



ENSEMBLE CAPRICE

Sunday, October 16 at 7 p.m.
Monday, October 17 at 8 p.m.



*Friends of
Music at
Dumbarton
Oaks*

ENSEMBLE CAPRICE
Vivaldi & the Gypsies

October 16 & 17, 2011

Matthias Maute, *recorder, traverso* | Sophie Larivière, *recorder, traverso* | Julie Triquet, *baroque violin*
Lucie Ringuette, *baroque violin* | Pemi Paull, *baroque viola* | Susie Napper, *baroque cello*
Nicolas Lessard, *double bass* | David Jacques, *baroque guitar* | Ziya Tabassian, *percussion*

PRÄAMBULUM

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

CONCERTO IN D MAJOR, RV 93, FOR GUITAR, 2 FLUTES, 2 VIOLINS, & BASSO CONTINUO

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

Allegro | *Largo* | *Allegro*

C 256 / HUNGARICUS 25 / HUNGARICUS 23 / HUNGARICUS 53 / C 106

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

CONCERTO IN D MINOR, RV 535, FOR 2 RECORDERS, STRINGS, & CONTINUO

Vivaldi

Largo | *Allegro* | *Largo* | *Allegro molto*

C 206 / C 207 / C 208 / C 345

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

☞ INTERMISSION ☞

PULCHER / ANGLICUS / BALLET DOCTORIS FAUSTI AD MENSAM

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

SONATA IN G MINOR (LA FOLLIA), RV 63, FOR 2 RECORDERS & CONTINUO

Vivaldi

C 272 / C 275 / ASZTALI NOTA

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

CONCERTO IN G MAJOR, RV 443, FOR FLAUTINO, STRINGS, & CONTINUO

Vivaldi

Allegro | (*Adagio*) | *Allegro molto*

HUNGARICUS 15 / IAG BARI

Anonymous (Uhrovska zbierka, 1730)

Throughout his life, **Antonio Vivaldi** (1678–1741) never elaborated on the sources of inspiration for his compositions. This could be one of the reasons why the spiritual kinship between his concerto pieces and eastern European gypsy music has hitherto gone unnoticed. While this assumption may seem absurd considering the geographic situation, it becomes clearly apparent upon closer inspection. As a virtuoso and composer, Vivaldi travelled widely. He is known to have attended performances of his operas in Prague and Vienna. These performances brought him close to the Balkans, and it is likely that he encountered nomadic musicians. Vivaldi taught for many years at the orphanage school famous for its shining musical life: the Ospedale della Pietà. This “orphanage” (in fact a home for the illegitimate daughters of noblemen) lay on the Riva degli Schiavi, the Slavic Canal. One can easily imagine how travelers arriving from Eastern European countries might perform their music practically on Vivaldi’s doorstep. The obvious similarities between the motifs used in many of Vivaldi’s works and gypsy music makes it even more tempting to surmise that he must have come into contact with music from Eastern Europe. Ragged sixteenth notes, syncopated rhythms, abrupt dynamic contrasts, and pianissimo passages found in Vivaldi’s works are almost identical to gypsy musical elements in the **Uhrovska zbierka, 1730**. The Uhrovska collection (named for the town in present-day Slovakia where it was found) is a fascinating document that provides a direct glimpse into the world of gypsy music. The approximately 350 melodies it contains were probably intended to be a comprehensive collection of gypsy music. Its multi-national character documents the extent to which the gypsies (and their music) travelled. Hungarian melodies stand next to Czech songs, and the Uhrovska’s discovery in Slovakia suggests further national influences.

There is another link that makes juxtaposing Vivaldi’s music with pieces from the Uhrovska collection remarkably satisfying: the composer and the gypsy musicians were clearly exceptional virtuosos who derived great pleasure from using their talents to exploit the limits of their instruments’ capabilities. Contrary to the oral tradition of the gypsies, who are essentially without written record, a traveling master violinist must have attempted to assemble the music of his people into a comprehensive “catalogue.” Few gypsies would have studied notation and so we must infer that Uhrovska was compiled by a traveling musician who had come into contact with the educated classes of his time. In this case, he utilized a sort of shorthand, leaving plenty of room for creativity. With only a few exceptions, the music in the Uhrovska collection is notated in a single voice, and so the bass line and the harmonic and rhythmic fleshing out in the mid-range would have been improvised. Thus, it was implied that the pieces would be arranged *ad hoc* by gypsy bands. We have adopted this practice and expanded the melodies into multi-voiced pieces. The kinship between Vivaldi and gypsy music became obvious to us during this project. The rough and fresh gypsy music must have fascinated a composer like Vivaldi. Although cause for speculation remains, we hope that the listener will be inclined to share our enthusiasm for this unusual musical encounter.

—Matthias Maute

Under the artistic direction of **Matthias Maute** and **Sophie Larivière**, **Ensemble Caprice** is renowned for its innovative interpretations of baroque music. For twenty years, Ensemble Caprice has received international acclaim for its performances of early music. The ensemble gives concerts in Europe, and is regularly invited to participate in such early music festivals as those in Bruges, Utrecht, and Regensburg, Germany. Ensemble Caprice has performed in the Händel Festival in Halle, Germany, and in the Recorder Festival in Stockstadt. In the United States, Caprice has given concerts in New York City at the Frick Collection and Miller Theatre, at the Boston Early Music Festival, and at the Library of Congress. In Canada, Ensemble Caprice has performed widely at musical events such as the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, the Elora Festival, and the Domaine Forget's International Festival. They have also toured in Israel and Taiwan.

In a lengthy article from November 2009, the *New York Times* praised Ensemble Caprice as “imaginative, even powerful, and the playing is top-flight.” Ensemble Caprice's CD, *Gloria! Vivaldi's Angels*, on the Analekta label, won Canada's prestigious 2009 JUNO award. The ensemble's *Vivaldi and the Baroque Gypsies* (Analekta) was nominated for a 2009 Echo Klassik award in Germany in two categories: Ensemble/Orchestra of the Year and Classics Without Borders. 2011 will see the return to disk of *Vivaldi's Angels* in a brand new recording on the Analekta label.

