

## Options for seniors in playing baroque trio sonatas

When growing old, musicians who want to continue the pleasure of playing chamber music have to pay extra attention to the flexibility of their repertoire. This is of importance as these elderly music players cannot always easily make or follow up appointments. This can seriously hinder the functioning of an ensemble. Here we advocate that baroque trio sonatas could be an excellent choice to ensure flexibility. When an ensemble has got some experience a professional conductor is not necessary.

There exist a great many of trio sonatas; practically all great baroque composers contributed to the collection<sup>1</sup>. Many of these sonatas do not demand great skill in performance technique. Virtuosity is seldom required. Trio sonatas can even play a part in encouraging older people to start with music playing. Soon after their first music lessons, starters might benefit from the pleasure of playing chamber music composed by great composers. They can even claim a semblance of authenticity as in earlier centuries the flexibility of the trio sonatas has been widely made use of; so this claim might contribute to their self-satisfaction.

In modern editions a trio sonata contains parts for four instruments; at first sight somewhat remarkably. The filling in of these parts is very flexible with regard to the choice of instruments and to the number of players. The three main parts of the score, written by the composer himself, are for two solo instruments and the bass. In the score of the bass numbers are added, the continuo numbers, to enable the construction at will of an extra part: a 'middle part'. The purpose of such a middle part is to fill the gap between the frequency ranges of the solo instruments and the bass. The editor usually provides such a middle part arranged for a keyboard in-

strument. In that part the editor includes the notes of the bass part to be played with the left hand of the keyboard player.

The obvious way to play the trio sonatas is with four instruments, playing the parts provided by the editor. In this case there is flexibility with regard to the choice of the solo instruments and the bass. For the solo instruments violins, oboes, flutes, recorders, or combinations of these can be used. The solo parts can also be doubled. For the bass instrument cello, viola da gamba or bassoon are the most obvious choices. If no bass player is available, the keyboard player can take some extra attention to the loudness of the tones produced by his left hand resulting in performances by only three participants. If no keyboard player is available, one could restrict the performance to the three parts written by the composer. The working out of the continuo numbers is not limited to a single instrument, so with some creativity it is also possible to include more instruments in this part.

An extra advantage of the flexibility is that a 'dovetail' is possible for the participation of a handicapped keyboard player. When a bass player is available, a one-handed keyboard player can leave out the bass notes, as these are already played by



*The author and his ensemble at the Technische Universiteit Eindhoven. Photograph by Bart van Overbeeke, E: bartvano@xs4all.nl*

the bass player. So the keyboard player can restrict his contribution to the middle part and play it with one hand. There exist bass players who will not be disappointed when their part is not doubled by another instrument, so in that case performance with a one-handed keyboard player might even be preferred above the performance suggested by the editor. The possibility of playing a part in ensemble playing might be inviting for handicapped musicians, especially as a creative contribution is possible in the working of the middle part.

Since the distance from the eye to the score will usually be different from the habitual

reading distance, care has to be taken for wearing suitable glasses. At a score-reading distance of  $d$  cm, an additional  $+100/d$  dioptres will be needed over the normal far-distance viewing conditions. Such extra glasses can be bought in many shops at low prices. Also, the score may be magnified by enlarged copying, which is now generally available.

A general conclusion is that the trio sonatas offer the possibility to encourage seniors making music in ensembles. Such an activity could mean a contribution to the remedy of loneliness among seniors.

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### Reference

1. Hogwood C. La sonate en trio. Arles: Actes sud; 1987

## Intermezzo: Optima™, our new font

Gerontechnology quarterly journal will be typeset in the Optima™ font, starting this issue. This font was designed by Hermann Zapf<sup>1</sup> and is his most successful typeface<sup>2</sup>. In 1950, Zapf made his first sketches while visiting the Santa Croce church in Florence. He sketched letters from grave plates that had been cut about 1530, and as he had no other paper with him at the time, the sketches were done on two 1000 lire bank notes.

These letters from the floor of the church inspired Optima™, a typeface that is classically roman in proportion and character, but without serifs. The letterforms were designed in the proportions of the Golden Ratio. In 1952, after careful legibility testing, the first drawings were finished. The type was cut by the famous punchcutter August Rosenberger<sup>3</sup> at the D. Stempel

AG typefoundry in Frankfurt. Optima™ was produced in matrices for the Linotype typesetting machines and released in 1958.

With the clear, simple elegance of its sans-serif forms and the warmly human touches of its tapering stems, this family has proved popular around the world. Optima is an all-purpose typeface; it works for just about anything from book text to signage. It is available in 12 weights and 4 companion fonts with Central European characters and accents.

### References

1. [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann\\_Zapf](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Zapf). Retrieved November 26, 2006
  2. [www.linotype.com](http://www.linotype.com). Retrieved November 26, 2006
  3. [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto\\_August\\_Rosenberger](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_August_Rosenberger). Retrieved November 26, 2006
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