

FLORISH in the KEY



athene

The solo violin
in London
1650-1700



PETER SHEPPARD
SKÆRVED

‘Florish in the Key’ – the solo violin in London 1650-1705

Played on:

Anon – ‘Charles II’ Violin 1664 (tracks 1-34)

Girolamo Amati – Violin 1629 (tracks 35-44)

(A=416Hz)

by

Peter Sheppard Skærved

Works from ‘Preludes or Voluntaries’ (1705)

1	Arcangelo Corelli	D major Prelude	1:10
2	Giuseppe Torelli	E minor Prelude	2:53
3	Nicola Cosimi	A major Prelude	1:37
4	Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber	D major Prelude	0:48
5	Giovanni Bononcini	D minor Prelude	1:08
6	Nicola Matteis	A major Prelude	1:16
7	Francesco Gasparini	D major Prelude	1:31
8	Nicola Francesco Haym	F major Prelude	0:50
9	Johann Gottfried Keller	D major Prelude	1:44
10	‘Mr Dean’	A major Prelude	2:10
11	Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni	D major Prelude	1:34
12	William Corbett	A major Prelude	1:42
13	Henry Eccles	A minor Prelude	1:57
14	Arcangelo Corelli	A major Prelude	1:23
15	Nicola Cosimi	A major Prelude	1:26
16	Tomaso Vitali	D minor Prelude	1:31
17	John Banister	B flat major Prelude	1:12

18	Johann Christoph Pepusch	D minor Prelude	0:51
19	Ambrogio Lonati	D minor Prelude	2:16
20	Henry Purcell	G minor Prelude	1:06
21	'Mr Simons'	F minor Prelude	1:30
22	Robert King	A major Prelude	1:30
23	Giovanni Battista Bassani	E flat major Prelude	1:45
24	'Mr Smith'	E major Prelude	1:41
25	William Gorton	A major Prelude	1:35
26	Marc 'Antonio Ziani	F minor Prelude	2:21
27	Gottfried Finger	E major Prelude	1:25
28	'Mr Hills'	A major Prelude	1:40
29	Johann Christoph Pepusch	B flat major Prelude	1:16
30	Giuseppe Torelli	C minor Prelude	1:01
31	Nicola Francesco Haym	D minor Prelude	1:14
32	Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni	C major Prelude	1:19
33	Francesco Gasparini	C major Prelude	1:33
34	Nicola Matteis	C minor Prelude	2:09

Works from 'A Set of Tunings by Mr Baltzar')

35	Thomas Baltzar	A major Allemande 1	1:48
36	Thomas Baltzar	A major Allemande 2	2:06
37	Thomas Baltzar	A major 'Corant.'	1:21
38	Thomas Baltzar	A major 'Sarabrand.'	1:30

Other works by Baltzar

39	Thomas Baltzar	C minor 'Preludium'	1:46
40	Thomas Baltzar	C minor 'Corant'	2:55
41	Thomas Baltzar	G minor Courante	1:57
42	Thomas Baltzar	G minor Sarabande	1:26
43	Thomas Baltzar	B flat major Sarabande	1:51
44	Thomas Baltzar	G minor 'Allemande & Varatio.'	3:49

Total playing time:

72:48

Florish in the Key – A personal note

John Walsh (1665 or 1666 – 13 March 1736) published ‘Preludes or Voluntaries’ sometime between 1700 and 1704. A later edition survives (1705). The collection offers a survey of the ‘state of the violin’ at the start of the 1700s, a cornucopia of playing, composition and improvising.

I cannot imagine a better instrument for this music than the violin heard on this recording. Although by an unknown hand, probably a London luthier, its inlay and date (1664) mark it as an instrument played in one of King Charles’ II’s ‘violin bands’. It is very likely that some of the violinists in the collection played this violin. With gut strings, and the wonderful little early baroque bow by the modern Genoese archetier Antonino Airenti, this violin offers a glimpse of how this intimate music might have sounded.

Where did Walsh get his title? For this, I turn to Edward Phillips’ *The New World of English Words, or, a General Dictionary* (the first folio dictionary) published in 1658. Phillips defines the ‘Prelude’ thus:

‘Prælude (Latin) a *Proem* or entrance into a discourse or subject: also, in Musick it is taken for a Voluntary or Florish on any Instrument.’ⁱ

It seems, bearing in mind ‘Preludes’, ‘Voluntaries’, and the instruction on the frontispiece of the collection (see illustration), ‘Florish in the Key’, that Walsh knew and consulted this entry for his title.

I think that Walsh gave careful consideration to the order of these preludes. The set appeared at the tail end of a flowering of 50 years of British literary collecting and compiling which had resulted in Phillips’ dictionary, as well as more slipshod affairs, such as John Aubrey’s *Miscellany* (1696). The sometimes collections of John Tradescant and the carpet-bagging piracy of Elias Ashmole are examples of the ‘happy delitescency’ (as Aubrey called it), which was responsible for works such as John Playford’s *Division Violin*. Walsh’s volume was clearly conceived as successor to that much reprinted musical *Kunstschränk*.ⁱⁱ

Walsh assembled 35 pieces by composers, some of whom were resident in London in 1700-1, and some not. The residents divide themselves between those whose 'settled status' proved permanent (they died here), and those who went home. Composers not living in London at the time are also split between those who visited and those who did not. The first group is again divided between those who left out of choice and the victims of changes of fortune, ranging from the demise of a patron, to the fall from noble, or public, favour.

The 'Table for the PRELUDES by the Severall/Eminent MASTERS for the VIOLIN/Contain'd in this Booke' includes 'Keys', to help players to choose pieces, if they were planning to use them as preludes for other works, or for other media.

The range of keys is limited – in a tonal environment, what a solo violin can do without sounding strained, is constrained. When David Matthews (1943-) wrote his *15 Fugues* (1999-2003) for me, he limited them to 15 keys, beyond these, he was concerned that the writing would sound laboured. Bach only wrote fugues for violin in the most 'open keys' – C Major (no sharps or flats), A minor and G minor (one flat in his notation – and with his preference for melodic minor scales, as many 'open strings' as possible). By Bach's standards, Walsh's collection is adventurous: D major (5), E minor, A Major (8), D minor (5), F Major, F minor (2), A minor, B flat major (2), G minor, E flat major, E Major (2), C minor (20), C Major (2) – 13 keys in all.

The work begins with the Italian master Corelli, and ends with the London star, Nicola Matteis, the most celebrated British-based violinist of any era. Clearly 'greatness' was a consideration in the assembly of the set: at the 'heart of the series', on the golden section of the list, Walsh put an extraordinary *G minor Prelude* by Henry Purcell, who had died in 1695.

The best way to describe this group of pieces, is to 'walk the line', violin in hand. Inevitably, things will get left out, but there might be interesting observations along the way!

A prelude in D major by Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) functions as overture, even prelude, for the set. It seems to be an original work (prelude 13 is from a violin sonata). Within a few years of the publication of *Preludes & Voluntaries*, Walsh was advertising eight volumes of works by Corelli, some of which might have surprised their composer(!). In character, this prelude is a 'trumpet imitation', a common trope in 17th century violin writing: Johan Jakob Walther's (1650-1717) *Hortulus Chelicus* (1688) has just such a movement, and the string player composers of Modena and Bologna, the Vitalis and Francesco Colombi, made extensive use of them. Corelli was admitted to the 'Accademia Filarmonica' of Bologna in 1670, but had left the city by 1675.

Giuseppe/Josefo Torelli (1658-1709) began work as *suonatore di violino* in the Bologna 'Accademia Filarmonica' in 1684. Walsh had an extraordinary scrap of music on his hands here, which explains its placement, after Corelli's glittering 'Vorspiel'. It shares features with Torelli's *Concertino per Camera Op 4* (1688), but is more extended. I believe that it numbers among the greatest movements for violin alone. If you put it alongside Johann Sebastian Bach's *E minor Sonata for violin & continuo BWV 1023*, you will understand how much he learnt from Torelli (he transcribed one work, a violin concerto, as 'BWV 979').

Page 3 of the set contains two works, one by Nicola Cosimi (to whom I will return later), the other by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber (1644 – 1704). This seems to have been the very first time that a single note of Biber's was published in the British Isles. Perhaps Walsh hoped to score a *coup*, by way of a little plagiarism! In 1681, Biber's collection of *Sonatae Violino Solo C 138–145* appeared in Salzburg. The 'Walsh Biber' is a dramatic reduction of the final 'Presto' of *Sonata I in A major C 138*, with elements of the first movement of the following *Sonata II in D C 139*.

The fifth prelude is labelled 'Signr Bononcini'. Mention 'Giovanni Bononcini' to anyone versed in London's music of the early 18th century, and stories of the rivalry between Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747) and G F Handel will be told (the original 'Tweedle-dee & Tweedle-dum'). But *that* Bononcini only arrived in 1720. In 1706 Walsh published the sixth edition of John Playford's *The Division Violin*,

with some additions, including music by Giovanni's father Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1643-1678). He makes far more sense, as composer of this prelude: this is a violinist's writing, and the son was very much a cellist.

Now we meet Nicola Matteis (fl. c. 1670 –? after 1713) for the first time. No London violinist was ever more celebrated. Like Thomas Baltzar (1630? -1661) before him, his career was brilliant, and short. In 1674, the indefatigable diarist and culture-vulture, John Evelyn, heard Matteis for the first time:

'19 [December] I heard that stupendious Violin Signor *Nicholao* [...] whom certainly never mortal man Exceeded on that Instrument: he had a stroak so sweete, & made it speake like the voice of a man [...]'ⁱⁱⁱ

By the time that Walsh's collection appeared, Matteis had disappeared from the London stage. The two movements included in Walsh's collection were not culled from Matteis' phenomenally successful *Ayrs For the Violin Preludes Allmands Sarabands Courantes Giges Diuisions and double Compositions fitted to all hands and Capacitie* (1676-1685 (Books 3-4), which suggests that Matteis was still alive, and provided two original works for Walsh. We will return to 'famous *Nicholao's* Violin' (Evelyn again).^{iv}

Francesco Gasparini (1661 – 1727), a pupil of Corelli, not only taught Marcello, Quantz, and Scarlatti, but, as *maestro di coro* at Venice's 'Ospedale della Pietà', hired Antonio Vivaldi as violin teacher in 1701. 'Gasperini', as the two preludes are labelled here, was the name later used for violinist Gasparo Visconti (1683-1713), but he did not come to London before Walsh's collection was published. The confusion is redoubled, as Walsh was advertising his 'Op 1', published in 1703, in Amsterdam, as *6 solos by Gasperine* in 1711.

The next prelude is labelled as by 'Signr Hyme', actually the Italian polymath-musician and numismatist, Nicola Francesco Haym (1678 – 1729). Haym's arrival in London, in 1701, offers a glimpse of how news about musicians, scores, instruments and, of course, musicians themselves, were passed around Europe – the 'Grand Tour'. By the middle 1700s, the Tour was *de rigeur* for young gentlemen,

between graduation and beginning their careers (which sometimes included work). British nobility took to the custom with aplomb following the 1660 restoration of Charles II.

The Tour was acquisitive: in addition to portraits of the young worthies lounging about Rome's Capitoline Hill, and crates of paintings and antiquities, they were expected to find performers to later grace the family music rooms, in 'Town' or 'Country'. A 'must-see' on the Tour was the 'Pantheon'. In the 17th century, there were just three tombs in the building, all painters: Annibale Carracci, Baldassare Tommaso Peruzzi and Raphael. In 1713, they were joined by one musician deemed worthy of their company, Arcangelo Corelli.

In 1696 the 16-year-old Earl Tavistock, Wriothesley Russell (1680-1711), matriculated from Magdalen College, Oxford. He then spent two years on the Tour, to Italy and back. While there, he 'discovered' the Roman violinist Nicola Cosimi (1660-1717) and began the discussions which would bring Cosimi to London at the end of 1700, when Tavistock succeeded his grandfather as Duke of Bedford. His father had been executed in 1683 for his part in the 'Rye House Plot'.

Cosimi did not come to London alone – a solitary violinist was not much use for the young duke wishing for music-making – Nicola Haym came with him. When Cosimi left London, two years later, Haym became the duke's *maestro di Capella*, the beginning of a London career as keyboardist, manager, composer and writer.

Haym's is the first piece in the set not written by a violinist: it is followed by a prelude by harpsichordist Gottfried J(ohann?) Keller (? – before 1705). Keller is the first musician on our list definitively linked to the churches of the Square Mile of the City of London, where this collection was published. In 1698, Keller married Mary Goodrick at St James, Duke Place, Aldgate. This dilapidated church was notable only for marrying eloping couples: over 40,000 such weddings took place there in the 1690s. Three years earlier, Keller and Henry Purcell were listed as teachers for the projected 'Royal Academy of Music'. Keller's prelude is Janus-faced: it includes some of the 'leaping' bowings percolating from the north-Italian

virtuosi, whilst retaining the flavour of the divisions in Playford's eponymous earlier work.

We know almost nothing about the next composer 'Mr Dean', except what Charles Burney later remembered from an early edition of 'Tatler', puffing a concert at Stationer's Hall:

'[...], a solo of the famous Archangelo Corelli was promised to be performed by Mr Dean. This is the first time that I have seen such a promise in the newspaper.'

This is the first record that we have of a London performance of Corelli's *Violin Sonatas Op 5*. Burney was talking about the violinist Thomas Deane 'Sr', playing in the Opera House band at the time. I think he wrote this prelude, because of the Italian link to Corelli and his followers. In 1712, 'Thomas Deane' was fired as musician by St Sepulchre's Church, in the Square Mile. However, this might equally have been his son, Thomas 'Junr', a theorbo player.

Walsh's title-page promised 'Variety of Compositions by all the Greatest Masters in Europe' for the violin. The result of this slight oversell was a mélange of original, copied, adapted, and perhaps fraudulent pieces. The next prelude, 'by' Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni (1671-1750), is a mixture of these. The first few bars are the opening of the sixth of Albinoni's *Concerti Op 2*. But these concertos were only published in Albinoni's home, Venice, in 1705 and in London in 1708. Perhaps one of Walsh's associates obtained a copyist's set of parts for the concerti in Italy, prior to publication, and the opening was continued in capriccio-like vein. Or, a musician wrote down what they remembered of the fanfare-like opening, and then made up the rest. But perhaps Albinoni himself was the source, and improvised this short work, based on his own theme, for a price, for one of Walsh's friends on the 'Tour'. Albinoni was still relatively young, and far from the apogee of his fame, so the latter is not impossible.

Play on: we come to the youngest musician in the collection, William Corbett (1680-1748), who went on to a mysterious career: after an appointment to a royal

position by Queen Anne, he travelled to Italy in 1709, where he remained till 1715. There he took lessons with Corelli, and may have worked as a spy for the Queen. In 1705, all this was before him, as was his passion for collecting violins: On his retirement, Corbett advertised for sale: 'his curious study of music-instruments of all sorts – Stainers, Cremona violins and basses, with the far celebrated violins of Corelli, *Gobbo*, Torelli and Nicola Cosimi.'

In 2018, I had the chance to play one of Corbett's instruments, which he bought directly from the maker, Hieronymus (II) Amati (1649-1740): it's stamped 'WC'. I played this prelude and felt the *frisson* that comes with a composer's music played on his own instrument.

Corbett used his prelude to advertise his brilliance: it's the only one to include what modern violinists call 'up-bow staccato'. This was the beginning of his work with Walsh, who, within a few years, was selling his 'sonatas for 2 FLUTES and a Bafs'.

Corbett is followed by another Englishman, Henry Eccles (1675-1735) often referred to as 'Junr.', though his relationship to the rest of the Eccles family (Solomon, John & Henry) is unclear. The first record of a performance is in 1705, and, 'On 15 May 1713 a concert was given in the Stationers' Hall for the Entertainment of ... the Duke d'Aumont, Ambassador extraordinary from France. For the Benefit of Mr Eccles, Musician to his Grace'. Eccles returned to Paris with the Duke. By 1720, he was listed as one of Louis XV's *Vingt Quatre Violons*.

The following 'prelude' is anything but: Walsh lifted it, *in toto*, from Corelli's *Violin Sonata Op 5 no 6*. Opus 5 first appeared in Rome, in 1700, so he took advantage of the comparative obscurity of the work to present the third movement as a solo. Some years later he was selling an edition claiming to include Corelli's own ornamentation of the set:

'[...] this edition has ye advantage of haveing ye graces to all ye adagio's and other places where the author thought proper by Arcangelo Corelli'.

The sequence now returns to Nicola Cosimi. Both of his preludes are in A major, and very different. The first uses the violin 'lira' style, evoking the idea of the 'lira da braccio', an instrument of sweeping chords. In countless Renaissance paintings (including Raphael's *Vatican Stanzas*, and Titian's horrific *Apollo & Marsyas*), Apollo, God of music, plays the Lira, as a stand-in for 'his' instrument in Greco-Roman statuary, the κιθάρα. An early chordal work for violin alone, by Biagio Marini (1594-1663), is titled 'Capriccio for violin with three strings, in imitation of a *Lira*'. Cosimi offsets his mastery of this 'antique' style with his second prelude, which is dashingly 'modern' – full of rattling unison effects, leaping bowings, and sparkling triplets.

Cosimi's reason for coming to London was financial: his meticulous accounts detail the sale of 'Cremona' violins he brought from Italy, and money he made teaching noble amateurs (£369 in two years). He took instruments and strings (500 sets) to sell on his return to Italy, including violins by Robert Cuthbert (1639-1714).

Cosimi adroitly balanced the liberality of two patrons. While his trip was sponsored by the young Duke of Bedford (who financed the publication of his music) he also enjoyed the patronage of Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert, who had returned from Maryland in 1684 to settle a boundary dispute with William Penn (expelled from my school). Baltimore commissioned a portrait of Cosimi by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) which survives in a 1706 mezzotint (presumably the portrait dated from 1705, the year of Cosimi's departure). Cosimi holds a recognisably English violin. Charles Burney notes that he appeared to be a young man: 'despite the immense perruque through which he is peeping.'

Latin verses were added to the mezzo-tint by John Smith (1652-1743):

'This is the Roman, gentle-born Cosimi....not to be imitated, whose soothing melodies might have been claimed by Amphion himself.'

Smith had engraved the frontispiece to Cosimi's *12 Sonatas*, underwritten by the Duke of Bedford, two years earlier.

In 1673, the then Duke of York, James, married the 15-year-old Duchess Maria di Modena (1658-1715), who became Queen in 1685. The young Queen's reign, however short, spurred interest in the musicians of Modena and Bologna. This included 'Il Vitalino' ('little') Tomaso Antonio Vitali (1663-1745). Walsh labelled him 'Signr Nicolini Junr'. Born in Bologna, Tomaso studied the violin with his father, Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632-1692) who moved from Bologna to Modena in 1674 to become one of the two 'vice-maestri di cappella' of the 11-year-old violinist-Duke Francesco II. When Francesco's older sister, Duchess Maria, travelled to London, she brought music from the court composers, especially that by Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1642-1678), who had been swindled out of the 'maestro di cappella' title by Giuseppe Colombi (1635-1694).

Vitali's D minor prelude continues the up-to-date virtuoso flavour of Corbett's and Cosimi's contributions. It is an exercise in brilliant 'leaping' bowings, crossing two and three strings, a gambit which Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) later pushed to the limits in his *24 Capricci*.

John Banister (Bannester) (1630-1679) was one of the most influential musicians of the age, and his son – also John – continued his father's influence. With the death of Thomas Baltzar in 1663, the interest that Charles II had shown in him led to his brief ascendancy in the '24 Violins', so there is a distinct possibility that he played on the instrument on which this disc is recorded, which bears the arms of the king and the date '1664' inlaid and pricked into its back. His prelude is little more than a series of scales and arpeggios in B flat Major.

On the same page, even more abbreviated, is a D minor prelude by Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667 – 1752). Pepusch arrived in London in 1697: at the time of this publication, he was far from the celebrated choral composer and theorist of later years: in 1705 he was working as violist and harpsichordist at the Drury Lane Theatre.

Carlo Ambrogio Lonati (1645-1710/15?) had a swashbuckling, scandalous career, as violinist, singer and comic actor. He crossed paths with our cast of composers a number of times. Purcell was influenced by Lonati's sonatas: 'the famous Lelio

Calista' which Purcell quoted in Playford's *Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (1694) was Lonati. This confusion was understandable; from 1673, Lonati was *Maestro di Capella* for the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden (this was her fourth and final sojourn in Rome) and Lelio Colista (1629 - 1680) was working as her lutenist. At this time Lonati acquired the sobriquet, 'il Gobbo della Regina'. In 1686 Lonati came to London with the castrato Giovanni Francesco (1653-1697) in the service of the new Queen Maria (of Modena). Purcell wrote 'Sefauchi's farewell' on their departure in 1688. Lonati and Antonio Alessandro Stradella (1643 -1682) had to leave Rome in 1677 when their scheme to embezzle money from the church was discovered (Stradella was stabbed to death in Genoa a few years later), and 'Siface' would be assassinated on the road from Ferrara to Bologna in 1696.

Henry Purcell's prelude is a masterclass in concision, with a hint of *Dido & Aeneas* in the descending bass line. My suspicion, and it's only a hunch, is that the idea for 'Preludes & Voluntaries' came to Walsh when he obtained this miniature wonder, perhaps when Purcell died.

The melancholy of Purcell is followed by the sorrowful F minor prelude of 'Mr Simons'. After years of playing this piece, I still don't know who he was. It is an exquisite piece of writing, exploiting the plangent 'open' E string in all the darkness, and resolving, twice, to delightfully drawn-out 'appoggiaturas'. I leave it to John Aubrey to express my feelings:

"These Antiquities are so exceedingly old, then no booke does reach them, so that here is no way to retrieve them.'

Robert King (1660-1726) was one of the most enduring violinist-impresarios of the age, whose career stretched across the reigns of five monarchs. He was made composer to William & Mary in 1689. His works appeared in at least six of John and Henry Playford's collections, and as a publisher himself, he imported music from Italy, including the Corelli *Sonatas Op 5*. In November 1702 he was selling Nicola Cosimi's *12 Sonatas* from his address at York Buildings, where Samuel Pepys had kept his office for the Board of Admiralty some years earlier.

King's prelude is a violinist's 'warm up'. First of all, a leisurely A major arpeggio and an easy scale, then some light two-part counterpoint, then some Venetian style 'sciolto-style' staccato, to finish.

Giovanni Battista Bassani's (1650-1716) E flat prelude is very fine. It was thought that Bassani had been the teacher of Corelli (unlikely), but Charles Burney later opined that he was the finer violinist. Bassani would have known the players in this collection who worked in Bologna (where he was a member of the 'Accademia Filarmonica') and Modena where he published his *Balletti, Correnti, Gighe e Sarabande Op 1* in 1677. Clearly Walsh knew the collection well, and trusted that no one else did: the prelude is the first Violin part of 'Balletto Sesto', first movement, 'Allegro', with no alterations. In the original, this material is the decorative swag, garlanding an almost Lutheran-chorale in the second Violin. It works wonderfully as a solo prelude.

To recap, there are (at least) three occasions in this collection where Walsh extracted material to make solo works. Once we look past the plagiarism (something nearly every composer in this collection could be accused of), we have a delightful model of the porous divide between ensemble works and 'pure' solo works.

'Mr Smith' is a bit of a puzzle. Peter Holman notes, in his wonderful *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540-1690*, two 'Smiths' (Robert and Henry) in Charles II's 'Twenty-Four Violins' in the 1670s, and a viol-player, John, in the 'Private Music'.^v But this feels as if it were lifted from a later, Venetian 'concertante', and shares certain figurative qualities with the anonymous 'Klagenfurt Manuscript' (1685). Playing 17th century music, one runs into a lot of music by 'Anon'. Perhaps Walsh appended the catch-all 'Smith' to avoid another faceless moniker.

William Gorton (?-1711) was a gamba-player and organist. From 1702 until his death, he was director of music in the exquisite new Wren church of St Clement Eastcheap (he was also buried there). This prelude was clearly influenced by French viol-writing, such as Le Sieur de Machy's (fl. 1655-1700) *Pièces de Violle en*

Musique et en Tablature (1685), particularly the knotty two-part writing. Playing this work in Gorton's church reminds me of the importance of certain acoustics to 'lift' such solo writing: not for nothing did Christopher Wren (1632-1723) refer to his churches as 'auditory'.

In 1705 Marc'Antonio Ziani (1653-1715) was 'vice-Hofkapellmeister' in Vienna to the Emperor Leopold. Six years later, Charles VI appointed him 'Hofkapellmeister'. His F minor prelude uses the dark/light possibilities of this key to dramatic effect. We can sure that Walsh did not get this prelude from the composer himself: in 1703 he advertised 'Ziani's Aires or Sonatas in 3 Parts, 2 vn, bc, op.1'. The first twelve of these were by Albinoni: eight years later, they were still in his catalogue.

As mentioned earlier, the Moravian da gamba player Gottfried Finger (1660-1730) was briefly a member of James II's chapel. In the very last moments of that ill-starred reign, he dedicated his *Twelve Sonatas* to the soon-to-be 'King over the water.' In 1700 Walsh published his Op 3, *VI sonata's or solo's, three for a violin & three for a flute with a thorough bass for ye harpsichord*. The following year, Finger ill-advisedly took part in a competition to set William Congreve's *The Judgement of Paris*. He was beaten by the locals, John Weldon, John Eccles and Daniel Purcell. Roger North noted that Finger:

'...thought he was to be judged by men, and not by boys, and thereupon left England and has not been seen since.'

Clearly, Walsh saw his departure as an opportunity: this prelude is the second movement of the third of the *Op 3 Sonatas*, 'Allegro', with no alterations whatsoever. This explains the 1st inversion final chord. The missing 'E', is, of course, found in the bass line.

I have no clue as to the identity of 'Mr Hills'. Walsh gives him two pages, which is intriguing. The piece is a throwback to the divisions of the 1660, doing little more than wander back and forth between A and E Major. But the position-work and bowing techniques, especially the use of slurs, are up-to-date.

After returning to Pepusch, Torelli, Haym, Albinoni, and Gasparini, Walsh brings his collection to a close, marked 'FINIS', with an exquisite allemande from Nicola Matteis.

In 1704, the satirist Thomas Brown (1663-1704) published his *Letters from the Dead to the Living, and from the Living to the Dead*. This gave the impression that Matteis, or 'Seignior Nichola', as he labelled him, was very much in his grave:^{vi}

'T is impossible to suffer it any longer! What, my diviner Airs made the sordid Entertainment of sordid Footmen, scoundrel Fellow, and I know not what Ragamuffins![...] I will dispatch an Imp to sowre your Ale, consume your Cordials, spill your Tobacco, break your Glasses, and cut all your Equipage of Harmony into ten thousand Millions of Bits: Nay, I will prosecute my Revenge so far, that even in the Playhouse, your Hand shall shake, your Ear judge wrong, your Strings crack, and every Disappointment that may render you ridiculous shall attend you in all Public Meetings where-ever you pretend to play.'

Matteis' 'imp' brings us back to the most celebrated violinist of the previous generation. In 1658 Anthony à Wood heard Thomas Baltzar (1631-1663) at a concert in Oxford:

'[...] he played to the wonder of all the Auditory: and exercising his Fingers and Instrument several wayes to the utmost of his power, Wilson thereupon the public Professor (the greatest Judg of Musick that ever was) did, after his humoursome way, stoop downe to Baltzar's Feet, to see whether he had a Huff on, that is to say, to see, whether he was a Devil, or not, because he had acted beyond the parts of Man.'^{vii}

Born in Lübeck, Baltzar worked working at the court of Queen Christina of Sweden, until she left for Rome after her 1654 abdication. He arrived in England the following year, and never left. In 1661 he was appointed to Charles II's 'Private Music', with an enormous salary. He was dead by July of 1663, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

John Evelyn was astonished at ‘the incomperable Lubicer’:

‘[...] his variety upon a few notes [& plaine ground] with that wonderfull dexterity, as was admirable, & though a very young man, yet so perfect & skillfull as there was nothing so crosse & perplex, which being by our Artists, brough[t] to him, which he did not at first sight, with ravishing sweetnesse, & improvements, play off, to the astonishment of our best Masters: [...] I stand to this houre amaz’d that God should give so greate perfection to so young a person: ...’^{viii}

I experience *déjà vu*, reading this: 18 years later, when John Evelyn heard Nicola Matteis for the first time, there was the shock of recognition at, seemingly, Baltzar reborn.

If any group of pieces might give us some sense the astonishment which greeted Baltzar’s playing in the mid-1650s, it is the four movement ‘A Set of Tunings by Mr Baltazar’. It uses the ‘scordatura’(‘tuning’) of A-E-A-Csharp – an early example of the technique in the British Isles. Valentine Reading’s (?-1704) ‘Ground’, using the same tuning, appeared in Playford’s *The Division Violin* in 1684.

Baltzar offers the player sophisticated narratives which leave space for the improviser’s work. It’s in the ‘Four Tunings’ that this paradox is best experienced. This helps me understand, John Evelyn’s reaction upon on first hearing him play:

‘[...] nor can I any longer question, the effects we read of in *Davids* harp, to charm maligne spirits, & what is said some particular notes produc’d in the Passions of *Alexander* & that King of *Denmark*.’^{ix}

The Baltzar works are played not on the ‘Charles II’ violin but a wonderful instrument fashioned in 1629 by Girolamo Amati, second generation of the greatest violin-making dynasty of Cremona. This instrument can be heard more extensively in my recent recording of the *Partias* for solo violin by Johann Vilsmaÿr, in volume 4 of the Great Violins series.



The two violins in St. Bride's,
Fleet Street, London



The Royal Crest, date, and King's initials
on the 'Charles II' violin

ⁱ - [no page numbers], *The New World of English Words, or, a General Dictionary*, Edward Phillips, London, 1658

ⁱⁱ P.9 *Brief Lives*, John Aubrey, Folio Soc, London 1975

ⁱⁱⁱ P.542 *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E S de Beer, Everyman, London, 1907

^{iv} P.543 *Ibid.*

^v PP 325-6 *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540-1690*, Peter Holman, Clarendon, Oxford, 1993

^{vi} : Letters from the dead to the living and from the living to the dead [1702], in *The Works of Mr. Thomas Brown*, 'Printed for Sam Brisco, London, 1719

^{vii} Pp. 111-2, Anthony à Wood, *The Life of Anthony à Wood from the Year 1632 to 1672*, Written by Himself and Published by Mr. Thomas Hearne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1772)

^{viii} P.331, Esmond Samuel de Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

^{ix} *Ibid.* Pp 331-2

The Violinist

Peter Sheppard Skærved is known for his pioneering approach to the music of our own time and the past. Over 400 works have been written for him, by composers Laurie Bamon, Judith Bingham, Nigel Clarke, Robert Saxton, Edward Cowie, Jeremy Dale Roberts, Peter Dickinson, Michael Finnis, Elena Firsova, David Gorton, Naji Hakim, Sadie Harrison, Hans Werner Henze, Sídika Özdi, Rosalind Page, George Rochberg, Michael Alec Rose, Poul Ruders, Volodymyr Runchak, Evis Sammutis, Elliott Schwartz, Peter Sculthorpe, Howard Skempton, Dmitri Smirnov, Jeremy Thurlow, Mihailo Trandafilovski, Judith Weir, Jörg Widmann, Ian Wilson, John Woolrich and Douglas Young.

Peter's pioneering work on music for violin alone has resulted in research, performances and recordings of cycles by Bach, de Bériot, Tartini, Telemann, and, most recently, his project, 'Preludes and Vollerieries', which brings together 200 unknown works from the seventeenth century, from composers including Colombi, Lonati, Marini and Matteis, with the Wren and Hawksmoor churches in London's Square Mile.

His work with museums has resulted in long-term projects at institutions including the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, the Metropolitan Museum, New York City, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, Galeria Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, and the exhibition 'Only Connect', which he curated at the National Portrait Gallery, London. Most recently his 'Tegner' commissioned by the Bergen International Festival, is a close collaboration with the major Norwegian abstract artist, Jan Groth, resulting in a set of solo Caprices, premiering at Kunsthallen, Bergen, and travelling to galleries in Denmark, the UK and even Svalbard/Spitzbergen. Peter is the only living violinist to have performed on the violins of Ole Bull, Joachim, Paganini and Viotti. As a writer, Peter has published a monograph on the Victorian artist/musician John Orlando Parry, many articles in journals worldwide, and most recently, *Practice: Walk*, for Routledge.

Peter is the founder and leader of the Kreutzer Quartet and the artistic director of the ensemble Longbow. Viotti Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music, he was elected Fellow there in 2013. He is married to the Danish writer Malene Skærved and they live in Wapping.

www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com

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I must acknowledge the scholarship of the experts in this field, without whom this work simply would not happen, most particularly Patrick Wood Uribe, whose work on Baltzar is an inspiration.



Peter recording in St John the Baptist, Aldbury, December 2019



Nicola Cosimi



Thomas Baltzar



Nicola Matteis



William Corbett

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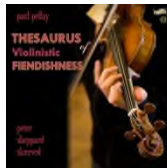


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