

Andrew Benson-Wilson : Early Music Reviews +

Partimenti Napoletani

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Partimenti Napoletani

Music for Keyboard Instruments by Paisiello, Durante & Dol

Nicoleta Paraschivescu

with Katharina Heutjer, violin

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 19075896222. 54'06



Although this recording would make a very acceptable recital of music for harpsichord and organ (and occasional violin) there is far more to it than that. In fact, unless you already know what a *partimento* is, I suggest you have a listen before you read any more, because what I am about to reveal might surprise you, given the nature of the music you will hear. You can find extracts of all the pieces [here](https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/8497471--partimenti-napoletani-music-for-keyboard-instruments-by-paisiello-durante-dol) (<https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/8497471--partimenti-napoletani-music-for-keyboard-instruments-by-paisiello-durante-dol>), but I particularly recommend the first and the fifth one on the list – Paisiello's *Partimento* in D and Durante's *Intavolatura* in A minor.

If you took my advice and listened before reading on, and are wondering what I am going on about, there is a clue in the video [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGojeGmKUv8) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGojeGmKUv8>) (Paisiello's *Partimento* Fugue in D) where, from 55 seconds in, you can follow the score of the piece being played. Incidentally, it is performed by [Nicoleta Paraschivescu](https://nicoletaparaschivescu.com/) (<https://nicoletaparaschivescu.com/>) on one of the most famous historic organs in the world. The score only has the bass line, together with a few obscure looking markings. *Partimento* is a method of using the Baroque concept of continuo (figured) bass for teaching purposes. It started in Naples in the late 17th and spread throughout Italy and beyond up to the 19th century. Rather than using the bass line to create a continuo accompaniment, *partimento* required students to compose complete pieces from just the given bass line.

For this recording, Nicoleta Paraschivescu has created her own realisations of *partimenti* from the 1782 *Regole per bene accompagnare il Partimento* by Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816), together with examples by his teacher Francesco Durante (1684–1755) and one by Giuseppe Dol (d1774). The results are a fascinating sequence of short pieces in the wide range of styles represented by the *partimento* technique, ranging from symphonies, overtures, concertos, arias and cavatinas, sicilianos and fugues.

Two Paisiello pieces are included, *La Partenza* and a Rondo, with a violin, played Katharina Heutjer. In the first, the harpsichord is the dominant instrument, in the Ronda the violin takes precedence. The harpsichord is a copy by Keith Hill of a 1735 Blanchet instrument, and was recorded in the attractively resonant acoustic of the Großer Saal of the Musik-Akademie Basel in Switzerland. Four of the pieces are played on the magnificent 1761 Gottfried Silbermann organ in Arlesheim Cathedral, a few miles south of Basel. The performances are excellent, the music varied and entertaining, even without the musicological interest of a lost teaching practice. A few of the pieces are in rare surviving contemporary realisations of *partimenti*. The music is in the style expected from the dates of the composers, generally representing the period of change from Baroque to early Classical. They range from less than a minute to around 5 minutes in length.

Detailed information is given in the programme booklet [here](http://partimenti.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Paraschivescu_Paisiello_digital-1.pdf) (http://partimenti.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Paraschivescu_Paisiello_digital-1.pdf) in German, English and French and there is more information, including scores, to be found [here](http://partimenti.ch/) (<http://partimenti.ch/>). There is a video introduction [here](http://partimenti.ch/2018/01/05/paisiello/) (<http://partimenti.ch/2018/01/05/paisiello/>).

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