

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday April 7, 2022 1:15 pm
The Church of the Transfiguration in New York City
Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)

The Vivaldi Project *From (early) Vienna with Love*

Elizabeth Field ~ violin Allison Edberg Nyquist ~ violin & viola
Stephanie Vial ~ violoncello

Trio ô Divertimento in C Major (c. 1750s)
à violino primo ô flauto traverso, violino secondo e basso

Leopold Hofmann (1738–1793)

Tempo giusto ~ Adagio ~ Minuet ~ Trio ~ Finale

Sonata Op. 1, No. 6 in f minor (1770)
à deux violons et violoncello obligé

Maddalena Lombardini Sermin (1745–1818)

Lento ~ Menuetto Allegretto

Terzetto Op. 9, No. 2 in D Major (1798)
pour un violon, alto, et violoncelle

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Allegretto ~ Andante quasi Allegretto ~ Menuetto allegro ~ Rondo allegro

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www.gemsny.org

About the Program

In a continuation of The Vivaldi Project's exploration of little-known classical string trios, Leopold Hofmann's *Trio O Divertimento in C Major* is paired with Beethoven's *String Trio in D Major, Op. 9, No. 2*. This particular Beethoven trio has been less frequently performed than the 1st and 3rd in this opus – perhaps, as it was considered a “stylistic throwback”. But this trio is a vital and captivating work. Hofmann was regarded by his Viennese contemporaries as one of the most important and influential musicians of his generation. This program seeks to be a total immersion in early Viennese style.

Leopold Hofmann's widespread fame was founded on both his sacred vocal works and 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 graceful 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 the seat of activity. Unusual among trios from this period, a triumphant and energetic fourth movement *Finale* in a quick 2/4 rounds out the work.

Classical string trios written by female composers are scant in number, in part at least because the violin and cello were generally considered indecorous instruments for the “fairer sex” to play. Such was not a concern among the charitable Venetian *ospedali*, which, perpetually short of funds, sought to cultivate the musical talent of the orphaned or abandoned girls, whose increasing fame drew ever larger crowds to their performances. The *ospedali* became the first music schools for women, and the best teachers (like Vivaldi at the *Pietà*) were brought in to oversee their musical education. By 1753, 7-year-old Maddalena Lombardini would undergo a rigorous audition in order to enter the *Ospedale dei Mendicanti*, where she would remain until she was granted permission to leave and marry violinist and composer Lodovico Sirmen in 1767. Maddalena Sirmen was counted among the best virtuosi of her day as both a singer and a violinist. Her surviving compositions, all of them instrumental, were widely published and reprinted during her lifetime. Very few Classical string trios were written in minor keys, so it is especially pleasing to have the dark and richly timbred trio *Op. 1, No. 6 in f minor*. Sirmen's style of varying textures and rhythmic pacing with sharp dynamic contrasts features throughout. The second movement, a minuet in rondo form, begins and ends in a cheerful F Major, but not without succumbing once again to the allure of f minor.

All five of Ludwig van Beethoven's string trios—the *Op. 3 Trio in Eb*, the *Op. 8 Serenade in D Major*, and the three *Op. 9* trios—were written and published before his first set of six string quartets, *Op. 18*. Did Beethoven consider these trios as preparatory compositions before turning to the increasingly favored quartet? Or did he look upon the string trio as an important genre in its own right – a popular and expressive musical form engaged in by his respected colleagues and appreciated by Viennese audiences? The first question, one often answered in the affirmative (particularly with regard to the two earliest trios), would, on the face of things, seem plausible. Beethoven had already begun sketches for the *Op. 18* quartets before finishing the *Op. 9* trios and indeed would never again return to the genre. But few deny the mastery of these last three trios, or contradict Beethoven's own acknowledgment of them in his publication dedication as “the best of my work”. Beethoven had his most brilliant colleagues in mind in writing the *Op. 9* trios. The violinist Schuppanzigh, likely violist Franz Weiss, and cellist Niklaus Kraft or his father, Anton, gave the first performance in Vienna. The *Allegretto* of *Op. 9 no. 2* begins somewhat elusively with a question asked in *pianissimo* and answered with increasing intensity and imagination. The *Andante quasi allegretto*, begun in utter simplicity, soon gives way to a rhapsodic melody, the three voices taking turns as soloist and with the *pizzicato* and arpeggiated accompaniment. The scherzo-like *Menuetto*, full of dynamic contrasts, is followed by a pastoral *Rondo* with all the youthful exuberance so often encountered in Beethoven's early works. And note that the opening rondo theme is not given to the violin (as it so often is) but to the cello!

Notes by Stephanie Vial

About the Artists

Violinist **Elizabeth Field**, distinguished for her passionate and stylistic playing on both period and modern instruments, is the founder of The Vivaldi Project. Elizabeth is concertmaster of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem and has performed with a wide variety of ensembles throughout the United States: from Washington DC's acclaimed Opera Lafayette to the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, with which she recorded regularly for Deutsche Grammophon. On period instruments she has recorded for Hungaroton, Naxos, and Dorian. She has held professorships at Sacramento State University and the University of California at Davis and has given master classes at universities across the country, including regular visits to The Curtis Institute. Elizabeth holds a DMA from Cornell University in 18th-century performance practice 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". Allison 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, Ensemble Voltaire, Third Coast Baroque (Chicago) and served as concertmaster of the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra. Her discography includes recordings for the Eclectra, Delos, MSR Classics, and Centaur CD labels. Allison 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 and DePauw Universities. Allison earned her degrees from the University of Michigan with Camilla Wicks and the Peabody Institute with Daniel Heifetz. She studied Baroque violin with Stanley Ritchie at Indiana University.

Stephanie Vial is a widely respected cellist, praised for her technical flair and expressive sense of phrasing. Stephanie performs regularly in early music ensembles throughout the United States and has given solo and chamber music concerts, lectures, and master classes at numerous universities and institutions: The Shrine to Music Museum in South Dakota, The University of Virginia, Boston Conservatory, McGill University, and The Curtis Institute of Music. Stephanie holds a DMA in 18th-century performance practice from Cornell University where she studied with John Hsu. She is the author of *The Art of Musical Phrasing in the Eighteenth Century: Punctuating the Classical "Period,"* published by the University of Rochester Press, and the creator of DancingwithBach.com, a video project exploring performance practice and the solo Bach cello suites. She has recorded for the Dorian Label, Naxos, Hungaroton, and Centaur Records. Stephanie calls Durham, North Carolina home, where she is a lecturer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

NEXT WEEK: ARTEK featuring Ryland Angel
My Heart is Filled with Longing

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