

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Thursday, February 9, 2017, at 8:00

Friday, February 10, 2017, at 8:00

Saturday, February 11, 2017, at 8:00

Fabio Biondi Conductor and Violin

Vivica Genaux Mezzo-soprano

Corelli

Concerto grosso in D Major, Op. 6, No. 4

Adagio—Allegro

Adagio

Vivace

Allegro—Allegro

Giacomelli

Sposa, non mi conosci FROM *Merope*

VIVICA GENAUX

Veracini

Già presso al termine FROM *Adriano in Siria*

VIVICA GENAUX

Vivaldi

Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 222

Allegro

Andante

Allegro

FABIO BIONDI

INTERMISSION

Vivaldi

Violin Concerto in E Major, RV 271 (*L'amoroso*)

Allegro

Cantabile

[Allegro]

FABIO BIONDI

Ariosti

Questi ceppi FROM *La fede ne' tradimenti*

VIVICA GENAUX

Vivaldi

Agitata da due venti FROM *Griselda*

VIVICA GENAUX

Vivaldi

Violin Concerto in F Major, RV 284

Allegro

Largo

Allegro

FABIO BIONDI

Corelli

Concerto grosso in B-flat Major, Op. 6, No. 11

Preludio

Allemanda

Adagio

Sarabanda

Gigue

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first performances of all the works on this program except Corelli's Concerto grosso in D major and Concerto grosso in B-flat major.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to 93XRT FM for its generous support as media sponsor of the Classic Encounter series.

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La stravaganza—Italian for “oddity, extravagance.” In the baroque period, the term referred to the technique of containing the unexpected within the bounds of etiquette, but it also serves as an appropriate metaphor for the musical world of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italy. On one hand, it was an age of rapid innovation. New genres like the concerto were germinating, while older forms such as opera continued to evolve. Instrumental music surged in popularity, prompting technical advances in the violin and other instruments as well as new methods of composition. At the same time, many of music’s social functions remained constant. Music had long been a potent means of self-promotion, a vehicle for institutions to display their amount of wealth, individuals their degree of refinement, and artists their level of skill. In essence, Italian baroque culture contains its own *stravaganza*—what was new, exciting, and innovative always arose within the confines of social structure. While some works on this evening’s program reach back to the past and others push forward into the future, all are inextricably linked to the people and places that produced them.

Arcangelo Corelli

Born February 17, 1653; Fusignano, Italy

Died January 8, 1713; Rome, Italy

Concerto grosso in D Major, Op. 6, No. 4

Concerto grosso in B-flat Major, Op. 6, No. 11



Born in Italy in 1653, Arcangelo Corelli was an extraordinary violinist and composer. After studying violin with masters in Bologna, Corelli moved to Rome—and around 1690, became the first violinist and director of music to the newly appointed

Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni. The cardinal required ensembles for many different purposes, and Corelli served essentially as a one-man department of artistic administration, finding performers, arranging for transportation, rehearsing and

conducting, making sure they were paid—and, of course, composing music. And the cardinal wasn’t Corelli’s only employer. From the early 1680s until the first decade of the eighteenth century, the composer led nearly every documented performance in Rome of an ensemble consisting of more than ten musicians. Ultimately, Corelli established himself among his peers as a pioneer in instrumental music and one of the greatest musicians of his time. As contemporary critic Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni describes,

He was the first to introduce Rome to ensembles of so large a number of instruments and diversity that it was almost

impossible to believe that he could get them to play together without fear of discord, especially since wind instruments were combined with strings, and the total nearly often exceeding a hundred.

Interestingly, Corelli's extant compositions for orchestra consist only of a single *sinfonia* and the twelve *concerti grossi* contained in his op. 6 collection, published posthumously in 1714. While this absence of instrumental music is curious, one thing is certain: these works had a profound impact on Corelli's contemporaries and later generations of composers. German composer Georg Muffat, writing in 1701, eloquently summarizes Corelli's influence in the foreword to his first collection of instrumental concertos:

These concertos, suited neither to the church (because of the ballet airs and airs of other sorts which they include) nor for dancing (because of other interwoven conceits, now slow and serious, now gay and nimble, and composed only for the express refreshment of the ear), may be performed most appropriately in connection with entertainments given by great princes and lords, for receptions of distinguished guests, and at state banquets, serenades, and assemblies of musical amateurs and virtuosi. The idea of this ingenious mixture first occurred to me some time ago in Rome . . . where I heard,

with great pleasure and astonishment, several concertos of this sort, composed by the gifted Signor Arcangelo Corelli, and beautifully performed with the utmost accuracy by a great number of instrumental players.

The Concerto grosso in D major, op. 6, no. 4 has been described as progressive—with a relatively fast opening movement, a lyrical second movement, a triple-meter third movement, and a lively finale, it almost seems to point toward the modern symphony. Casting the concerto against a modern backdrop obscures its defining baroque elements, however. A four-movement structure was typical for a *sonata da chiesa*, or “church sonata,” which did not contain baroque dances. And the notion of contrast, one of the central tenets of the baroque era, dominates the entire work. In the opening Allegro, straightforward music for the orchestra throws the irrepressibly brilliant solo figuration into relief. In the lyrical Adagio, lush melody is shot through with occasional flashes of dissonance, while the triple-meter Vivace nods toward the lively rhythms of baroque dance. The joyful Allegro finale ends with a surprise coda.

The Concerto grosso in B-flat major, op. 6, no. 11 on the other hand, is a clear example of a *sonata da camera* (chamber sonata), with dances typical of baroque instrumental music such as the sarabande and gigue. ■

Concerto grosso in D Major, Op. 6, No. 4

The dates of composition and first performance are not known.

INSTRUMENTATION
strings, continuo

**APPROXIMATE
PERFORMANCE TIME**
9 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
April 27, 28, 29, 30, and May 3,
2011, Orchestra Hall. Nicholas
McGegan conducting

Concerto grosso in B-flat Major, Op. 6, No. 11

The dates of composition and first performance are not known.

INSTRUMENTATION
strings, continuo

**APPROXIMATE
PERFORMANCE TIME**
10 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
March 20, 1971, Orchestra Hall.
Margaret Hillis conducting

Antonio Vivaldi

Born March 4, 1678; Venice, Italy

Died July 27–28, 1741; Vienna, Austria

Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 222

Violin Concerto in E Major, RV 271 (*L'amoroso*)

Violin Concerto in F Major, RV 284



As the workshops of Amati, Guarneri, and Stradivari attest, the violin's popularity skyrocketed during the seventeenth century, and its performers were equally compelling. Italian virtuosos such as Corelli and Antonio

Vivaldi left indelible impressions; as one contemporary of Corelli rhapsodized,

I never met with any man that suffered his passions to hurry him away so much whilst

he was playing on the violin as the famous Arcangelo Corelli, whose eyes will sometimes turn as red as fire; his countenance will be distorted, his eyeballs roll as in an agony, and he gives in so much to what he is doing that he doth not look like the same man.

A witness at one of Vivaldi's performances remarked, "He added a cadenza that really frightened me, for such playing has not been heard before and can never be equaled: he brought his fingers no more than a straw's breadth from the bridge, leaving no room for the bow—and that on all four strings with imitations and incredible speed." This fascination with virtuoso players

Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 222

COMPOSED
ca. 1737

INSTRUMENTATION
solo violin, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
14 minutes

Violin Concerto in E Major, RV 271 (*L'amoroso*)

COMPOSED
ca. 1728

INSTRUMENTATION
solo violin, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
8 minutes

Violin Concerto in F Major, RV 284

COMPOSED
ca. 1714

INSTRUMENTATION
solo violin, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
8 minutes

fueled the development of the concerto, a genre that became virtually synonymous with Vivaldi. Pitting solo performer against ensemble, concertos showcase the soloist's prowess while pushing the instrument to its limits.

The concerto was the perfect expressive vehicle for the women of the Ospedale della Pietà, the institution with which Vivaldi was connected for much of his life. Although the Pietà was described as an orphanage, it was in reality a home for illegitimate daughters of Venetian noblemen and was well financed by its "anonymous" benefactors. Residents received room, board, and an excellent education in music—which while originally intended to augment moral and religious instruction, took on a life of its own. Concerts at the Pietà were wildly popular. As one traveler wrote, "All year long the presence of foreigners in this pious place was great, there being not a single important person visiting Venice who left before honoring them with their presence." Much of Vivaldi's output—including almost 500 concertos—was intended for these talented performers, who performed behind a screen to preserve their modesty. (While Vivaldi's dramatic style may have compensated somewhat for the lack of visuals, it must have been frustrating not to see the musicians as they brought the music to life.)

One of these Pietà musicians was a girl named Chiara. Left on the doorstep of the orphanage as an infant, she began her violin studies at the age of twelve—perhaps with Vivaldi himself, but more likely with his primary student Anna Maria. By all accounts, Chiara was remarkably talented. On hearing her perform in 1739, French writer Charles de Brosses remarked, "Chiaretta will certainly be the first violin of Europe."

Dedicated to this talented young violinist, the Violin Concerto in D Major, RV 222, possibly composed around 1737, gives us a glimpse of her musical personality. The opening Allegro is overtly virtuosic, as the soloist weaves delicate figuration around the orchestra's straightforward framework. The ensuing Adagio—the heart of the piece—begins with a brief yet intensely passionate theme,

gradually moving into a series of variations that gave Chiara a chance to show off her technique while maintaining the lyrical mood. The concerto closes with a virtuosic Allegro, in which solid ritornellos ground brilliant solo statements.

Vivaldi composed his Violin Concerto in E Major, RV 271 (*L'amoroso*) around 1728, during a time when he was writing a number of "themed" works including *The Four Seasons*, composed just five years earlier. Although *The Four Seasons* is renowned for its evocative portrayals of nature, *L'amoroso* brings its subject to life in a much subtler manner. In the first movement, marked Allegro, the ensemble and soloist unite to create a mood that is rapturous, yet controlled. The brief cantabile brings a distinct shift in affect, with its wistful, slightly melancholy melody. The pensive mood lingers slightly in the final Allegro, in which flashes of the minor mode break through the breathless energy and gesture slightly toward love's bittersweet possibilities.

Composed around 1714, the Violin Concerto in F Major, RV 284, is the earliest of the three. The work comes from the composer's op. 4 collection, organized around the principle of "la stravaganza," or finding the unexpected within the expected. This was not to all critics' tastes; French author Ginguené, for example, cites Vivaldi for "brilliant, difficult, and occasionally bizarre passage work," criticizing him as "more taken up with the cares of astounding the ear than with those of enchanting it." One interesting feature of the F major concerto is its occasional recruitment of other soloists from the orchestra, unexpectedly creating the feel of a concerto grosso in the context of a piece for solo and ensemble. Also noteworthy are the connections to the third concerto in the composer's famous op. 3 collection, *L'estro armonico* (1711). As *La stravaganza* was positioned as a sequel to the earlier volume, Vivaldi both relies on listeners' powers of recollection and shrewdly engages in a bit of self-promotion. ■

FOUR ARIAS

Geminiano Giacomelli

Born ca. 1692; Piacenza, Italy

Died January 25, 1740; Loreto, Italy

Sposa, non mi conosci FROM *Merope*

Francesco Maria Veracini

Born February 1, 1690; Florence, Italy

Died October 31, 1768; Florence, Italy

Già presso al termine FROM *Adriano in Siria*

Attilio Ariosti

Born November 5, 1666; Bologna, Italy

Died September 1729; London, England

Questi ceppi FROM *La fede ne' tradimenti*

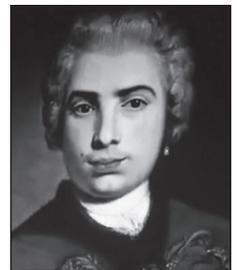
Antonio Vivaldi

Agitata da due venti FROM *Griselda*

Operatic style evolved significantly in the centuries following its inception, and singers had perhaps the biggest impact on its development. Eighteenth-century composers approached a new opera project with the entire cast in mind, and strove to exploit each performer's uniqueness to the fullest lest they fall out of favor. In 1720, composer and satirist Benedetto Marcello joked, "In walking with singers . . . the composer will always place himself at their left and keep one step behind, hat in hand, remembering that the low[est] of them is, in the operas, at least a general, a captain of the king's forces, of the queen's forces, etc." Performers even unwittingly shaped musical architecture; as scholar Charles Rosen describes wryly, "Baroque opera [is] a series of display pieces for the singers." The da capo aria, for

example—a tripartite song in which the third part is an embellished version of the first—gave singers a perfect opportunity for a dazzling display of vocal pyrotechnics.

Somewhat ironically, Geminiano Giacomelli's most famous aria, "Sposa, non mi conosci" from *Merope* (Venice, 1734), was long thought to have been written by Antonio Vivaldi, who used it with the text "Sposa, son disprezzata" in his 1735 opera *Bajazet*. Today, poaching another composer's music without attribution is plagiarism, but it was common practice in the baroque—and



for good reason. If singers were given arias they enjoyed, and the public heard their favorite tunes, the entire venture was more likely to succeed—which meant more money for all involved. As “Sposa, non mi conosci” illustrates, beauty and drama were not sacrificed in the process. Presenting the viewpoint of a man wronged, but still in love, the plaintive text is perfectly captured in the music’s slow tempo, descending figures in the violins, and minor mode. In the premiere of Giacomelli’s work, this aria was sung by the castrato Farinelli, a singer with serious star power.

Opera reached increasingly beyond the borders of Italy, and composers rushed to explore the global possibilities.

Francesco Maria Veracini benefited from George Frideric Handel’s efforts to establish Italian opera in London—but not as part of Handel’s company. In 1733, the Opera of the Nobility was established as a competitor to Handel’s Royal Academy,



taking advantage of a rift between Handel and the castrato Senesino and creating a roster of stars including the famed Farinelli. It was for this group that Veracini composed *Adriano in Siria* in 1735, the same year Handel’s famous operas *Ariodante* and *Alcina* received their premieres. With a cast that included Senesino, Farinelli, and the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni, *Adriano in Siria* tells the story of the emperor Adriano, whose infatuation with the Parthian princess Emirena tests his virtue. Farinelli sang the role of Prince Farnaspe, the hero who defends Emirena and eventually becomes her spouse. The act 1 aria “Già presso al termine,” with its expansive range and controlled virtuosity, shows just how impressive Farinelli must have been.

While the shift from private court performance to public theaters was one of opera’s most significant milestones, royal patronage was responsible for the genre’s debut in Berlin. In 1697, Sophia Charlotte of Hanover, queen of Prussia, a great-granddaughter of James I of England and daughter of the Electress Sophia of Hanover, brought Italian musician Attilio Ariosti to the city. A Catholic

Geminiano Giacomelli

Sposa, non mi conosci FROM *Merope*

COMPOSED
1734

INSTRUMENTATION
solo voice, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
6 minutes

Francesco Maria Veracini

Già presso al termine FROM *Adriano in Siria*

COMPOSED
1735

INSTRUMENTATION
solo voice, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 26, 1735; King’s Theatre, London, England

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
9 minutes



monk and composer of an infamous 1693 oratorio, *La passione*—complete with “*sinfonie infernale*” and a mad scene—Ariosti’s presence at the Protestant court was slightly controversial. He never held an official post, but Ariosti was responsi-

ble for the first Italian operas ever heard in Berlin, including the 1701 work *La fede ne’ tradimenti*. Based on an incident between King Fernando of Castille and King Sancio of Navarre, the opera is somewhat satirical. Fernando’s aria “*Questi ceppi*,” however, with its hushed melody and affecting accompaniment, is completely heartfelt.

Although Vivaldi is known primarily today for his instrumental music, he ventured into the world of opera around 1710, and continued to compose and produce operas until his death in 1741. While only around twenty are extant today—and these are rarely performed—the composer prided himself on his prodigious output in the genre, once

suggesting that he may have composed as many as ninety-two. *Griselda*, written in 1735, is based on a story from Boccaccio’s *Il decamerone* about Griselda’s patience and virtue as her husband



puts her through a cruel set of trials. Vivaldi’s evocative writing for violin is almost audible in the *simile* aria “*Agitata da due venti*,” in which the character’s emotional state is compared to the natural world. In the text, love and duty are depicted as contrary winds. Vivaldi

responds with a wild setting, full of dramatic leaps and fiery ornamentation. ■

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Jennifer More is a freelance writer and program annotator for several local and national orchestras, including Music of the Baroque (Chicago).

Attilio Ariosti

Questi ceppi FROM *La fede ne’ tradimenti*

COMPOSED
1701

INSTRUMENTATION
solo voice, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
July 12, 1701; Berlin, Germany

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
8 minutes

Antonio Vivaldi

Agitata da due venti FROM *Griselda*

COMPOSED
1735

INSTRUMENTATION
solo voice, strings, continuo

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first performances.

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
7 minutes

Sposa, non mi conosci FROM *Merope*

Epitide, Act 3, Scene 7:

Sposa, non mi conosci.
Madre, tu non m'ascolti.
(Cieli, che feci mai?)
E pur sono il tuo cor,
il tuo figlio, il tuo amor,
la tua speranza.
Parla . . . ma sei infedel.
Credi . . . ma sei crudel.
Morir mi lascierai?
O Dio, manca il valor,
e la costanza.

Wife, you do not acknowledge me.
Mother, you do not heed me.
(Heavens, is this my doing?)
And yet I am your heart,
your devoted son, your one true love,
your lasting hope.
Speak . . . but you are insincere.
Believe . . . but you are cruel.
Am I thus left to die?
O God, gone away are valor
and fidelity.

—Apostolo Zeno, rev. Domenico Lalli

Già presso al termine FROM *Adriano in Siria*

Farnaspe, Act 1, Scene 2:

Già presso al termine de' suoi martiri,
fugge quest'anima sciolta in sospiri,
sul volto amabile del caro ben.
Fra lor s'annodano sul labbro i detti;
e il cor, che palpita fra mille affetti,
perché non tolleri di starmi in sen.

An end to its torments at last drawing nigh,
submerged in sighs, this spirit flies
to the beloved's venerated face.
Upon the lips all sentiments are frozen;
and the heart, pulsing with a thousand emotions,
seems unable to endure remaining in its place.

—Angelo Maria Cori after Pietro Metastasio

Questi ceppi FROM *La fede ne' tradimenti*

Fernando, Act 2, Scene 9:

Questi ceppi, e quest' orrore,
più terrore non han per me.
Ch'assai bello agl'occhi miei
è qual luogo, ov'io potei,
idolo mio, piacer a te.

These shackles and this horror,
burden me with terrors no more.
Of surpassing beauty to my eyes
is that place where, my idol,
I might restore pleasure to you.

—Girolamo Gigli

Agitata da due venti FROM *Griselda*

Costanza, Act 2, Scene 2:

Agitata da due venti,
freme l'onda in mar turbato,
e il nocchiero spaventato
già s'aspetta a naufragar.
Dal dovere e dall'amore
combattuto, questo core
non resiste, e par che ceda,
e incominci a desparar.

Agitated by two winds,
the wave trembles in the troubled sea,
and the frightened helmsman
already expects to be shipwrecked.
Assailed by duty and by love,
this embattled heart
cannot resist, and seems to concede
and begin to despair.

—Apostolo Zeno, adapt. Carlo Goldoni, after Giovanni Boccaccio