

William
SHIELD

Complete Chamber Works • 3

Violin Duets, Opp. 1 and 2

The Dorrit Ensemble



William
SHIELD
(1748–1829)

Violin Duets, Op. 1 (pub. 1778)

Violin Duet in G major, Op. 1, No. 1

- 1 I. Allegro moderato
- 2 II. Amoroso

Violin Duet in F major, Op. 1, No. 2

- 3 I. Allegro moderato
- 4 II. Allegretto

**Violin Duet in E flat major,
Op. 1, No. 3**

- 5 I. Allegro non tanto
- 6 II. Minuetto con variazione

Violin Duet in A major, Op. 1, No. 4

- 7 I. Moderato
- 8 II. Rondeau: Tempo di minuetto

**Violin Duet in B flat major,
Op. 1, No. 5**

- 9 I. Con spirito
- 10 II. Allegro

Violin Duet in D major, Op. 1, No. 6

- 11 I. Moderato
- 12 II. Rondeau: Tempo di minuetto

Violin Duets, Op. 2 (pub. c. 1779)

Violin Duet in G major, Op. 2, No. 1

- | | | | |
|--------------|----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 10:21 | | | 6:18 |
| 5:16 | 13 | I. Allegro | 3:03 |
| 5:05 | 14 | II. Rondo: Affettuoso | 3:15 |

Violin Duet in A major, Op. 2, No. 2

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 5:54 | | | 3:29 |
| 3:14 | 15 | I. Adagio | 1:49 |
| 2:40 | 16 | II. Rondo: Allegretto | 1:40 |

**Violin Duet in B flat major,
Op. 2, No. 3**

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|------------------------|-------------|
| 9:10 | | | 5:04 |
| 4:23 | 17 | I. Allegro con spirito | 2:06 |
| 4:47 | 18 | II. Tempo di minuetto | 2:58 |

Violin Duet in D major, Op. 2, No. 4

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|---------------------|-------------|
| 7:18 | | | 6:18 |
| 3:34 | 19 | I. Allegro moderato | 3:59 |
| 3:44 | 20 | II. Allegretto | 2:19 |

**Violin Duet in E flat major,
Op. 2, No. 5**

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 6:59 | | | 5:20 |
| 4:33 | 21 | I. Adagio | 2:19 |
| 2:26 | 22 | II. Grazioso con variazioni | 3:01 |

Violin Duet in D minor, Op. 2, No. 6

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 6:46 | | | 4:15 |
| 3:01 | 23 | I. Canoni: Allegro | 1:30 |
| 3:45 | 24 | II. Tempo di minuetto | 2:45 |

William Shield (1748–1829)

Complete Chamber Works • 3

The publication of the violin duets *Opp. 1* and *2* marked a change in the direction of William Shield's career. Previously he was known as a violinist and viola player, but now he began to thrive as a composer and very soon his music was enjoying a huge popular success with London audiences.

William Shield, born in Swalwell, County Durham, was taught the violin by his father but music lessons were suspended when the death of his father saw the boy apprenticed to a Tyneside boat-builder. Shield soon extricated himself from the apprenticeship to take up violin and composition with Charles Avison. His reputation as a concert performer spread rapidly, and, on the advice of Felice Giardini, he travelled south to London where he secured the position of first violin, later first viola, in the orchestra of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. The opera repertoire seems to have stimulated Shield into writing his own stage music, and *The Flitch of Bacon* (1778), written for the Haymarket Little Theatre, was a hit. About this time the viola player William Napier became Shield's publisher, issuing two sets of violin duets as *Op. 1* (1778) and *Op. 2* (c. 1779). Following his appointment at Covent Garden, Shield wrote a string of successful operas and pantomimes; the most popular were afterpieces, for example *Rosina* (1782), *The Poor Soldier* (1783), and *The Farmer* (1787), but his mainpieces, for example *Robin Hood* (1784), *Fontainebleau* (1784), and *The Noble Peasant* (1784), contain high-range arias of Queen of the Night-like difficulty. Haydn attended an early performance of *The Woodman* (1791), and he and Shield became friends. Shield often said that he learned more about music in the company of Haydn than from any other source, and Haydn, impressed by Shield's ability to write extended arias with colourful concertante wind parts, presented him with a copy of *Pietà di me*. During 1791 Shield travelled abroad and began work on a set of string trios (1796) and two musical anthologies – *An Introduction to Harmony* (1800) and *The Rudiments of Thoroughbass* (1815). Shield, appointed Master of the King's Music in 1817, wrote the last of all court odes. He was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, and willed his Stainer viola to George IV.

No performance of the *Opp. 1* and *2* sets is cited in contemporary sources, but it is likely that some individual duets were first heard as far back as the 1760s at the informal concerts given by Charles Avison's flute and violin students (including Shield) at St Nicholas's vicarage in Newcastle. The London premieres of *Opp. 1* and *2* probably took place at William Napier's morning concerts held at the Thatched House Tavern in St James's Street. The performers at this venue were gentlemen amateurs backed with some professional assistance (possibly including Shield), and the audience consisted largely of nobility (but not ladies) on their way to court. Napier's concerts were more than a vehicle for airing newly published works or composers, and when it was proposed to revive the series in 1792, the *Morning Chronicle* of 28 January recalled that they had served to improve the 'taste and science' of the amateur as well as introducing 'professional merit' to the 'highest patronage'. Shield's duets, expressly written with talented amateurs in mind (according to the title page of *Op. 2*), exactly suited the repertoire of the morning concerts.

Violin Duets, Op. 1

Both sets of duets are neatly engineered with a violinist's grasp of technique and articulation, and with each part sharing musical interest; all are cast in two movements. The prevailing spirit of *Op. 1* is Italianate and there are many attractive details to be heard. The opening *Allegro moderato* to *Op. 1, No. 1* leads off with a triadic theme animated with semiquaver motion followed by a second idea with dotted rhythms propelled by syncopation; the arioso-like second movement, *Amoroso*, includes an ardent minor-mode episode. Triplet figuration features in the *Allegro moderato* of *No. 2*, and there is lively semiquaver passage work in the central section; a 'hunting' rondo begins with the representation of distant horn calls and later depicts a chromatically wounded prey. The opening movement of *No. 3* gives the impression of an exotic dance with folk fiddles and the audible thrum of a guitar; it is followed by a minuet with variations. An octave leap sparks off the opening of *No. 4* and other leaps percolate throughout; there is a pull towards the minor mode in the second half. The rondo movement *Tempo di minuetto* might be imagined as a spring song with birds and babbling brooks but there is a wistful undercurrent. The repeated note figure with upward arpeggiation and pulsing accompaniment opening *No. 5* signals drama; a lively second movement slips midway into the tonic minor. *No. 6*, written for either violins or flutes, assumes a suitably fluty tone, starting with an off-beat motif that slants the opening movement as a whole; an imaginatively varied rondo follows.

Violin Duets, Op. 2

Op. 2, 'composed in an easy stile for the use of scholars', is an altogether more compact set which sharpens the focus on elements already noticed in *Op. 1*. Shield employs a variety of forms including minuet (*Nos. 3 and 6*), variation (*No. 5*), rondo (*No. 2*), and canon (*No. 6*). He also adopts vocal styles: the *Affettuoso* second movement in *No. 1* might be heard as an arioso and the opening *Adagio* movements of *Nos. 2 and 5* as lyric duetting. Worth noticing is the way Shield cleverly changes the textures at each return of the opening theme, as for example, in the *Allegro* of *No. 1*. Another point of interest is the first movement of *No. 3*, which plunges into action like a mini stage overture. The *Allegro moderato* of *No. 4* opens with a scalar rise before dipping sequentially, and a second theme anticipates the tune of Shield's most famous song *The Ploughboy* (the two ideas link at the end); the second movement adheres to folk style, incorporating hurdy-gurdy-like figurations and simulated versions of the northern pipe tunes which Shield himself so avidly collected.

No autograph survives of *Opp. 1 and 2*, and Napier's printed edition, preserved in the British Library, London, is the prime extant source. The printing history of the duets, with reissues of both sets by Bland and Weller (c. 1818), and of the *Op. 2, Nos. 1, 2 and 6* by Charles Wheatstone (c. 1815), testifies to their sustained popularity.

Robert Hoskins

Elizabeth Layton

Photo: Jacquie Way



British violinist Elizabeth Layton has served as soloist with orchestras such as the Philharmonia, BBC Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. She has given recitals at Wigmore Hall and the Southbank Centre, and festival appearances include Bath, Edinburgh, Harrogate, Cheltenham, Schleswig-Holstein and Gstaad. A former concertmaster of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and associate leader of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Layton has regularly collaborated with the BBC as both a soloist and director. She has toured worldwide with The Nash Ensemble, and her extensive discography includes the complete Beethoven piano trios (nominated for a *Gramophone Award*), and the violin and piano works of Schubert (*The Telegraph* Classical CD of the Week). Layton studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School, and The Juilliard School with Dorothy DeLay. She currently serves as guest concertmaster and director of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, with appearances at festivals throughout Australia and Asia. Dr Layton is head of classical performance at the Elder Conservatorium of Music at Adelaide University.

www.elizabethlayton.net

Elizabeth Sellars

Photo: Pia Johnson



Australian violinist Elizabeth Sellars is an accomplished artist whose playing is recognised for its nuanced tone, technical assurance and communicative integrity. She studied with Nehama Patkin and Nathan Gutman before pursuing advanced studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama under David Takeno and the Takács Quartet, and is a recipient of awards and scholarships from The Northcote Trust, Australian Business Foundation and The Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Sellars has appeared as guest concertmaster and principal violin with leading Australian orchestras. A dedicated chamber musician, she co-founded the Sutherland and Quercus Trios, as well as the Techniski Quartet, which won the inaugural Tunnell Trust and Royal Over-Seas League Ensemble Prize, and is first violinist of the Flinders Quartet. She has recorded for Naxos, Toccata Classics and ABC Classics. As a respected pedagogue, she has taught at the Australian National Academy of Music, Monash University and the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Sellars holds a PhD on the violin music of George Frederick Pinto, and performs on a Eugenio Degani violin (Veneto, 1876).

www.elizabethsellars.com

www.artaria.com

Sources

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

Violin Duets, Op. 1

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE387

London, The British Library: g.421.q.(4) (Napier, 1778)

Violin Duets, Op. 2

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE388

London, The British Library: g.421.b.(1) (Napier, c. 1779)



William Shield's early career as a violinist and violist took him to the centre of musical life in London where he became principal violinist of the Covent Garden theatre orchestra in 1773. The publication of the *Violin Duets* later that decade marked the launch of Shield's success as a hugely popular composer. Each set of duets is neatly engineered, with many attractive details in the Italianate spirit of *Op. 1*. The *Op. 2* set is more compact, developing arioso vocal styles, clever changes of texture, and folk elements such as hurdy-gurdy-like figurations.



**William
SHIELD**
(1748–1829)

**Adelaide
University**

Violin Duets, Opp. 1 and 2 (1778–79)

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1–12 | Violin Duets, Op. 1 (pub. 1778) | 46:28 |
| 13–24 | Violin Duets, Op. 2 (pub. c. 1779) | 30:44 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

The Dorrit Ensemble

Elizabeth Layton, Elizabeth Sellars, Violin

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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