University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Interpreti Veneziani

Tuesday, March 5, 2013, 7:30 p.m.

University Auditorium

Sponsored by

Plaza Royale Associates
Interpreti Veneziani

Program

Concerto for Violin, Strings and Harpsichord, Op. 9, No. 5, RV 358 (From *La Cetra*)
- Allegro
- Largo
- Allegro

Sebastiano Maria Vianello, Violin

*L’Eroica*, for Strings and Harpsichord

Andrea Falconieri

Concerto for 2 Violins, Strings and Harpsichord
Op. 3, No. 2, RV 578 (*L’Estro Armonico*)
- Adagio e spiccato; allegro
- Larghetto
- Allegro

Paolo Ciociola and Nicola Granillo, Violin

*Sinfonia* for Strings and Harpsichord,
from *L’Olimpiade*, R. 725
- Allegro
- Andante
- Allegro

Niccolò Paganini

*Le Streghe* for Violin and Strings
Nicola Granillo, Violin

INTERMISSION

*Sinfonia* for Strings and Harpsichord,
from *Farnace*, RV 711
- Allegro
- Andante
- Allegro

Violin Concerto in D Minor
Felix Mendelssohn
- Allegro
- Andante
- Allegro

Giuliano Fontanella, Violin
Program Notes
Concerto for Violin, Strings and Harpsichord, Op. 9, No. 5, RV 358 (From La Cetra)
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

The shockingly redheaded Antonio Vivaldi was ordained as a priest at age 25 and that same year he was appointed “master of violin” at an orphanage in Venice, the Ospedale della Pietà. The “orphanage” was among several locations in Venice devoted to out-of-wedlock female offspring. These “Ospedali” were supported by wealthy noblemen who were the fathers of said offspring, resulting in an outstanding educational curriculum for young women as well as richly endowed music programs — truly among the first real conservatories of music in Western Europe. It was for the celebrated orchestra at the Ospedale della Pietà that Vivaldi wrote a significant number of his works.

La Cetra (The Lyre), from around 1727, was the title that Vivaldi gave two sets of works (one set of which is mostly lost), including Op. 9, No 5 in A Minor. It is an interesting variation of the so-called “concerto” form, a form that Vivaldi himself more or less solidified during his lifetime. Typically, his solo concertos begin with an Allegro (lively) movement, followed by a slower, more contemplative movement, then end with an upbeat Finale. In this concerto, Vivaldi begins the first movement with a somber slow introduction, followed by an almost manic Presto (very fast). The brief Largo (slowly) second movement begins without interruption. The galloping Allegro finale is typically Baroque, marked by its perpetually moving lines.

L’Eroica, for Strings and Harpsichord
Andrea Falconieri (1585–1656)

Italian composer and lutenist Andrea Falconieri lived in “interesting times.” His native city of Naples was under Spanish rule during most of his life. It was a major European center of culture and refinement, which is said to have rivaled Paris for its grandness. In 1647, he was appointed music director at the royal chapel in Naples, a post he held until his death, from the bubonic plague, in 1656. (Sadly, this particular outbreak of the plague in Naples devastated the city, killing half of the population and bringing its “Golden Age” to a close.)

Falconieri was mostly known for his vocal music, which combined stylistic elements of the Spanish with Northern Italian and a touch of Neapolitan verve. His instrumental music came to us in a handwritten-edition by Falconieri himself, and one printed edition. L’Eroica comes from the latter. It is an upbeat piece marked especially by the interplay between the melody and the low strings and harpsichord.

Concerto for 2 Violins, Strings and Harpsichord Op. 3, No. 2, RV 578 (L’Estro Armonico)
Antonio Vivaldi

In addition to having such a great orchestra play his works, Vivaldi can also thank technology for his career. The notion of mass printing music had been around for close to 300 years, yet in Vivaldi’s day music printing was still a slow and painstaking process, and still quite expensive. Estienne Rogers of Amsterdam was among the first music printers to effectively use engraving plates, a huge leap forward for music printing in the early 1700s. Rogers was also ahead of his time as an aggressive marketer of his brand.

Beginning with Op. 3, published in 1711, Rogers became Vivaldi’s music publisher
and the result was widespread dissemination of the composer’s music. Before its publication, Vivaldi was little known outside of northern Italy. Afterward, he was an international sensation: Op. 3 — titled *L’Estro Armonico* ("Harmonic Inspiration") — was a “hit” in the music capitals of Europe, making the rounds to Paris, London, Cologne, Berlin, and beyond, even reaching J.S. Bach in Weimar, who arranged several of the concerti to play on harpsichord himself.

The opening *Adagio* of Op. 3, No. 2 in G minor, is unrelenting, hardly wavering from the unison rhythm. The *Allegro* second movement is ethereal and light by comparison. Note the recurring, rising line in the orchestra that precedes the cheery entrances of the violin soloists. The *Larghetto* is like a long sigh, a melancholy interlude, followed by an upbeat and chirpy *Allegro*.

*Sinfonia* for Strings and Harpsichord, from *L’Olimpiade*, R. 725
Antonio Vivaldi

Though modern listeners know Vivaldi as a composer of instrumental music — the vast majority of his fans no doubt know his Op. 8, *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons), still among the most popular works in the repertory — he also composed prodigiously for voice, including dozens of cantatas, sacred choral works, and at least 50 operas (Vivaldi himself claimed he wrote more than 100 operas, and though some resurface every year or two, only about 50 are known).

Venice itself is important in the history of opera. The city was home to the first public opera house, the Teatro di San Cassiano, which opened in 1637. It became the city of opera for a time, with several opera houses catering to the newfound Venetian love of the dramatic musical arts.

*L’Olimpiade* was composed on a libretto by Pietro Metastasio and premiered in the Teatro Sant’Angelo in 1734. The drama’s setting is the Olympics, the original games in ancient Greece. What precedes the opening act was an instrumental Sinfonia, a three-part instrumental prelude by a small opera orchestra. As in this example from *L’Olimpiade*, the three movements of the sinfonia are generally designated with tempi that are fast, slow, then a rousing finale to round it out.

*Le Streghe* for Violin and Strings
Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840)

Niccolò Paganini was the most illustrious violinist of his day and perhaps any day. Without recordings, we will never know for sure.

After a successful premiere at La Scala in Milan, the 21-year-old Paganini began to tour incessantly, spreading his fame throughout mainland Europe and the U.K. One tour is said to have lasted six-and-a-half years. Audiences were astonished at his abilities, which some historians believe was enhanced by a case of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, an unusual flexibility in the joints.

He began composing works to feature his extraordinary abilities, works that even today are among the most challenging in the solo violin literature. *Le Streghe* (The Witches) was based on a melody of Franz Süssmayr, the composer who is now best known for completing Mozart’s Requiem. After a brief statement by the orchestra, and a brief answer by the solo violinist, the Süssmayr theme is introduced. Listen as Paganini deftly varies the theme; an interesting moment occurs about midway through when he moves into the minor key, though the major again prevails. Paganini saves the real pyrotechnics for the last minute or so, a true *tour de force* for the solo violinist.
Sinfonia for Strings and Harpsichord, from Farnace, RV 711
Antonio Vivaldi

The story that spawned the libretto for Vivaldi’s opera Farnace was a popular one. Most notably, fellow Venetian Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) completed a version for the Teatro Sant’Angelo in Venice in 1703. Vivaldi’s Farnace premiered at the same theatre in 1727, and though it disappeared from the scene later in the 1700s, it emerged in the late 20th century due to a revival in interest in Baroque opera, as well as a revival in interest in this specific opera.

Scholarship suggests that Vivaldi was particularly fond of this work, or perhaps obsessed with it. He revised it several times, and late in his life, in 1737, he attempted to mount a revised version to be performed in 1739 in the northern Italian city of Ferrara. Things didn’t go well, the opera was cancelled, and Vivaldi apparently never finished the entire revision or published it, though he did keep it among his personal scores.

The Sinfonia from RV 711 deviates from the expected fast-slow-fast movement layout. Instead, this work is fast-fast-faster, perhaps readying us for the opening, as King Farnace sings: “I shall rise again to tear the laurels from Rome’s prod brows ...” No wonder this story was so popular with Venetians!

Violin Concerto in D Minor
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

German composer Felix Mendelssohn was a child prodigy. In his short life he wrote hundreds of works: no surprise since he began piano lessons at age 6, composition lessons at 10, and by his mid-teens he was writing accomplished works that have since joined the classical repertory.

One of his most famous compositions is his Violin Concerto in E Minor, written in 1844. It is often called “Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto” on programs because the work on tonight’s program, written when he was only 13, was dismissed as “juvenilia” and never published in his lifetime. Violinist Yehudi Menuhin would bring this “other” violin concerto to the attention of music lovers. Apparently, a rare book dealer had showed the score of the Concerto in D to Menuhin, who had already been a champion of Mendelssohn’s well-known Concerto in E Minor. Menuhin bought the manuscript, bought the rights from the Mendelssohn family, prepared it for publication, and gave its premiere performance in New York City in 1952.

Menuhin wrote of the work: “The Concerto in D Minor is full of invention and not in any way inhibited by too-strict traditional concepts. It exhibits, in fact, a remarkable freedom and elasticity of form.”

The orchestra opens with a bold declaration, followed by lengthy interplay between string sections. The violin entrance is understated, yet quietly dramatic. Note in particular that the brief cadenza that ends the first movement is almost presented in the style of a recitative in an opera, rather than a full-blown display of technique that is more common. The melancholy Andante movement begins with a long introduction. Haunting harmonics leave this movement in a state of suspended animation. The finale is an impressive display, which begins with the violin soloist introducing a madcap dance. The “elasticity of form” that Menuhin refers is evident in this movement as a cadenza appears early in the movement, as well as another on display later on.

— Program notes by Dave Kopplin.
About Interpreti Veneziani

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 characterising their performances,” becoming a main attraction for both locals and visitors to the romantic city.

In Venice, only they play a total of some 350 concerts, with more than 60,000 subscribers to their own seasons at the San Vidal Church, where Vivaldi used to play, and where his spirit remains strong.

Playing on original instruments, specializing in mostly Baroque music, the individual talent of the members of this group, their expertise as soloists and ensemble musicians and the high level of their performances have earned 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”; in Leningrad’s Belozelsky Hall, 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.

Interpreti Veneziani has performed in the U.S., Turkey, Italy, Holland, Venezuela, the Bahamas, Mexico and in the prestigious Australian Melbourne International Arts Festival.

Interpreti Veneziani has 18 albums to their name, all on Rivo Alto label.

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