

Bridging the Baroque

Discovering the Classical String Trio

The Vivaldi Project
Elizabeth Field, violin
Allison Edberg Nyquist, violin
Stephanie Vial, cello

Sonata da Camera a Tre in F major, op. 1, no. 5 (1705)
due violini e violone o cembalo

*Preludio Largo - Allemanda Presto -
Corrente Allegro – Gavotta-Presto*

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Sonata in G major, B.37 (c. 1755-1762)
for two violins and basso

Allegretto
Tempo di Menuetto

J. C. Bach
(1735-1782)

Sonata in G minor op. 1, no. 2 (1762)
for two violins with a thorough bass for
harpsichord or violoncello

Largo andante
Allegro spiritoso
Allegro assai

Carlo Antonio Campioni
(1720-1788)

Trio in C major (c. 1750s)
for two violins and basso

Tempo giusto
Adagio
Menuet/Trio
Finale

Leopold Hofmann
(1738-1793)

Divertimento in D major, H. V:15 (c. 1750-1766)
for two violins and basso

Adagio
Allegro
Menuet-Trio

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Trio II in D minor (c. 1770)
for two Violini and Violoncello obbligato

Allegro
Andante un poco Adagio
Presto

John Antes
(1740-1811)

Our program for this afternoon's concert explores the exciting early development of the Classical string trio, a genre that while manifestly popular in its day, has been largely overlooked during the past century. Only a handful of Classical string trios survive as celebrated works for today's performers and audiences—Beethoven's op. 9 set of three trios, two youthful works of Schubert (the first unfinished), and the grand six-movement *Divertimento in E flat* by Mozart, notably the sole representative from the 18th century. Yet at its compositional peak (c. 1760-1770), the string trio out-published the string quartet by a ratio of more than five to one, resulting in some 2000 string trios by many of the 18th century's most prolific and eminent composers. These facts are not really surprising given that the string trio's predecessor, the *trio sonata* was one of the most important and highly popular forms of instrumental music throughout the Baroque period. As such, it became a key repository for musical ideas and innovations and played no small role in defining the instrumental language of the 17th and 18th centuries. While the string trio (as the *trio sonata*'s natural successor) tends to be defined according to the hindsight of chamber music history as a "quartet minus one," perhaps we might instead describe the development of the string quartet as a "trio plus one."

The Baroque *trio sonata* is a trio in the sense that it is written for two melodic instruments (often two violins) and *basso continuo*, improvised harmonies above an independent bass line. But while the *continuo* counts as one voice of the trio, the number of instruments used to produce it can vary considerably: keyboard and/or the plucked lute, theorbo or guitar, and/or a variety of bowed bass instruments. The Classical string trio on the other hand, specifies three players, eliminating the role of the chordal *basso continuo* in favor of a more homophonic, integrated bass line.

Of course the *basso continuo* tradition did not suddenly one day cease to exist, and neither was the absence of a chordal realization unheard of among Baroque sonatas. We see this in the first work on our program, from **Antonio Vivaldi's** set of twelve op. 1 *trio sonatas* scored for *due violini e violone o cembalo*. The option for the bass line to be played by cello "or" harpsichord was also offered by Corelli, Tartini, and many other Baroque composers. It is rare to hear these works performed today without the texture of the improvised keyboard part, but doing so reminds us of the flexibility and fluidity between genres and the way their accompanying aesthetic changes are wrought over time. The *sonata no. 5 in F major* is a joyful, conversational work. It reveals all the infectious zest, enthusiasm, and virtuosity which Vivaldi brought to his *trio sonatas*, and which are the hallmarks of both his playing and compositional output—a wealth of solo sonatas, concertos, *sinfonias*, masses, psalms and vespers music, oratorios, solo cantatas, and operas (at least 50 of them and possibly 94 if we are to believe Vivaldi's own boasts).

The six string trios B. 36-41 of **Johann Christian Bach** owe much of their charm and vitality to the detailed nuance and variety of expression found throughout their well-balanced phrases. Eighteenth-century music historian Charles Burney evidently heard and admired this quality in Bach's music: "Bach seems to have been the first composer who observed the law of contrast, as a principle." Other composers may have found contrast accidentally, but Bach, Burney asserts, made a point of it. Indeed, the G major *sonata's* buoyant opening *Allegretto* (the diminutive and jauntily-paced form of *Allegro*) is full of juxtaposed ideas—at first questioning, then boisterous, with sometimes the violins speaking together, at other times engaged in an animated dialogue. The second movement, *Tempo di Menuetto*, is equally lively, bearing testament to Bach's enthusiasm and period of discovery during his years in Italy (1755-1762), from which the trios likely date.

The avid music collector and amateur violinist Thomas Jefferson sought to possess all of **Carlo Antonio Campioni's** chamber music. In a note to his music vendor, Jefferson meticulously copied the opening measures of all the compositions by Campioni he possessed, adding that "he would be glad to

have everything else he has composed of solos, duets, or trios.” Among the trios (42 total), the op. 4 set stands out in their treatment of the cello, which is given a true share, and often leading role, in the melodic material. Yet like Vivaldi, the op. 4 title page, as in all of Campioni’s published trios, indicates that the *thorough bass* can be played by either harpsichord “or” violoncello. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how the plucking harpsichord could effectively produce Campioni’s lush bass line melodies, particularly the plaintive rising and falling fourth gesture of the G minor trio’s opening *Largo andante*. In the trio’s *Allegro spiritoso*, Campioni shows off his unique combination of Italian flair and French poise, while the finale *Allegro assai* is a rousing gigue, rustically textured with open-string double stops and clever instrumental pairings.

The Viennese composer **Leopold Hofmann** was regarded by his contemporaries as one of the most important and influential musicians of his generation. A trained singer, keyboard player, and violinist, his widespread fame was founded in both his sacred vocal works as well as his considerable instrumental output. His innovative contributions to the symphony and concerto make him an important bridge between high Baroque forms and the emerging Classical style. Indeed, the elegant, tuneful opening of the trio in C major could not be more *Galant* in character. One can really hear the roots of the Viennese style in the broad harmonic rhythms of the *Tempo giusto*’s accompaniment and the wonderfully expansive and elastic back and forth between the two violins. The tender yet coy *Adagio* is followed by a *Minuet* and *Trio*, the latter offering the cello (an instrument Hofmann treated as a solo instrument in a number of his trios) the seat of activity. Unusual among trios from this period, an energetic fourth movement *Finale* in a quick 2/4 rounds out the work. It is owing to the Moravian composer Johann Friedrich Peter that a copy of this trio survives. While a seminary student in Germany, Peter copied dozens of works by European composers, which he then brought with him to America in 1770, and which are now housed by the Moravian Music Archive.

Joseph Haydn begins the *Adagio* of his Divertimento in D major with masterful and breathtaking simplicity. The violin, a soprano in an Italian love song, floats above the cello’s lilting harmonic outline while the second violin acts as a lute’s pizzicato accompaniment. The phrases, rarely regular, ebb and flow according to melodic contour, rhythmic momentum, and key. The clever manipulation of irregular phrasing also characterizes the *Allegro*, which features a recurring fanfare-like motif among its diverse expressions. In the *Minuet/Trio*, Haydn effortlessly combines questions, answers, and imitative phrases. It is not surprising that these early works, written for connoisseurs around the same time as the op. 1 and op. 2 string quartets, were well received. Numerous copies of the trios circulated in the 1760s and 1770s, along with accounts such as Giuseppe Carpani’s (*Le Haydine, 1812*), which describes their “singularity of style and seductiveness of manner” that “made them a success everywhere, and the subject of discussion in the profession.”

The three string trios of Pennsylvanian-born **John Antes**, are the earliest known chamber works written by an American composer. Educated in the Moravian Boys’ school at Bethlehem, Antes became an ordained Moravian minister in 1769 after working for a number of years as an instrument maker. Of the seven instruments he is known to have made, only a violin and viola survive, housed in museums in Nazareth and Lilitz, PA. The string trios likely date from Antes’ missionary service in Egypt from 1770-1781. Additional surviving works include 31 concerted anthems and solo songs, and 59 hymn tunes. The Six Quartettos mentioned in a letter to Benjamin Franklin (1779) have unfortunately been lost. Each instrumental voice in the densely textured D minor trio is treated with equal importance. The outer *Allegro* and *Presto* movements are highly conversational in nature, with phrases of contrasting characters combined through question, exclamation, and dramatic pause to create a lively discourse. Begun by the second violin, the second movement *Andante un poco Adagio* is both cheerful and serene.

Praised for its brilliant and expressive playing, **The Vivaldi Project** is dedicated to presenting innovative programs of Baroque and Classical string repertoire that combine scholarship and performance to both educate and delight audiences. The period instrument ensemble takes its name from the virtuoso violinist and innovative composer Antonio Vivaldi in recognition of his pivotal position between earlier Baroque and later Classical composers (those well known and beloved as well as those rarely heard). The Vivaldi Project's recording series, *Discovering The Classical String Trio*, with two volumes to date (MSR Classics), is receiving critical acclaim both for the innovative repertoire and "superb" playing. The Vivaldi Project's educational arm, *The Institute for Early Music on Modern Instruments (EMMI)*, offers professional string players and advanced students the opportunity to study historical performance practices using their own modern instruments.

www.thevivaldiproject.org

"The group's exquisite sense of ensemble, vibrant sound, and ardent cantabile represent period instrument playing at its best."—FANFARE MAGAZINE

"The Vivaldi Project consists of three superb string players—conversational playfulness. . . impeccably calibrated embellishments . . . perfectly matched declamatory unisons . . . sensitively parsed bass lines"—GRAMOPHON

"The repertoire is charming, and the playing, on original instruments, is superb. This is lovely music, beautifully played, and deserves to be heard much more often." —STRINGS MAGAZINE

Violinist **Elizabeth Field**, distinguished for her passionate and stylistic playing on both period and modern instruments, is the founder of The Vivaldi Project. Field is concertmaster of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem and also performs with a wide variety of ensembles throughout the US: from Washington DC's acclaimed Opera Lafayette to the Sun Valley Summer Symphony. In addition to period instrument recordings for Hungaroton, Naxos, and Dorian, Field has performed and recorded regularly for Deutsche Grammophon with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Field holds a DMA from Cornell University in 18th-century performance practice, has held professorships at Sacramento State University and the University of California at Davis, and was a regular guest teacher at The Curtis Institute. She is an adjunct professor at George Washington University. Her DVD with fortepianist Malcolm Bilson, *Performing the Score*, explores 18th-century violin/piano repertoire and has been hailed by Emanuel Ax as both "truly inspiring" and "authoritative."

Allison Edberg Nyquist's violin playing has been described by *The Chicago Sun Times* as "impeccable, with unerring intonation and an austere beauty." Nyquist has performed throughout North America, collaborating with many of the top Baroque ensembles, including Chatham Baroque, The Washington Bach Consort, Haymarket Opera Company, Apollo's Fire, and Ensemble Voltaire. Her discography includes recordings for the Eclectra, Delos, MSR Classics, and Centaur CD labels. Nyquist is concertmaster of the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra and a member of Third Coast Baroque (Chicago) and The Vivaldi Project. She was Artistic Director of Music City Baroque (Nashville) and adjunct professor of Baroque violin at the Blair School of Music. She also taught violin at Lawrence University, Ohio State University, and Interlochen Arts Camp and served as professor of viola at Indiana State University and DePauw University.

Stephanie Vial is a widely respected cellist, praised for her technical flair and expressive sense of phrasing. Vial performs regularly in early music ensembles throughout the US and has given solo and

chamber music concerts, lectures, and master classes at numerous universities and institutions: including The Shrine to Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota, The University of Virginia, Boston Conservatory, Duke University, and The Curtis Institute of Music. Vial holds a DMA in 18th-century performance practice from Cornell University where she studied with John Hsu. Her book, *The Art of Musical Phrasing in the Eighteenth Century: Punctuating the Classical "Period,"* published by the University of Rochester Press, was praised by Malcolm Bilson as "inspired scholarship" and "essential reading." She has recorded for the Dorian Label, Naxos, Hungaroton, and Centaur Records. Vial calls Durham, NC, home, where she is a lecturer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.