

concerti published together as his Opus 3. The composer, who was himself a virtuoso violinist, wrote hundreds of concerti for the violin but relatively few for four violin soloists. This concerto was published early in his career, and it contributed to his international reputation.

Of the at least 500 concerti that Vivaldi composed, nearly half are for solo violin. He wrote such a vast quantity to meet the need for his own concert tours as well as to supply his students at the Pietà school in Venice. Usually these concerti matched a single soloist with an orchestra. The concerti that constitute his Opus 3 are dedicated to the grand prince of Tuscany and bear the title *L'estro armonico* ("Harmonic Inspiration"). Published in Amsterdam in 1711, this collection was the first of Vivaldi's works to be printed outside Italy. Each of the 12 concerti features the violin—sometimes just one soloist, sometimes two, and sometimes four, as in the case of the B minor concerto. Because Vivaldi's foreign publisher had broader distribution channels, this particular set of concerti came to wider attention than his earlier published works.

The B minor work eventually came into the hands of Johann Sebastian Bach, who at the time was a little-known court musician and composer in central Germany. Intrigued by the work and the way that Vivaldi had balanced his varying musical themes, Bach arranged the piece for four harpsichord soloists and changed the key; the result is BWV 1065.

Bartok Divertimento

Vivaldi Concerti Grossi Numbers 10 & 11



RUDOLF BARSHAI
Moscow Chamber Orchestra

Divertimento for String Orchestra Sz.113 BB.118 is a three-movement work composed by Béla Bartók in 1939, scored for full orchestral strings. Paul Sacher, a Swiss conductor, patron, impresario, and the founder of the chamber orchestra Basler Kammerorchester, commissioned Bartók to compose the Divertimento, which is now known to be the pair's last collaborative work.

The term "Divertimento" (Italian for "diversion") denotes a work primarily designed for the entertainment of both the listeners and the performers. The divertimento was popularized in the Classical period by Haydn, Boccherini, and Mozart. This is a neo-classical work constructed around modal tonalities, but it cannot simply be defined as a modernist work or a strictly neoclassical work. One of the most evident neoclassical characteristics is the treatment of texture. Frequently, a small group of soloists contrasts the whole orchestra, greatly varying the work's texture. This is reminiscent of the Baroque genre of the Concerto Grosso, where a small group of soloists, the concertino, was contrasted and accompanied by the tutti orchestra, or the ripieno. While baroque tonality comes within reach, the work is for the most part tonally modernistic. Dynamically, the work features sharp contrasts. The work also utilizes the fugal elements of imitation, fugato, and contains a three voice fugue.

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the conductor and ensemble who undertakes to perform this work is one of understanding this work

within Bartók's oeuvre. Bartók's music has now attained the "serious" stature and consideration that it deserves, and yet with this respect comes a focus on the music's structure, its rhetorical strengths, its highly evolved tonal and rhythmic elements.

A quick look at the score demonstrates that even though Bartók wrote the Divertimento very quickly, he still provided his customary highly detailed instructions for performance. The first 24 measures contain two highly coordinated allargandi, which serve to exaggerate the slightly off-kilter rhythm and sense of melodic propulsion. Bartók shifts timbres continually in this movement by alternating between tutti strings and soloists. The first mistake that a conductor may make is to allow his soloists to play with the typical orchestral solo attitude of "now it is my chance to be heard". Nearly all the solo portions of the first movement are marked piano or mezzo-piano, and are often inserted between forte statements by the tutti strings. Clearly, by drastically reducing both the musical forces and the written dynamic Bartók was striving for some rather extreme shifts of aural mass. These shifts serve to heighten the lively, spontaneous character of the movement.

Concerto for Four Violins and Cello in B Minor, Op. 3, No. 10, concerto for violins and cello by Antonio Vivaldi, part of a set of 12

Bartók Divertimento

Vivaldi Concerti Grossi Numbers 10 & 11

RUDOLF BARSHAI

Moscow Chamber Orchestra

Divertimento For String Orchestra

1 Allegro Non Troppo 9:36

2 Molto Adagio 10:19

3 Allegro Assai 7:01

Concerto Grosso In B Minor Op. 3 No. 10

4 Allegro / Largo - Larghetto / Allegro 10:20

Concerto Grosso In D Minor Op. 3 No. 11

5 Allegro / Largo E Spiccato / Allegro 10:26

Total Time: 47:42

Recording Info: Producer: Michael Bremner Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson
Recorded by Decca 1962



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