

# NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY

## An Elegant Party in Central Park with the Handel and Haydn Society at the Naumburg Bandshell

*by delarue*

Every year, a new generation of classical music fans discovers the annual series of free [Naumburg Bandshell concerts](#) in Central Park, which ran uninterrupted for 114 years until the disaster of 2020. Judging from the crowd last night, there's no shortage of younger supporters to continue the tradition where all the seats fill up as much as an hour before the concert.

This time out was a deep dive into the baroque, with violinist [Aislinn Nosky](#) leading period instrument ensemble the [Handel and Haydn Society](#) through an intricate and intuitive performance of what was essentially party music for the ruling classes of Europe right around the time the formerly Dutch colony across the pond was starting to get restless. If Woody Allen had been a figure from around the turn of the 18th century, this is probably what he would have been listening to (and maybe playing – clarinetists abounded in those days).

The ensemble opened with Corelli's Concerto Grosso in D Major, with a bit of a hush and what seemed like a striking emphasis on steely pedalpoint as much as the equally insistent exchanges of contrapuntal voicings. The crowd immediately responded after the first movement. Likewise, the lushly emphatic bowing in the second movement, which the group quickly turned into a lively dance with a Vivaldiesque series of flurries on the way out.

That boisterous energy set the stage for the rest of the night. The group followed with 18th century British composer Charles Avison's Scarlatti-inspired Concerto Grosso No. 5 in D Minor, digging into the stately rhythm of the first movement with gusto and an inspired bluster when the score permitted. Nosky shifted from sharp-toothed articulation to an elegant legato sway in the second movement and the waltzing conclusion.

The piece de resistance was Vivaldi's Violin Concerto in A minor, RV 356, a romp where Nosky rose from a practically conspiratorial, sotto-voce understatement to an incisive precision matched by a welcome, raw attack echoed by the group's low strings (and a couple of planes passing overhead to bolster the low end). Was the second movement just hazy ambience? Hardly. The group held those resonant notes for dear life, 1711-style, at least until bursting out on the wings of Nosky's fugal attack.

Geminiani's Concerto Grosso after Corelli, Op. 5, No. 5 in G Minor, from 1727, got a matter-of-fact, energetic sway and contrasting lushness (as well as a vividly plaintive interlude) before the sprightly country dance in the second movement.

After the intermission, the group flipped the script with Corelli and his Concerto Grosso in B-flat Major, Op. 6, No. 11, a gently emphatic pavane introducing tightly choreographed scurrying and a second movement where the pregnant pauses early on took the audience completely by surprise.

Harpsichordist Ian Watson was called on for his most prominent role of the night in Handel's Concerto Grosso in F Major, Op. 6, No. 9. The strings maintained a bouncy tenacity through the composer's endlessly permutating volleys and then surprisingly poignant exchanges before the lively, contrastingly stately waltzes afterward

The final piece on the bill was Geminiani's Concerto Grosso in D Minor, La Follia, after Corelli, Op. 5, No.12, Nosky foreshadowing the low strings' intense response (and drawing a spontaneous burst of applause from the crowd) with her rapidfire work in the opening movement. Through the tradeoffs between lulls and liveliness, it was the most sophisticated piece of the night, and the crowd roared their appreciation.

This year's [Naumburg Bandshell concert series](#) continues on July 12 at 7:30 PM with chamber orchestra [A Far Cry](#) playing an innovative program of string arrangements of Bartok miniatures plus works by Dvorak, Beethoven, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh and Karl Doty. Take the 2 or 3 to 72nd St., walk east and get there early if you want a seat.

See: <https://newyorkmusicdaily.wordpress.com/2022/06/29/hnh/>