

The orchestral parts and scores of the following works are available from:

<http://www.artaria.com>

Sources

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

Franz Anton HOFFMEISTER:

Viola Concerto in D major

Edited by Allan Badley - Artaria Editions AE374

Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek:

Mus.ms. 3944-0-5

Franz Anton HOFFMEISTER:

Viola Concerto in B flat major

Edited by Allan Badley - Artaria Editions AE375

Prague, Národní Muzeum: XXXII-A-389

(prov. Ossec Monastery)

Cadenzas (Hoffmeister Viola Concerto in B flat):

Suzanne Beia



NAXOS

HOFFMEISTER

C. P. STAMITZ

Viola Concertos

Victoria Chiang, Viola

Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

Markand Thakar



Carl Philipp Stamitz (1745–1801) • Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754–1812)

Viola Concertos

Concertos for the viola are among the most rare of all eighteenth-century works. It is odd that this should be the case given that the viola was a standard orchestral instrument and was a member of the most progressive and important chamber music genre, the string quartet. Nonetheless, even prolific composers of concertos such as Leopold Hofmann shied away from writing concertos for the viola even though they might employ the instrument in a solo capacity elsewhere. The dearth of concertos probably reflects a general shortage of specialist violists. The *Breitkopf Catalogue*, issued in six parts and sixteen supplements between 1762 and 1787 and one of the most important guides we have to music from this period, lists barely a handful of viola concertos, in striking contrast to the large number of works for flute, violin, harpsichord and even oboe and cello. More viola concertos must have existed at one time but these works may well have been composed for specific players who had a vested interest in ensuring that they did not circulate very widely. Tiny though the extant repertory may be, it contains several works of real historical and musical importance. Among them is the first of the three concertos featured on this recording, the *Viola Concerto No. 1 in D* by Carl Philipp Stamitz.

Stamitz received his earliest musical training from his brilliant and famous father Johann, Director of Instrumental Music and leader of the celebrated Mannheim court orchestra. After his father's early death in 1757 Carl continued his studies with a number of leading court musicians including his father's old friend and colleague Franz Xaver Richter. He later joined the orchestra as a second violinist, a position which enabled him to continue to develop his formidable performing technique as well as to study the contemporary Mannheim repertoire at first hand. His orchestral colleagues included a number of gifted composers,

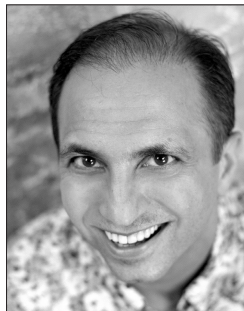
foremost among them its leader, Christian Cannabich.

Stamitz left Mannheim in 1770, travelling to Paris where, the following year, he was appointed court composer to Duke Louis of Noailles. Together with his brother Anton, Carl was a regular performer at the Concert Spirituel and undertook tours as a virtuoso to Vienna in 1772, to Frankfurt the following year, and in 1774 to Augsburg, Vienna and Strasbourg. After his departure from Paris in the late 1770s, Stamitz never again held an important permanent position. He travelled incessantly, performing concerts throughout Europe and continued to compose prolifically in all genres. Among his more unusual works from these years is his *Great Allegorical Musical Festivity in Two Acts* that celebrates Jean-Pierre Blanchard's successful balloon ascent in 1787.

Stamitz's compositions enjoyed great popularity in their time and circulated widely in both printed and manuscript copies. When asked by his father whether he had met the Stamitzes in Paris, Mozart replied: "Of the two Stamitz brothers only the younger one [Anton] is here, the elder [Carl] (the real composer *a la* Hafeneder) is in London. They are indeed two wretched scribblers, gamblers, swillers and adulterers – not the kind of people for me. The one who is here has scarcely a decent coat to his back" [Letter of 9th July 1778]. As with so many comments originating from Mozart's ill-fated trip to Paris, his opinion of Carl Stamitz should be treated with some caution, particularly in the light of Gerber's enthusiastic appraisal published in his *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* in 1792:

"With what extraordinary art and facility he plays the viola! With what heavenly sweet tone and cantilena he enchants our ears with his viola d'amour – and with what fire and surety he

Markand Thakar



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Photo: J. Henry Fair

Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

Baltimore Chamber Orchestra was founded in 1984. Led by Markand Thakar, it is the leading chamber orchestra in Mid-Atlantic United States. BCO is a full orchestral ensemble of up to forty musicians comprising strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Its repertoire is the symphonies, concertos, and overtures of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn, together with contemporary compositions and premières. In addition to its concert series in Baltimore, recent highlights include two world premières; three recordings released on the Naxos label (8.570320 / Pleyel, 8.559398 / Leshnoff, 8.572162 / Stamitz, Hoffmeister); concerts in New York and around the region; and an international tour. BCO is proud that all students are admitted free of charge to all concerts.



Photo: Steve Sortino

plays the violin as Konzertmeister! Berlin, Dresden, many capitals and large cities are witness of his prowess! And he certainly would have been long attached to one of the German courts, if this artist's unusual dislike for all connections of this sort had not stood in the way of his entering an orchestra. Indeed, it is a great undertaking to live in Germany as a free artist. And he who tries and wishes to succeed must not have any less art than Stamitz ... in his relationships, as highly esteemed for his honourable and noble character, as for his art."

In spite of his early fame, his obvious gifts as a performer and composer, and his sporadic experiments in alchemy, Carl Stamitz died so heavily in debt that his possessions had to be auctioned to help pay his creditors.

It is significant that Gerber's enthusiastic praise of Stamitz's powers as a performer should refer to his playing of the viola and viola d'amore ahead of the violin. Stamitz was unusual in presenting himself as a virtuoso on these instruments, particularly the viola d'amore which, by the end of the eighteenth century, was more of an historical curiosity in most parts of Europe than part of the modern musical landscape. Stamitz enjoyed an advantage over most other performers of these unfashionable instruments in that he composed the music he played. He could tailor the solo part to show off his technical strengths, exploit the unique tone colours of the instrument, and, in concertos, to ensure that the balance between the solo instrument and orchestra was carefully managed to avoid problems with projection. All of this would have meant very little had Stamitz written dull, lifeless music, but his viola concertos, like all of his other works, abound in attractive melodic ideas and scintillating writing for the orchestra.

Stamitz's *Viola Concerto No. 1 in D* was published in Frankfurt and Paris in ca 1774. Stamitz gave concerts

the previous year in Frankfurt and it is possible that the publication of the work resulted from the strong impression he had made there both as a violist and composer. The solo writing in the concerto is impressive. Stamitz not only calls for the kind of dazzling passage work that is typical of all concertos of the period, but he also makes use of multiple stopped chords, harmonics and left hand pizzicato, a technique more readily associated with virtuosi of the following century such as Nicolò Paganini. Stamitz's sensitivity to tone colour is also evident in the work's unusual orchestration which calls for *divisi* violas (there are two viola parts rather than one) and a pair of clarinets in place of the more usual oboes. The softer, darker quality of this orchestration perfectly matches the tone colour of the solo instrument and contributes a great deal to the sensuous beauty of the work. Stamitz's skilful handling of his orchestral forces reminds us that he had the good fortune to be taught by artists such as Cannabich who were among the most gifted and experienced orchestral composers of their generation. Mozart's derogatory comments about him perhaps reveal one side of his nature, but the gravely beautiful minor-key slow movement of the *D major Viola Concerto* shows another and allows us to glimpse the man whose playing, according to the novelist Jean Paul Richter, moved the audience to tears.

If the reasons Carl Stamitz composed viola concertos are clear enough, this is certainly not the case with Franz Anton Hoffmeister who was born in Rothenburg am Neckar in May 1754. When just fourteen years of age he arrived in Vienna to study law but was so entranced by the city's rich and varied musical life that upon graduating he decided to devote his life to music. By the 1780s he had become one of the city's most popular composers with an extensive and diverse catalogue of works to his credit.

Hoffmeister's reputation today, however, rests almost exclusively on his activities as a music publisher.

In 1785 he established one of the first publishing houses in Vienna, second only to Artaria & Co which had only begun publishing music five years earlier. Over the next fifteen years Hoffmeister issued works by many prominent Viennese composers, among them Albrechtsberger, Clementi, Forster, Pleyel and Paul Wranitzky. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven are all represented in his vast catalogue, Mozart by several important first editions including the *G minor Piano Quartet K. 478* and the single *String Quartet in D, K. 499*, the ‘Hoffmeister’ Quartet. A second company he founded in Leipzig in 1800, the Bureau de Musique, later grew into the firm of C.F. Peters which remains active today.

As a composer Hoffmeister was highly respected by his contemporaries. This is evident from the entry in Gerber’s *Neues Lexikon der Tonkünstler* published around the time of Hoffmeister’s death in 1812:

“If you were to take a glance at his many and varied works, then you would have to admire the diligence and the cleverness of this composer... He earned for himself a well-deserved and widespread reputation through the original content of his works, which are not only rich in emotional expression but also distinguished by the interesting and suitable use of instruments and through good practicability. For this last trait we have to thank his knowledge of instruments, which is so evident that you might think that he was a virtuoso on all of the instruments for which he wrote.”

As an enterprising composer and one with a strong interest in publishing, it is hardly surprising that Hoffmeister wrote prolifically in many genres. His output of concertos is as interesting for its diversity as for its undoubted quality. As a professional composer, as distinct from a professional performer, Hoffmeister

composed works both on commission, and, in later years, with publication in mind. The flute concertos found a ready market among amateur musicians but works like the two viola concertos enjoyed only limited circulation on account of the scarcity of viola soloists. There are few viola concertos from the late eighteenth century and none, with the exception of Hoffmeister’s two works, by a prominent Viennese composer. Thus, his concertos assume an even greater historical importance than the majority of his other works in the genre.

Little or nothing is known of the origins of the *Viola Concerto in D*. Johann Traeg offered the work for sale in his catalogue of 1799 but in all likelihood it was composed either during the 1780s or early 1790s. Like many unpublished concertos of the period the present work survives in a single source, in this instance a set of parts preserved in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden. The parts formerly belonged to Joseph Schubert, a composer and violist in the Dresden Court Orchestra, whose autograph cadenza to the first movement is written into the solo part. The Dresden source is unusually problematic not just in terms of its numerous textual inaccuracies but also in its preservation of an incomplete set of parts for an alternative second movement styled ‘*Siciliano*’ that suggests that the work may at one time have existed in two versions.

The situation is similar with the *Concerto in B flat*. On the basis of style the work appears to date from the 1780s and may have been composed around the same time as the *Viola Concerto in D*. Although the sole surviving set of parts is now located in the Národní Muzeum in Prague and once belonged to Ossec Monastery, they appear to be in the same hand as the *D major Concerto* and may have belonged at one stage to Joseph Schubert (the wrapper carries the possession mark “*Pro me. I.S.*”

Since neither work was ever published it is probable

that they were composed on commission. The poor state of the manuscript copies argues against Schubert as the original recipient and it seems unlikely that his copies derive from a source close to the composer. Nonetheless, they are the only copies to survive and without them these two exceptional concertos would have been irretrievably lost.

In many respects the works are similar in style to Stamitz’s concerto, with their elegant yet imposing opening movements, wistful, beautiful slow

movements, and cheerful, bustling rondo finales. The full range of the viola is exploited with Hoffmeister delighting as much in the silvery upper register of the instrument as in its warm, rich lower register.

The beauty of all three works on this recording reminds us of the immense musical riches to be found in even the most unexpected corners of the eighteenth-century repertory.

Allan Badley

Victoria Chiang



Victoria Chiang has performed across North America, Europe and Asia. She has appeared as soloist with the Romanian State Philharmonics of Constanța and Târgu Mureș, the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, the Acadiana Symphony, the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra at the 38th International Viola Congress. She has collaborated as guest artist with the Guarneri, Takács, Tokyo, American and Pro Arte String Quartets, and with members of the Emerson, Cleveland, and Juilliard String Quartets, and has been a regular guest artist at the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival and the Bargemusic series, having given solo performances in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall and at the 25th International Viola Congress. Victoria Chiang is a member of the artist/faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of Music and of the Aspen Music Festival, and is a founding member of The Aspen Ensemble. The group, which concertizes internationally, is Ensemble in Residence at the University of Baltimore.