

Friday, January 27, 2012, 8pm
First Congregational Church

Europa Galante

Fabio Biondi, *violin & conductor*

PROGRAM

New Faces & Old

Antonio Brioschi (fl. c. 1725–c.1750) Sinfonia in D major (bef. 1734)
Allegro
Andante piano
Presto

Joseph Haydn Double Concerto for Violin and Harpsichord
in F major (Hob. 18:6) (1766)
Allegro moderato
Largo
Presto

Soloists: Fabio Biondi, Paola Poncet

Angelo Maria Scaccia (c. 1690–1761) Violin Concerto in E-flat major
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Soloist: Fabio Biondi

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) Concerto for Three Violins in G major, Op. 3,
No. 3 (RV 310)
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

Soloists: Fabio Biondi, Fabi Ravasi, Andrea Rognoni

INTERMISSION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Concerto for Two Violins in D minor
(BWV 1043)

Vivace
Largo ma non tanto
Allegro

Soloists: Fabio Biondi, Andrea Rognoni

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) Suite from *Rodrigo* (1704)

Ouverture
Gigue
Sarabande
Matelot
Menuet
Bourree
Menuet
Passacaille

Program is subject to change.

EUROPA GALANTE

Fabio Biondi, *violin & conductor*

VIOLIN I

Fabi Ravasi
Isabella Bison
Elin Gabriellsson

VIOLIN 2

Andrea Rognoni
Luca Giardini
Barbara Altobello

VIOLA

Stefano Marcocchi
Gianni de Rosa

CELLO

Marco Frezzato
Antonio Fantinuoli

VIOLONE

Patxi Montero

THEORBO

Giangiaco Pinardi

HARPSICHORD

Paola Poncet

Cal Performances' 2011–2012 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Antonio Brioschi (fl. c. 1725–c.1750)
Sinfonia in D major

Antonio Brioschi was a composer of early symphonies beginning in the 1740s. Along with G. B. Sammartini, he helped to establish Milan as a great center of instrumental music. A total of 51 symphonies by Brioschi have been found. They circulated widely in the mid-18th century, becoming popular in many capitals, including Paris, Prague and Stockholm.

The Sinfonia in D major for string orchestra with continuo was completed not later than 1734. Brioschi scholar Sarah Mandel-Yehuda writes:

The music gains special vitality from the varied rhythmic vocabulary, featuring many syncopations, dance patterns, play between symmetrical and asymmetrical phrases, and from the large leaps in the melodic lines of the violin parts.

The concise first movement is in two repeated sections, showing close interplay between first and second violins throughout. The first section exposes two main ideas. The second begins with a contrasting passage featuring baroque ‘walking’ rhythms, then concluding with a modified reprise of ideas from the first section.

The *Andante piano* is not exactly tuneful, but its melodies are pleasant. It is in a binary form similar to the first movement. The relationship between first and second violins is interesting, sometimes very close, utilizing the same rhythm and melody. At other times, the two parts play against each other in contrast.

The finale is mostly a showcase for the first violin. The music is rhythmically incisive with several short ideas spun out in succession. The form is in two parts like the first movement. However, the second part begins more like a real development of ideas before reprising the main ideas and ending conclusively.

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Double Concerto for Violin and Harpsichord in F major (Hob. 18:6)

Joseph Haydn lived so long and composed so much music that he became uncertain about the occasion or reason for composing many of his works. One work about which his memory was fuzzy was the Violin-Harpsichord Concerto, an early work from before 1766 (the start of the Esterházy period). Haydn thought he may have composed it for the 1756 ceremony in which his future sister-in-law became a nun. For certain, the concerto was written for some special occasion, since it is comparatively lengthy. Also, some technical aspects suggest an early date. In any case, the work appeared in the Breitkopf catalog in 1766, and it was Haydn’s only concerto for two instruments.

In the double exposition of the first movement, we do not hear the soloists until the second time. Here, we perceive a quality that shines throughout the work: a classical balance between soloists in both solo passages and those where the instruments are combined. This plays out especially beautifully in the double cadenza near the movement’s ending.

The steady beat in the bass accompaniment to the *Largo* seems like a remnant from the baroque “walking” bass sound. The music Haydn writes above this, however, is much more classical: the restrained orchestral theme and intertwined solo lines that focus on beauty and expression. Again, Haydn offers a double cadenza, and although lovely, it does not grow organically from the main ideas of this otherwise perfectly crafted movement.

The *Presto* finale’s main points of interest are the frequent syncopations and other constructions that skip over the downbeats of some measures. The soloists’ parts are especially playful in this movement, which, even in an early period, exemplifies the typical jollity of a Haydn finale.

Angelo Maria Scaccia (c. 1690–1761)
Violin Concerto in E-flat major

Angelo Maria Scaccia was a violinist in Milan beginning as early as 1711. Active in opera orchestras, Scaccia also played in the yearly *Concerti di Quaresima*, a series of concerts held during Lent, when theaters were closed. Under the direction of pioneer symphonist G. B. Sammartini, an orchestra of 60 players performed in these outdoor events, which gave Milan widespread fame for its instrumental music. Beginning in 1720, Scaccia was a member of an elite theater orchestra of “virtuosi,” and in 1751 he was awarded an honorary degree of “*patente di violinista*.”

Scaccia’s pre-classical concertos employed some elements left over from the baroque period. The shadow of Vivaldi hung heavily over his music, and his use of ritornello form in the fast movements was backward-looking.

In the E-flat major Concerto, the first movement main theme is made up of chains of short ideas, usually repeated immediately. The soloists’ music features idiomatic violin figures for showing off technique. Sometimes these are like little comments on an idea from the main theme.

The second movement offers a bare pair of orchestral phrases at the beginning. After that, the orchestra supports the solo violin, which functions somewhat like an operatic soloist, concluding with an opportunity for an *ad libitum* cadenza before the orchestra join in for an undulating ending.

An *Allegro* finale offers a rhythmically varied opening theme, which the soloist develops at first. Orchestral segments are relatively long and varied, and not always related to the opening theme. The soloist comments on these ideas but also presents Vivaldi-like figuration, culminating in a held chord, an optional cadenza, and a sweeping scale that leads to a series of exchanges between orchestra and soloist and a conclusive re-iteration of the concerto’s home key.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)
Concerto for Three Violins in G major, Op. 3, No. 3 (RV 310)

Antonio Vivaldi, “The Red-Haired Priest,” apparently had a personality as lively as his music and the color of his hair. Traveling widely, he seems to have taken every commission that came his way, in the process becoming an extremely prolific composer. His more than 400 concertos were some of his chief efforts. Vivaldi’s reputation outside Italy was made initially when his *L’Estro armonico*, Op. 3, was published in Holland around 1712. Musical Europe was impressed with these concertos, and J. J. Quantz later remarked that at the time they were an “entirely novel type of musical composition.”

L’Estro armonico contains concertos mostly for one, two, and four violins. Just one is for three violins, and the only other three-violin concerto by Vivaldi is the present one. He takes a dual approach to writing for this little group. Often he treats each violinist as a soloist, as he would have in a solo concerto. At other times, three soloists play together in a concerted style like the *concertino* of a *concerto grosso*. (Bach learned this dualistic approach well and applied it in the *Brandenburg Concertos*.)

Vivaldi’s fast-movement forms are simple: Orchestral strings state a substantial theme at the outset and then intersperse parts of the theme in between virtuosic passages for the soloists. In this concerto, the first movement’s main theme is strongly rhythmic. This contrasts richly with the soloists’ segments, which often consist of even fast notes. The first soloist receives most of the spotlight—a part perhaps played by Vivaldi himself together with two advanced students?

That spotlight continues to shine in the second movement, where the soloist functions like an operatic singer delivering an aria. All the other players support this long cantilena, the soloists playing fast broken chords and the orchestral strings playing chordal *pizzicato*.

The third movement proceeds much like the first. The main theme is different, but the formal procedure is the same. We hear a bit more from

the orchestral strings, and the soloists come together as a group more often. In rounding out this concerto, Vivaldi places the soloists in a high register near the end, producing a shimmering effect.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Concerto for Two Violins in D minor
 (BWV 1043)

Most of Bach's orchestral works in concerto form originated in his period at Cöthen (1717–1723) or earlier. During the Cöthen period, he wrote little or no church music, concentrating instead on keyboard, chamber, and orchestral music for the court. Only a few concertos have come down to us, although Bach experts speculate that there must have been many more now lost.

Bach wrote three concertos featuring violin soloists. Two of them (in A minor and E major) are for solo violin, and one in D minor (BWV 1043) is for two violins. Vivaldi was the deepest influence on Bach wherever Italian forms (such as the concerto) were concerned, and the two-violin work bears some external similarities to Vivaldi. However, the spirit and compositional technique of the work is pure Bach.

The first movement's main theme and several solo passages are constructed as miniature fugues, exposing a high degree of learnedness and depth. The second movement—one of the most exquisitely wrought cantilenas in all of Bach's music—is actually a pastoral similar to those scattered throughout his cantatas. The vigorous final movement contains passages where the two violins play repeated chords to accompany the orchestra in the manner of an organ. In this movement, as in the first, Bach employs the violins not as individual solo instruments but as a featured unit pitted against the main orchestra. Thus, the Concerto in D minor closely resembles the solo concerto's ancestor, the *concerto grosso*.

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
Suite from *Rodrigo*

From the time in the 17th century, when commercial public opera houses were opened, a composer's best bet for financial success and fame was to compose for these institutions. By the time that George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) came to maturity, that trend was still in place, but in Germany the opportunities were very limited. Hamburg was the only city with a commercial opera company. Handel came to Hamburg in 1703 and started as a second violinist in the opera orchestra, later playing the harpsichord. In 1705, his first opera, *Almira*, was given in Hamburg. *Nero* followed in the same year.

To perfect his technique and explore new opportunities for opera productions, he travelled to Italy the following year, settling in Rome. Using that as a base, he composed both sacred music and opera, including *Rodrigo*, first performed in Florence in 1707. Almost immediately (and mysteriously), the instrumental music from the opera became known in England, where most of it was used in a play by Ben Jonson. With the addition of the final *Passacaille*, that music has been rounded out as the present Suite.

Predictably, the movements of the *Rodrigo* Suite are French types. The Overture is among Handel's most daring and incisive pieces of this type. Most of the movements that follow are familiar in style: a jolly Gigue, a touchingly graceful Sarabande, two Menuets, a quick and busy Bourée, and a proud instrumental Air. The Matelot is less familiar, but it is merely a French sailor's dance. The concluding Passacaille is noteworthy for its virtuosic violin part, which dialogues with the strings and other instruments, seemingly inviting them to play more challenging, applause-getting music.

Notes by Dr. Michael Fink
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Simona Fowler

EUROPA GALANTE has performed in many of the world's major concert halls and theatres including La Scala in Milan, Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Royal Albert Hall in London, Musikverein in Vienna, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York and the Sydney Opera House. The ensemble has toured throughout Australia, Japan, Canada, Israel, the United States and South America. Europa Galante's repertoire includes the works of Handel (*Agrippina*), Vivaldi (*Bajazet*) and instrumental works through the 18th century.

They have shown a great interest in the works of Alessandro Scarlatti, such as the oratorios (*Maddalena*, *La Santissima Trinità*), Seneratas (*Clori*, *Dorino e Amore*) and operas such as *Massimo Puppieno*, *Il Trionfo dell'Onore*, *La Principessa Fedele* and *Carlo Re d'Allemagna*.

Europa Galante often collaborates with the Fondazione Santa Cecilia in Rome to rediscover and restore such 18th-century Italian operas as Antonio Caldara's *La Passione di Gesù Cristo*, Leo's *Sant'Elena al Calvario* or Di Mayo's *Gesu sotto il peso Della Croce*. The ensemble has a varying structure and often performs chamber music such as the string sonatas of Italian composers of the 17th century.

In 1998, after years of collaboration with the French record company Opus 111, Europa Galante signed a contract with Virgin Classics

to record Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and two volumes of Luigi Boccherini's string quintets, as well as arias from cantatas by J. S. Bach with Ian Bostridge.

The ensemble has been nominated three times for Grammy Awards—most recently for their collaboration with mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux in album of Vivaldi arias, *Pyrotechnics*, which won the Echo Classics award. Europa Galante was nominated for Grammys in 2004 for the CD of Vivaldi's *Concerti con molti strumenti* and in 2006 for their recording of Vivaldi's *Bajazet*. Their next recording projects include a Vivaldi compilation *La Stravaganza* and Vivaldi's *Ercole sul Termodonte*, with a cast of Genaux, di Donato, Damrau, Lehtipuu and Basso.

This past season, Europa Galante had a long tour in Sweden and performing in Europe extensively (Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Poland) with repertoire including Bach's Orchestral Suites. Their season also included many concerts of the "Three Tenors" program with Ian Bostridge at Grand Théâtre d'Amiens, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Béla Bartók National Concert Hall in Budapest, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Grand Auditorium of Luxembourg, the Bruges Concertgebouw and the Barbican Centre in London. Opera programs included Ariosti's *La Fede nei Tradimenti*, which toured to festivals in Vienna, Siena and Montpellier, and Handel's *Agrippina* at the Hallé Festival.

This season, Europa Galante tours in Europe, Asia and the United States, presenting a program of instrumental works and a separate program with Vivica Genaux.

Europa Galante is resident orchestra at Fondazione Teatro Due in Parma.

Europa Galante with Fabio Biondi records for Virgin Classics and may also be heard on Opus 111/Naïve. They appear by arrangement with New World Classics, Kerby Lovallo, Director (kl@newworldclassics.com). Learn more about the artists at www.newworldclassics.com/galante.htm and www.europagalante.com.



Born in Palermo, **Fabio Biondi** began his international career at age twelve, performing his first solo concert with the RAI Symphony Orchestra. Driven early

Anna DeLabra

ly on by an inexhaustible cultural curiosity, Mr. Biondi was introduced to pioneers of the new approach to baroque music, an opportunity that was to expand his musical vision and change the direction of his career.

When he was 16, he was invited by the Musikverein of Vienna to perform Bach's violin concertos. Since then, Fabio Biondi has performed with many ensembles, including Cappella Real, Musica Antiqua Wien, Seminario Musicale, La Chapelle Royale and Les Musiciens du Louvre (since its founding), all specializing in the performance of baroque music using original technique and instruments.

In 1990, Mr. Biondi founded Europa Galante, an ensemble which, in just a few years thanks to their worldwide concert schedule and extraordinary recording successes, became the most internationally renowned and awarded Italian ensemble of baroque music. Mr. Biondi and his ensemble have been invited to play at important international festivals and concert halls, from La Scala in Milan to the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Musikverein in Vienna, Lincoln Center in New York and Sydney Opera House.

Europa Galante's first record, of Vivaldi's concertos, was awarded the Premio Cini of Venice and the Choc de la Musique, and was soon followed by a number of other awards, such as five Diapasons d'Or and Diapason d'Or de l'Année in France, RTL Prize, "Record of the Year" nominations in many countries, and the Prix du Disque, *ffff*, by *Telerama*. In 2006, their recording of Vivaldi's *Bajazet* was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Mr. Biondi's musical development, taking in both the universal repertoire plus the rediscovering of minor composers, includes three centuries of music. This is illustrated in his varied discography: Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, Corelli's Concerti Grossi, the oratorios, serenatas and operas of Alessandro Scarlatti (*La Messa di Natale, Clori, Dorino e Amore, Massimo Puppieno* and *Il trionfo dell'onore*) Handel's operas (*Porro*), and the 18th-century Italian violin repertoire (Veracini, Vivaldi, Locatelli, Tartini), as well as sonatas by Bach, Schubert and Schumann. Mr. Biondi embodies the perpetual pursuit of style, free from dogmatism and he remains intent in his quest for the original language. It is because of this very approach that he can collaborate as soloist and conductor with many varied orchestras, including Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Rotterdam Chamber Orchestra, the European Baroque Orchestra, the Opera of Hallé, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Norway, the Orchestre Nationale of Montpellier and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra.

Mr. Biondi also performs in duo with piano, harpsichord or fortepiano in venues around the world, including the Carnegie Recital Hall, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Hagi Hall in Tokyo, Auditorium Nacional in Madrid and the Wigmore Hall in London.

Since March 2005, Mr. Biondi has served as artistic director for baroque music of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. Since 2011, he has been academician of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome.

Next season, Mr. Biondi will conduct the Orchestre de Montpellier, Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, Orquesta de la Coruña and the Camerata of Patras.

Fabio Biondi plays an Andrea Guarneri violin (Cremona, 1686). He also plays a 1766 Carlo Ferdinando Gagliano violin, owned by his teacher Maestro Salvatore Cicero and kindly lent to him by the Salvatore Cicero Foundation in Palermo.