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CLASSICS

Hell's *Angels*

La Serenissima

Adrian Chandler *Director / Violin*



HELL'S ANGELS

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Sonata for violin, cello & continuo in G, RV 820 *

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)

1	I. Allegro	[3.19]	15	I. Allegro	[3.28]
2	II. Adagio	[1.58]	16	II. Aria: Gratoso - Un poco più	[5.13]
3	III. Allegro - Adagio	[0.46]		allegro - Più andante	
4	IV. Allegro	[1.37]	17	III. Allegro assai	[4.27]
5	V. Adagio	[0.53]			
6	VI. Allegro	[2.12]			
7	VII. Allegro	[3.43]			

Sonata for 2 violins in F, RV 68

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)

8	I. Allegro	[3.39]			
9	II. Andante	[2.21]			
10	III. Allegro	[3.18]			

Sonata V for 2 cellos & continuo in B $\flat$, Op. 2

BENEDETTO MARCELLO (1686–1739)

11	I. Adagio	[3.19]			
12	II. Allegro	[3.04]			
13	III. Largo	[1.12]			
14	IV. Presto	[1.36]	Total timings:	[1.20.28]	

* The final movement of this work has been completed by Adrian Chandler owing to the loss of the final page of the manuscript (bar 60 onwards).

Sonata V for 2 violins in g, Op. 12

JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR (1697–1764)

15	I. Allegro	[3.28]
16	II. Aria: Gratoso - Un poco più	[5.13]
	allegro - Più andante	
17	III. Allegro assai	[4.27]

Sonata I for harpsichord & violin in G, Op. 13

LOUIS-GABRIEL GUILLEMAIN (1705–1770)

18	I. Allegro	[7.17]
19	II. Aria: un poco allegro - Altro - Reprise	[8.14]
20	III. Presto	[5.50]

Sonata XV for violin, cello & continuo in g, Op. 6

MICHELE MASCITTI (1663/64–1760)

21	I. Preludio: Largo Andante	[3.07]
22	II. Allegro	[2.05]
23	III. Largo	[2.30]
24	IV. Allemanda: Andante	[2.17]
25	V. Giga: Allegro	[3.01]

This programme was recorded in 2022 when the performing arts were still battling against the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a bit of an experiment, and we recorded a lot of music, including three works by Leclair and Somis that did not make it onto the final album (it is still over 80 minutes long!). However, the idea of an album that explored not only Vivaldi's influences on other composers, but also one that delved into the legacy of his performing style and techniques, has long held a fascination for me.

On account of the juxtaposition of French and Italian repertoire, it was decided to give the album a title inspired by the legendary meeting between violinists Pietro Locatelli and Jean-Marie Leclair in Germany on 22 December 1728 at the court of Kassel. The meeting was witnessed by Jacob Wilhelm Lustig, who afterwards wrote that Leclair played like an angel, while Locatelli played like a devil. This description has often since been used to describe the differences in national playing styles of France and Italy.

From its humble origins in the early sixteenth century, the violin's social rise over the following two centuries was impressive. Relatively little is known about how the creation of the violin came about and we certainly do not know *who* was responsible for its design. It is most likely that it was not the work of a single maker, but rather the result of the efforts of various north Italian luthiers. Initially, an instrument with three strings appeared around 1520-1530 with a fourth (top) string being added around the middle of the century. It is therefore remarkable that in a little over 175 years, the violin had shaken off the stereotypes of the tavern and the dance band and had introduced a new figure to the European stage, the virtuoso violinist, who devoured the many violin sonatas written during the seventeenth century and championed the arrival of the heroic concerto that elevated the status of the violin still further.

The advent of the concerto inspired a flurry of compositional activity from various (predominantly Italian) composers, but it was the Venetian, Antonio Vivaldi, who truly put the concerto on the map, modifying the genre over a period of nearly four decades both in terms of form and technique. These revolutionary achievements are particularly impressive considering that this was a genre still very much in its infancy, only materialising in the final decade of the seventeenth century.

LA SERENISSIMA · ADRIAN CHANDLER

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Viewed chronologically, an examination of Vivaldi's violin repertoire outlines the most significant advances in the development of violin technique to date. Probably many of his technical innovations were as the result of his own experimental bent, but it is also evident that he himself must have received expert training as a youngster. Exactly who Vivaldi's teachers were, time does not tell, but we can be reasonably certain that Vivaldi received initial tuition from his father, Giovanni Battista Vivaldi, who was also a violinist of great talent and capable of being a sparring partner for his son, Antonio.

In September 1729, Giovanni Battista was given a year's leave of absence from his job as an orchestral violinist at the Basilica of S. Marco in order to accompany Antonio on a tour of 'Germania'. It was during this sojourn that Vivaldi composed the four sonatas for two violins with optional bass (including the present Sonata in F, RV 68). All four of these concerto-like sonatas are immensely tricky and include the kinds of advanced techniques found regularly in the hardest of his late concertos.

In addition to his father, it is also likely that Vivaldi studied with the Bolognese master, Giuseppe Torelli. This hypothesis is underpinned by the fact

that Torelli appears to have given a very early sonata for violin and cello by Vivaldi (RV 820) to Johann Georg Pisendel (who later became a pupil of Vivaldi himself in 1716-17) whilst teaching the young Saxon in Ansbach (1698-99). Other than through direct contact with Vivaldi, it is hard to imagine how Torelli could have procured such a manuscript at this early stage of Antonio's career. Perhaps the early date of composition accounts for the experimental but unidiomatic violin writing (particularly in the fourth movement) and for his decision to borrow material from Arcangelo Corelli's Opus 1 and Opus 5 in the second and third movements. Despite this, it is interesting to note how many hallmarks of Vivaldi's style are already present both here and in another early trio sonata that is composed in a similar vein (RV 60).

In sharp contrast with the Italians, the string technique of the French had remained largely static throughout the 1600s principally due to the cult of dance music which enjoyed great popularity amongst the nobility. Although the use of the violin gradually spread to other musical genres, rarely did the music require the sophisticated techniques perfected by the Italians. The evolution of French violin technique took place slowly but surely during the early years of the eighteenth century as the new concerto and

sonata styles of the Italians became fashionable at the French court. This led to the appearance in the 1720s and 1730s of a new breed of French virtuoso including Louis-Gabriel Guillemain, Jean-Pierre Guignon and Jean-Marie Leclair who were to become three of the finest violinists in Europe, all pupils of the Italian, Giovanni Battista Somis.

Hailing from Turin, Somis was born into a musical family and studied the violin with Arcangelo Corelli and his own father Lorenzo Francesco, possibly alongside Antonio Vivaldi during the years 1700 – 1701 and again in 1703; he may also have studied with Vivaldi's father, Giovanni Battista as the two families had long been friends. This close connection with the Vivaldi family may explain why Somis' music contains many Vivaldian traits, particularly in his treatment of sequences, a feature that is also common in the music of Leclair and Guillemain.

Despite the misery heaped upon Turin by the French during the (unsuccessful) Siege of Turin (1706), artistic links between France and the Duchy of Savoy remained vibrant. And so it was that Leclair entered the city in 1722, initially as a ballet-master, but then as a violin student of Somis on his return in 1726. Like Corelli, Leclair was not a particularly prolific composer, preferring

instead to publish his works when he felt that they had been adequately 'perfected'. Although some of his collections were composed in the French style, most of his works were conceived using a French take on the Italian style.

As one might expect, his works focus on violin sonatas, trio sonatas and concertos, but there also exist two publications of sonatas for two violins *sans basse* such as the present sonata in g minor. The lack of a bass instrument may seem a little *avant garde* but as we have already seen, Vivaldi composed for this combination, as did his teacher Torelli, whilst Somis' 12 cello sonatas (c.1740) contained a handful that were clearly intended as duo sonatas for two cellos.

Perhaps on account of the many talented amateur musicians in France, the duo sonata without bass became a genre whose popularity lasted well into the nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising therefore that both Guignon and Guillemain, Somis' other famous pupils, also published collections of these works. All three of these composers were evidently exceptional violinists, but perhaps the most gifted was Guillemain, whose compositions should strike terror into the heart of any mortal player. Even in his *Pièces de Clavecin en Sonates*, which were first and

foremost harpsichord pieces (and virtuosic in the extreme), he is unable to resist writing a fiendish accompaniment for the violin.

Inevitably, with the adoption of Italianate technique by French musicians, came the Italians themselves and with them, a penchant for the Italian trio sonata. One composer who took advantage of this fashion was the Neapolitan, Michele Mascitti, another former pupil of Corelli. Leaving Italy at a relatively young age, he toured extensively throughout Germany and the Netherlands under the protection of Cardinal Ottoboni and Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, before settling in France in 1704 where he enjoyed considerable fame as a composer of sonatas and trio sonatas, including the present example for violin and cello or viola da gamba.

Whilst the viola da gamba was still enjoying great popularity in France, by contrast, the instrument had all but died out in Italy; Venice's Ospedale della Pietà and the court of the Medici were two of only a handful of places where the viol was still played. Consequentially, the Italian peninsula produced little music for the viola da gamba as there was little demand. However, a small amount of music was produced by composers such as Vivaldi, who referred to it as a 'viola all'inglese'

(a term also used by Francesco Gasparini) presumably on account of the instrument's popularity in England.

As in the case of the Mascitti sonata, the Italian repertoire often gives the performer the option of playing the works either on the viola da gamba or on the cello, as in the case the two concertos by Giuseppe Tartini and the Opus 2 sonatas for 2 cellos and continuo by Benedetto Marcello. It might be considered a bold choice for an Italian to publish a collection of music for viola da gamba or cello, but for Marcello, a Venetian nobleman, he could probably afford to take a few financial risks.

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LA SERENISSIMA

La Serenissima is the UK's leading exponent of Italian baroque music. Praised for its "all-too-rare ability to make one's pulse race afresh with every new project" (Gramophone) La Serenissima is "one of Britain's best-loved chamber orchestras" (The Telegraph). La Serenissima has uncovered a wealth of neglected repertoire, bringing it to audiences through performance, recording and outreach. From manuscript to stage, the group's entire repertoire is edited from source material by founder and director Adrian Chandler.

Founded in 1994, La Serenissima is acclaimed for its award-winning discography, regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and international radio, as well as in advertising (Beats, 2022) and film (Portrait of a Lady on Fire, 2020). The group has won two Gramophone Awards for The French Connection (2010) and The Italian Job (2017). In 2018, Vivaldi X2 topped the UK Classical Chart, and Vivaldi's Women attracted over a million streams in its first weeks of release.

La Serenissima performs across the UK and internationally. It gave the first UK performance of Brescianello's opera *Tisbe* (2018) and the modern premiere of Caldara's opera *Lucio Papirio*

Dittatore (2019). The ensemble supports young instrumentalists through its Emerging Artist Chairs (launched 2020) and has created digital outreach for Key Stage 2 children with support from Arts Council England.

La Serenissima celebrated its 30th anniversary with a residency at London's Wigmore Hall in 2024–25, alongside the release of Vivaldi's *Opus 8*, including a new recording of *The Four Seasons*, to coincide with the 300th anniversary of its publication. This album was chosen as the winner of BBC Radio 3's *Building a Library on The Four Seasons* in 2026.

La Serenissima is proud to have as Honorary Patron His Excellency the Italian Ambassador to the UK.

www.laserenissima.co.uk

ADRIAN CHANDLER

Director / Violin

Born on Merseyside in 1974, Adrian Chandler is recognised internationally as a leading interpreter of Italian Baroque music, with an "avant-garde approach that would have awed Hendrix" (The Guardian). His "electrifying playing" and "real richness of sound" (Classical Music) have captivated listeners for over 30 years. Adrian founded La Serenissima in 1994 whilst a student at the Royal College of Music, channeling his love affair with Vivaldi into a lifetime's mission. With La Serenissima he has performed at major concert venues and festivals across the UK and Europe,

and has been broadcast by BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, Scala Radio and radio stations worldwide.

He has driven La Serenissima's acclaimed recording work, creating an extensive catalogue spanning neglected Italian baroque composers from Ariosti to Zavateri, alongside a host of works by Vivaldi. During the 2020 UK lockdown, Adrian edited a Vivaldi violin concerto daily, reaching fans, musicians and scholars across the globe via social media. Following a walking accident in the Brecon Beacons that severed two tendons in his right shoulder, Adrian made his conducting debut in 2025, in the presence of His Majesty King Charles III. He has since made a full return to playing in 2026 and continues his mission with La Serenissima.



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PERFORMERS & INSTRUMENTS

Adrian Chandler, *violin & director*

Rowland Ross, Guildford, 1981, after Amati

Oliver Cave, *violin I (violin II solo in RV 515)*

Martin Hilsden, UK, 1985 after anonymous c1650

Vladimir Waltham, *cello*

Anon., c1710, Venice

Carina Drury, *cello*

Maker unknown, Italy, c1850

Samuel Ng, *cello* [12] – [15] only

Johann Christoph Leidolf, Vienna, 1758

Lynda Sayce, *theorbo*

Theorbo in A: Michael Lowe, Wootton-by-Woodstock, 2000, after iconography c.1700

Robin Bigwood, *harpsichords*

Andrew Wooderson, London, 2001, after Grimaldi, 1697 (harpsichord)

French instrument tba



THANK YOU

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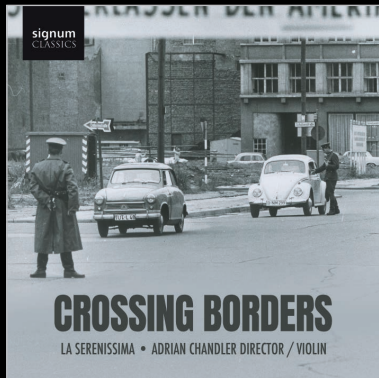
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