Italian Music for Strings of the Baroque Period

RICHARD BURGIN, violin
RUTH POSSELT, violin

VIVALDI: Concerto in A Major for violin, strings and continuo

VERACINI: Sonata for violin and continuo in B Minor (Op. 1, No. 3)

DALL'ABACO: Sonata in C Major for 2 violins and continuo (Op. 3, No. 1)

TORELLI: Concerto in D Minor for violin, strings and continuo

ALBINONI: Trio Sonata in A Major, Op. 1, No. 3, for 2 violins and continuo

Cambridge Society for Early Music
Erwin Bodky, DIRECTOR
BAROQUE
Italian Music for Strings of the Baroque Period

CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY FOR EARLY MUSIC, Erwin Bodky, Director
Richard Burgin, Ruth Posselt, Violinists

SIDE 1

VIVALDI: CONCERTO IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN, STRINGS AND CONTINUO
(On the Pisendel Concerto) Allegro—Tempo di Siciliana—Allegro

VERACINI: SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND CONTINUO IN B MINOR, Op. 1, No. 3
Preludio—Allemanda—Largo—Allegro

The works assembled on this record represent some of the most exquisite samples of music for larger and smaller string ensembles written by Italian composers of the Baroque period.

The two "violin concerti" by Giuseppe Torelli (1651-1709) and Antonio Vivaldi (1675-1741) are especially chosen to show the evolution of the violin concerto from the oldest one extant (Torelli) to the first climax of concerto-writing as represented by the magnificent "Pisendel Concerto" of Vivaldi. None of the early violin concerti, including those by J. S. Bach, are, however, concerti in the present day meaning of this term. They all are still "concerti grossi", a name designating a composition in which sections played by all musicians, (the "Grosso"), alternate with other sections played only by a small group of players, (the "Concertino"). Torelli was the first composer who at times reduced the "Concertino" to one player; yet the soloist must still participate in the playing of the "Grosso" parts.

Torelli, the most important master of the "School of Bologna", is remarkable for "disciplined formalism, elegance of expression and pervasive lyricism" (H. G. Mishkin in the Harvard Dictionary). His Concerto in D minor is the seventh of his twelve Concerti grossi Op. 8 which were published in 1709 shortly after the composer's death. It is, as far as present knowledge goes, the first violin concerto ever written. It is amazing to see how heights of virtuosity violin technique had already been developed, even at this early date.

Vivaldi's Concerto in A Major, composed around 1716, is explicitly written for Georg Pisendel, (1687-1755), one of the most celebrated violinists of this period who had studied with Torelli as well as with Vivaldi himself. Among the virtually innumerable concerti written by Vivaldi, this one is of unique importance as it is the only concerto of the period for which an original cadenza has been preserved. The extraordinary boldness of this cadenza, which appears toward the end of the last movement, gives us a startling picture of the degree of creative inventiveness which was at the command of this truly great master.

The so-called "Trio-Sonatas" which form the most important type of chamber music in the Baroque period, are pieces in three parts, yet are to be played by four musicians: the "basso continuo", the foundational line below the two "obbligato" voices, is performed by a violoncellist jointly with the harpsichordist, who is supposed to improvise his part during the performance. Both Trio-Sonatas, selected for this record, the Sonatas for two violins and Continuo by Evaristo Felice dall'Abaco (1675-1742) and Tommaso Albinoni (1674-1745) are written in the form of the "Sonata da chiesa" (church sonata) which consists of four movements in the order slow-fast-slow-fast. Abaco is still virtually unknown and only very few of his works are available in current editions, although Alfred Einstein does not hesitate to state that "his works are perhaps the purest incarnations of the aristocratic type of the fully mature style of Italian chamber music and surpass even the works of Corelli in depth of expression and immanent logic". The Sonata by Albinoni, a masterpiece of finest contrapuntal design, arouses our special interest, as J. S. Bach used the opening theme of its second movement as subject for a splendid fugue for harpsichord (Bach-Gesellschaft, vol. 36, p. 173).

To give also a striking sample of a Sonata for violin and continuo, a Sonata by Francesco Maria Veracini (1685-1750) was selected, from his Op. 1, written around 1721. A celebrated violin player, he wrote in a very personal style which caused the Italian musicologist Luigi Torchi to call him "the Beethoven of the 18th century". We do not want to identify ourselves with this statement even if the attention of the listener is drawn to the fact that in the last movement of this piece appear some little melodic phrases which are typical of Beethoven. This violin Sonata in B minor represents an interesting attempt to combine elements of the "Sonata da camera" (a suite of dance pieces, preceded by a Prelude) with other ones from the Sonata da chiesa: The first two movements are Preludio and Allemanda, the two next ones Largo and Rondo.

The harpsichord (Continuo) parts for all pieces on this record are not "realized" beforehand but improvised during the recording session, approximating the 18th century manner of performance.

Notes by ERWIN BODKY

Recorded at Sanders Theatre, Harvard University
Recording Engineer: Peter Bartok

RUTH POSSELT is, in the words of the late Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, "one of the greatest violinists of our time". She first appeared at Boston's Jordan Hall at the age of six, in Symphony and Carnegie Halls at nine. She has since played more than forty times with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and with virtually every first-rate orchestra and conductor here and abroad. Her repertoire includes not only the vast classic literature of solo and chamber music, but a large number of concertos by notable 20th-century composers which she has championed and performed with outstanding success.

RICHARD BURGIN is concert-master and associate conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, having served at first desk since 1920. He gave his first concert at the age of 11, in 1903; among his teachers were Lotto, Joachim, and Leopold Auer. He has been active as soloist, recitalist, and first violinist in his own string quartet, as well as holding the concert-master's position in Leningrad, Helsinki, Oslo, and Stockholm. Mr. Burgin is on the faculty of the Berkshire Music Center, and in addition to regular appearances with the Boston Symphony as conductor or soloist he has directed many student and amateur orchestras.

ERWIN BODKY, a pupil of Ernst von Dohnanyi, Richard Strauss and Ferruccio Busoni, is a harpsichordist of international reputation who has appeared as soloist with Wilhelm Furtwängler, Serge Koussevitzky and Bruno Walter and is an authority in the field of Early Music. His publications on the interpretation of early keyboard music have won him worldwide recognition. After having had a distinguished career in universities and music schools in Europe and the United States he is now associate professor of music at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

He is the founder and music director of the Cambridge Society for Early Music whose annual concerts have become a high point in the musical life of Boston.

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KAPP BAROQUE
Cambridge Society for Early Music
ERWIN BUDEY, Director

SIDE 1

1. VIVALDI—CONCERTO IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN
   STRINGS, AND CONTINUO (The Piccolo Concerto)
   Allegro—Rengardo di Skrittano—Allegro

2. VERACINI—SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND CONTINUO
   IN B MINOR, Op. 1, No. 3
   Allegro—Allegro—Largo—Allegro

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Cambridge Society for Early Music
ERWIN BUCKY, Director

SIDE 2
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1. DALL'ARACO—SONATA IN C MAJOR FOR 2 VIOLINS AND CONTINUO, Op. 3, No. 1
   Adagio—Allegro—Largo—Allegro

2. TORELLI—CONCERTO IN D MINOR FOR VIOLIN, STRINGS AND CONTINUO
   Allegro—Adagio—Allegro, Adagio—Allegro

3. AERONI—TREVI SONATA IN A MAJOR,
   Op. 1, No. 3, FOR 2 VIOLINS AND CONTINUO
   Grave—Allegro—Grave—Allegro
   (Op. 4781)

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