



Avison/Geminiani

Charles Avison's
Concerto Grosso Arrangements
of Francesco Geminiani's

*Sonatas for Violin and
Basso Continuo, Op. 1*

THE AVISON ENSEMBLE

Pavlo Beznosiuk

Charles Avison – 12 Concerti Grossi
after Francesco Geminiani's *Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo, Op. 1*

CD1

No. 1 in G Major	[8.26]	
01	<i>Grave - Allegro</i>	[2.45]
02	<i>Allegro</i>	[2.11]
03	<i>Grave</i>	[0.28]
04	<i>Allegro</i>	[3.01]
No. 2 in D Minor	[6.37]	
05	<i>Adagio</i>	[1.48]
06	<i>Allegro</i>	[1.46]
07	<i>Adagio</i>	[1.30]
08	<i>Allegro</i>	[1.33]
No. 3 in E Minor	[6.02]	
09	<i>Adagio – Allegro</i>	[3.08]
10	<i>Allegro</i>	[2.54]
No. 4 in D Major	[6.29]	
11	<i>Adagio</i>	[1.19]
12	<i>Allegro</i>	[2.29]
13	<i>Grave</i>	[0.59]
14	<i>Allegro</i>	[1.41]
No. 5 in B flat Major	[6.49]	
15	<i>Affettuoso</i>	[1.49]
16	<i>Vivace</i>	[2.32]
17	<i>Grave</i>	[1.01]
18	<i>Allegro</i>	[1.27]
No. 6 in G Minor	[19.18]	
19	<i>Affettuoso</i>	[3.30]
20	<i>Adagio</i>	[0.54]
21	<i>Allegro</i>	[2.20]
22	<i>Andante</i> [Theme and Variations]	[12.34]

CD2

No. 7 in C Minor	[6.10]	
01 <i>Grave</i>		[1.30]
02 <i>Allegro</i>		[1.59]
03 <i>Grave</i>		[0.40]
04 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.01]
No. 8 in B Minor	[7.25]	
05 <i>Affettuoso</i>		[1.30]
06 <i>Vivace</i>		[2.21]
07 <i>Adagio</i>		[1.26]
08 <i>Vivace</i>		[2.07]
No. 9 in F Major	[8.46]	
09 <i>Vivace</i>		[4.07]
10 <i>Andante</i>		[1.42]
11 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.57]
No. 10 in D Major	[6.39]	
12 <i>Adagio</i>		[1.08]
13 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.06]
14 <i>Adagio</i>		[1.13]
15 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.11]
No. 11 in A Minor (arr. Pavlo Beznosiuk)	[7.50]	
16 <i>Spiritoso</i>		[2.42]
17 <i>Andante</i>		[2.32]
18 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.36]
No. 12 in D Minor	[7.35]	
19 <i>Amoroso</i>		[3.06]
20 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.08]
21 <i>Allegro</i>		[2.21]

Total CD durations: CD1 54.22 CD2 45.06

The Avison Ensemble

Charles Avison's Concerto Grosso Arrangements of Francesco Geminiani's
Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo, op. 1

Charles Avison

Charles Avison (1709 or 1710-1770) was born in Newcastle, England, and lived and worked his entire life in this vibrant city on the river Tyne. He served as organist at two of Newcastle's most important churches, instituted a concert series that eventually became the Newcastle Musical Society, and became recognized as the leading musician of Northern England.

Avison can justly be considered the greatest English composer of orchestral concertos. He wrote more than fifty works in the genre, including his well-known orchestral transcriptions of keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, as well as chamber music, accompanied keyboard sonatas and vocal compositions. Avison also made concerto arrangements of Francesco Geminiani's *Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo, op. 1* (1716), but their very existence was unknown to us until just a few years ago. They were discovered in the second of two of Avison's workbooks that suddenly appeared in the years 2000 and 2002 respectively. Consisting of more than 600 pages of music hidden from view for over two centuries, these two books add significantly to Avison's repertoire and reputation (for further information on the workbooks, see this author's article in *Music and Letters*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 2005). It is particularly fitting that they are now in the possession of The Avison Ensemble, the world's pre-eminent musical organization devoted to this native son of Newcastle.

Avison and Geminiani

The name of Francesco Geminiani actually appears numerous times throughout both workbooks, more often in fact than any other composer. In volume I we find Avison's copies in score of Geminiani's *Concerti Grossi, op. 2*, *Concerti Grossi, op. 3* and arrangements of Corelli's *Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo, op. 5*. Volume II contains not only the music for this world première recording, but also Avison's concerto versions of Geminiani's *Sonatas for Violin and Basso continuo, op. 4*, and his copies in full score of Geminiani's *Concerti Grossi, op. 7*, which had previously appeared only in parts.

The prominence of Geminiani's music should come as no surprise. Avison had left Newcastle for London at the age of 15 to further his education and career. There he met Geminiani, who had moved to London in 1714. Avison probably also studied with the Italian master, and the two composers

established a close relationship that would endure throughout both of their lives. Avison also thoroughly assimilated the Italian concerto-grosso style of his mentor and friend, and became the leading advocate for Geminiani's music in England. For example, Avison wrote in the Preface to his *6 Concertos in 7 Parts, op. 3* that Geminiani was the 'greatest Master of Instrumental Music.' The admiration was clearly mutual. Geminiani recommended Avison for two posts in Dublin between 1733 and 1740 (which he did not accept), and he wrote to Avison in 1760: 'My friend, I love all your productions. You are my heir.' Six years after Geminiani's death in 1762, Avison offered this eloquent testimonial in Newcastle's *The Literary Register, or Weekly Miscellany*: "On viewing a portrait of the late celebrated GEMINIANI. While contending nations alarm the world abroad and interior commotions at home, I peruse thy pacific page, and wonder where the powers of music are fled not to harmonize the passions of men; yet still the dulcet strains will live in congenial souls, to smooth the path of life which providence has given to lovers of harmony.'

The Music

Avison seems to have arranged only eleven of the twelve solo violin sonatas in Geminiani's opus 1. There is no transcription of sonata no. 11 in the workbook, but Pavlo Beznosiuk has written his own concerto version of this missing work. The first six sonatas (and these concertos) are written in the multi-movement *da chiesa* style, while the final six are *da camera* sonatas, featuring binary dance movements (although without being named as such). For example, the final movements of nos. 7 and 10 are in standard gigue rhythm. The first movement of the ninth sonata is an allemande, and the *Andante* that follows is in sarabande rhythm, the performers on this recording adding the appropriate ornamentation on the repeats.

Avison scored his arrangements of opus 1 for his customary 7-part string ensemble. Like almost all of Avison's concertos, they are written in the Italian concerto- grosso style, in which an orchestra is divided into two groups, the *concertino* (solo) and *ripieno* (the other members of the orchestra). This style of composition allows for dramatic contrast between the two sections, while also providing the first *concertino* violinist with ample opportunities for virtuosic display.

Avison's versions feature similarities and divergences from the Geminiani models. For example, Avison divides the double stops played by the solo violinist between *concertino* violins I and II. Geminiani, too, had used this standard technique in his own trio-sonata arrangements of six of the violin sonatas, but he also made changes in melody, tempo and dynamics, supplied new ornamentation, and even added some new movements. Although Avison sometimes divides the two violin parts differently, he

remains relatively faithful to the melodic lines of the original sonatas, also retaining their tempos, harmonies and formal structure.

There are, however, some notable variants in Avison's arrangements. The most striking occurs in the final movement of the Concerto in G minor (from op. 1, no. 4). Here we find an orchestral *Andante* followed by an extensive set of two-part variations based on the harmonic progression of the preceding *Andante* and lasting more than 200 measures. The structure, the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter and the inscription 'Da Capo il Minuet' at the end of the two-part section tell us that the form of this movement is that of the classical minuet, the variations occupying the place of the 'Trio.' However, no instrumentation is indicated for this two-part section, nor is it found in the original violin sonata.

The question therefore remains as to what instrument or instruments should be used for this music. A performance on solo harpsichord is certainly appropriate, since keyboard versions can be found in both collections of Geminiani's harpsichord music (published in 1740 and 1762), and in Walsh's 1743 publication 'HANDEL's Celebrated WATER MUSICK Compleat. Set for the Harpsicord. To which is added, Two favourite MINUETS, with Variations for the Harpsicord, By GEMINIANI.' Nevertheless, an instrumental realization is equally valid, especially considering the orchestral setting of this arrangement. We are therefore on firm historical and stylistic grounds to perform these variations with a solo violin and cello, as is the case in this recording.

Mark Kroll

The Avison Ensemble

Several years ago cellist Gordon Dixon discovered a collection of 18th century music hidden away at the back of a cupboard. This turned out to be a number of concertos of the hitherto little known Newcastle born composer Charles Avison. Excited by the originality and freshness of the music Gordon formed The Avison Ensemble with the aim of enhancing public awareness of Avison and the many other neglected British composers of the baroque period.

Comprising some of Europe's finest musicians, the Avison Ensemble performs on period instruments in order to recreate as close as possible the distinctive 'sound world' that the composers would have known.

The Avison Ensemble is unique in having its own composer along with a substantial repertoire of his music as yet unperformed in modern times. Miraculously they have added to this repertoire with the

recent acquisition of two of Avison's original workbooks, which contain many unpublished works by Avison and other 18th century composers.

Today, the Avison Ensemble introduces new audiences to classical music through touring, recording, subscription concerts and radio broadcasts. Most recently these include a collaboration with the Choir of Her Majesty the Queen's Chapel Royal, numerous broadcasts for the BBC as part of the Ensemble's "Live from the 18th century" concert series; recordings of concertos by Garth and Herschel for *Cavalier Classics* with cellist Anner Bylsmer and violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk; and the first ever complete recording of Charles Avison's 12 concertos Op. 6 released by Naxos in July 2004.

February 2006 saw the release of the Avison Ensemble's latest CD *Charles Avison: Six Concertos opus 3 & Eight Concertos opus 4*, again on the Naxos label. They have recently recorded Avison's Twelve concertos opus 9 and the six cello concertos of the 18th century Durham composer John Garth, due to be released later this year by Divine Art Records.



Pavlo Beznosiuk: Director/Violin

A major presence on the early music scene for twenty five years, Pavlo Beznosiuk has been described as an artist with "star quality" whose "playing is full of fantasy" and "whose range of ideas seems every time more amazing". A rare performer who is equally at home on instruments as diverse as modern, classical, baroque and renaissance violins, viola and mediaeval fiddles.

Well known as a soloist, chamber musician and concertmaster, he has led and directed The Academy of Ancient Music, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Hanover Band, Avison Ensemble, L'Arte dei Suonatori (Poland) and Le Parlement de Musique (France).

As leader of the Parley of Instruments in the 1980s he was involved in pioneering work in the use of Renaissance violins and his improvisational abilities earned him the sobriquet "Heifetz of the Mediaeval Fiddle". In recent years, Beznosiuk's performances of the entire cycle of Biber's 'Rosary' sonatas have met with critical acclaim worldwide and his 2004 recording (on AVIE) of these pieces has been similarly fêted. He is currently engaged in a project to record all the published (and some unpublished) music by Charles Avison.

Pavlo Beznosiuk's extensive list of recordings is a testament to his popularity as one of the field's outstanding players. They include all the solos in the six Brandenburg concertos with the New London Consort, Vivaldi's Op.6 violin concertos with The AAM and Christopher Hogwood (Decca), Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante and Haffner Serenade (Virgin/EMI and Erato), and prizewinning recordings of the Schubert Octet and Cherubini string quartets with the ensemble Hausmusik. He has also made world premiere recordings of music by J.J. Walther and J.P. von Westhoff (on Etcetera). On television Pavlo Beznosiuk has featured in BBC documentary programmes on the life and music of Mozart and Beethoven; these and his innumerable TV and radio broadcasts for the BBC and other European stations have established his pre-eminence in the field of early music.



Violin I

Pavlo Beznosiuk *concertino*
Joanne Green
Jane Gordon

Violin Hill Workshop Circa 1760
Michiel de Hoog. 1988
Jacob Stainer, Absam, Tyrol, 1680

Violin II

Simon Jones *concertino*
Simon Kodurand
Katerina Bengtson

Carlo Tononi 1703
Anon, 2002, China
Richard Duke, London 1750

Viola

Andrew Byrt
Lisa Cochrane

Bavarian, anonymous 18th C.
Joseph Hill 1771

Cello

Richard Tunnicliffe
Deborah Thorne

Leonhardt Maussiell, Nuremberg c.1730
Anon. English c. 1770

Bass

Christine Sticher

Anon. Italian c.1660

Harpsichord

Roger Hamilton

Michael Thomas 2 manual harpsichord in the French tradition.

PITCH 415

Recorded at The Jubilee Theatre, St. Nicholas' Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne
2-5 October 2005

Executive producer: Gordon Dixon
Produced and engineered by Philip Hobbs
Editing: Julia Thomas



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Arrangement of no. 11 © Pavlo Beznosiuk

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DDA 25059

John Garth: Keyboard Sonatas

DDA 25115

Charles Avison: 12 Concert Grossi ,

Op. 9 & 10

DDA 21211

Charles Avison: 12 Concerti Grossi
after Scarlatti

DDA 21213

Charles Avison: Trio Sonatas
and Keyboard Sonatas, Op. 1 & 8

DDA 21214

Charles Avison: Harpsichord
Sonatas, Op. 5 & 7

DDA 21215



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