

Baroque Concertos 2

City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong
 Union Church Hong Kong
 Sat, 8pm

Oboist Leanne Nicholls doesn't have any problems comprehending Italian musical terms such as *allegro* ("cheerful" or "brisk"), *con brio* ("with vigour") or *concerto grosso* ("big concert"). But the founder and artistic director of the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong found herself reaching for her dictionary to figure out the meaning of the name given to the Antonio Vivaldi work - *Il Grosso Mogul* - that will open the troupe's forthcoming baroque concert.

It was only after a conversation with violinist and guest concertmaster Andrea Zanchetta - who, like Vivaldi, hails from Venice - that she discovered the Concerto for Violin in D Major, *Il Grosso Mogul* (The Grand Mogul) is named after a diamond discovered in India.

Originally weighing 787½ carats, the gem was the talk of the town around the time that Vivaldi composed the piece because Ortensio Borgio, the Venetian tasked with cutting it, somehow polished away so much of the jewel that his finished product came to only 279 carats.

Subsequently nicknamed "Woman's Best Friend" by the musicians, "it's a gem of a work", Nicholls (right) says with a laugh. She also thinks the piece possesses "lots of virtuosity [and is] dazzling ... [and] brilliant", and adds that "this concerto has been a favourite with many other composers - including Brahms and Mendelssohn". Additionally, "Bach held this piece in high esteem and copied and transcribed it for organ".

The piece's featured soloist, Zanchetta, is based in Hong Kong but was formerly a solo violinist for Venice's Interpreti Veneziani. Described by Nicholls as "very, very familiar with baroque Venetian composers", he is one of *Baroque Concertos 2*'s three soloists and also plays Vivaldi's Concerto for 4 Violins in B Minor (along with City Chamber Orchestra violinists Hvang Yoo, Su Yan and Samuel Bin).

Nicholls is the soloist for a work composed by another Venetian in the all-concerto programme. Alessandro Marcello is not as well known as his slightly younger contemporary, Vivaldi, but his Concerto for Oboe in D Minor "really is a classic example of a concerto and famous for its second movement, which is absolutely beautiful ... very poignant. It's what you'd find on a CD of famous adagios," Nicholls says.

"Baroque music is very important to the repertoire of a chamber orchestra and we want very much to cover this repertoire," she says. When planning the musical ensemble's 10th anniversary season programme, Nicholls also sought to include performances in which members of the orchestra feature as soloists.

For this Saturday's concert, City Chamber Orchestra harpist Teresa Suen and her instrument have the rare opportunity of taking centre stage when playing George Frideric Handel's Concerto for Harp in B Flat Major. Usually, "if the harp's on the stage, it's so far away" and can only be heard "tinkling in the background", Nicholls says. But in the intimate confines of Union Church, this instrument should be clearly heard as well as seen for at least this part of the concert.

Yvonne Teh

22A Kennedy Road, Mid-Levels, HK\$180, includes refreshments. Inquiries: 2864 2154 or info@cco.hk.com

