University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Interpreti Veneziani

Giuliano Fontanella, Paolo Ciociola,
Guglielmo De Stasio, Pietro Talamini, Federico Braga, Violin
Alessandro Curri, Viola
Davide Amadio, Cello
Angelo Liziero, Double Bass
Paolo Cognolato, Harpsichord

Sunday, January 20, 2008, 5 p.m.

Sponsored by
PROGRAM

Concerto in D Minor, Op. 3 (L’Estro Armonico), No. 11  
Antonio Vivaldi
  Allegro
  Adagio e spiccato
  Allegro
  Largo e spiccato
  Allegro

Concerto in E Minor, Op. 3 (L’Estro Armonico), No. 4  
Vivaldi
  Andante
  Allegro assai
  Adagio
  Allegro

Concerto for Piano No. 1 in C Major  
Giovanni Paisiello
  Paolo Cognolato, piano soloist
  Allegro
  Largo
  Allegro

Passacaglia  
Johan Halvorsen
  Based on a theme by George Frideric Handel

Intermission

Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 1  
George Frideric Handel
  A tempo guisto
  Allegro
  Adagio
  Allegro
  Allegro

Concerto in C Major, RV. 561  
Vivaldi
  Allegro
  Largo
  Allegro molto

Ciaccona  
Tomaso Vitali
Concerto in D Minor, Op. 3 (L’Estro Armonico), No. 11
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi was ordained as a priest at age 25. That same year, the red-headed composer was appointed “master of violin” at an orphanage in Venice. It was for the orchestra at this orphanage – made up mainly of young women – that the “red Priest” wrote a vast number of his compositions. Vivaldi’s output was astonishingly large and undeniably influential: as much as anyone of his day, he helped establish the concerto as a standard performance medium.

His first printed collection of concertos, Opus 3, published under the title L’Estro Armonico (“harmonic inspiration”) was published in 1711; it was an immediate sensation, spreading the Italian composer’s name throughout the music capitals of Europe.

His Op. 3, No. 11 is arranged in five movements, rather than the typical three. Its distinctiveness also lies with the soloists: two violins and cello. The first movement Allegro begins with the soloists as if they were improvising before the gig, followed by the orchestra and continuo (usually harpsichord and low strings) joining, full speed ahead. The brief Adagio e spiccato is almost over before it starts. The second Allegro is the heart of this work, with the Baroque penchant for counterpoint amply portrayed. Note also the held note near the end (pedal point), which comes shortly before the final cadence. The Largo e spiccato features exquisite writing for violin. The final Allegro returns to the mood of the opening, with the three soloists leading off the flurry of non-stop action.

Concerto in E Minor, Op. 3 (L’Estro Armonico), No. 4
Vivaldi

After hearing two concertos from Vivaldi’s L’Estro Armonico you will likely understand why Op.3 was a favorite of J.S. Bach, who transcribed several of the concertos (not to mention several other Vivaldi works) for keyboard.

Vivaldi’s Op. 3, No. 4 begins with a stately and somber opening theme. The orchestra announces the theme, followed by the soloists’ introduction, one by one. The interplay continues as orchestra squares off against soloist, as well as the soloists playing together as a group.

The Allegro assai is showy and non-stop action, a perfect example of why Baroque music is sometimes said to be “perpetually in motion.” The brief Adagio is haunting, pleading, and serves as an introduction to the rollicking Allegro that follows.

Concerto for Piano No. 1 in C Major
Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816)

Paisiello has not become a household name. It probably doesn’t help that the Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello’s most famous work, The Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia) was eclipsed by Gioachino Rossini’s opera, written after Paisiello’s, with the exact same title. In spite of the twist of fate that may have relegated Paisiello to history’s back burner, he was a very prolific and important composer in his day.

Paisiello was mainly known as a composer of operas – he wrote at least 80 operas – and he also wrote various cantatas, oratorios and mass movements; divertimenti for wind instruments and band; string quartets; one symphony, the score of which was lost; and at least eight concertos for keyboard and orchestra.

The concerto on this program was penned while Paisiello was living in St. Petersburg, Russia, most likely in the 1780s. It is typical of the concerto form: a three movement work with up-tempo first and last movements, and a slower middle movement.

It is also characteristic of the “court” concertos of the day, written for talented amateur musicians — princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, kings and queens. Paisiello
convivially displays their royal abilities yet never taxes their talent to a point of potential embarrassment.

**Passacaglia**

**Johan Halvorsen (1864-1935)**

Norwegian violinist and composer Johan Halvorsen was a successful musician in his day. He studied composition and violin, but ultimately spent the bulk of his career conducting, including a 30 year stint at Norway’s Christiania National Theatre.

He might have been a footnote in music history had it not been for this arrangement drawn from a harpsichord suite of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759). Halvorsen’s arrangement was for violin and viola, but it has been performed with violin and cello, violin and double bass, and no doubt many other combinations.

This work is an undeniable *tour de force*. The theme is present from the downbeat, continuously repeating yet always evolving: every new phrase is a variation of the theme (note that most performers take a bit of a “breath” at the end of each phrase). As the work unfolds, the players trade off, back and forth, almost like jazz musicians spontaneously trading phrases.

**Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 1**

**George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)**

German-born composer George Frideric Handel, best known for his ever-popular *Messiah* oratorio, was a devoted student of the instrumental works of the Italian masters of the day, most assuredly including Vivaldi.

Handel was not alone in his appreciation of the Italian master. The London public was enamored with the Italians, too. Handel, who had moved to London, was keenly aware of the continuing popularity of his southern neighbors, and no doubt kept his London audience in mind when he composed his own Op. 6, published in 1739 as Twelve Grand Concertos, Op. 6.

In No. 1, Handel certainly captures the elegance and grace of the Italian concerto style. The stately opening movement is like a grand processional. Notice the contrast between the orchestra and melodic solo episodes. The second movement, marked *Allegro*, is vigorous, chirpy, and cheerful. The *Adagio* is tuneful and sweeping, reminiscent of a duet from a Baroque opera, with soloists soaring over the pulsing continuo. Listen carefully to the opening theme of the next *Allegro*, a fugal subject that you will hear several times as Handel demonstrates his deft handling of counterpoint. The closing *Allegro* features a dance-like lilt heard throughout, until its final, satisfyingly grand ending.

**Concerto in C Major, RV. 561**

**Vivaldi**

Vivaldi and his peers were practical. If they had a great violinist, they’d write a violin concerto. If the next year they had an exceptional cellist in the orchestra, they’d write a cello concerto or two. Composers of the day also freely adapted pieces for other instruments, such as this Vivaldi work, RV. 561. This work is usually performed as a “triple” concerto featuring violin and two cello soloists, for example, but it is easily adapted to violin, viola, and cello as the principal soloists. Vivaldi would have approved.

For fans of Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons, the opening *Allegro* will be rather reminiscent of *Spring*. It is bouncy and joyful, with the back-and-forth interplay between orchestra and soloists that has marked all of the Vivaldi works on this program. The *Largo* is lilting and graceful, evocative of music from a courtly waltz. The finale, marked *Allegro*, is distinctive. It begins somewhat syncopated; that is, the downbeat is thwarted a bit by the melody. Vivaldi introduces another rhythmic surprise as the movement nears its end, interrupting the vigorous patterns of four with patterns of three (sixteenth notes vs. triplets).
Ciaccona
Tomaso Vitali (1663-1745)

Tomaso Vitali’s greatest contribution to music might have been the violin students he taught, though he did leave a small number of instrumental works. The Ciaccona has been attributed to him and survived with his name attached for 150 years, though recent research — in which scholars closely compared the Ciaccona to Vitali’s other works — suggests that it is not his work. The more probable composer was violinist Ferdinand David who edited a collection of Vitali’s works published in 1867.

No matter. It is firmly ensconced in the solo violin repertory (again, probably thanks to Heifetz who led off his debut solo recital with this work).

The entire work is based on four descending notes: G, F, E-flat, and D. After these notes are intoned, they become a foundation over which the violinist enters, soaring over the unrelenting, underlying theme. As the work progresses, you will hear the violin part become more and more dazzling, and increasingly virtuosic.

The powerful and emotional ending has more in common with the romantic concertos of the 19th century than with the measured proportions and contained emotions of the Baroque era.

— Program notes by Dave Kopplin
BIOGRAPHY

From Venice, Italy comes this group of master musicians — Interpreti Veneziani. They made their debut in 1987, immediately gaining a reputation for the “…youthful exuberance and all-Italian brio characterizing their performances,” becoming a main attraction for both local residents and visitors to the romantic city. In Venice only, they play a total of some 350 concerts, with over 60,000 subscribers to their own season at the San Vidal Church, where Vivaldi used to play, and where his spirit still hangs strong.

Playing on original instruments and specializing in mostly Baroque music, the individual talents of the members, their expertise as soloists and ensemble musicians, and the high level of performances have earned the Interpreti an enthusiastic welcome from both audiences and critics alike.

Their most recent major achievements include appearances in the Bayreuth Festival and concerts in Stockholm’s Royal Palace during the “Water Festival”; and in Leningrad’s Belozelsky Hall, and participation in the World Vision telemarathon at the Kirov Theater to mark the reinstatement of the name St. Petersburg; a concert at the Osaka Symphony Hall in live broadcast for Japanese radio; concerts at the Tokyo Kjoy Hall and the Yokohama Minato Mirari Hall during three tours in Japan; and participation in the “Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields” festival in Ballarat and Melbourne Australia, where they toured in 2003.

In January 2004 the Interpreti Veneziani performed in Istanbul, Venezuela and the Bahamas. They performed in Algeria, and are scheduled to perform in Mexico, Guatemala and Venezuela in the near future.

Interpreti Veneziani have 15 albums to their name, all on the Rivo Alto label.

Even though it is difficult to reproduce the Venetian atmosphere and Vivaldi’s music in concert halls, Interpreti Veneziani manage to do the impossible — they unfold the silence of the lagoon and the romanticism of the city wherever they go, feeling that no one composer renders Venice better than he does.