

# *Divertimenti Viennesi*

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS

VON DITTERSDORF  
Six String Trios

VAÑHAL  
Divertimento in G

J.M. HAYDN  
Divertimento in C

Musica Elegentia  
Matteo Cicchitti *conductor*



## Divertimenti Viennesi

**Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf 1739-1799**

### Six String Trios

*for two Violins and Violone*

<b>Trio I</b>		
1. Allegro		4'30
2. Minuetto		4'36
<b>Trio II</b>		
3. Andante		4'59
4. Minuetto		2'15
<b>Trio III</b>		
5. Presto		4'22
6. Minuetto		2'43
<b>Trio IV</b>		
7. Allegro moderato		4'54
8. Minuetto		5'00
<b>Trio V</b>		
9. Allegro		5'16
10. Minuetto		6'30
<b>Trio VI</b>		
11. Allegro		4'38
12. Minuetto		3'36

**Jan Krřitel Vaňhal 1739-1813**

### Divertimento in G

*for Violin, Viola and Violone*

13. Allegro		3'13
14. Minuetto		3'04
15. Adagio		4'03
16. Minuetto		4'24
17. Allegro		2'32

**Johann Michael Haydn 1737-1806**

### Divertimento in C

*for Violin, Viola and Violone*

18. Allegro moderato		6'35
19. Adagio		4'47
20. Minuetto		2'29
21. Finale Presto		2'33



(early and classical music group  
with period instruments)  
Gian Andrea Guerra *violin I*  
Mauro Righini *violin II and viola*  
Matteo Cicchitti *violone and conductor*

## “Divertimenti Viennesi”

It is the name of a musical genre intended for two, three, four or more solo parts. The movements in which a Divertimento is articulated are not conceived in polyphonic style nor are they as elaborate as in the Sonata. They do not have a very accentuated character, as they are sound images that aim to give pleasure in hearing, rather than expressing a given feeling in all its facets.

This is how Heinrich Christoph Koch defined the instrumental genre of “Divertimento” in the *Musikalische Lexicon* (1802). In fact, Koch’s definition refers to what we might consider the second season of the divertimento genre, starting around 1780. Before this date, in fact, ‘Divertimento’ was an all-encompassing term, and designated all non-orchestral instrumental music, including sonatas and quartets (the quartets of Franz J. Haydn, until Op.20, bear the title ‘Divertimento’). Only after 1780 this term designated a music in a lighter style compared with the elaborate genres (quartets and quintets). However, it is not uncommon to find, instead of ‘Divertimento’, equivalent terms such as ‘trattenimento’ or ‘allettamento’, to emphasize the function of noble leisure, which could have also been performed by good amateur musicians. During the eighteenth century, in fact, the use and consumption of “domestic” music spread, and this type of compositions, simple but refined, met the needs of cultured entertainment that not only the aristocracy, but also the new growing bourgeois class, intended to satisfy. Domestic music (heard or performed in private) was undoubtedly a *status symbol*.

The genre of Divertimento does not have a stable formal structure. It can be composed for different ensembles (of strings or winds, or mixed formations), and can have a variable structure (from two to multiple movements), as shown by the tracks on this album. The place of performance could have also varied, from the interiors of palaces (living rooms, dining rooms, ballrooms), to the exteriors (courtyards, gardens, parks). The sections in Allegro tend to have a reduced sonata form, with

short development, and sometimes without a second well-profiled theme. The presence of one or more dance movements – usually, the minuetto – is the rule. These characteristics denote a more prominent entertainment function, which, indeed, aims to give “pleasure in hearing”.

The three authors represented here are the same age (Dittersdorf and Vaňhal were born in 1739; Johann Michael Haydn, younger brother of the famous Franz Joseph, in 1737), and they were all experienced musicians, as well as composers. The story goes that in 1784, a quartet with Franz Joseph Haydn on violin I, Dittersdorf on violin II, Mozart on viola, and Vaňhal on violoncello, gave a famous performance, in a soirée attended by the Viennese high society, and in which were also present the poet Casti and Paisiello. This demonstrates not only the connection among the four composers mentioned above, and their common membership to the *Wiener Klassik*, but also the fact that chamber music was a pleasant entertainment for the composers themselves. The Divertimenti included in the album can be dated between 1760 and 1770. They are short-lived works, which certainly aim to give pleasure, and therefore give pre-eminence to the melody in the violin. But, to a careful analysis, they reveal many small finesses in the so-called secondary parts (viola e violone), called not only to support the main part, but to interact with it, and with each other, in a lovely “musical conversation”. (The idea of inter-instrumental dialogue is also enhanced by this recording.) If the rigorous counterpoint is generally banned, in accordance with the galant style that dominated in that part of the century and shunned excessive writing intricacies, there are exceptions, such as the allegro fugato of the trio No.3 of Dittersdorf, proving that even the quotation of a higher style could be included in the elegant ensemble play, and that the boundary with the sonata was not so clear.

**Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf** (1739-1799), began his career as a virtuoso of violin, and came to composition relatively later in life, but boasts a respectable catalogue, which, in addition to operas and sacred music, includes more than 100 symphonies, among

which stand out the three program symphonies inspired by the *Metamorphosis of Ovidio* (1785), about 40 solo concerts (for various instruments) and a lot of chamber music, including about fifteen divertimenti. The Op.1, printed in Paris in 1767, bears the title “Sei Suonate a tre” (two violins and a bass), and in English sources also “String Trios” (trios for strings). The title “sonata” explains the use of polyphony in the Allegro No.3 (ancient heritage of the church sonata), but the style of the individual trios, all in two movements, with the Allegro-Minuetto pairing, is typical of the galant sonata, and the style is comparable to divertimenti. The prevalence of the Allegro “cantabile” (singende Allegro; see in particular the Allegro No.5 in A major), the often attenuated bitematism, a certain relief of the cadential passages, where there is also some rustic element (see the first movement of No.2 in G major) are the characteristics that emerge from Dittersdorf’s trios.

The trio No.3 is interesting, as we said, for the use of the fugato, which involves a balance of roles between the three instruments involved, but the second theme, with the clear preeminence of the melody, embellished with some trills, and the delicious dialogue between violin and viola, immediately restores a galant atmosphere. In Minuetti, elegance inherent in this type of dance is combined with a certain finesse of writing. The melody is in the foreground, but has a particular quality. In spite of its fixed form, it has a varied and unpredictable articulation, with some chiaroscuro effects. The ‘trios’, that are the central sections of the minuetti, are all in minor mode, and the support parts (viola e violone) are more active. Notable is the aforementioned trio No.3, which, in addition to the minor mode, introduces a decisive change of pace: a very lively triplet rhythm, with an almost ‘tarantella’ effect.

**Jan Křtitel Vaňhal** (1739-1813), a Bohemian by birth, trained as an organist and violinist and studied with Dittersdorf in Vienna. He made a long journey to Italy between 1769 and 1771, and then lived composing but, above all, teaching (he had Ignaz J. Pleyel among his pupils). You can consider him one of the first independent

musicians and freelancers. He boasts a remarkable catalog, especially of instrumental music, and a great production of chamber music. At that time, his fame in northern Europe was equal if not higher than that of Franz Joseph Haydn. The Divertimento in G major is dated around the end of the 1860s (however *ante* 1773), and has a typical structure in five movements, arranged in strings, that is, with two Allegri at the beginning and end, and two Minuetti interspersed with a central Adagio. The two Allegri are in sonata form, but the final one is much more compact, with a very short development, and an immediate transition from the first to the second theme. In the autograph score of Vaňhal the ensemble is specified in “Violin, Viola, Violoncello o Violone”, and on the second page is also annotated the tuning of the violone (to rise: F-A-d-fis-a): perhaps a reminder for the composer, so that he did not write music outside the instrument extension. In the first two movements, the violone has a prominent *concertante* role. In the initial Allegro in 3/8, which has a fairly wide sonata form, with an unusually extensive development (as many as 51 bars, there is a virtuosic passage in the transition between the first and second theme, where the bass mimics the rapid figurations of the violin. Delightful is also his counterpoint to the second theme, in the upper register. In the first of the two Minuetti (II mov.) the intrusion of the violone breaks the regularity of the phrase, usually strict, in the first period. In the trio, he still intervenes with rapid figurations in sixteenth notes. The central Adagio (III mov.), in C major, has a ternary rhythm that assimilates it to the adjacent minuetti; the main melody of the violin is embellished by the embroidery of the auxiliary instruments. In the second minuetto (IV mov.), the bass accompanies with a soft pizzicato the unison melody of violin and viola. In the trio, however, the violin detaches and assumes a leading role with faster figuration. The final movement – the only one of the five to have a binary rhythm (2/4) – although very short, and in spite of the predominantly homophonic structure, with the violin in the foreground, is perhaps the most captivating piece, because of the characteristic descending bass, on which the melody in syncopated rhythm unfolds. The pre-eminence of the violin is not undermined by the second *concertante* theme, which is introduced by the viola,

but is then immediately replicated and varied by the violin with exquisite ornaments, according to the practice of diminution.

**Johann Michael Haydn** (1737-1806), born in Rohrau, soon settled with his older brother Franz Joseph (1732-1809) in Vienna, where he studied violin, organ and composition. Already active in Salzburg since 1763, in 1781 he took the post of organist left vacant by Mozart, after the resounding break with archbishop Colloredo, and remained in that city, with a few interludes, until his death. He was one of the most influential composers on the young Mozart, especially in the sacred genre, and was also esteemed as a teacher (he had among his students Carl Maria von Weber). Given the nature of his work, he wrote mostly sacred music (a large number of oratorios and masses). He also distinguished himself in instrumental music: he wrote about fifty symphonies, of which we can mention the two in C major, of 1784 and 1788, that prefigure the fugal ending of *Jupiter* of Mozart: and also concertos, a lot of chamber music, including about thirty divertimenti. The composition included in the album bears, in the main handwritten source, the title «Divertimento a Violino conc[ertante], Violoncello conc[ertante] e Violone di Giovan[ni] Michele Haydn», and is of uncertain dating: the thematic catalogue by Sherman and Thomas places it between 1758 and 1760, the Grove between 1764 and 1770. The four-movement structure is typical of the classic quartet: Allegro, Adagio, Minuet, Finale. The initial Allegro has the typical sonata form, with a second theme on the viola that is elaborated in the development section, with an imitative style. The *concertante* function of the lowest instruments is particularly strong, especially in the viola, which often dialogues with or joins the violin. The beautiful Adagio in F major, with a pastoral atmosphere, is also conceived in sonata form, and presents a delicious duet for violin and viola, with violone that supports with soft notes and some embroidery. It is a piece that reveals an attention to details really notable, worthy of Haydn the major.

The main theme of the minuetto is played together by violin and viola, while the violone proceeds stealthily with a nice counterpoint. In the Trio in minor mode the

parts split and give life to a short *concertante* passage. The reprise of Minuetto in the present execution is foreshortened, in a faster tempo, and played with a very delicate pizzicato. This makes the usual “da capo” very exciting to listen to. The final Presto, in a monothematic sonata form, presents one of those dazzling beginnings typical of the elder Haydn: three wide notes followed by a sudden flicker, and only four bars to close the theme. There is no second theme, replaced by the ever more urgent development of the second rapid motif of the main theme, with frequent strikes and responses between the two acute instruments and the violone, typical of the *concertante* style, or “style dialogue”.

#### Note on staffing and execution

Among the compositions included in this album, the last two expressly require the use of the ‘violone’ (the double bass viol). In Vaňhal as an alternative to the Violoncello for the lower part, while in M. Haydn the Violoncello is the middle part, and the Violone the lower part. Some sources related to the Divertimenti of Haydn allow to replace, if necessary, the Viola to the Violoncello for the middle part, and the Violoncello to the Violone for the grave part. In Dittersdorf the most serious part is written generically for “Basso”, as in many sources of the time. In the strings’ ensembles, the possible options, depending on the contexts and circumstances, were Violoncello, Violone, and Contrabbasso. Studies of performance practice, have shown that in the Viennese and Austrian environment the use of the Violone as “basso” was very frequent, at least until a certain date. Franz Joseph Haydn himself pointed out exclusively “Violone” in his scores until 1772. The violone at the time was considered the “true” bass of the strings both in chamber music and in church music and also for outdoor performances. The clear and transparent sound and the solo use of the instrument makes it suitable for the musical language of the classical period, for its use in small groups and as a solo instrument.

The violone used in this album is a 16’ five-string, tuned in C-E-A-d-g. The versatility of the instrument, capable of giving depth to the bass, but also of

unraveling agile counterpoints, and producing penetrating tonal effects, makes it particularly suitable for *concertante* roles. The concertation of the Master Matteo Cicchitti tends to exalt precisely the dialogic principle, therefore the timbre peculiarities of the three instruments involved. In this sense, the choice to replace the viola with the second violin in Dittersdorf is also explained. The three instruments are always well identified, and one can always grasp, by simply listening, the single lines: the main melody as the embroidery, the foreground as the background. One can thus appreciate the subtleties of a genre destined for noble entertainment.

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**MUSICA ELEGENTIA.** It is the group the homonymous musical and cultural association originates from. It deals with the performance of early music with period instruments or faithful reproductions of instruments. It makes a philological interpretation of music, using techniques that are documented in the essays of musical performances of the same period.

This group was founded in Lanciano at the end of the year 2012 and it is directed by Matteo Cicchitti, musician from Abruzzo (Italy), expert and researcher of the historical performance.

Musica Elegentia took part to very important concerts in prestigious theatres (Bolognese Society for Ancient Music in Bologna; Music in Marfisa d'Este in Ferrara; Musica Antiqua VIII ed., Picture Gallery of Palace d'Avalos in Vasto; Independent International Literary Prize "Marguerite Yourcenar 2013", Music Festival of Nations, Theater Marcello in Rome; Theater Keiros in Rome; Classical Music in Trastevere in Rome; Concerts of Santa Barbara dei Librari in Rome; Flos Carmeli in Lanciano (Ch); Early Music Day 2019, University "G. d'Annunzio" of Chieti; European Researchers' Night 2018 in Chieti; International Festival of Baroque Music and not only in Alessandria; Festival Musica Sibrii in Varese; International Festival of Baroque Music in Abruzzo), giving to the public monographic concerts with a repertoire that includes sacred and profane, instrumental and vocal music of the XVI-XVII-XVIII centuries.

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