

*For the Love of All-Things Italian*

*Elizabeth Field, violin*

*Allison Nyquist, violin*

*Stephanie Vial, cello*

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| Sonata da Camera a Tre in E minor, op. 1, no. 2 (1705)<br>due violini e violone o cembalo<br><i>Grave – Corrente Allegro – Giga Allegro – Gavotta Allegro</i>                                   | Antonio Vivaldi<br>(1678-1741)        |
| Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend, BWV 655<br>from 18 Chorale Preludes (1710-1714, 1739-1742)  | Johann Sebastian Bach<br>(1685-1750)  |
| Sonata op. 5, no. 1 in A major (1756)<br>for two violins with a thorough bass for<br>harpichord or violoncello<br><i>Affetuoso</i><br><i>Minuet</i>   | G. B. Sammartini<br>(1700-1775)       |
| Sonata in G major, B. 37 (c. 1755-1762)<br>for two violins and basso<br><i>Allegretto</i><br><i>Tempo di Menuetto</i>   | Johann Christian Bach<br>(1735-1782)  |
| Sonata in G minor op. 1, no. 2 (1755-1762)<br>for two violins with a thorough bass for<br>harpichord or violoncello<br><i>Largo andante</i><br><i>Allegro spiritoso</i><br><i>Allegro assai</i> | Carlo Antonio Campioni<br>(1720-1788) |
| Divertimento in D major, H. V:15 (c. 1755-1762)<br>for two violins and basso<br><i>Adagio</i><br><i>Allegro</i><br><i>Menuet-Trio</i>   | Franz Joseph Haydn<br>(1732-1809)     |
| Tercetto, op. 2, no. 4 in D major (1760)<br>per due violini et basso<br><i>Adagio</i><br><i>Allegro spiritoso</i><br><i>Fuga allegro</i>  | Luigi Boccherini<br>(1743-1805)       |

## Program Notes

Europe's love affair with all things Italian was in full bloom throughout the 18th century. Italy's musicians populated its capitals while its composers, the Bach family not least among them, flocked to Italian cities to soak up the latest operatic and instrumental works. Our program this evening highlights the important Italian influence specifically on the development of the string trio—an exciting and flexible genre, highly popular in its day, and yet largely overlooked during the past century. It is a little known fact that during the period from 1762-1770, the number of string trios listed in the Breitkopf thematic catalog eclipsed the number of string quartets by a ratio of more than five to one. The Vivaldi Project has, since 2015, been immersed in the study of the classical string trio—its relationship to the earlier baroque trio sonata (as exemplified by Vivaldi and his contemporaries), and its important, untold role in 18<sup>th</sup>-century musical life and the history of chamber music. *Discovering the Classical String Trio, vol. 1 (MSR Classics)* was released in the Spring of 2016, with vol. 2 anticipated in the Spring of 2018.

We begin this evening's concert with the Italian trio sonata, one of the most important and highly popular forms of instrumental music throughout the Baroque period, and as such, a key repository for musical ideas and innovations. The 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. While it is rare to hear trio sonatas without the improvised keyboard part, such an option was also fairly common, certainly more so than current practice would suggest. Vivaldi, for instance, suggests in his op. 1 sonatas that the *continuo* may be played by *violone* (a term applied to a variety of bowed instruments including cello) “or” *cembalo* (harpsichord).

As our program progresses and the classical string trio begins to emerge, with its bass line more fully integrated into the trio texture, still the use of a *basso continuo* is not entirely left behind. Sammartini and Campioni offer the same option as Vivaldi of cello or keyboard, providing the *continuo* figures (the numbers indicating chords) above the bass lines. J.C. Bach, Haydn, and Boccherini, on the other hand, all simply call for *basso* with no figures provided. The lack of specificity can make it difficult to determine what common practice may have been, but there can be little doubt that Haydn and Boccherini presumed cello as the bass instrument. It is important also to note that the terms “string trio” and “string quartet” came about relatively late. The earliest works tended to be called *Sonate*, then *Divertimenti a tre* or *quattro*, then *Trios*. Titles were chosen by composers in order to sell their work to the public in terms they best understood, and are an integral part of a genre's history. The string trio within a relatively short time frame, offers a wonderful amalgam of historical and national styles, highlighting the fluidity and range of characteristics to be found in any given genre.

**Antonio Vivaldi** brought to his trio sonatas all the infectious zest and enthusiasm which are the hallmarks of his playing, as well as his expertise in both vocal and instrumental compositional forms. The opening *Grave* of op. 1, no. 2 in E minor combines a beautiful vocal line with lush instrumental embellishments, which is then followed by three dances, each with a distinct character combining technical flair, rhythmic energy, and rapid fire dialogue between the instruments.

The chorale prelude BWV 655 by **J.S. Bach**, essentially an Italian trio sonata, makes a wonderful pair with Vivaldi's op. 1, no. 2—G major the perfect compliment to the relative E minor, and its melody lines in the two keyboards and bass line in the pedals easily adapted for string instruments. The

Italianate chorale trio was one of Bach's most extraordinary innovations among the set of 18 large-scale chorale preludes, what would become some of the most revered works in the organ literature. Composed between 1710 and 1714 during Bach's tenure as court organist at Weimar (and reworked later in Leipzig between 1739 and 1742), they reveal an extraordinary diversity of styles and influences, all combining rich motivic development and ingenious counterpoint to express and enhance the emotions of the text. During this same compositional period in Weimar Bach further indulged his fascination with Italian style and forms, transcribing a number of instrumental concertos, primarily by Vivaldi. Vivaldi often injected his expertise with the dramatic concerto form into the trio sonata, and Bach does very much the same with BWV 655. The chorale tune in Bach's jubilant setting of *Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend* (Lord Jesus Christ, turn to us) is hinted at in the upper parts, but only heard in its entirety in the bass line of the recapitulation.



The works of oboist, organist, and composer **Giovanni Battista Sammartini** (Milan's most famous composer at the time) were better known outside Italy—published and performed in Paris and London, and also in Vienna, Esterhazy, and Prague. Since opera so dominated the musical culture of Italy, Italian instrumentalists, in particular, could often achieve greater renown outside their native land. Sammartini is perhaps best known for his important role in the early development of the symphony, and yet the bulk of his compositional output consists of more than 265 chamber and solo works, among which the string trios for 2 violins and bass form the largest and most popular group. Like Vivaldi, Sammartini indicates that the thorough bass may be played by "violoncello or harpsichord." The *Sonata op. 5, no. 1* reveals not only Sammartini's indebtedness to Vivaldi, but also the grace and elegance—the quintessential *Galant Style*—for which he was to become revered.

While little is known about the trios by J.S. Bach's youngest son, **Johann Christian Bach**, it is difficult to imagine that they could belong to any period other than his years in Italy (1755-1762), spent primarily in Milan, and where he studied with and came to greatly admire Sammartini. During this transformative period, Bach not only abandoned his Protestant faith, but also fell in love with and began composing opera (the first of his family to do so). Indeed, the buoyancy of the G major sonata's opening *Allegretto* (the diminutive and jauntily-paced form of *Allegro*) bear testament to Bach's youthful enthusiasm and period of discovery. The second movement *Tempo di Minuetto* is equally cheerful, the violins at times speaking together, at others engaged in a lively dialogue.

Selecting one work from among **Carlo Antonio Campioni's** seven sets of trios (42 in all) is no easy matter. The avid music collector and amateur violinist, Thomas Jefferson, evidently agreed, penning to a music vendor that he owned several of Campioni's compositions and “would be glad to have everything else he has composed of solos, duets, or trios.” Campioni wrote an unusual number of his trios in minor keys, the equivalent of one in every set with G minor being a clear favorite. The op. 4 set stand out in their treatment of the cello, which is given a true share, and often leading role in the melodic material. In spite of the indication that the *thorough bass* can be played by either “harpsichord or violoncello,” it is difficult to imagine how the plucking harpsichord could effectively produce such lush bass line melodies, particularly the plaintive rising and falling fourth gesture which characterizes the opening *Largo andante*. The *Allegro spiritoso* shows off Campioni's unique brand of Italian flair combined with the French poise from his early years in France. The finale *Allegro assai* is a rousing *gigue*, calling to mind bagpipes through the use of open string double stops and clever instrumental pairings.

The Austrian composer **Joseph Haydn** excelled in every musical genre, vocal and instrumental alike. He early on became fluent in both Italian and the Italianate style of singing, and in musical contexts often referred to himself with the Italian version of his name, Giuseppe. The *Adagio* of the D major Diverimento no. 15 flows like one of his lovely Italian arias. With breathtaking simplicity, the violin floats above as the cello slowly outlines the harmony, with the viola providing a lute-like pizzicato accompaniment. At the same time, the phrases are rarely regular, ebbing and flowing according to melodic contour, rhythmic momentum, and key. The clever manipulation of irregular phrasing also characterizes the *Allegro* which begins with a kind of trumpet or horn-like call to attention and which recurs throughout. A four-bar question opens the *Minuet*, which is then answered in unison by the violins. The voices then imitate each other in the d minor *trio*, allowing the cello moments to have its say. 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 (18 of which survive today) circulated in the 1760s and 70s along with accounts such as Giuseppe Carpani's (*Le Haydine, 1812*) describing their “singularity of style and seductiveness of manner” which “made them a success everywhere, and the subject of discussion in the profession.”

**Luigi Boccherini** composed nearly 50 trios, alongside over 100 string quintets, nearly 100 string quartets, numerous symphonies, concerti, and other stage, vocal, and chamber music works. The trios display Boccherini's distinctive combination of delicate string textures and intricate melodic and rhythmic figurations. The timbre of the D major trio's opening *Adagio* is immediately striking, a combination of the cello's high tessitura, alternating pairings of instruments, and double stop techniques. In the *Allegro Spiritoso*, Boccherini suddenly transports us to the world of an early symphony by the much admired Haydn. But again, the textures and melodic twists and turns are all Boccherini. The *Fuga Allegro* pits the voices playfully against each other, one rising as another falls.

BIO

Praised for its brilliant and expressive playing, **The Vivaldi Project**, co-directed by Elizabeth Field and Stephanie Vial, 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 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](http://www.thevivaldiproject.org)

*Reviews of Discovering the Classical String Trio Vol. 1, MSR Classics*

*“This is superb playing that will certainly lead to a renewed interest in the genre . . . highly recommended.” —FANFARE MAGAZINE*

*“The pieces here are stylish, charming and full of inventive writing . . . The performances are superb—sensitive and vital.” —COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO, Top 5 Pick*

*“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 extensively for Deutsche Grammophon with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Field holds a DMA from Cornell University in 18<sup>th</sup> century performance practice and has held professorships at Sacramento State University and the University of California at Davis. She is a regular guest teacher at The Curtis Institute and 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." Ms. Nyquist has performed throughout North America, collaborating with many of the top baroque ensembles, including Chatham Baroque, The Washington Bach Consort, Haymarket Opera Company, and Apollo's Fire. Her discography includes recordings for the Eclectra, Delos, MSR Classics, and Centaur CD labels. Ms. Nyquist is concertmaster of the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, and a member of Ensemble Voltaire, 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, on the violin faculties of Lawrence University, Ohio State University and Interlochen Arts Camp and served as viola professor 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, Duke University, and The Curtis Institute of Music. Vial holds a DMA in 18th-century performance practice from Cornell University. 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.