

# Giovanni PLATTI

# Six Flute Sonatas, Op. 3

Paul Wåhlberg, flute Knut Erik Sundquist, double bass Hans Knut Sveen, harpsichord & clavichord



### Giovanni Benedetto Platti (1692 or 1697–1763) Six Flute Sonatas, Op. 3

In 1743, Sei Sonate a Flauto Traversiere Solo con Violoncello overo Cembalo by Giovanni Platti was published by Johann Ulrich Haffner in Nürnberg. It is a magnificent edition dedicated to "Pietro Filippo di Krufft of Cologne, a dilettante flautist".

Little is known about Krufft, but it is of interest that Platti uses the word 'dilettante' about him in his dedication. It is the first time this concept is used in the German-speaking world. It was a widespread designation in Italy at the time, of musicians or other artists who were not dependent on their art to support themselves – mostly noblemen. Tomaso Albinoni referred to himself as a dilettante, as did Alessandro and Benedetto Marcello. They were all highly respected artists in the Venetian musical arena from which Platti emerged. One can assume therefore that Krufft was a highly competent flautist.

Giovanni Benedetto Platti was born in Padua or Venice in 1692 or 1697. He was musically educated in Venice. His teachers were most probably Francesco Gasparini, Vivaldi, Lotti and indeed Albinoni and the Marcello brothers. There is no significant information about his life before he came to Würzburg in 1722 together with a group of Italian musicians. Johann Philipp Franz von Schönborn who was Prince-Bishop of Bamberg and Würzburg was deeply preoccupied with Italian music and wanted to expand the music at court. He employed a number of foreign musicians, mostly Italians. Together with Platti six further Italian musicians were employed in 1722. After the sudden death of the Prince-Bishop in 1724, conditions for the musicians at court deteriorated. The number of musicians was considerably reduced, and only two of the Italian musicians could stay on. In 1723 Platti married the soprano Maria Theresia Lambrucker. She was also employed at court. When Friedrich Carl von Schönborn, brother of Johann Philipp, was elected new Prince-Bishop in 1729, conditions improved. Platti stayed in Würzburg until his death in 1763. His wife gave birth to at least ten children. She died in 1752.

Platti was "Oboist, Violinist und Tenorist". A list of the court musicians from 1730 shows that "Virtuos Platti" was the best paid musician, and continued to be so, despite changes of monarch. He earned twice as much as the "Kapellmeister". Platti's position at court was unique. He was involved in chamber and church music and served as oboist and violinist. Later on he was assigned other tasks, including pedagogical ones. In a decree of 1730 it is stated that he was to teach Johanna Wolf (daughter of the Dance Master), the castrato Busch, and (after Busch's disappointing lack of development) the soprano Vogel. In a record from 1757 it is mentioned that two military band musicians were to stay at court in order to follow Platti's tuition. He was thus also supposed to teach oboists.

Platti was no doubt a virtuoso. Whether he was also a flute virtuoso has not as yet been ascertained. There is no document from his time in Würzburg recording him as a flautist. It might have been a matter of course for an oboist also to play the flute, but when Platti left Italy, the new, modern "Flauto Traverso" was still not widely known and rarely used there. In the list of musicians at the court of Würzburg a "Herr Caspar Tritt, Hoboist und Flautraversist" is included. In the same document Platti is referred to as "Herr Johann Platti, aus Venedig, Virtuos auf der Violine und Hoboe". Would a plausible conclusion be that the oboist Tritt played the flute while Platti did not? Platti's wife, Theresia Platti, is recorded as second on the list after the Kapellmeister. Husband and wife evidently had a prominent position in the court orchestra

As a composer Platti is renowned for his harpsichord sonatas, numerous pieces for cello and his church music. His work has distinct pre-classical features, associated with composers such as Haydn. His melodious imagination and lively, elegant style are apparent. His slightly anonymous existence in Würzburg obviously contributed to the fact that he never gained the recognition he deserves.

The flute sonatas show a marked virtuoso character. This is particularly true with regard to the last sonata, *No. 6 in G major*. In this sonata and in *No. 4* Platti wrote

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short solo cadenzas in the flute part, which did not become an established practice until much later. They are also very elegantly conceived, absolutely in accordance with Ouantz's directions in his bie "Versuch" a few years later.

The six sonatas for flute are fairly disparate. They constitute in many ways a development from baroque to classical style, and may have been composed over a longer period of time. *Numbers 4* and 6 have, as mentioned, distinct classical features. We play them at a higher pitch and on a slightly later flute, typical of the prevailing instruments at the end of Platti's career. We play the other sonatas at a lower pitch, which was common practice in the early 1700s. In this case we use a flute which Platti might have encountered on his arrival in Würzburg. This is a copy of a flute made by Denner in Nürnberg in approximately 1715.

We have chosen to use double bass and harpsichord in our performance. Platti's harpsichord sonatas are a great resource for the harpsichordist to gain idiomatic ideas for the realization of the figured bass. Therefore in the flute sonatas, with the double bass one extra octave beneath, the harpsichordist has greater freedom to execute these ideas on the full range of the keyboard. Sonata No. 4 is in A major and is in this respect in a very different tonal world from the others. We wanted to give it another distinct timbre, and this is why we play it on a clavichord. The clavichord was in general use at the time as a practice instrument, in solo sonatas and in ensemble playing.

In the final movement, Giga, of Sonata No. 3 in E minor, Platti repeatedly noted "tre:" in the solo flute part. Most probably it means tremolo, and is to be played in a kind of rhythmic vibrato. The term comes from a tremulant, a device in use in many organs from the 1500s onwards. At Platti's time the designation was often used in music for the clavichord. Platti also uses the term in his harpsichord sonatas, which implies that they were composed for, or can be played on, the clavichord. "Tre:" was generally used for long notes in slow movements. In the flute sonata Platti indicated the use of it in a lively, dramatic last movement. Conceivably it could mean "trill": in the harpsichord sonatas "tr" and "tre" are used randomly. Neither tremolo nor trill seemed convincing as a solution for this part of the flute sonata. We chose another solution for which there is no documentation in Ouantz's works or others. We know that there was a wide variety of instruments and a great deal of innovation at this time. The 'Toy Symphony' by Leopold Mozart is well known. In this piece of music a number of imaginative instruments are listed in the score. In the organs of the time, one finds similar items. In Casparini's famous Sonnenorgel in Görlitz the following effects are to be found, in addition to the ordinary organ stops: "Cymbelstern, Nachtigall, Vogel-Gesang, Tamburo 16", Kuckuck". We have taken the liberty of aiming for a similar effect

Paul Wåhlberg

Flutes made by Eugene Crijnen:

After Denner (c. 1715) a=390, Sonatas Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 After Grenser (c. 1750) a=415, Sonatas Nos. 4 and 6

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#### Paul Wåhlberg

Paul Wåhlberg teaches flute at the world's northernmost music academy in Tromsø, Norway, and lives in the tiny community of Godfjord. He was trained in Göteborg, Zürich and The Hague, and has since performed extensively, specializing in early instruments. He was one of the founders of the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra, which has been touring most of Europe. With this ensemble he has recorded music by Bach and the Norwegian eighteenth century composer Johan Henrik Freithoff. He also founded the group Musica Domestica which has appeared throughout Great Britain and Scandinavia.

### Knut Erik Sundquist

Knut Erik Sundquist was a member of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra for seven years and now performs regularly with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Claudio Abbado. He has performed with artists such as Leif Ove Andsnes and the Orion String Quartet. He also plays with Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt, Germany, a group performing important contemporary music. He plays double bass in the Norwegian Army Band in Harstad, Norway.

#### Hans Knut Sveen

Hans Knut Sveen is Associate Professor in Harpsichord and Early Music at the Grieg Academy in Bergen. He was educated as church musician (organist) and harpsichordist in Bergen and at the Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam. He is one of the founders and players of Bergen Barokk.



Paul Wåhlberg



Knut Erik Sundquist



Hans Knut Sveen

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Giovanni Benedetto Platti had his musical apprenticeship in Venice, where his teachers may have included older contemporaries such as Vivaldi. From 1722 until his death in 1763 he was employed at the episcopal court in Würzburg, described as an oboist and violinist, greatly respected for his virtuosity. His Flute Sonatas, presumably composed over a number of years, range from the late baroque to the early classical in style.

## Giovanni Benedetto **PLATTI**

(1692 or 1697-1763)

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Six Flute Sonatas, Op. 3			
Sonata No. 1 in D major	12:32	Sonata No. 4 in A major*	12:12
1 Adagio	2:50	13 Grave e cantabile	2:53
2 Allegro	2:48	14 Allegro	3:24
3 Andantino	3:41	15 Larghetto	2:45
4 Tempo di Minuet	3:09	16 Allegro moderato	3:07
Sonata No. 2 in G major	13:41	Sonata No. 5 in C major	9:08
5 Grave	2:11	17 Pastorale – Allegro	2:48
6 Allegro	4:15	18 Non tanto adagio	2:42
7 Largo	4:23	19 Allegro assai	3:36
8 Allegro molto	2:48	Sonata No. 6 in G major	16:05
Sonata No. 3 in E minor	14:26	20 Siciliana – Adagio	3:20
9 Allegro ma non molto	3:00	21 Allegro	4:07
10 Larghetto	4:34	22 Non tanto adagio ma cantabile 3:30	
11 Minuet	4:16	23 Arietta con Variazioni. Non tanto	
12 Giga	2:34	allegro	5:04

Paul Wåhlberg, flute • Knut Erik Sundquist, double bass Hans Knut Sveen, harpsichord and clavichord\*

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Flute

Sonatas