

Guts Baroque Duo presents:
Early Italians:
The Origins of the Violin Sonata

Sunday, August 30, 2020, 4:00 P.M. PDT/7:00 P.M. EDT
YouTube Live



“The Merry Fiddler” by Gerard van Honthorst, 1623

featuring:

Sylvia Schwartz, violin
John Ott, viola da gamba

Early Italians

Sunday, September 27, 2020

Program

Sonata 48 à 2: violino e violone.....Giovanni Paolo Cima
(c.1570-1630)

Canzon Prima.....Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)

La Gardana, symfonia per un violino o cornetto solo.....Biagio Marini (1594-1663)

Sonata Prima à sopran solo.....Dario Castello (1602-1631)

Sonata Terza à violino solo.....Giovanni Battista Fontana
(1589-1630)

Sonata Terza, variata per il violino.....Biagio Marini
(1594-1663)

Canzon Prima à 2, violino e basso.....Giovanni Battista Buonamente
(1595-1642)

Intermission

Sonata Quarta à violino solo detta la Hortensia virtuosa.....Marco Uccellini (1603-1680)

Sonata Prima "La Stella".....Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi Mealli (fl.
1660-1669)

Sinfonia a 3 in e.....Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682)

Sonata 12.....Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704)

Ciaccona à violino solo.....Antonio Bertali (1605-1669)

Fin

Program Notes

Giovanni Paolo Cima (c.1570-1630) was a Milanese organist. In 1595, he became the organist at the Basilica S Celso in Milan, a post he held until his death. From 1607-11, and again from 1614 on, he also served as unofficial maestro di cappella for the orchestra there, though he was never officially acknowledged as such. His works were all composed for the church, though many were subsequently published. Though most of his works are motets, he published a few collections with instrumental music in them as well. Cima was one of many victims of the 1630-31 outbreak of the bubonic plague.

Cima's 1610 collection titled *Concerti ecclesiastici* contains several motets and a few larger vocal works, plus a handful of instrumental sonatas at the end of the collection. This first generation of sonatas were instrumental works, for multiple instruments with continuo. The piece is written in sections, without a break between, with different thematic ideas for each section. Sonata 48 is written for violin, violone and continuo, but the violone part generally doubles the continuo. Though this is still a duo sonata, it can be performed with only two instruments.

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643) was born in Ferrara, and grew up in the musical court of Duke Alfonso d'Este, where he studied organ with the great Luzzasco Luzzaschi. By age 25 he was a famed organist and had gained a position in Rome at the Cappello Giulia. He supplemented his salary by teaching and by publishing his compositions, mostly for keyboard, but also including a great number of instrumental works. Frescobaldi is one of the earliest and most important composers for instrumental genres during the early 17th century, as most other composers focused on writing for voices.

Canzona Prima per Canto Solo is taken from Frescobaldi's collection *Canzoni da sonare a una, due, tre et quattro*, a collection of "instrumental canzonas" published in Venice in 1634. Frescobaldi's instrumental canzonas introduced the idea of writing contrasting sections with changing tempos, a practice which contemporary sonata composers quickly adopted. Frescobaldi did not specify instruments for his works, intending for them to be available to any instrument that fits the range.

Biagio Marini (1594-1663) was born in Brescia to a musical family. In 1615, he gained a position as a violinist in the orchestra at the Basilica San Marco in Venice, under Claudio Monteverdi. Soon after his acclaim as a violinist and composer gained him court appointments all over Italy and as far north as Düsseldorf. During all this time he composed many volumes of vocal and instrumental music, which were published in Venice. His instrumental music is particularly noteworthy, as his work helped form the solo and trio sonata genres that would pervade the Baroque period.

His op.1 collection *Affetti Musicali*, published in 1617, contains music written for various instruments and continuo, including the first pieces for one violin and continuo, La Ponte, La Gardana and La Orlandina. They are called Sinfonias by Marini but they set the groundwork for the genre of solo sonatas. La Gardana (the Garden), though it has only one section, shows off the violin's ability to play fast notes and divisions.

Variata per il Violino (Sonata Terza) is taken from Marini's op. 8 collection, *Sonate, symfonie, canzoni, passe' mezzi, baletti, corenti, gagliarde e retornelli*, published in 1626. By then, Marini's works had become

much more idiomatic to the violin, and his bow techniques are much more on display. He also added changing meters and tempi, to distinguish between sections.

Dario Castello (1602-1631), a Venetian violinist, was known until very recently only from the title pages of his two instrumental collections. Recent research has uncovered more of his life. From 1624 until his death he worked as a violinist in the Capella S Marco in Venice, alongside his father, Giovanni Battista and his brother, Francesco. He also led a company of *piffari*, essentially a marching band made up mostly of wind and brass instruments. His career came to a premature end when he perished in the bubonic plague outbreak of 1630-31.

Sonate Concertate book 1 contains the first two datable solo instrumental sonatas ever published. Written for an unspecified solo instrument, these sonatas feature multiple sections with changing tempo and meter, shaping the way Italianate sonatas would be composed for a century. Tonight's program features the first of the two, Sonata Prima, in A minor.

Giovanni Battista Fontana (1589-1630) is only known from a few documents and a 1641 posthumous publication of his music, *Sonate a 1. 2. 3. per il violino, o cornetto, fagotto chitarone, violoncello o simile altro instromento*. From this we know he was born in Brescia, and worked as a violinist in Venice, Rome and Padua. Unfortunately, he died in the bubonic plague outbreak of 1630-31.

Fontana's only published collection of music, 18 *Sonate*, was assembled and published after Fontana's death. His published collection contains three solo violin sonatas. Tonight's program features the third such sonata. It opens with the canzona rhythm, a rhythm pattern common at the beginning of many vocal and instrumental works dating back to the Renaissance. The violin writing is very virtuosic, exploring the violin's ability to play divisions, runs of very fast notes connecting the notes of a melody.

Giovanni Battista Buonamente (1595-1642) was born in Mantua, where he was trained as a violinist, as well as a member of the Franciscan order. He first worked for the Gonzaga court in Mantua, playing under the great Claudio Monteverdi. He quickly became known internationally, and his violin playing was highly sought after. From 1626-1631 he worked in Vienna, as a chamber musician to Emperor Ferdinand II. Afterward he accepted an appointment in Bergamo at the Capella S Maria Maggiore, but left two months later when the Franciscan Order rescinded his permission. He later worked in Parma at the ducal church, Madonna della Steccata, and then at the Basilica S Francesco in Assisi, where he worked until illness forced him to retire in 1635.

His op. 6 collection, *Sonate e Canzoni*, is a collection of pieces for two instruments and continuo. The distinction he makes between Sonatas and Canzonas is that his Sonatas are more like Marini's, and his Canzonas are more in the style of Frescobaldi's, though the terms were more or less interchangeable at the time. The *Canzon Prima à 2, Violino e Basso* is written in two voices, with the basso doubling the continuo.

Marco Uccellini (1603-1680) studied the violin in Assisi, likely with Giovanni Battista Buonamente. In 1641 he was employed by the Este court in Modena, where he became a close confidant of the d'Este family. He stayed there until 1665, when he gained a similar position in the court in Padua. While there he composed several operas, ballets and vocal works, but they are all lost to history. His collections of instrumental music survive, as they were published and distributed widely.

His violin sonatas were very innovative, stretching the range of the violin to the upper positions and featuring rapid passaggios. Another development is that each new section finishes before the next begins, creating the feel of a multi-movement work. Tonight's program features the fourth sonata of his op. 4 collection *Sonate*,

Arie, Correnti. This sonata is subtitled *detta Hortensia virtuosa*, possibly referring to the skilled Roman orator and widow from the first century B.C., who passionately argued that women should not be taxed if they are not allowed to hold public office.

Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi Mealli (fl. 1660-1669) was a Tuscan violinist employed by Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in the 1660's, where he published at least three collections of instrumental music. Since the first two are labeled Opera 3 and 4, it can be assumed that at least two prior collections were published. However, his career in Vienna came to an end when he murdered a singer, Giovanni Marquett, during an argument. He fled to Spain, and all subsequent record of him is lost.

La Stella (the star) is the first sonata in his op. 3 collection from 1660, the oldest that survives. Similar to Uccellini's, his sonata utilizes the higher positions and greater virtuosity that was developing in the violinists of Italy.

Alessandro Stradella (1639-1682) was born to a noble family, and his father was a member of a chivalric order, the Cavalieri di San Stefano. After his father's death he moved to Rome and served as a page in the Lante palace in Rome, where he also started composing. His music was popular and well-received, but legal troubles led him to flee Rome for Venice in 1677. He quickly became mixed up in scandal again, leaving Venice with the mistress of his powerful patron, Alvise Contarini. He survived one assassination attempt by Contarini's henchmen, then left for Genoa, where he continued both to compose and to become involved in scandal. In 1682 he was stabbed to death, though the cause is unclear.

Stradella's music is primarily vocal, including several operas and oratorios, sacred and secular cantatas and smaller works, but he did compose 12 *Sinfonie* for Violin and Basso Continuo, never published but preserved in manuscript, many of which have obbligato basso parts written for a cello or other bowed bass. Similar in form to Sonatas, Stradella's Sinfonias feature different movements with changing meters. Tonight's program features the third of this collection, in e minor.

Isabella Leonarda (1640-1712) was born in Novara. At the age of 16 she entered an Ursuline convent, the Collegio di S Orsola. By 1658 she was the music instructor, and composed and led all the musical performances in the convent. In 1676 she became Mother Superior, and by 1693 was *madre vicaria*, the vicar of the entire order. She began publishing her works in 1660, and they quickly earned her the nickname "*la Musa Novarese*" (the Novarese Muse).

Though most of Leonarda's works are sacred vocal music, she did publish one collection of instrumental sonatas in 1683. All but the last are duo sonatas, but Sonata 12 is a lovely solo sonata for violin and continuo.

Antonio Bertali (1605-1669) was born in Verona, where he was trained in violin from Stefano Bernardi. In 1622 he was granted a position as a violinist in the Hapsburg court in Vienna, where he stayed for the rest of his life. Besides playing the violin, he was frequently called on to compose, and in 1649 became *maestro di cappella*. During his time there he oversaw the next generation of developing violinists in Austria, including Johann Heinrich Schmelzer.

Though he is most famous for his vocal music, which served as a model for later composers, Bertali composed one undated Ciaccona for solo violin and basso continuo. Using the popular ground bass pattern of the chaconne, he wrote a set of variations exploring different rhythms, technique, ranges, and even cross-relations between major and minor keys. As the original is quite long, tonight's performance will feature an edited version.

About Us

Cellist and gambist **John Ott**, a native of Los Angeles, received his Bachelor of Music degree in cello performance from UC Irvine in 2004, studying with Dr. Margaret Parkins, and in 2016 completed his Master of Music degree in Early Music, viola da gamba at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he studied with Jane Hershey. In between, he performed with Symphony Irvine, Dana Point Symphony, Montage Civic Orchestra, and South Orange County Chamber Orchestra, played in the string quartet Elegie Quartet, and played chamber music all over Los Angeles and Orange County. During his two years in Massachusetts, aside from his Longy ensembles, he performed with Boston Camerata and Boston Opera Collaborative. He has played with the Orange County-based early music group L'Esprit Baroque since 2014. He maintains a large teaching studio, primarily at Vienna Music Institute in Irvine, CA, and is the cello coach for three high schools in Irvine Unified School District.

Fascinated and deeply inspired by the relationship between music, movement, and dance, violinist and Dalcrozier-in-training **Sylvia Schwartz** is a passionate chamber musician in both modern and historical performance practices. A native of Boston, Sylvia has performed with Guts, L'Esprit Baroque, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, LA Chamber Chorale, The Meistersingers, Eudaimonia—A Purposeful Period Band, Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, Harvard Early Music Society, New Bedford Symphony, New England Classical Singers, and Lizzie and the Flakjackets throughout the United States and Canada, in Estonia, Latvia, and at Shostakovich Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia. Sylvia earned a M.M. in Violin Performance from the Longy School of Music, where she studied violin with Laura Bossert and early music with Dana Maiben, Na'ama Lion, Vivian Montgomery, and Ryan Turner. She also holds a B.S. in Engineering from Olin College. Sylvia teaches privately in person and online, and concertizes frequently with Guts and L'Esprit Baroque.

About Historically-Informed Performance Practice

The mission of Guts is to bring the music of the Baroque era to vivid life, recreating the distinct sound of the time in which it was composed. In tonight's program, Sylvia will be playing a baroque violin, constructed in 2016 by Douglas Cox to replicate a Guarneri violin of the early 1700's, with a short baroque bow made by David Hawthorne. John will play a

viola da gamba built by Lu Mi Workshop in 2013 in the pattern of Nicolas Bertrand, with a bow made by Louis Bégin. Both instruments are strung with pure-gut strings, the way they would have been in the 18th century. Gut strings sound warmer, though quieter, than their modern metal equivalents, and baroque instruments are under less tension, so they sound more open, though not as projecting. Like most Baroque music, all of the music on tonight's program has a basso continuo line forming the foundation of the ensemble, typically shared by the cello or gamba and the keyboard, usually a harpsichord or organ. We are presenting these works without a keyboard instrument for this concert.

As performers, we will be adding ornaments such as trills and turns to the music as we play. The practice of decorating music was unique to the performer and to the circumstances of performance, and helped each musician put their own stamp on a piece of music. Decorating this way both adds to the expressiveness of the music and allows us to share our personalities as performers with our audience. Also, since the music of this time is generally imitating sung text, even though the music we are playing has no specific text we will be shaping our phrases and melodies as if they were sung with words.

For more information about upcoming concerts, recordings, and special projects,
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Acknowledgements

Sylvia is currently raising funds to purchase the instrument you hear on our recorded concert, and is deeply grateful to the following people who have contributed more than \$12,000 since November 2017, matching her own payments of more than \$8,000, and totaling **all but the last \$500** of funding needed by November of this year:

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