

ACRONYM

NAUMBURG ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

August 6, 2024

Vienna: City of Music, City of Dreams

Program Notes:

Just northeast of the Alps, Vienna sits on the Danube river close to the geographic center of Europe. A sophisticated crossroads where East met West and where Mediterranean and Baltic cultures mingled, Vienna was already known for its music long before the famed Viennese Classicism of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. A century earlier, following the end of the devastating Thirty Years War in 1648, Viennese musical culture combined the fire and drama of the Italian *seconda prattica* with the harmonic and formal complexity of Northern Europe to birth the *stylus phantasticus*, a virtuosic instrumental idiom that would deeply influence subsequent European music. ACRONYM presents a selection of this strange, wonderful music from seventeenth-century Vienna, a city of music and city of dreams.

Giovanni Valentini (c.1582–1649) was likely born in Venice, and in 1614 he took a post in Graz, serving as organist to the Archduke of Styria. The enharmonic keyboards used in Graz—with 19 or more notes to the octave, allowing for far more direct chromaticism—likely steered Valentini's compositional style. The Archduke was soon elected Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, for whom Valentini then served as *Hofkapellmeister* in Vienna. Valentini's delightfully wild instrumental works were mostly unpublished and have therefore been largely forgotten today, but they demonstrate numerous innovations, including the surprising harmonic shifts found in his C Major Sonata, the shocking dissonances and metric irregularities in his G Minor Sonata, and the discontinuity of phrases in his A Minor Sonata.

Valentini's countryman, student, and eventual successor as *Hofkapellmeister* in Vienna was the violinist **Antonio Bertali** (1605–1669), who led and expanded musical



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activities in the Imperial City during the decades following the Thirty Years War. Bertali is represented here by two sonatas which survive in the *Partiturbuch Ludwig*, a manuscript of over a hundred sonatas from this era, most of them *unica*. The *Partiturbuch* is also the source of the Sonata a7 by **Georg Piscator** (fl. 1610–1643), who probably Latinized his surname from “Fischer.” Little is known of Piscator, including his dates of birth and death. He was an organist in Innsbruck from 1622, Munich from 1635, and Vienna from 1643. Almost none of his music survives.

Adam Drese (c.1620–1701) was a viola da gamba player and composer who studied in Dresden with Heinrich Schütz, as well as in Warsaw, Regensburg, and Coburg. He was *Kapellmeister* first in Weimar, then in Jena, and finally in Arnstadt, where his death slightly preceded J. S. Bach's arrival (Bach would write several chorales using Drese's texts and melodies). Because of his extensive travels, Drese is credited with being one of the most important transmitters of the Italian compositional style throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Late in life he became a devout Pietist.

Johann Heinrich Schmelzer (1620–1680), renowned as one of the finest violinists of his era, worked his way slowly through the musical ranks of Vienna. He eventually became the first Austrian *Hofkapellmeister* of the imperial city—succeeding many generations of Italians—before succumbing to the plague only a short time later. Schmelzer's Sonata a5 in D Minor shows the influence of Valentini and Bertali in its use of irregular meters and surprising harmonic sequences.

Born and educated in Venice, **Pietro Andrea Ziani** (1616–1684) spent the latter part of his career in Vienna as personal composer of the Holy Roman Empress Eleanor Magdalene, for whom he wrote a large number of operas and oratorios. Ziani's opus 7 collection of sonatas, which remain largely unrecorded and unexplored in the modern era, bear a dedication to George II, the Elector of Saxony. Ziani's contemporary and fellow Italian **Alessandro Poglietti** (d. 1683) was an organist at the imperial court from 1661. He is remembered today primarily for the creativity of his keyboard compositions, but his Sonata a8 features counterpoint on a far larger scale than would be possible on a harpsichord or organ. Poglietti was killed in the Battle of Vienna.



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The Battle of Vienna was the theme of an arrangement by **Andreas Anton Schmelzer** (1653–1701), the son of Johann Heinrich. Andreas adapted the tenth “Mystery Sonata” composed for scordatura violin by **Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber** (1644–1704), rewriting it as a battle piece for two violins, replete with titles for each variation like “The March of the Turks” and “The Victory of the Christians.” Biber is the likeliest composer of the following piece on this program as well; the set of *Balettae* (dances) for two antiphonal choirs of stringed instruments originally carried the name “Henrico Biber,” but this was crossed out and replaced with “Signore Hugi,” an otherwise unknown composer. Its brief movements, played continuously, consist of *Intrada* — *Aria* — *Treza* — *Courante* — *Sarabande* — *Gavotte* — *Gigue* — *Ciacona*. Johann Heinrich Schmelzer’s Serenade for a Masked Ball, which closes our program, consists of a short prelude and *gigue*, followed by a lengthy *ciacona*.

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