerto for voice, trumpet and strings by Rosenmüller *O Felicissimus Paradysi*.

Despite being based in Scotland, Laudonia stands out by bringing together leading exponents of early music from both Scotland and Europe. This fusion of diverse experiences and ideas infuses their performances with an exciting vitality and energy.

While their primary focus lies in giving concerts and producing recordings, Laudonia is equally committed to fostering educational and outreach programs within Scotland and beyond. Collaborating with schools, conservatoires, and concert halls, the ensemble aims to create projects that are both educational and stimulating, allowing young people and new audiences to experience, learn from, and be inspired by live music.

Laudonia co-founder, Susan Hamilton's earliest musical education was as a chorister at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, where she was one of the first girl choristers, and as a pupil at St Mary's Music School. An award-winning soprano, focussing on baroque music, Susan performs at major international

festivals and has worked with conductors such as Sir John Eliot Gardiner. Along with Ben Parry she was co-founder and formerly artistic director of the Dunedin Consort.

Speaking about Laudonia's Grand Tour, she said: "Sir John Clerk of Penicuik's Grand Tour is of national importance. We were inspired by his incredible journey and fascinated that music played such a significant role opening doors and offering him wonderful opportunities. Music has always had the power to break down all barriers. It is a language without prejudice."

TOUR DATES: September 2023

Melrose 1st September 19:30 – Holy Trinity Church, Melrose

Edinburgh 2nd September 19:30 – St Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh

Dunkeld 3rd September 19:30 – Dunkeld Cathedral

Inverness 5th September 19:30 – Inverness Cathedral

Aberdeen 6th September 19:30 – Queen's Cross Church, Aberdeen

London 8th September 19:30 – St Mary Abbot's Church, Kensington