

West Cork Chamber Music Festival 2021
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Bantry and Beyond

Festival Echoes

14. Baroque Sonatas

Filmed at the Santa Clara Keller, Cologne

Ariadne Daskalakis, Ensemble Vintage Köln

Ariadne Daskalakis [baroque violin]

Rainer Zipperling [baroque cello, viol de gamba]

Andreas Nachtsheim [lute]

Michael Borgstede [harpsichord]

Schmelzer

'Unarum Fidium' Sonata No.1 in C major

Vivaldi

Sonata No.1 in G minor Op.2 RV27

Tartini

Sonata No.10 in G minor Op.1 'Didone abbandonata'

J.S. Bach

Sonata in E major BWV 1016

Schmelzer

'Unarum Fidium' Sonata No.4 in D major;

Johann Heinrich Schmelzer [c.1620-1680]***Sonatas I and IV*** from *Sonatae unarum fidium* [1664]

These two Sonatas bookend this recital. When Schmelzer began his career as a violinist in the Viennese Imperial court, the Austrian musical world was dominated by Italians. The *Hofkapellmeister* had been an Italian for as long as anyone could remember and Italian violinists were playing works by Marini, Uccellini, Viviani and Pandolfi Mealli. By the end of his life, Schmelzer had overturned this order; he himself had become the first non-Italian Kapellmeister at the Viennese court and was considered to be *one of the most famous, distinguished violinists in the whole of Europe*.

He was hugely influential in the development of violin technique and instrumental music in 17th century Austria. There is no doubt that he was influenced by the Italian composers who were responsible for introducing solo violin repertoire to northern climes, such as Marini, Fontana and Uccellini. Schmelzer in turn influenced the later German and Austrian composers. There is much debate as to whether or not he was Biber's teacher, the case cannot be proved, attractive though the idea is.

The six *Sonatae unarum fidium* were most likely intended for the composer's own use as a performer. The description *Sonatae unarum fidium*, meaning literally sonatas for one violin, is part of an elaborate and learned dedication to Cardinal Carlo Caraffa that trades on the double meanings of *Fidium*, and should not be taken to mean solo violin without continuo. Schmelzer's hyperbolic dedication has been wonderfully described by the violinist, Andrew Manze, as a *riot of resonance*.

As with his successor, Heinrich Biber, another violinist-composer, Schmelzer's genius lies in his ability to translate the art of improvisation into the permanence of a sonata without losing the immediacy of the improviser. Most of his sonatas rely strongly on the variation principle and consist of a number of short sections in contrasting meters and tempos, but in the solo violin sonatas, these sections are extended to allow a greater display of his astounding virtuosity. Both sonatas are through composed creating a uniquely rich sound world, perhaps only matched by Biber's wonderful set of eight solo sonatas.

Francis Humphrys

Antonio Vivaldi [1678-1741]

Violin Sonata in G minor RV27 [1709]

1. *Preludio – Andante*
2. *Giga – Allegro*
3. *Sarabanda – Largo*
4. *Corrente – Allegro*

This Sonata is from the set of twelve sonatas in Vivaldi's Op.2 from 1709. The title page specifies harpsichord as the accompanying instrument, but there is a clear case for strengthening the bass line with a cello as in this performance.

Guiseppe Tartini [1692-1770]

Violin Sonata in G minor Op.1/10 'Didone abbandonata' [1731]

1. *Affettuoso*
2. *Presto*
3. *Allegro*

Tartini was a teacher, theorist, composer and violin virtuoso who was based at Padua for most of his life. When he had finally settled there after his nomadic life as a virtuoso violinist, he founded his celebrated violin school, which attracted students from all over Europe. The G minor Sonata is from a set published in Amsterdam in 1732. It is not known whether Tartini or a publisher gave the sonata its name, taken from a Metastasio opera libretto, but the sighing Affettuoso certainly encourages such a melodramatic title. The movement also includes music in the singing, cantabile style for which Tartini was famous. It is followed by a technically challenging Presto and a dance-like Allegro.

J.S.Bach [1685-1750]

Violin Sonata in E major BWV1016 [1720-25]

1. *Adagio*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Adagio ma non tanto*
4. *Allegro*

Bach's sonatas for violin and harpsichord are less well-known than his solo Sonatas and Partitas. In 1774 his son, CPE Bach, praised the accompanied sonatas extravagantly: '*The six harpsichord trios are amongst the finest works of my dearly beloved father. They still sound excellent and give me great pleasure although they are over 50 years old [!!]. There are several Adagios in them which even nowadays could not be set in a more singing style.*' By trio sonata CPE referred to the three voices – violin, harpsichordist's right hand and the bass played by the left hand with optional support of a viola da gamba, though not in this performance.

The earliest source for these works describes them as '*sonatas for obbligato harpsichord and solo violin with a bass accompanied by a viola da gamba if you like*'. They were written while he was Capellmeister at Cöthen for the music-loving Prince Leopold, who had brought together a highly distinguished ensemble to work with Bach. The presence of these outstanding musicians like Joseph Spiess and Christian Abel inspired much of Bach's solo instrumental works. It is interesting to note that these sonatas were among the very first works published in the Nineteenth Century's Bach revival.

Unlike some Baroque composers Bach's music translates to modern instruments without blinking. Later in our series of Festival concerts you can hear this Sonata played on modern instruments, where it will sound like another work from another era though the familiar outlines will shine through.

Francis Humphrys

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