

The Violin in its form more or less as we know it today first emerged in Northern Italy in the early 1500s, the work of Andrea Amati who was apprenticed as a Lute Maker and became a Master Instrument Maker in 1525. Among other early Violin makers of the 1500s were Gasparo da Salò and Giovanni Maggini, both Italians. But it is during the 1600s and early 1700s that the art of Violin making reached its peak. The Italians Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri as well as the Austrian Jacob Stainer are most noted during this period. Stradivari was an apprentice to Nicolo Amati, Andrea Amati's Grandson. At first the Violin was not popular, in fact it was considered a 'street' instrument of low status. But by the 1600s such well-known composers as Claudio Monteverdi used the Violin in his operas, thus the Violins' status grew. The Violins' prestige continued to rise during the Baroque period, made more notable by such celebrated figures in music as Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach, among many others.

We open our Disc, appropriately, with a virtuoso piece for Solo Violin, the *Preludio* from one of Bach's three Partitas for Solo Violin. In the works of J.S. Bach, Baroque music, particularly in its three major forms of Canon, Fugue and Chaconne, reached its peak. Bach also pushed the limits of performance, often requiring extreme dexterity from players who, until Bach's time, had been accustomed to playing the keyboard using only the middle three fingers. Similarly with his Organ Works. Pedals had hitherto been used mainly to reinforce leading bass chords; Bach's Solo Pedal Exercise (BWV 735) must have tested many an Organist. In his Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, Bach again pushed performers to their limits of digital dexterity. This brilliant Prelude was later used by Bach as the Sinfonia to Cantata 29, now re-scored for Organ and Orchestra.

The Violin quickly became the favourite solo instrument for use in Concertos, largely thanks to Vivaldi who, himself a brilliant violinist by all accounts, produced a number of Violin Concertos for use by his young-lady pupils in the Venice Ospidale where he was based for most of his working life. Though it should be added that Vivaldi produced Concertos featuring almost every other Baroque instrument available! Though favouring brilliant fast movements, Vivaldi could also be quite lyrical in his slow movements, as illustrated by our Sonata in A, Op 2/2 for Violin & Organ. Indeed the Violin is very much at home in the 'soulful' *Adagio* movements, as illustrated in two *Adagios*, by Veracini and Bonporti.

Born in Magdeburg in 1681, **Georg Philipp Telemann** would compete for fame, in Germany at least, with J.S. Bach. Indeed their lives crossed paths frequently. The two were in competition for the post of Cantor of the Leipzig Thomaskirche. Telemann also founded the Leipzig Collegium Musicum which Bach would later direct, and would become Godfather to Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel. Telemann also retained a great friendship with Handel, who would jokingly relate that Telemann "*could write a church piece in eight parts with the same expedition another would write a letter*".

Telemann is best known for his association with Hamburg, where he became Cantor of the Johanneum in 1721. He also became actively involved in the Hamburg Opera, and in addition to his heavy schedule of church duties, gave public concerts at the churches, the Drill-Hall and at a tavern known as the 'Lower Tree-House', where a wide variety of sacred and secular music was performed. They were patronized by prominent Hamburg citizens and supported by paid admission. He was also made music director of the Hamburg Opera, remaining in that capacity until its closure in 1738.

Der getreuer Musikmeister ("The Faithful Music Master") was founded in 1728 by Telemann and J.V. Görner. Intended as a "home music lesson", this German music periodical, the first of its kind, appeared every two weeks in the form of a four-page *Lection* meaning a reading or a lesson. It consisted of actual music, new music just composed and given its first circulation in this unusual fashion. Much of it was by Telemann himself, but other contemporary composers were also represented, such as Keiser, Pezold, Görner, Bonporti, Zelenka, Ritter and Stoltzer. Many pieces from this series are popular today.

Telemann remained in Hamburg until his death in 1767, being succeeded in that position by his Godson, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. We include two works by Telemann in our Disc, a Concerto for Violin, and one for Two

Violins.

The Italian composer and violinist **Pietro Antonio Locatelli** was born in Bergamo in 1695. A child prodigy on the violin, he was sent to study in Rome under the direction of Corelli, or more probably with Valentini. He won a reputation as a violin virtuoso, performing in Italy, in Bavaria and in Berlin. Little is known of his subsequent activities except that he finally settled in Amsterdam in 1729, where he died on 1 April 1746. Locatelli's works are mainly for the violin. In addition to a number of Violin Concertos, Locatelli also wrote Violin Sonatas, a Cello Sonata, Trio Sonatas, Concerti Grossi and a set of Flute Sonatas (his Opus 2). His early works show the influence of Arcangelo Corelli, while later pieces are closer to Antonio Vivaldi in style. Locatelli's *L'Arte del Violino*, printed in Amsterdam in 1733, was one of the most influential musical publications of the early eighteenth century. It is a collection of twelve Concertos for Solo Violin, Strings and Basso continuo, with a 'capriccio' for unaccompanied Violin inserted into the first and last movements of each Concerto as a sort of cadenza. We present the second Concerto from Op.1 (1721) of the 12 Concerti Grossi.

The centerpiece of our program is Bach's Concerto for Three Violins and Orchestra. In 1729 and in addition to his church duties as Cantor to the City of Leipzig, Bach took over directorship of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, a group of the city's most talented musicians who gave regular weekly concerts in the large music room behind Gottfried Zimmermann's popular Coffee Shop on the Catherine Strasse, or in the warmer months, in Zimmermann's coffee garden "*in front of the Grimma gate on the Grimma road*".

Gottfried Zimmerman was a music-lover and probably a competent musician, who frequently re-equipped his establishment with the latest musical instruments for use by the Collegium and other musical guests. These concerts were serious events, and were, in fact, hardly different from what we consider to be normal concert procedure today. Indeed, the word "concert" began to be used expressly in connection with the *Collegium* during its later years.

Though mainly instrumental music was performed, vocal music might also be given; the Coffee Cantata, BWV 211, was first presented there in 1732. As well as his own works, Bach also presented works by Handel, Vivaldi, Telemann, Locatelli, Albinoni and others. It was doubtless here that Bach's Concerti for one or several Harpsichords received their performances, many having been adapted from earlier (possibly violin) Concertos, or from Concertos by other composers (eg Vivaldi). Bach's Concerto for Three Claviers and Orchestra, BWV 1064 is presumed to have been adapted from a work for three Violins, and the work heard on our Disc is an attempted reconstruction. Though an original has not been established, internal evidence suggests a composition by Bach himself. During his time at the Cöthen Court (1717-23) Bach produced several virtuosic Violin compositions, Solo Works and Sonatas. Soloists in a Concerto for Three Violins would have been Bach himself, perhaps the famous Dresden violinist Pisendel on a visit, and either Joseph Spiess, Leader of the Court Capelle who had been brought from Berlin, or even the music-loving Prince, who achieved competence on the harpsichord, viola and violin.