

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, April 8, 2021 1:15 pm

Streamed from New York City to midtownconcerts.org, [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com)

The Vivaldi Project

Elizabeth Field ~ Violin
Allison Nyquist ~ Violin and Viola
Stephanie Vial ~ Cello

The Early Viennese String Trio

Sonata op. 1, no. 5 in G major (1770)
à deux violons et violoncello obligé

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen (1745–1818)

Allegro moderato
Rondo Allegro assai – Menuetto Allegro

Trio op. 2, no. 3 in D major (1782)
per violino primo, viola, e violoncello

Francesco Zannetti (1737–1788)

Allegro
Allegro con moto

Trio Concertant, op. 3, no. 3 in G major (c. 1793)
pour violon, alto, et basse

Paul Wranitzky (1756–1808)

Allegro moderato
Adagio
Menuetto allegretto – Trio
Finale allegro

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Gene Murrow, Executive Director



Program Notes by Stephanie Vial

The string trio is often viewed, according to the hindsight of chamber music history, as a kind of minor sub-genre, a “quartet minus one.” We at The Vivaldi Project, however, propose that the 18th-century string quartet might more aptly be described as a “trio plus one.” The Classical string trio, as the successor to the immensely popular Baroque trio sonata (exemplified by Vivaldi and his contemporaries), would out-publish the string quartet in the 1760s by a ratio of more than 5 to 1. The resulting body of works includes more than 2000 trios from many of the century’s most revered and eminent composers. Today’s program, part of the soon-to-be-released third volume of our series, *Discovering The Classical String Trio*, continues to explore this vast and essentially unknown repertoire.

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 in order to present all-female choral and instrumental performances, whose increasing fame drew ever larger crowds. The *ospedali* became the first music schools for women, and the best teachers (like Vivaldi at the Pietà) were brought in to oversee the musical education of these *figlie*. 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 (acknowledged primarily as a favored student of the great Tartini) was counted among the best *virtuosi* of her day as both a singer and a violinist. Her surviving compositions, all of them instrumental — concertos, duets, trios, and quartets — were widely published and reprinted during her lifetime. The *Trio op. 1, no. 5* presents a rich combination of dramatic gestures and lyrical melodies shared among the three voices. Wildly varying textures and dynamics intensify the rhythmic ebb and flow of the opening *Allegro moderato*, evoking the language of Beethoven to come. The second movement *Rondo* shifts back and forth from a repeating jaunty theme in 4/4 to a *Menuetto* in 3/4, with a decidedly gypsy-like flavor in its minor-key passages.

Few of the 6 known string trios for violin, viola, and cello by the Italian composer **Francesco Zannetti** survive in their entirety. The delightful *Sonata in D major op. 2, no. 3* makes us wish they had, not least for its contribution to the repertoire of a virtuoso viola part. Quite different from Zannetti’s earlier sets of trios with fully figured bass lines (in the tradition of a Baroque trio sonata), the op. 2 works embrace the increasingly popular *concertante* style. The violin and viola (Zannetti was both a violinist and a tenor) trade turns as soloist throughout. A composer of numerous operas and oratorios, Zannetti’s style combines virtuosity with rich vocal expression and operatic drama. The opening *Allegro* tumbles and falls, the violin and viola chasing and catching each other as they go. The second movement *Allegro con moto*, like the Sirmen trio, is in *rondo* form, the violin and viola alternating minuet-like variations, surrounded by a repeating *musette* theme, the cello providing the bagpipe drone with wonderfully resonant low D’s.

Born in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, **Paul Wranitzky** (Pavel Vranický) would play an important role as a violinist, composer, and conductor in the musical life of Vienna at the height of the Classical period. Both Haydn and Beethoven preferred Wranitzky as the conductor of their works. Wranitzky’s operas and ballets were also well received, his singspiel *Oberon* serving as an inspiration for Mozart’s *Magic Flute*. His significant chamber music output includes some 25 string quintets, 56 string quartets, and at least 24 string trios. Wranitzky was often a peacemaker among the members of the Viennese musical society, including one instance involving Haydn, and acted as mediator for Mozart’s widow, Constanze, in her dealings with music publishers. He died suddenly from what was likely typhoid fever, and his popularity (and with it his music) fell quickly into relative obscurity. The *Trio Concertant no. 3* is a grand work which exploits to great advantage the warmth and openness of string instruments playing in G major. Begun by the viola, the *Allegro moderato* features rich, expansive melodies, followed by a C major *Adagio* given over primarily to eloquent solo passages exploring the upper reaches of the cello’s register. Back in G major, an amiable *Menuetto and Trio* leads to a rollicking *Allegro* in *rondo* form.

About the Artists

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

"The Vivaldi Project consists of three superb string players . . . Their second MSR release proves just as captivating as their first. . . . Highly recommended . . . I look forward to future volumes in this important series." —GRAMOPHONE

"The group's exquisite sense of ensemble, vibrant sound, and ardent cantabile represented period instrument playing at its best." —FANFARE MAGAZINE

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 also performs 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 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. She 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. Vial 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. Vial 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, NC, home, where she is a lecturer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

NEXT WEEK: Shin, Tanimoto, Ross Trio
Style Benders