

THE ART OF ELEGANT CONVERSATION

Johann Joachim Quantz

(1697 - 1773)

Sei Duetti

(BERLIN, 1759)

ELYSIUM ENSEMBLE

ON PERIOD INSTRUMENTS

Greg Dikmans (flute)

Lucinda Moon (violin)



INTRODUCTION

This recording of duets by Johann Joachim Quantz is the first of a series to be produced as part of a Baroque Music Performance Research Project. The project was initiated in 2010 by the Elysium Ensemble's principals, Greg Dikmans and Lucinda Moon, and is being supported by the Early Music Studio at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Melbourne and by private and corporate sponsors.

The aim of the project is to identify neglected or newly discovered chamber music from the Baroque and early-Classical periods (1600–1800) with a view to bringing it to a wider audience through historically informed performances and recordings. An important aspect of the project is to dedicate time to experiment with, explore and reflect on the music in a way that is not often possible in the hectic life of professional music making.

In the first year of the project we decided to focus on Quantz's *Versuch* (1752), his famous treatise on 18th-century performance practice, applying his ideas to his *Sei Duetti* (1759). This was a treatise we had both studied when we began our journey into historically informed performance and it was very stimulating to revisit Quantz in the light of many years of performing experience. Edward R. Reilly (the translator of the treatise into English) was calling for exactly this sort of study at the time his translation was first published in 1966.

Quantz seems to be more often quoted than truly understood. Barthold Kuijken in his Introduction to a facsimile edition of Quantz's *Versuch* makes some pertinent observations that have inspired us in our work:

“Quantz says”, “According to Quantz, one should”, “In Quantz one can read” — how many times have these words been uttered by generations of performing artists, musicologists, teachers and students? And with what results? Is the *Versuch* ... really so important? Is Quantz really to be seen as the main authority of his time ... And finally: what kind of music do his directions apply to?

Whoever wants to go beyond simple quotations and catchwords has to ask himself these questions over and over again. But many answers are possible, since they depend on the level of one's own musical proficiency and evolution, and on one's knowledge of the historical circumstances.

Another inspiration for our ongoing work are the ideas presented in the following passage from *Quantz and his Versuch: Three Studies* (1971) by Edward R. Reilly:

Quantz most obviously differed from his immediate predecessors in his refusal to content himself with oversimplified generalizations that ignored the complexity of the process of giving life to music in performance. If we are fully to grasp what he has to say, we must first understand that he was the product of a certain time and place and the advocate of a certain style of performance and composition, but in addition we must also do him the justice of refusing to compromise his ideals either through over-simplification or through the creation of a musical dogma when none was intended. For beyond the details of musical execution, Quantz's work presents us with a view of the knowledge, sensitivity, and dedication needed to achieve musical artistry from which we still have much to learn.

Dialogue: a discussion between two or more people, especially one directed toward exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem.

Baroque musicians and theorists saw many parallels between the Greek and Roman art of rhetoric (oratory) and music. According to ancient writers such as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, orators employed rhetorical means to control and direct the emotions of their audiences and so persuade and move them. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Marin Mersenne in *Harmonie universelle* (1636) describing musicians as ‘harmonic orators’.

In his famous treatise on performance practice, Johann Joachim Quantz stresses the importance of an understanding of the art of rhetoric (oratory) in the very first paragraph of Chapter XI — ‘Of Good Execution in General in Singing and Playing’:

Musical execution [the manner of performance] may be compared with the delivery of an orator. The orator and the musician have, at bottom, the same aim in regard to both the preparation and the final execution of their productions, namely to make themselves masters of the hearts of their listeners, to arouse or still their passions, and to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that. Thus it is advantageous to both, if each has some knowledge of the duties of the other.

Rhetoric is the art of discourse and communication, of speaking with elegance and eloquence. According to Aristotle there are three equally important elements in oratory: the speech itself (in music this is the piece being performed),

the speaker (the performers) and the audience. The audience plays an important role and can influence a live performance in a very real way. Direct communication with an audience was the primary motivation of most music from the 17th and 18th centuries.

In much 18th-century chamber music the melodic lines (which sometimes included the bass line) interact in a continuous musical dialogue, which was sometimes described as a *conversation galante* (courteous conversation). This is particularly true in Quantz’s *Sei Duetti*. On the surface this music can be enjoyed for its charm and beauty, but a deeper appreciation is achieved when listened to attentively, following closely the various musical ideas as they are presented and developed.



JOHANN JOACHIM QUANTZ (1697–1773)

Quantz was a performer, composer, teacher, writer on music and instrument maker, and one of the most famous musicians of his day. His autobiography, published in F.W. Marburg's *Historisch-kritische Beyträge* (1754–5), is the principal source of information on his life. It briefly describes his early years and then focuses on his activities in Dresden (1716–41), his Grand Tour (1724–27) and his work at the court of Frederick the Great in Berlin and Potsdam (from 1741).

Quantz was born in the village Oberscheden in the province of Hannover on 30 January 1697. His father was a blacksmith. At the age of 11, after being orphaned, he began an apprenticeship (1708–13) with his uncle Justus Quantz, a town musician in Merseburg. Quantz writes:

I wanted to be nothing but a musician. In August ... I went to Merseburg to begin my apprenticeship with the former town-musician, Justus Quantz. ... The first instrument which I had to learn was the violin, for which I also seemed to have the greatest liking and ability. Thereon followed the oboe and the trumpet. During my years as an apprentice I worked hardest on these three instruments.

While still an apprentice Quantz also arranged to have keyboard lessons:

Due to my own choosing, I took some lessons at this time on the clavier, which I was not required to learn, from a relative of mine, the organist Kiesewetter. Through his instruction I laid the first groundwork for understanding harmony, and probably first received the desire to learn composition.



At the completion of his apprenticeship Quantz was proficient on most of the principal string instruments, the oboe and trumpet. He hoped to get a position in Dresden or Berlin as 'I believed I could hear much more beautiful music there, and learn much more, than I could in Merseburg.'

In 1714 he had the opportunity to go to Pirna to fill in for a sick journeyman under the direction of town-musician Schalle.

During this period in Pirna I saw Vivaldi's violin concertos for the first time. As they represented a completely new way of composing music they impressed me not a little. I did not fail to supply myself with quite a number of them. The splendid ritornellos of Vivaldi served as excellent examples in the future.

Quantz accepted an invitation to join the town band in Dresden, one of the most important artistic centres in Europe, in March 1716, thus fulfilling the hope he had expressed at the completion of his apprenticeship. He makes some telling observations:

Here [in Dresden] I soon became aware that the mere playing of the notes as set down by the composer was far from being the greatest merit of a musician.

The Royal Orchestra was in full bloom already at this time. It distinguished itself from many other orchestras by its French smoothness of performance, as introduced by the concertmaster at that time, Volumier; just as it later, under the direction of its concertmaster, Herr Pisendel, who introduced a mixed style, achieved a finesse of performance which I have never heard bettered in all my travels. At this time it boasted of various famous instrumentalists such as: Pisendel and Veracini on the violin, Pantaleon Hebenstreit on the

Pantalon [hammered dulcimer], Sylvius Leopold Weiss on the lute and theorbo, Richter on the oboe, Buffardin on the transverse flute, not to speak of the good violoncellists, bassoonists, horn players, and bass violinists. When listening to these famous people I was greatly amazed, and my zeal for continuing musical studies was doubled. I wanted to prepare myself so that in time I too could become a fair member of this excellent company.

Quantz spent part of 1717 studying counterpoint with J.D. Zelenka and in 1718, at the age of 21, was appointed oboist in the newly formed Dresden Polish Chapel of August II, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland.

In March of the year 1718 the so-called Polish Kapelle, which was to consist of 12 members, was established. Since 11 members had already been hired and an oboist was still lacking I was proposed for the job, and after a successful test before the director of the Kapelle, Baron von Seyferitz, I was accepted.

When it became clear that there would be little opportunity for advancement as an oboist in the Polish Chapel, Quantz decided to devote himself seriously to the flute and in 1719 studied briefly with the famous French flute player Buffardin, principal flute in the Royal Orchestra.

Here I reached a turning point, affecting both my previous way of life and my main lifework. The violin, which until now had been my principal instrument, I now exchanged for the oboe. However, I was prevented by my colleagues, who had had longer experience, from excelling on either instrument, which I wanted to very much to do. My chagrin over this caused me to take up seriously the transverse flute, which until then I had practiced only for my own pleasure. On this instrument I did not have to fear any special resistance from my colleagues, particularly since the previous flautist,

Friese, who had no great inclination toward music, willingly allowed me to take the chair of the first flautist [in the Polish Chapel]. For about 4 months I took instruction from the famous flautist Buffardin in order to learn the peculiarities of this instrument. We played nothing but fast pieces, for this was the “forte” of my master.

Quantz became an intimate friend of J.G. Pisendel, the concertmaster of the Royal Orchestra, who greatly influenced his development as a performer and composer.

I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of Herr Pisendel, the great, skillful violin virtuoso and Royal Concertmaster after Volumier's death. This acquaintance, by and by, grew into an intimate friendship on both sides which to my great pleasure is still continuing until this day. From him ... I have learned to perform not only an adagio [slow movements], which he played in an extremely touching way, but also, insofar as the interpretation of movements and the performance of music in general is concerned, I have learned most from him. He encouraged me to make further attempts in the field of composition.

Between 1724 and 1727 Quantz was able to complete his education with a Grand Tour, travelling and studying in Italy, France and England. He studied counterpoint with Gasparini in Rome, a skill that he would later put to good use in his *Sei Duetti*.

I began to take instruction from Francesco Gasparini, a 72 year old kind and honest man, who was not only a learned contrapuntist but also an agreeable lucid opera composer of his time. He taught me the principles of counterpoint. Since I already had some knowledge of composition and did not lack in industry, I reached, within the space of six months, the point

where my master did not consider it necessary to give me further lessons. ... Furthermore, he offered to correct anything that I might compose during my stay in Rome without a fee. A rare example among the Italians!

On a visit to Naples in 1725 Quantz met Alessandro Scarlatti:

The first church composer in Naples was the Oberkapellmeister and Knight, Alessandro Scarlatti. ... I heard Scarlatti play on the clavicembalo, which he knew how to play in a learned way although he did not possess as much finesse as his son [Domenico Scarlatti]. After this he accompanied me in a solo. I had the good fortune to win his favour, in fact so much that he composed a few flute solos for me. He introduced me at various distinguished houses and even wanted to obtain for me a position in the Portuguese service with a substantial salary, but I considered it wise to decline.

From August 1726 to March 1727 Quantz visited Paris where he heard many performances. '[T]he French style was not unknown to me and I did like their manner of playing very much', however he did not enjoy the French vocal style. He was also unimpressed by the opera orchestra, but enjoyed the solo performances of many instrumentalists, among them the flautist Michel Blavet, who for a time taught Prince Frederick before he became king of Prussia.

However, outside of the orchestra, there was no lack of good instrumentalists. Fortcroix and Roland Marais were good gambists. The first had a great deal of skill, but the latter had more neatness and pleasantness in his playing. Guigon and Battiste were good violinists. The former played in the Italian, the latter in the French style. Blavet, Lucas, the two brothers Braun, Naudot, and several others played the transverse flute. Among them Blavet was the best. His helpfulness and good way of living caused us to become friends,

and I must praise him for the many kindnesses which he showed me in various ways. Also, there was no lack of good organists, clavier players, and violoncellists.

After a ten-week visit to England, where he met Handel, Quantz returned to Dresden on 23 July 1727.

Now I reflected on all the good and bad music that I had heard on my journey. I found that I had gathered quite a store of ideas, but that it would be necessary to put them in proper order. In every place in which I had stopped I had composed something, imitating the style prevalent there. But, I also thought about the merit which the original has over the imitation. Thus I began to direct my greatest efforts toward the goal of forming a personal style so that possibly I too could become an originator in music. However, it would take thought, experience, and time to achieve this. Thus, whereas formerly a composition might be finished in an hour, I now allowed myself a day's time, being only too sure that the first ideas might be successful, but that they are, if not always the worst, certainly not always the best. That, in fact, a fine sensitivity and mature judgment are necessary to purify them and bring them into their proper relationship to one another, so that a piece will be popular not only for a short time and fleetingly, but, if possible, always.

As well as being a wonderful learning experience, the three-year Grand Tour established Quantz's reputation outside Germany, paving the way for the future international dissemination of his music and writings.

Within a year of returning to Dresden Quantz was promoted to the Dresden Court Chapel (Saxon Kapelle), thus recognising his status as one of the outstanding performers in Dresden.

Up to this time I had been oboist and flautist in the Polish Kapelle ... However, during my journey, my place had been given to another, and I was transferred to the Saxon Kapelle. This happened in the month of March in the year 1728 ... From this time on I abandoned the oboe completely, because its embouchure is different from the flute, and remained solely with the transverse flute.

In May 1728 Quantz accompanied Augustus II (King of Poland) on a state visit to Berlin. He made a particularly deep impression on Prince Frederick and thereafter returned to the Prussian court twice a year to teach him the flute.

After I had the honour of allowing myself to be heard several times before Her Majesty, the Queen [of Prussia], I was offered a position by Her Highness for 800 thalers a year. I was ready to accept, but the King [of Poland], my master, would not agree. However, I did receive permission to go to Berlin as often as I was asked for.

In the same year, 1728, the Crown Prince of Prussia [Frederick II] ... decided to study the transverse flute and I had the honour of teaching His Highness. For this reason I had to go to Berlin, Ruppin or Reinsberg twice every year.

Until 1741 Quantz was involved in the active musical life of the Saxon court in Dresden. In 1734 he published his Opus 1 consisting of 6 sonatas for flute and continuo. He married in 1737 and in 1739 started making flutes.

Because of the lack of good flutes, I began in the year 1739 to drill and tune some myself, which practice never did me any harm.

Frederick II became King of Prussia in 1740 and Quantz finally accepted a position at the court in Berlin.

In November 1741 I was called by His Majesty of Prussia to Berlin for the last time, and offered a position by His Highness with such favourable conditions that I could no longer refuse to accept: two thousand thalers a year for life [a previously unheard of sum], plus a special payment for my compositions, a hundred Dukaten for each flute that I would construct, the privilege of not having to play in the orchestra, but only in the Royal chamber music, and not having to take orders from anyone but the King. ... Thus I left Dresden in December 1741, since I began to serve in the Royal Prussian Service at that time.

Quantz stayed in Berlin for the remainder of his career. His duties centred on the supervision of the king's private evening concerts, for which he wrote new works and at which he alone had the privilege of criticising Frederick's playing. He died in Potsdam on 12 July 1773.

Only a few compositions were published during Quantz's time in Berlin, most notably the *Sei duetti*, op. 2 (Berlin, 1759). His most significant contribution to music literature is his treatise *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752). The majority of Quantz's output awaits publication and exact dating. He wrote many solo sonatas, trio sonatas (mostly dating from the Dresden period) and concertos.



The English translation of Quantz's autobiography is published in P. Nettl: *Forgotten Musicians* (New York, 1951).

QUANTZ'S **VERSUCH** AND HISTORICALLY INFORMED PERFORMANCE

Three important and influential treatises dealing with performance practice were published in the middle of the 18th century:

- Johann Joachim Quantz's *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (*Essay of a Method for Playing the Transverse Flute*), published in Berlin in 1752;
- Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (*Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*), also published in Berlin: Part 1 in 1753 and Part 2 in 1762; and
- Leopold Mozart's *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (*Essay of a Thoroughgoing Violin School*) published in Augsburg in 1756.

By studying these treatises, which complement each other beautifully, we can form a detailed picture of musical taste and performance practice in 18th-century Europe.

Quantz's *Versuch* is so much more than an instruction book for learning the flute. Only five of its 18 chapters concern the flute exclusively. The rest of the treatise deals with all aspects of performance practice in a way that is not only more comprehensive but also more concrete than ever before. It expounds one musician's ideas on how to become a complete 18th-century musician.

Those of us interested in historically informed performance are indebted to the pioneering work of Edward R. Reilly who published a complete English

translation (with introduction and notes) of Quantz's *Versuch* in 1966, as well as several scholarly studies relating to Quantz and his works. A second edition of Reilly's translation appeared in 2001 and a Kindle ebook edition in 2011.

Reilly notes that the *Versuch* is divided into three separate but closely related treatises. The first 16 chapters deal with the education of the solo musician and include the rudiments of flute playing. But they also include information of general interest: the basic forms of ornamentation, how to practice, how to develop the ability to recognise and convey the character of a piece of music, the various types of fast and slow pieces and their appropriate execution, dynamics, free ornamentation, cadenzas and performing in public.

Chapter 17 — 'Of the Duties of Those Who Accompany' — takes up approximately one third of the book and includes information about tempo markings, intonation, problems of balance, the size and arrangement of an ensemble and the duties of the leader of an orchestra, the ripieno violinists, the viola players, the cellists and double bass players and the keyboard player.

The final chapter — 'How a Musician and a Musical Composition Are to Be Judged' — includes descriptions of most of the principal types of composition of the time, especially those favoured in the courts of central and northern Germany. It also compares and evaluates the Italian, French and German styles of performance and composition.

A reading of the *Versuch* makes it clear that Quantz was a first-rate musician. Howard Mayer Brown, in a review of Reilly's translation, notes that:

Quantz's musicianly qualities are manifest on every page of his work, for he tries to do much more than merely instruct the beginner in the rudiments

of playing. Instead, he does really try to capture in prose those qualities that make up a sensitive performer. ... [T]he work is especially fascinating ... for the insights it gives us into the sorts of musical problems faced by 18th-century musicians, which turn out to be, not so surprisingly, the very same problems that face musicians today, and probably also at all other times: how to play in tune, how to play expressively, and how to phrase beautifully and with good taste.



QUANTZ'S SEI DUETTI

The *Sei Duetti a due flauti traversi* (Berlin, 1759) are historically significant and engaging compositions that deserve to be heard by a wider audience. They also provide excellent material to work with when studying Quantz's *Versuch*. Published seven years after the *Versuch*, it is clear that Quantz considered the edition, including its lengthy Preface, to be a supplement to the *Versuch*. For this reason Barthold Kuijken includes a facsimile of the Preface in the facsimile edition of the treatise published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1983.

Quantz does not discuss duets in any depth in the *Versuch*, but he does stress the advantages of practicing 'well-elaborated' (i.e. contrapuntal) duets. As Edward R. Reilly has noted, in the Preface to the *Sei Duetti* 'the various characteristics of "good" duets are outlined along exactly the same lines found in Quantz's descriptions of musical forms in the *Versuch*. ... The passage might be inserted unaltered between the discussion of trios ... and that of solos.'

Reilly includes an English translation of the Preface in 'Further Musical Examples for Quantz's *Versuch*' (JAMS, 1964) and makes some interesting observations about the *Sei Duetti*:

Stylistically, the six duets ... provide excellent examples of the composer's intermediate position between the Baroque and Classical eras. They afford the performer and scholar an opportunity to test the author's precepts in an appropriate context. As a composer Quantz certainly cannot be classed among the great, but he does display a high level of craftsmanship, and his works frequently come alive in actual performance in a way one would hardly





expect from simply analyzing the printed page. They clearly illustrate the qualities and defects of much mid-18th-century music, and how dependent such music is on certain basic elements of performance. Re-created with the clarity of phrasing, dynamic variety, and in fast movements the briskness which Quantz demands, the duets become elegant, light, and tender. Performed too slowly and clumsily, they are merely tedious.

Having performed these duets many times in concerts and for this recording, we now think the music is probably better than Reilly is suggesting. He is correct that they come alive in actual performance and Quantz's ideas on performance practice make a big difference. The slow movements in particular are often very expressive. Reading the *Versuch* confirms Quantz's strong expressive intentions in performance.

We have been gratified by the positive responses from our audiences. These types of duets are quite different to other forms of Baroque chamber music and fit in well with the idea of 'elegant conversation'. Quantz says that duets have 'certain merits peculiar to themselves' and describes them as 'an elaborate music written in contrapuntal or imitative style.' There are many beauties to be discovered when listened to attentively.

INSTRUMENTATION

While the title page of the *Sei Duetti* states they are for two flutes, in the Preface Quantz says they can be performed on other instruments such as on a flute and a muted violin, as well as other combinations of matched instruments (two violins, two oboes etc). He goes on to say: 'In general, duets as well as trios produce a better and more intelligible effect on two instruments of different types than upon instruments of the same kind.' So the combination of flute and muted violin seems to be a preferred option.



ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

Baroque flute: G.A. Rottenburgh — mid 18th century (Rudolf Tutz, Innsbruck)

Baroque violin: presumed Italian (c. 1700)

Baroque bow: 18th century 'Sonata' bow (Michelle Speller, Vancouver)

Pitch: A = 413 Hz

ABOUT THE RECORDING

The CD was recorded in the crystal clear and resonant acoustic of The Salon at the Melbourne Recital Centre, Australia from 10–13 October 2011. The natural acoustic of the space shines through (no artificial reverb has been added).

The original recording was made at 176.4kHz/24bit using Sonodore microphones and preamplifiers and monitored on Lipinski loudspeakers.

Recording and post-production by Thomas Grubb (www.manomusica.com)

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Portrait of Johann Joachim Quantz: Unknown 18th-century artist (Schloß Fasanerie bei Fulda; Kurhessische Hausstiftung)

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DUETTO I IN G MAJOR

- 1 *Allegro* 6:43
- 2 *Larghetto* 2:29
- 3 *Presto* 2:01

DUETTO II IN A MINOR

- 4 *Allegro assai* 4:19
- 5 *Andantino* 3:53
- 6 *Presto* 2:18

DUETTO III IN B MINOR

- 7 *Allegro* 3:09
- 8 *Larghetto, alla Siciliana* 4:30
- 9 *in Tempo di Minuetto*
ma Grazioso 4:22

DUETTO IV IN C MAJOR

- 10 *Allegro* 3:51
- 11 *Affettuoso* 2:59
- 12 *Presto* 3:50

DUETTO V IN D MAJOR

- 13 *Allegro* 4:07
- 14 *Mesto* 3:38
- 15 *Allegro di molto* 5:05

DUETTO VI IN E MINOR

- 16 *Grave* 1:36
- 17 *Allabreve, ma Presto* 2:24
- 18 *Cantabile* 3:16
- 19 *Più tosto Vivace* —
Canone infinito 2:35

