

# Tartini

**Devil's Trill Sonata**

**Violin Concertos**

**D12, D51, D80, D115**



**David Oistrakh**  
**Gordan Nikolitch**

*alto*

# Giuseppe Tartini

## ***Violin Concerto in C Major, D12***

1	I. Allegro	5:10
2	II. Andante 'Felice età dell'oro'	3:36
3	III. Allegro assai	4:27
4	IV. Appendix. Grave secondo - Andante larghetto 'Misero pergoletto'	3:29

## ***Violin Concerto in A Minor, D115***

5	I. Andante cantabile - Allegro assai	4:59
6	II. Andante cantabile	4:58
7	III. Presto	4:54

## ***Violin Concerto in G Major, D80***

8	I. Allegro non presto	5:50
9	II. Andante	4:10
10	III. Allegro assai	3:04
11	IV. Appendix. Grave	4:05

## ***Violin Concerto in A Minor, D115***

12	I. Allegro (moderato)	5:40
13	II. Adagio 'Tortorella bacie'	2:56
14	III. Allegro (con brio)	4:14

**Gordan Nikolitch, violin**

**Orchestre d'Auvergne • Arie van Beek, conductor**

## ***Violin Sonata in G Minor, B.g5 "Devil's Trill"***

15	I. Larghetto affettuoso - Allegro	6:51
16	II. Grave - Allegro assai - Grave - Allegro assai - Grave	4:52
17	III. Allegro assai - Adagio	3:28

**David Oistrakh, violin**

**Vladimir Yampolsky, piano**

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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Giuseppe Tartini was born in Pirano (now Piran in Slovenia) in 1692 where his father managed the local salt mills. His education pointed towards a career in the Church, however the young Tartini had other ideas. When he was sixteen he travelled to Padua where he studied law. His studies were interrupted when he was forced to leave Padua, having married outside his family's wishes. For a number of years he was given refuge in a Franciscan order in Assisi, and it was during this time that he taught himself the violin. Following the death of his protector he was able to support himself playing the violin and it is known that in 1714 he was playing at the opera house in Ancona. Although details of his early life are sketchy it is documented that between 1717 and 1721 he spent time as a peripatetic violinist in various churches, opera houses and schools in the area around Venice.

By 1721 his reputation was such that he was invited to become the first violinist at S Antonio in Padua without having to pass the required examination. He was also given leave to travel to other areas in Italy whilst in post. This special permission proved useful two years later when he was able to travel to Prague in order to perform at the coronation of Emperor Charles VI of Bohemia. From his early years Tartini had been something of a hothead (as well as an excellent fencer) and this visit to Prague apparently coincided with a scandal in which Tartini was accused of fathering a local innkeeper's child! However it is known that three years later he was back in Padua where he was soon to open an internationally recognised violin school, probably the first of its kind. This academy proved to be highly influential: many of his students (who generally remained for a couple of years) went on to teach, perform and compose throughout Europe. Tartini was also friendly with other experienced teachers such as Padre Martini whose own school in Bologna acted as a magnet for many composers.

Despite tempting offers from elsewhere in Europe, Tartini maintained his base in Padua until his death in 1770. He did however make short visits to other Italian cities as a virtuoso performer until c1740 when his career was foreshortened by a stroke which left him partially paralysed.

In later years Tartini published various treatises which expanded on his teaching theory, performing styles, harmony, philosophy and



mathematics. Much of this was unintelligible to his intended audience (which did not however prevent Leopold Mozart and others from plagiarising his work) and his dense prose was heavily criticised. Rousseau however acknowledged Tartini's theories to support his own work. Many of Tartini's innovations and theories stemmed from his early days in Assisi, and perhaps the most important of these theories is that of the 'resultant' tone. The 'resultant' tone can be heard when two loud notes are played together, and two other tones can also be heard: a low one (known as the difference tone, so called because it corresponds to the difference between the two vibration numbers) and a higher, much fainter one (the summation tone which corresponds to the sum of the vibration numbers). Another innovation of Tartini's came about because he wished his students to imitate the phrasing and expression of a singer, and so he introduced the longer bow to help them in phrasing.

Although he played in opera house orchestras and lived at a time when a successful musical career could generally only be achieved by writing for the stage, Tartini showed no inclination to compose operas. The vast majority of works by this hugely prolific composer were either concertos for violin (c135) or string sonatas (c200). However as his violin teaching demonstrated, he did have an interest in the human voice and he left a handful of religious works. An awareness of opera and song can be seen in two other aspects of his work: firstly, many of his slow movements are based upon the folk tunes he remembered from his childhood in Slovenia; and secondly, a number of movements are headed by inscriptions taken from opera libretti by Metastasio (Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, 1698-1782), the foremost librettist of the day), presumed designed to convey the required mood or emotion to the players. For example the *C major Concerto (D12)*, has two slow movements, one contains the following inscription from Metastasio's *Demofonte* (set by Jommelli in 1743) above its first slow movement 'Felice età dell'oro / Bella innocenza antica / Quando al piacer nemica / Non era la virtù' (O happy golden time of lovely innocence when happiness and virtue were always together). An alternative slow movement included here uses another quotation from *Demofonte* 'Misero pargoletto' (Wretched child). This was another distinctive Tartini hallmark, the provision of an alternative slow movement, one of which the composer might eventually regard as definitive. Sometimes, Tartini would provide a poetic motto in a secret code and mainly drawn from Metastasio and Tasso. The *G major*

*Concerto D80* here also has an 'alternative' movement.

Tartini's works quickly went out of fashion after his death in 1770 and it is only due to the unstinting work of the 20th century musicologist Minos Dounias that we are aware of the extent of Tartini's *oeuvres*. Dounias has catalogued Tartini's music, not in chronological order (for as more music is discovered it would lead to untold confusion!) but according to their keys. It is possible to get some idea as to the composition date of some concertos from their publication date, the *Concerto in D major D15* for instance was included in a collection published by Le Cene of Amsterdam in 1728. Tartini's music also underwent stylistic changes and in this way we are able to place certain works within an 'early' period (up to 1735, at which time his works were more demanding for the soloist, and included cadenzas, which Tartini called 'Capriccios'), the 'middle' period (1735-50, at which time Tartini turned to a more elegant compositional style) and the 'late' period (after 1750, when Tartini was engaged in his theoretical writing and at which time his music became similarly inward-looking). In that way it can be said with some certainty that the D15 for example, would be an early work, whereas D12, 51 and D80 (all included here) belong to the middle period and D115 is from the final period.

Tartini once dreamt that he had bargained his soul with the devil. As he later recounted to J G de Lalande (*Voyage d'un François en Italie* 1769) he was initially delighted to have such a 'novel servant'. Handing the devil his own instrument, Tartini heard him play 'a sonata so unusual and so beautiful performed with such mastery and intelligence, on a level I had never before conceived was possible! I was so enraptured and overcome that I stopped breathing and awoke gasping. Immediately I seized my violin, hoping to recall some shred of what I had just heard – but in vain. The piece I then composed, the ***Devil's Sonata***, is without doubt my best, but it falls so far short of the one that stunned me that I would have smashed my violin and given up music forever if I could but possess it'.

One can perfectly understand that Tartini found this experience exhilarating as the resulting work, even if 'far short of the one that stunned', is itself of exceptional difficulty. The work is in three movements, the first of which is based upon a simple melody and gives little indication of the fireworks to come; the second movement is rather more intricate whilst the finale subtitled 'Sogni dell'autore' (the

author's dreams) contains the hair-raising passages that give the sonata its name in which the player's left hand is required to carry two parts simultaneously. Although known during Tartini's lifetime, it was only published complete as part of a collection *L'art du violon* by J B Cartier in 1798. Its route to publication was circuitous, having come to Cartier from Tartini's pupil Pietro Nardini by way of Nardini's student Pierre Baillot. De Lalande dates the sonata as early as 1713, but experts consider this unlikely, placing it instead from the late 1740s. Post-Tartini, tales of diabolical violinists excited later audiences: Paganini, aided by his cadaverous appearance, was widely believed to be possessed; an E T A Hoffmann heroine sings herself to death egged on by a demonic violinist and Pugnani's ballet *Le violon du diable* (1849) concerns a violinist who enlists the help of Satan in winning his sweetheart.

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## NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

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**Gordan Nikolitch** was born in 1968 in the former Yugoslavia. He studied with Jean-Jacques Kantorow at the Basel Academy of Music in Switzerland and became leader first of the **Orchestre d'Auvergne** (which despite its name is a chamber orchestra made up of soloists from all over the world) and then of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Nikolitch is a Professor at the Royal College of Music and also at Guildhall School of Music and Drama and is leader of the London Symphony Orchestra as well as Artistic Director of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. In these recordings he plays an instrument made by Lorenzo Storioni of Cremona (1794). His usual violin is one made by Giuseppe Guarneri. The conductor **Arie van Beek**, who was appointed Musical Director of the **Orchestre d'Auvergne** in 1994, was born in 1951 and studied with Edo de Waart and percussion with David Porcelijn at the Rotterdam Conservatory, where he now teaches. His repertoire ranges from the baroque to 20th century and includes opera and ballet.

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