




audite

Francesco

# VENTURINI

Concerti

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la festa musicale







**FRANCESCO VENTURINI (1675-1745)**

**Concerti di camera, Op. I, No. 2 in A minor**

- I. Concerto. Allegro assai / Adagio 6:20
- II. Canon. Andante 1:52
- III. Passepied & Trio 2:39

**Concerti di camera, Op. I, No. II in B-flat major**

- I. Ouverture 4:58
- II. Aria. Tempo giusto e affettuoso 4:18
- III. Furies. Presto / Sarabanda. Cantabile 4:30
- V. Gavotta 0:39
- VI. Menuet I & II 2:05

**Ouverture à 5 in E minor**

Source: Lund / Samling Engelhardt, 231

- I. Ouverture. Adagio 3:40
- II. Gavotte 0:58
- III. Sarabanda 1:42
- IV. Anglaise & Trio 1:43
- V. Rondeau 1:17
- VI. Gigue 1:51

**Concerto à 6 in A major**

Source: Uppsala Universitetsbiblioteket

- I. Adagio. Allegro 3:04
- II. Adagio 1:57
- III. Allegro 2:36

**Concerti di camera, Op. I, No. 9 in G minor**

- I. Ouverture. Adagio 6:55
- II. Aria. Allegro 1:54
- III. Aria. Affettuoso 4:10
- IV. Aria. Mouvement de Gavotte 1:55
- V. Menuet I & II 2:15

la festa musicale

**violin solo • direction**

Anne Marie Harer *dir.* (Op. I, No. 2 & No. II) & solo 2 •  
Mechthild Karkow *dir.*

**violin**

Henriette Otto • Iris Maron

**violin • viola**

Maria Pache *viola solo* • Amy Shen •  
Wiebke Corßen • Lena Rademann

**violoncello**

Christopher Harer *solo v* Irene Liebau *solo 2*

**violone**

Christine Sticher

**oboe**

Simon Böckenhoff *solo* • Georg Fritz

**recorder**

Georg Fritz *solo* • Irene Liebau *solo* •  
Moni Fischaleck *solo 2*

**bassoon**

Moni Fischaleck *solo* • Eva-Maria Horn *solo 2*

**lute • baroque guitar**

Dennis Götte

**organ**

Johannes Liedbergius

**harpsichord**

Olga Chumikova

**percussion**

Michael Metzler







### Francesco Venturini's Concertos for various instruments

#### The composer Francesco Venturini and his sources of musical inspiration

Around 1713 Francesco Venturini's *Concerti di camera*, Op. 1, appeared in print in Amsterdam, issued by the distinguished music publisher Estienne Roger: a peculiarity of the time and an indicator of their creator's prestige. But who was this Francesco Venturini?

Although his Italianate name suggests otherwise, Venturini was born in Brussels around 1675. This at least is suggested by the baptismal entries for his children, which he signed with the sobriquet of "Bruxellensis" – "hailing from Brussels". Nothing is known about his youth or education. He is first documented in Hanover, where he got married on 13 January 1697 and, just over a year later, was engaged as a violinist in the court orchestra. (Interestingly, the court records always listed "François Venturini" amongst the French musicians.) As an instrumentalist he must have been formidably talented: the Hanoverian court orchestra was, at that time, one of the cultural hotspots in Europe. Outstanding musical personalities such as the composers Antonio Sartorio, Agostino Steffani and George Frideric Handel shaped musical life at the Hanover court, which reached its heyday from 1665, and especially between 1680 and 1714. While the cultural and social orientation of the House of Welf had initially been Catholic-Italian, the accession to the throne of Ernst August in 1679 brought about a shift towards the Protestant-French sphere, inspired by Louis XIV and Versailles. Ernst August also had the court orchestra reorganised – the Italian musicians were dismissed and largely replaced by French colleagues. In 1688 Agostino Steffani, who had trained in Germany, France and his native Italy, and whose compositions combined Italian and French stylistic elements, accepted the post of Court Kapellmeister. Hanover, an attraction for artists and intellectuals such as the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, became an international centre for the development of a style combining the different musical traditions of Italy and France, and played a leading role in the development of North German baroque music.

During the reign of Ernst August, the focus was on the annual opera productions. After his death, Georg Ludwig, his son and heir who was to ascend the English throne





as George I in 1714 through the “Act of Settlement”, extended the court orchestra to 17 musicians and concentrated on instrumental music. It was probably as part of this expansion that Venturini was engaged. His name appears for the first time at Easter 1698 in the records of the ensemble, which was then being led by the violinist Jean-Baptiste Farinel, famous for his progressive treatment of the orchestra. Venturini frequently deputised for Farinel, including during George Frideric Handel’s brief spell as Kapellmeister. In 1713 Venturini advanced to the position of “Maestro dei Concerti” (concertmaster) and a year later succeeded Farinel as Kapellmeister. Interrupted only by a sojourn in Gotha for around one year in 1718/19 in order to help set up a new court orchestra there, he held this position until his death on 18 April 1745.

Venturini found ideal conditions in Hanover to develop as a composer. Not only did he have an excellent and generously sized orchestra at his disposal, but his employers also attached great importance to the cultivation of instrumental music both at the Leineschloss and at the Herrenhausen summer residence. And Venturini responded to this demand with representative works.

### **The Concerti di camera, Op. I**

Venturini’s most famous compositions include the aforementioned twelve *Concerti di camera a 4-9 instrumenti*, Op. I, written before he was promoted to the position of Kapellmeister. These instrumental works are written for different combinations of strings, flutes, oboes and bassoons with basso continuo.

The concertos, all of which are referred to in print as “Sonata”, are orchestral suites. They follow an intriguing pattern: the odd-numbered pieces open with a French overture whilst the even-numbered begin with an Italian concerto in the manner of a sinfonia, which even formally bears the marks of the characteristic mixture of French and Italian stylistic elements. And this mixed style goes further – the introductory movements are followed by a series of French dances and other pieces, for instance Italian-influenced “arias”, where (similarly as in a vocal aria) extended solo passages are often given to individual instruments. The instrumentation also features some French characteristics (e.g. the trio passages for oboe and bassoon), as well as using techniques of the concerto grosso – originating from the Venetian tradition of polychoral





music – when individual solo instruments are juxtaposed with the tutti ensemble. The solo parts for various instruments also reveal Venturini's contribution to the developing concerto style.

For this album, *la festa musicale* has recorded three of the twelve concertos of the opus I set: concertos II and IX are new recordings, whilst concerto XI is a premiere recording. In almost all the movements of these three orchestral suites Venturini varied the available instruments – he arranged them in various combinations, reduced and expanded their number and played with the resulting sound effects.

In the opening movement of Sonata II in A minor, tutti and solo passages alternate: the oboe, explicitly designated as “Haubois Solo di Concerto”, is the star of the piece with the greatest number of solo passages, followed by the first violin and flutes. This bipartite movement is especially captivating in its first section (marked *allegro assai*), featuring virtuoso passagework by the soloist as well as a rousing tutti sound, based on fast repetitions. In the *adagio* second section, the oboe commences a poignant lament above the foundation of the bassoon and strings before the *da capo* of the concerto is heard. A solemn four-part canon leads into a *passepied*, a French court dance which, interrupted by a trio of oboes and bassoon, communicates a great sense of musical *joie de vivre*.

In the G minor Sonata IX, the French overture is followed by three arias and two minuets. The centrepiece of this suite is the second *aria à II instruments* – a form of miniature oboe concerto alongside the orchestral tutti, introduced, and at times replaced, by duetting bassoons and cellos. This beautiful and soulful movement is marked “*affetuoso*”.

Sonata XI in B-flat major is similarly structured. A French overture with an *allegro* alternating between trio and tutti passages is followed by an expressive aria where soloistic wind instruments are accompanied by high strings. An effective contrast is provided by the following piece with the eloquent title “Furies”, in which the strings' rapid runs indeed seem to be driven by furies. The sarabande that follows exudes a pastoral sense of calm and allows us to breathe a sigh of relief; but the furies' *da capo* begins again... A short, fast gavotte is heard before the suite comes to a lively end with a round of merry minuets.





### Premiere recordings from Swedish collections

This disc comprises pieces by the composer preserved in Swedish collections which were edited specially and recorded here for the first time. Venturini's *Ouverture à 5* in E minor survives in the estate of Hinrich Christoph Engelhardt, who (with one interruption) was organist of Uppsala Cathedral and academic music director from 1727 to 1764. After his death, his music collection was transferred to Lund University and contains around 750 works, mainly by Handel, but also by other prominent composers such as Carl Heinrich Graun and Antonio Vivaldi. Venturini's *Ouverture* is entirely dedicated to dance – lively numbers alternate with solemn pieces. After the overture, a cheerful gavotte leads into a courtly sarabande, whose striding rhythms exude an elegant sense of melancholy. An English contredanse, the angloise, radiates energy once more with a wind trio before the rondeau reintroduces a gentler tone. A melodious and lively gigue concludes the suite.

The manuscript of the *Concerto à 6* in the violin-friendly key of A major for two solo violins, high strings and basso continuo is today housed in the Uppsala University Library. Its formal conception, featuring a slow-fast-slow-fast movement sequence, corresponds to the Italian church sonata. The two solo violins are at the centre of the composition: in the allegro sections they are given ample opportunity to show off virtuoso runs.

### Venturini interpreted by *la festa musicale*

In his concertos for various instruments, Venturini not only contributed to the “mixed taste” by combining French and Italian stylistic elements, but also repeatedly focused on individual instruments in solo passages. Thanks to the new performing editions, carefully prepared by the cellist Christoph Harer who went back to original contemporary sources, *la festa musicale* brings the composer's ideas to life. With subtly differentiated variations in instrumentation the musicians achieve impressive musical and acoustic effects, emphasising Venturini's compositional skill, his individuality as well as the *joie de vivre* of his music.



## la festa musicale

The North German baroque ensemble *la festa musicale*, founded in 2014, stands for excellent artistic standards, which are reflected in creative, cross-disciplinary concert formats and top-class cooperation projects. Concertmaster Anne Marie Harer is the artistic director.

The ensemble has appeared at major festivals including the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Handel Festival Halle, the Tage für Alte Musik Knechtsteden and the Niedersächsische Musiktage.

*la festa musicale* regularly performs with internationally renowned soloists such as Anna Dennis, Peter Kooy, Joanne Lunn, Klaus Mertens, Alex Potter, Andreas Scholl and Zachary Wilder. Joint projects have connected *la festa musicale* to conductors such as Jörg Breiding, Lajos Rovatkay, Hermann Max and Jörg Straube.

Concerts performed by the ensemble have been recorded by Deutschlandfunk and Norddeutscher Rundfunk. *la festa musicale* has already released several CD recordings, including motets by J S Bach (together with the Kammerchor Hannover) and church music by Bonifazio Graziani (alongside Collegium Vocale Hannover), Diogenio Bigaglia and Antonio Lotti (together with Knabenchor Hannover).

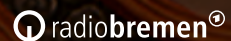
The musicians enjoy sharing their enthusiasm for early music with diverse and inquisitive audiences. They are particularly interested in creating their own programmes and performance formats. Creatively curated programmes, music education projects as well as family and children's concerts bring musicians and listeners together in an intensive way.

*la festa musicale* is an official partner of the UNESCO City of Music Hannover and cooperation partner of the Forum Agostino Steffani.





recording:  
October 21 - 24, 2019  
recording location:  
Sendesaal Bremen



Eine Produktion von Radio Bremen, 2019  
recording producer:  
Dipl.-Tonmeisterin Renate Wolter-SeEVERS  
producer (Radio Bremen):

Dipl.-Tonmeisterin Renate Wolter-SeEVERS  
recording engineer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Siegbert Ernst  
executive producer (audite):

Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

recording format:  
PCM 48kHz, 24bit

cover:

© Bildarchiv Foto Marburg / (CbDD) /  
Christian Stein / Thomas Scheidt  
Schloss Herrenhausen,  
Deckendekoration des Festsalles  
fmd494301 Hannover

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