

*Singing birds
& yellow
carnations*

*A portrait
of Anna
Magdalena
Bach*



Corelli

Corelli Concerts

'Singing Birds and Yellow Carnations': A Portrait of Anna Magdalena Bach

This programme portrays the domestic life of the Bach family. When Bach married Anna Magdalena Wülcken - his second wife - he presented her with an album of harpsichord music a wedding present. His wife was skilled musician, who not only bore 13 children and managed her household, but also spent many hours copying her husband's music. Through the eyes of contemporary documents, letters and accounts read by an actor playing the part of Johann Elias Bach, a cousin who lived with the family for 5 years, we explore the domestic world of the Bach's and the music they shared. We learn of the trials and tribulations of her step children, the joy of family music-making, her near fatal illness and her husband's concern, and her last years as an alms widow: in short, a tribute to the lady who had a penchant for singing birds and yellow carnations.

'If possible, I would be glad to have for my honoured Cousin, Herr Bach, a bottle brandy made with rose-hips; and for his wife, a few - nota bene - yellow carnations. I know for certain that she is a great connoisseur of gardening, and yellow carnations would give her great delight - and ingratiate me all the more with both Herr Bach and his wife.'

Johann Elias Bach to his mother 1738

The music is drawn mostly from the Anna Magdalena Bach books. Although predominantly by Bach, it includes items by Couperin, C P E Bach and other contemporary musicians. A soprano soloist sings a selection of the vocal items that Frau Bach copied into her collection, amongst which are the beautiful arias 'Bist du bei mir' and 'Schlummert ein' as well as the more humorous - and racy - 'Willst du mein Herz mir schenken'.