RICCARDO MINASI
FEARLESS ITALIAN
BAROQUE VIOLIN

Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne
October/November 2015

Riccardo Minasi guest director, baroque violin
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

PROGRAM

Francesco DE MAJO
Sinfonia in D major
Angelo RAGAZZI
Violin Concerto in G minor
Domenico SARRO
Sinfonia from Demofoonte
Angelo RAGAZZI
Sonata Op. 1, No. 4 in F minor, *Imitatio in Salve Regina Interval*
Francesco DURANTE
Concerto No. 2 in G minor
Gennaro MANNA
Sinfonia in E flat major
Leonardo LEO
Concerto for 4 violins in D major
Nicola FIORENZA
Sinfonia for 3 violins in G major
Niccolò JOMMELLI
Sinfonia from *La Betulla liberata*

Brisbane
Queensland Performing Arts Centre
Monday 26 October at 7:30pm

Sydney
City Recital Hall
Wednesday 28 October
Friday 30 October
Saturday 31 October
Wednesday 4 November
Friday 6 November all at 7pm
*Matinee*
Saturday 31 October at 2pm

Melbourne
Melbourne Recital Centre
Saturday 7 November at 7pm
Sunday 8 November at 5pm

Chairman's 11
Proudly supporting our guest artists

The duration of this concert is approximately 2 hours including interval.
We kindly request that you turn off all electronic devices during the performance.
Macquarie Group is proud to be the principal partner of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra for the 2015 concert season.

Presenting both classics of the baroque repertoire as well as unfamiliar compositions enables modern listeners to discover the depth of the baroque period. It is this ability of the ensemble to perform baroque pieces in as fresh and exciting a way as when they were first performed that is one of the most enticing aspects of a Brandenburg concert. In this concert series Riccardo Minasi joins the Brandenburg as a guest director and soloist. We hope you will enjoy the energy and vitality that Riccardo and the orchestra bring to the work of Neapolitan composers.

It is a privilege to continue our support for the Brandenburg and congratulations once again to Artistic Director Paul Dyer for creating a wonderful year of concerts. Our partnership with the Orchestra in bringing these works to life means the immense talents of its musicians and visiting artists can be widely enjoyed and appreciated.

Shemara Wikramanayake
Chair, Macquarie Group Foundation
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

There are so many words I could use to describe Riccardo Minasi, a man of passion, integrity, generosity and brilliance. Riccardo’s unbridled enthusiasm is infectious and inspiring, he is a wonderful leader and performer and I feel privileged to welcome him to the Brandenburg stage as guest director and baroque violin for this beautiful concert series.

Riccardo is in huge demand in Europe – I have been waiting for the right time to bring him back to Australia since he last performed with us in 2011.

Riccardo is something of a champion of the long forgotten music of baroque Naples. Scattered across Europe, forgotten but held safely in various libraries, this is the first time many of these pieces have been performed in Australia, in fact many have not even been recorded. This incredibly fascinating and beautiful music was part of the cornerstone of art, culture, religion and everyday life in baroque Naples. Riccardo has unearthed these music gems for us tonight, which he performs with his trademark enthusiasm, joy and breathless precision.

Paul Dyer AO
Artistic Director and Conductor
RICCARDO MINASI
FEARLESS ITALIAN BAROQUE VIOLIN

Riccardo Minasi guest director, baroque violin
Australian Brandenburg Orchestra

THE MUSICIANS ON PERIOD INSTRUMENTS

**Baroque Violin 1**
- Shaun Lee-Chen, Perth (Guest Concertmaster)
- Matt Bruce, Sydney (Associate Concertmaster)
- Catherine Shugg, Melbourne
- Bianca Porcheddu, Canberra
- Skye McIntosh, Sydney

**Baroque Violin 2**
- Ben Dollman, Adelaide
- Sarah Dunn, Sydney
- Matt Greco, Sydney
- Simone Slattery, Adelaide
- Rafael Font, The Hague

**Baroque Viola**
- Monique O'Dea, Sydney
- Marianne Yeomans, Sydney
- Simòn Gangotena, Melbourne

**Baroque Cello**
- Jamie Hey, Melbourne
- Anthea Cottee, Sydney
- Rosemary Quinn, Sydney

**Baroque Double Bass**
- Jacqueline Dossor, Surrey, UK

**Baroque Oboe**
- Kirsten Barry, Melbourne
- Owen Watkins, Bega

**Baroque Bassoon**
- Peter Moore, Perth

**Baroque Horn**
- Darryl Poulsen, Perth
- Dorée Dixon, Perth

**Harpsichord/Organ**
- Paul Dyer, Sydney

* Denotes Brandenburg Core Musician
* Section Leader
1 Shaun Lee-Chen appears courtesy of West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Perth
2 Bianca Porcheddu appears courtesy of St. Francis Xavier College, Florey ACT (staff)
3 Monique O'Dea appears courtesy of Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney (staff)

Harpischord preparation by Geoffrey Pollard in Sydney, Carey Beebe in Brisbane and Alistair McAllister in Melbourne

Organ preparation by Joanna Tondys in Sydney, Carey Beebe in Brisbane and Ken Falconer in Melbourne
In January 2013 Paul Dyer AO was awarded the Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for his ‘distinguished service to the performing arts, particularly orchestral music as a director, conductor and musician, through the promotion of educational programs and support for emerging artists’ in recognition of his achievements as Co-founder and Artistic Director of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and Brandenburg Choir.

Paul Dyer is one of Australia’s leading specialists in period performance styles. He founded the ABO in 1990 and has been the orchestra’s Artistic Director since that time. Paul has devoted his performing life to the harpsichord, fortepiano and chamber organ as well as conducting the Brandenburg Orchestra and Choir.

Paul completed postgraduate studies in solo performance with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatorium in The Hague, performed with many major European orchestras and undertook ensemble direction and orchestral studies with Sigiswald Kuijken and Frans Brüggen.

Paul appears as a soloist, continuo player and conductor with many major ensembles including the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Orchestra, Australia Ensemble, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Opera Australia, Australian Youth Orchestra, Victorian State Opera, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Vancouver, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London.

Paul has performed with many prominent international soloists including Andreas Scholl, Cyndia Sieden, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Andreas Staier, Marc Destrubé, Christoph Prégardien, Hidemi Suzuki, Manfredo Kraemer, Andrew Manze, Yvonne Kenny, Emma Kirkby, Philippe Jaroussky and many others. In 1998 he made his debut in Tokyo with countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, leading an ensemble of Brandenburg soloists, and in August 2001 Paul toured the orchestra to Europe with guest soloist Andreas Scholl. As a recitalist, he has toured Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States.

Paul is an inspiring teacher and has been a staff member at various Conservatories throughout the world. In 1995 he received a Churchill Fellowship and he has won numerous international and national awards for his CD recordings with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and Choir, including the 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2010 ARIA Awards for Best Classical album. Paul is Patron of St Gabriel’s School for Hearing Impaired Children. In 2003 Paul was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal for his services to Australian society and the advancement of music. In 2010 Paul was awarded the Sydney University Alumni Medal for Professional Achievement.
Riccardo Minasi, was born in Rome in 1978. He has performed both as soloist as well as concertmaster with Le Concert des Nations of Jordi Savall, Accademia Bizantina, Concerto Italiano, Il Giardino Armonico, Al Ayre Español, Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di S.Cecilia and Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid. He has also worked with the Concerto Vocale of René Jacobs, Ensemble 415, Luca Pianca, Viktoria Mullova, Albrecht Mayer, Christophe Coin and Reinhard Goebel.

As a conductor he directed the Orchestra and Choir of the Opéra National de Lyon, Kammerakademie of Potsdam, Zürich Kammerorchester, Balthasar Neumann Ensemble, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, L'Arpa Festante, Recreation-Grosses Orchester of Graz, Attersee-Akademie Orchestra, ensemble Resonanz, European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO), Il Complesso Barocco, Holland Baroque Society and the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra, of which he was the associate conductor between 2008 and 2011.

Invited by Kent Nagano, Riccardo performed as concertmaster at the Belcanto Festival in Knowlton and collaborated as historical advisor for the Montréal Symphony Orchestra in Canada. In 2010 he worked as assistant conductor, concertmaster, curator and editor of the critical edition of the opera Norma by Vincenzo Bellini with Cecilia Bartoli and Thomas Hengelbrock in Dortmund.

Since its foundation in 2012 Riccardo has been the conductor of the ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro, with whom he has a full calendar of performances and has already realized many highly awarded recordings ranging from instrumental to operatic repertoire.

From 2004 to 2010 Riccardo was professor of chamber music at the Conservatorio V. Bellini of Palermo, and lectures in historical practice at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, the Longy School of Music in Cambridge (USA), the Sibelius Academy of Helsinki, the Hochschule für Musik in Hannover, the Conservatory of Antwerpen, the Chinese Culture University of Taipei (Taiwan), the Conservatory of Sydney (Australia), the Kük's Residence in the Czech Republic, the Zürich Opera House, the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole and as the Italian representative of the jury in 2009, at the auditions for the European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO).

Riccardo’s recording of Biber’s Rosenkranz Sonaten was a finalist at the Midem Classical Award in Cannes as album of the year in 2009. The recording “Stella di Napoli” with Joyce DiDonato and the chorus and orchestra of the Lyon Opera was nominated for a Grammy Award as “best classical vocal album”, received a “Diapason D’or of the Year” and the “BBC Music Magazine Award 2015”. Next season he will conduct at the Zurich Opera the ballet Der Sandmann (music by Schumann and Schnittke), with the Hamburgische Staatsoper Gluck’s Iphigénie en Tauride, with the orchestra La Scintilla (Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven), with the London Chamber Orchestra (Cherubini, Beethoven, Mendelssohn), and with Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl.
“...What stands out at concert after concert is the impression that this bunch of musicians is having a really good time. They look at each other and smile, they laugh...there’s a warmth and sense of fun not often associated with classical performance.”
Sydney Morning Herald

The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, led by charismatic Artistic Director Paul Dyer, celebrates the music of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with excellence, flair and joy. Comprising leading specialists in informed performance practice from all over Australia, the Brandenburg performs using original edition scores and instruments of the period, breathing fresh life and vitality into baroque and classical masterpieces – as though the music has just sprung from the composer's pen.

The Orchestra's name pays tribute to the Brandenburg Concertos of J.S. Bach, whose musical genius was central to the baroque era. After celebrating their 25th anniversary in 2014, the Brandenburg continues to deliver exhilarating performances.

The Brandenburg has collaborated with such acclaimed and dynamic virtuosi as Andreas Scholl, Fiona Campbell, Philippe Jaroussky, Kristian Bezuidenhout, Emma Kirkby, Andreas Staier, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Genevieve Lacey, Andrew Manze, Avi Avital and more.

Through its annual subscription series in Sydney and Melbourne, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra performs before a live audience in excess of 40,000 people, and hundreds of thousands more through national broadcasts on ABC Classic FM. The Brandenburg also has a regular commitment to performing in regional Australia. Since 2003 the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra has been a member of the Major Performing Arts Group, which comprises 28 flagship national arts organisations supported by the Australia Council for the Arts. The Brandenburg is pleased to be performing two concert series in Brisbane in 2015.

Since its beginning, the Brandenburg has been popular with both audiences and critics. In 1998 The Age proclaimed the Brandenburg “had reached the ranks of the world’s best period instrument orchestras”. In 2010 the UK’s Gramophone Magazine declared “the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is Australia’s finest period-instrument ensemble. Under their inspiring musical director Paul Dyer, their vibrant concerts and recordings combine historical integrity with electrifying virtuosity and a passion for beauty”.

The Australian proclaimed that “a concert with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is like stepping back in time, as the sounds of period instruments resurrect baroque and classical works with reverence and authority”.


Discover more at brandenburg.com.au
The Neapolitans

Italian composers and performers dominated the European musical world in the eighteenth century, but musical dominance abroad was not matched by political dominance at home: only the region of Savoy and the Venetian Republic were ruled by the Italians themselves.

What we now know as Italy was a collection of separate states until the middle of the nineteenth century. For centuries it had been the battleground for wars between the monarchies of Spain, Austria and the French, with Spain gaining control in the mid 1600s. By the early decades of the eighteenth century Austria had become the major power in Italy but the southern part of the peninsula, known as the Kingdom of Naples, reverted to Spanish control in 1734.

Subjugation by foreign powers was an economic disaster for the south of Italy, which also had to contend with devastation caused by plague, famine, frequent earthquakes and the occasional eruptions of Mount Vesuvius. The region was heavily taxed to bankroll Spanish wars, and a plague in the 1650s wiped out almost half the population. In the eighteenth century the economy of the region was still very backward. There was very little by way of infrastructure, with few roads and little industry, and agriculture was controlled by landlords whose mendacity drove starving peasants off the land and into the towns. By the end of the seventeenth century the population of Naples had risen to 200,000 due to the influx of dispossessed peasants. By 1791 it had doubled. Naples was the largest city in Italy and one of the largest in Europe, but also the most densely populated and squalid.

A small number of people at the top of the social order – the bureaucracy and landowners – derived most of the benefits in a society ruled by banditry and lawlessness, while the vast majority of people were illiterate, without employment, and eked out a life by begging or relying on charity.

Music and Naples

Paradoxically, these same conditions fostered a golden age of art, science, philosophy, and particularly music, and Naples was definitely on the bucket list of every well-to-do European gentleman making the “Grand Tour” of Italy. The string of viceroys who ruled Naples as the representative of the Spanish king understood the power of entertainment to dominate their subjects and impress their enemies, and the presence of a powerful and wealthy court created a myriad of job opportunities for local musicians. Music was required for dances, parties, for the royal chapel, and to celebrate royal and vice-regal birthdays and marriages and important civic events. By the 1730s there were four public opera theatres and operas were also performed outdoors in summer, and privately in the royal palace and in the palaces of the nobility. In other Italian cities there were two seasons of opera, but in Naples you could see opera throughout the year.
There were also employment opportunities in sacred music. Naples in the eighteenth century boasted five hundred churches and particularly lavish and ornate religious festivals. These occurred all year round, and many involved street processions which lasted for hours. By the end of the seventeenth century twenty one new patron saints were added to the city’s traditional eight and all had to have great public festivities in their honour. A French traveller recorded the feast of San Giovanni in the late seventeenth century:

[there were] many choruses of angels, which were accompanied by flutes and other musical instruments all in harmony with the voices of the angels and … spiritual hymns which deafened the place. And once the song of the first set had finished, a cloud opened from which the other angels likewise came down singing and playing. And once they had descended, all the while continuing their harmonious sound, we saw the first angels who had sung rise up on the cloud.

Funerals in Naples were particularly spectacular rituals, with choruses of singers and instrumental music, and at the most important ones “there were buglers who played the pipe and muffled drums and black banners”.

The Conservatories

Many of the musicians in Naples were trained at one of four conservatories. Like the ospedali in Venice, these were charitable institutions originally set up to provide lodging and education for poor boys. Initially this was done by training them as choirboys, but this was later expanded to include instrumental playing and composition. The English music historian Charles Burney was eager to visit the best known of the conservatories, the Conservatorio di San Onofrio, when he visited Naples in 1770, and was taken aback to discover the boys all practising at the same time:

On the first flight of stairs was a trumpeter screaming upon his instrument till he was ready to burst – on the second a French horn bellowing in the same manner – in the common practising room was a dutch concert, consisting of seven or eight harpsichords, more than as many fiddles, and several voices all performing different things in different keys. … Out of 30 or 40 boys who were practising I could discover but two that were playing the same piece.

They practised in this way all day long from two hours before dawn until 8 at night, with only an hour and a half break, yet according to Burney “this constant perseverance for a number of years, must, with genius and good teaching produce great musicians”.

Gian Francesco de Majo (1732–1770)

Sinfonia in D major

_ Allegro con brio
  Andantino
  Allegro

De Majo was born in Naples into a family of musicians. His father was director of music of the Spanish royal chapel in Naples, and de Majo worked there also, as organist. When he was twenty seven his first opera was performed in Parma and in Rome, where it was a phenomenal success. The dramatist Carlo Goldoni was there: “A part of the pit [that is, the people sitting in the stalls] went out at the close of the entertainment to conduct the musician home in triumph, and the remainder of the audience stayed in the theatre, calling out without pause, Viva Majo! till every candle was burnt to the socket”.

One year later de Majo developed tuberculosis, and although he only lived ten more years he went on to compose eighteen operas and many sacred works. He was commissioned to compose an opera for the coronation of Joseph II as Holy Roman Emperor in Vienna, and also spent time in Mannheim and Madrid before returning to Naples to take up his father’s old job as director of music at the royal chapel. He died three years later.

What to listen for

Mozart heard de Majo’s music when he visited Naples in 1770 and described it as “bellissima” (very beautiful).

A sinfonia was a short instrumental work which functioned as an overture to Italian opera in this period and was the forerunner to the classical symphony. This sinfonia begins with a lively first movement, in which strings are supplemented by oboes and a pair of horns. The second slow movement is for strings alone and is in a contrasting minor key. Like other sinfonias in this concert the last movement is a dance-like gigue.
Angelo Ragazzi (1680–1750)

Concerto in G minor

Adagio
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Ragazzi was a product of the Naples conservatory of San Maria di Loreto, and became one of the leading instrumental composers in Naples in the first half of the eighteenth century. His career, like many other musicians in Naples in this period, was affected by the shift of power between the Spanish and the Austrians. Although he worked for a period as a violinist in the royal chapel in Barcelona, most of his life was spent moving between Naples and Vienna at the behest of his royal employers.

What to listen for

Ragazzi composed many concertos and sonatas for violin, and his music shows the influence of his teacher in Vienna, the music theorist Johann Joseph Fux, as well as Vivaldi. Ragazzi favoured a polyphonic style, in which the parts play independent melodies. This concerto is in the form of a concerto grosso in its four movement structure and in the way the instruments are organised, with a small group of soloists (the concertato) set against the full orchestra (the ripieno).

Domenico Sarro (1679–1744)

Sinfonia from the opera Demofoonte

Allegro
Poco andante
Allegro

Sarro (also known as Sarri) was brought to Naples at the age of six to study at the Conservatory of San Onofrio, and never left the city again. In 1703 he took part in a public competition for the job of director of music for the vice-regal court, and was given the job of deputy music director, but his career stalled when Naples changed from Spanish to Austrian rule. He later became music director to the city of Naples and to the court when the Spanish returned to power, and was chosen to compose the opera for the opening of the new Teatro San Carlo in 1737 to be given in the presence of the King of Naples, Charles III.

Unlike other more famous Neapolitan composers, Sarro did not travel and so was only moderately well known during his lifetime, although he is acknowledged as having been responsible for contributing
to the development of Neapolitan musical style. By the end of the 1730s his music was generally thought unfashionable. The French politician Charles de Brosses, who heard one of his operas in 1739, described his music as “knowledgeable but cold and sad”, though apparently others disagreed as it received “great applause”. Unfortunately one of those who did not like it was the king, and the minister responsible for recommending that the opera be staged commented: “the composer Sarro has always been a most celebrated man. It is true however that he flourished in a bygone age”. He promised that Sarro’s next opera would be better suited “to the grandeur of the joyous day and to good modern taste”.

The opera *Demofoonte* premiered at the Teatro di San Bartolomeo in 1735, and starred the great castrato Caffarelli as the primo uomo – “first man”. Singled out for their talent and hoped-for future stardom, boys were castrated around the age of nine, so that when they became adults they would have the voice of a boy, supported by the strength of an adult male body. The two most famous castrati were Caffarelli and Farinelli. Both were born in small towns and came to Naples to study with the celebrated voice teacher Nicola Porpora, and both began their careers in Naples opera houses.

Curiously, *Demofoonte* was a collaboration between Sarro, and two other composers, Leonardo Leo and Francesco Mancini. Although it is not entirely clear, it appears that each composer contributed the music for one act. Sarro composed only Act I, as well as this sinfonia which would have opened the opera. This type of collaboration was not uncommon in Italian opera at this time, when the concept of a work of art being owned by its creator (copyright) was not yet known.

What to listen for

This sinfonia is scored for strings, oboes and horns. The first movement features the full orchestra and one can hear the influence of Vivaldi in the scalar passages and strong repeated chords. The second movement is gentler and is for strings alone. The final movement is a gigue, with strings and winds playing in turn.

**Francesco Durante** (1684 – 1755) *Concerto No. 2 in G minor Affettuoso, Presto, Largo affettuoso, Allegro*

**Angelo Ragazzi**

**Sonata Opus 1 No 4 in F minor Imitatio in Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiae**

*Andante*  
*Adagio*  
*Allegro*

This sonata was one of twelve published in Rome in 1736. The collection of sonatas was Ragazzi’s only printed work, and the sonatas are composed in varying styles although all are scored for two first violins, second and third violins, and basso continuo. For the bulk of the work the two first violins play together, and it is only in the lively final movement that the first violin takes a solo part consisting of swooping arpeggiated figures.
INTERVAL

Gennaro Manna (1715–1779)

Sinfonia in E flat major

*Intrada – allegro*
*Bouré*
*Menuet & Trio*
*Presto*

Although Manna is little known today, he was known to his contemporaries as one of the most important composers of his time. He was particularly popular in his home town of Naples, where he held various prestigious positions including director of music for the city of Naples, the city’s cathedral and one of the conservatories. He was especially well known for his operas, but he only composed them for the first twelve years of his career after which he concentrated on sacred music.

What to listen for

While he was in Naples in 1770 Charles Burney heard Manna conduct one of his sacred compositions, which he described as “admirable” and “ingeniously written”, with “fancy, contrivance and light and shade”. This sinfonia, with its four movements based on typical dance forms of the period, foreshadows the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart.

Leonardo Leo (1694–1744)

Concerto for 4 violins in D major

*Maestoso*
*Fuga*
*Andante*
*Allegro*

Leo was a pupil of possibly the most famous Neapolitan composer, Alessandro Scarlatti. He wrote his first opera at the age of twenty, in 1714, and went on to compose over forty operas in total, in both the serious and newly fashionable comic styles. Despite this impressive track record, he had a reputation for procrastination and the opera company in Naples posted a guard outside his room to force him to finish composing on time. Leo became the dominant figure in Naples’ musical life in the 1730s, and through connections with the royal family he received commissions to compose operas for other Italian cities and for the Spanish court in Madrid. His lifetime ambition was to be director of music of the royal chapel, which finally occurred in 1744, but he died only nine months later.
Leo was a versatile and accomplished composer, with a gift for melody. As well as opera he composed many sacred vocal works, and a significant amount of instrumental music in various genres. This concerto is in four movements, a form which by then had been overtaken by Vivaldi’s more flashy three movement form. It is scored for four separate violin parts, accompanied by basso continuo, with solo episodes. The score of the second movement, a fast moving fugue, is marked “spiccato” which indicates that the players are to bounce the bows on the strings to create a detached effect. The third movement is a complete contrast to the previous two, in a gloomy minor key and with arpeggiated figures. There is a return to the brighter major in the final movement, where the solo violin features prominently.

Nicola Fiorenza (d. 1764)

Sinfonia in G major for three violins

\begin{itemize}
  \item Largo
  \item Allegro
  \item Siciliana: largo
  \item Grave
  \item Allegro
\end{itemize}

Fiorenza was a violin teacher at one of the Naples conservatories. He won his position through a ballot: unable to decide between five candidates, the conservatory’s governors put their names in a box and Fiorenza’s was the one selected. He taught there for twenty years until, after years of complaints, he was finally sacked on the grounds of mistreating his students (he is reported as having threatened one with his sword).

What to listen for

Fiorenza composed fifteen concertos and nine symphonies, many of which feature the violin as solo instrument. He favoured the four movement structure, slow-fast-slow-fast, although even the faster movements here have a certain stateliness. The third movement is based on a Siciliana, a type of dance with a specific rhythmic pattern.
Niccolò Jommelli (1714–1774)

Sinfonia from the oratorio *La Betulia liberata*

*Allegro*
*Andantino*
*Allegro assai*

Jommelli was one of the most important Italian composers in the middle of the eighteenth century. He began his studies at the Conservatorio of San Onofrio in Naples when he was eleven years old. His first operas were performed when he was twenty three, and he received commissions to compose operas for all major Italian cities for most of his life. Jommelli was well-travelled and held a number of important musical posts. He was musical director of the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, one of Venice’s acclaimed music schools for girls, in the 1740s, but in 1750 he began to write more sacred music and as a consequence took up the position of music director at St Peter’s in Rome. This nearly proved his undoing, as when he was late returning to Rome from overseeing a performance of one of his operas in Vienna he was only saved by the intervention of the pope from being tried by the church court for neglecting his duties.

In 1753, at the height of his fame, Jommelli became chief music director at the wealthy and influential court of Stuttgart, where he was given almost complete artistic control of opera, church and instrumental music. The best singers, players, choreographers, dancers and set designers were hired, and under his leadership the Stuttgart orchestra became one of the finest in Europe. Intrigues at court and the death of his wife in 1769 caused Jommelli to return to Naples. Mozart heard his last major opera there, pronouncing it “beautiful but too serious and old-fashioned for the theatre”.

What to listen for

Jommelli composed the oratorio *La Betulia liberata* in 1743 at around the time he began teaching the girls of the *Ospedale degli Incurabili* in Venice. Telling the story of Judith who cuts off the head of Holofernes from the Old Testament of the Bible, the libretto was by the famous Italian librettist Metastasio and was set by thirty composers, including the young Mozart.

The sinfonia (which would have been the overture) is in three short movements. The first is a sprightly *allegro* with solo episodes for oboes and horns. The second movement is for strings alone, and is marked “always soft”. Typical for this period, the last movement is also quick, a dance-like gigue.
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<th>Neapolitan Composers</th>
<th>Contemporary Musicians</th>
<th>Contemporary Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1679</td>
<td>Domenico Sarro born</td>
<td>Henry Purcell becomes organist at Westminster Abbey</td>
<td>Halley publishes catalogue of stars of the southern hemisphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1680</td>
<td>Angelo Ragazzi born</td>
<td>Vivaldi born two years earlier, Handel and JS Bach born five years later</td>
<td>London woman flogged for “involving herself in politics”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1694</td>
<td>Leonardo Leo born</td>
<td></td>
<td>Death of Queen Mary II of England</td>
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<tr>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Jommelli born</td>
<td>CPE Bach born</td>
<td>Elector of Hanover becomes George I King of England</td>
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<tr>
<td>1732</td>
<td>Gian Francesco de Majo born</td>
<td>Haydn born</td>
<td>First German dictionary of music published</td>
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<tr>
<td>1744</td>
<td>Leo and Sarro die; Jommelli is in Venice</td>
<td>Semele by Handel premieres in London</td>
<td>France declares war on Great Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Ragazzi dies; Jommelli starts work at St Peter’s in Rome</td>
<td>JS Bach dies</td>
<td>Galley slavery abolished in Europe</td>
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<td>1753</td>
<td>Jommelli moves to Stuttgart</td>
<td></td>
<td>British parliament extends citizenship to Jews</td>
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<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Nicola Fiorenza dies</td>
<td>French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau dies</td>
<td>London introduces the practice of numbering houses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>De Majo dies</td>
<td>Beethoven born; Mozart is 14 and visits Naples</td>
<td>Captain James Cook sails up the east coast of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td>Jommelli dies</td>
<td>Gluck composer at Paris Opera</td>
<td>German cobbler Birkenstock makes sandals</td>
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