Georg Philipp Telemann (1681 – 1767)
Concerto à 4 Violini senza Basso, D-major TWV 40:202

arranged by Olaf Mühlenhardt

Georg Philipp Telemann was one of Europe's most prominent and popular composers. Many of his contemporaries considered him the most distinguished German composer, even more highly esteemed than Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Friedrich Händel. With over 3600 listed works he is undoubtedly the most productive composer in music history. How could one single person compose such a monumental volume of music? His boundless inventiveness, the extraordinary speed of his production and a career lasting over 70 years simply fail to explain this sufficiently.

His work encompasses all genres of spiritual and secular music. Along with over 1700 church cantatas, 40 passions, 16 masses, six oratorios, several motets, psalms and other spiritual compositions, he wrote about 50 operas (his first was completed at age 12), numerous secular cantatas and large-scale works for special occasions. The body of his instrumental music contains far more than 1000 works, of which only 125 orchestral suites and about the same number of concertos have survived. In addition to his orchestral works and *Sinfonien* he wrote chamber music for various combinations of instruments – quartets, numerous trio sonatas, duets, solos and as well as keyboard and organ music. The concertos for four violins belong to about 80 surviving works without basso continuo.

Even though it is safe to assume that Telemann composed the majority of his instrumental works before 1740, the near total absence of autograph manuscripts hinders the establishment of a more precise chronology of many works. The Concertos for four Violins were probably written during Telemann's time in Eisenach or Frankfurt, a period during which he not only composed a lot of chamber music, but also intensively played the violin.

During the short period in Eisenach between 1708 and 1712 Telemann wrote at least four complete volumes of church cantatas, about 20 serenades and festive music, 50 miscellaneous cantatas and a vast array of chamber music – *"how could it be possible to remember all I have invented for fiddlers and wind-players***f** – including multiple concertos and sonatas for various instruments, especially for the violin.

As concertmaster and cantor at the court of Duke Johann Wilhelm he had an excellent orchestra at his disposal and often played with the violin virtuoso Pantaleon Hebenstreit: *"I hereby remember the strength of Sir Hebenstreit on the violin, that surely put him among the top rank with other masters: when we had to play a concert together, I would seclude myself some days in advance, the violin in my hand, the sleeve rolled up on my left arm, with ointments to strengthen my nerves to be my own apprentice, so I could withstand his powers. And behold: it helped my noticeable improvement.*

In Frankfurt, aside from his church obligations, he conducted the Collegium musicum and composed music for their *great weekly concerts* – a mixture between public performance and collective music making. There probably was ample opportunity to experiment with such unusual instrumentations. Who knows, he may well have written the concertos for his own use with his friends and colleagues, or perhaps for some of his students in Frankfurt?

The form of these concertos is concise and concentrated, even in a moderate tempo none of them lasts longer than eight minutes. The fast movements are fresh and lively. The slow ones are expressive and make use of uncommon harmony. Because of the imitative disposition all parts are equally involved in the materials' treatment. The antiphonal opposition of instrumental groups in pairs is especially prominent.

The manuscripts of the concertos TWV 40:201-203 are in the possession of the *Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek* in Darmstadt. They were apparently written by copyists. Concerto TWV 40:204 exists only as a reprint from 1951. Due to questionable provenance and stylistic considerations its authenticity remains uncertain.

Except for the slurs in the *Grave* there are no further entries in the manuscript of the **Concerto in D-major TWV 40:202**. Dynamic markings are merely suggestions to differentiate between leading voices and accompaniment as well as form. The commas in the *Grave* and the last *Allegro* were added to indicate phrasing.

Olaf Mühlenhardt, April 2010

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D-dur, TWV 40:202

Georg Philipp Telemann
(1681 - 1767)
arr. O. Mühlenhardt

Adagio

Alto Sax. 1
Alto Sax. 2
Alto Sax. 3
Alto Sax. 4

6 **Allegro**

9

12

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