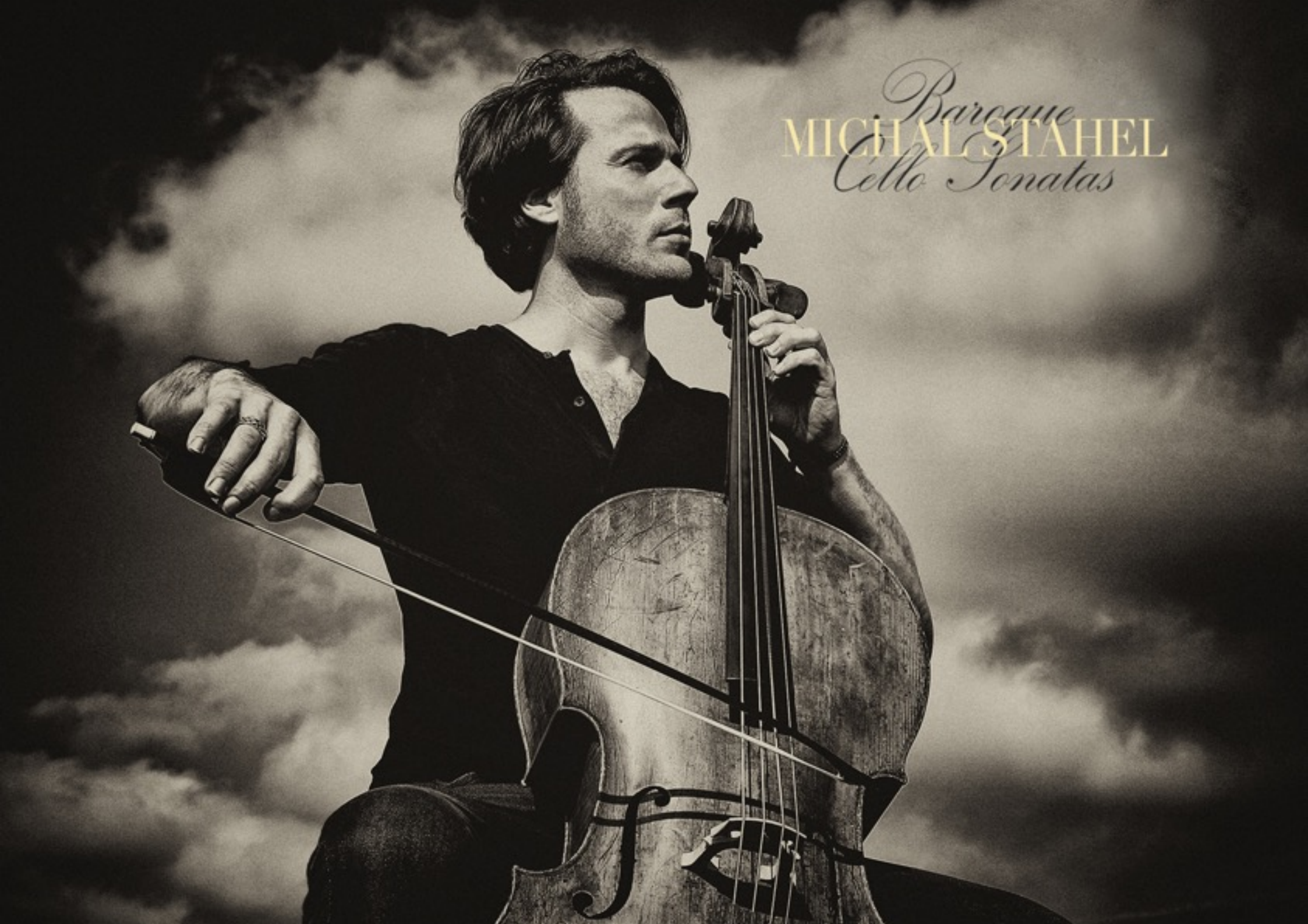
Baroque
MICHAL STÄHEL
Cello Sonatas

ANTONIO MARIA BONONCINI (1677-1726)

Sonata a Violoncello Solo in G major*

1 Largo 2:04
2 Allegro 1:45
3 Adagio 1:26
4 Sarabanda 1:47

Sinfonia per camera in c minor*

5 Cantabile 4:13
6 Spiritoso 2:11
7 Affetuoso 1:22

ANTONIO CALDARA (1670-1736)

Sinfonia à Violoncello Solo in D major

8 Adagio 2:41
9 Allegro 2:21
10 Grave 1:41
11 Presto 1:21

Sonata for Violoncello and Basso continuo, no. 4 in d minor

12 Allegro 2:24
13 Largo 4:12
14 Allegro assai 3:36

NICOLA PORPORA (1686-1768)

Sonata for Violoncello and Basso continuo in F major

15 Larghetto 1:24
16 Allegro 1:56
17 Adagio 1:48
18 Allegro non presto 2:33

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Sonata for Violoncello and Basso continuo, RV 44 in a minor

19 Largo 2:58
20 Allegro poco 2:37
21 Largo 3:08
22 Allegro 2:24

FRANCESCO PAOLO SUPRIANO (SCIPRIANI) (1678-1753)

Sinfonia di Violoncello a Solo in C major*

23 Amoroso 1:49
24 Allegro assai 1:26
25 Larghetto 1:26
26 Presto 1:12

FRANCESCO ALBOREA (FRANCISCELLO) (1691-1739)

Sonata a Violoncello e Basso in D major*

27 Amoroso 2:33
28 Allegro 2:17
29 Menuet 2:08

Sonata a Violoncello e Basso in G major*

30 Adagio 1:52
31 Allegro 4:01
32 Adagio 1:00
33 Menuetto 2:10

* World première recordings

Total time 74:27

MICHAL STAHEL Baroque violoncello
Antony Posch, Vienna 1728 (Esterházy Privatstiftung), restored in the luthier studio of Gerlinde Reutterer in Vienna 2007-2009

MARTIN GEDEON Positive organ
(Esterháza Centre of Culture, Research and Festival)
JAN ČIŽMÁŘ Theorbo, Baroque Lute, Baroque guitar
SOMA DINYÉS Harpsichord

Recorded from 4 to 8 August 2014 in the chapel of the Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt, Austria.

To download the complete booklet in English, German and Slovak please visit www.pavlikrecords.sk/shop/michal-stahel-baroque-cello-sonatas-cd-audio

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Esterházy

We thank the Esterháza Centre of Culture, Research and Festival in Fertöd, Hungary, for the loan of their positive organ.

ESTERHÁZY-PALACE
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Vienna 1728

The Habsburgs, as rulers of large swaths of Europe stretching from today's Portugal and Spain to Flanders, parts of Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, and on to Croatia and regions of Italy including Sicily and Sardinia, viewed themselves as the bearers and patrons, and in fact as the epicenter, of European art and culture. They employed music as a tool with which to represent the imperial court's power and glory. While the French court, traditionally viewed as a rival, concentrated more on architecture, the Habsburgs supported music consistently and early on. Ferdinand I and Ferdinand II were the rulers who ultimately settled on Vienna as their imperial capital and residence. And as the nobility gravitated towards the court, the imperial administrative apparatus grew—as did the need for theaters and for the performance of concerts and operas. This went hand-in-hand with Vienna's dynamic economic and cultural development, and the city was to act as a magnet for artists and intellectuals from all over Europe until well into the 18th century. Several Habsburg Holy Roman Emperors were themselves passionate composers and musical performers: Ferdinand III., emperor from 1637 to 1657, was himself a composer, but little of his output has been preserved. His successor, Leopold I, had an opera house built—of wood—and composed both arias and entire operas. And Maria Theresia appeared at court as a singer, while Joseph II was an active chamber musician and an enthusiastic opera lover.

Music stood at the center of imperial representation, the general understanding of culture, and courtly life. And since

the Habsburgs hired well-known composers and musicians from all over Europe, musical life at the imperial court came to equal that of other centers such as Paris and London as early as the reign of Maximilian I. But with the coronation of Ferdinand II in 1619, Italian musicians—and the baroque style they brought with them—came quite clearly to the fore. Ferdinand's marriage to Eleonora Gonzaga, whose family had been important patrons and supporters of Claudio Monteverdi, provided a firm foundation for the relationship between Vienna and Italian music. In terms of musical life at the Viennese court during the first half of the 18th century, one must above all mention the Graz-native Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), who arrived in Vienna at the end of the 17th century and was quickly appointed *Hoff-Compositeur* [court composer] and, in 1715, Hofkapellmeister. Further important composers employed during the 18th century's first half by the imperial court music establishment (the Hofkapelle) included Attilio Ariosti, Carlo Agostino Badia, Giuseppe Bonno, Giovanni Bononcini, Antonio Caldara, Francesco Bartolomeo Conti, Giuseppe Porsile, Luca Antonio Predieri, and Marc'Antonio Ziani, who was Fux's direct predecessor as Hofkapellmeister.

Under Joseph I, Holy Roman Emperor from 1705 to 1711, as under his predecessors, there existed a veritable cultural „arms race" between Vienna and Paris. And the reign of Charles VI, his successor, saw the imperial Hofkapelle grow to number 300 musicians, its greatest size ever—with music's role as a vehicle of power growing commensurately. It was under Charles's rule and the conditions associated therewith that the cello used on the present recording first saw the light of day. In response to an order by the princely

Esterházy family, Antony Posch (1677–1742), the *Hoff-Lautenmacher* [court luthier], built this instrument at his Vienna workshop in 1728 for use at the Esterházys' court in Eisenstadt. Together with Johann Georg Thir (ca. 1710–1781), Johann Joseph Stadlmann (1720–1781), and their workshops, Posch was part of that world-famous generation of string instrument makers who had migrated from Bavaria to Vienna and proceeded to produce instruments of superlative quality. And this cello and other examples owned by the Esterházy Foundation serve us as indications that such instruments were not played exclusively by the musicians of the Viennese court. Even just the fact that the Esterházys had their instruments produced in Vienna implies that they were dependent upon the nearby city and profited greatly from its rich artistic and cultural offerings.

This previously protestant Esterházys' conversion to Catholicism and their unconditional loyalty to the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, who were simultaneously Kings of Hungary, laid the cornerstone for the family's meteoric ascent. Its members proved their loyalty to the imperial house particularly in armed conflicts, from the confrontations with the Ottoman Turks to the 30 Years' War (1618–1648) and the Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815). Prince Paul II. Anton Esterházy de Galantha (1711–1762), who was just 17 years old when this cello was built, studied in Vienna and exhibited a strong interest in culture. And in keeping with Esterházy tradition, he lent his support to Habsburg ruler Maria Theresia in the War of the Austrian Succession beginning in 1741. Because of the family's loyalty to and close relationship with the Viennese court, it stands to reason that they were quite familiar with Vienna's

manifold musical life, of which they adopted numerous elements. Having begun with sacred music, the Esterházys' patronage expanded during the second half of the 18th century to include instrumental music and opera, and their appointment of Joseph Haydn as vice-Kapellmeister in 1761 eventually garnered them worldwide fame as cultural patrons. Prior to the presence of Joseph Franz Weigl (1740–1820) and Antonín Kraft (1752–1820), the two first cellists of the Esterházy orchestra under the leadership of Joseph Haydn (who wrote his two cello concertos for them), and before Franz Liszt's father Adam List (1776–1827), who was employed there as second cellist under Kapellmeister Johann Nepomuk Hummel, I am not aware of any chamber music repertoire that would suggest the presence of a strong cello-playing personality at the Esterházy court during the first half of the 18th century.

The development of the cello from a bass instrument to be played as part of basso continuo group into a solo instrument began around the end of the 17th century within the circles of two cellists employed at Bologna's San Petronio Basilica: Domenico Gabrielli (1651–1690) and his student Giuseppe Maria Jacchini (1667–1727). The invention of metal-wound gut bass strings around this time made it possible for the cello to be played as the equal of other solo instruments such as the viola da gamba and the violin. The perfection of these two cellists' advanced playing techniques, resulting in the ability to play more exposed solo parts, was to take place a bit later on in Naples. The protagonists of the strong generation of cellists to emerge from that city during the early 18th century included Francesco Alborea, Francesco Supriano, Giovanni Perroni,

and Salvatore Lanzetti, of whom the first three—along with Antonio Maria Bononcini—continued to develop their cello-playing careers as musicians of the Viennese court. Their proficiency as players must have far exceeded that of the Austrian cellists employed there, for above all after 1727—the year when the exceptional Italian cellists Giovanni Perroni and Francesco Alborea were hired—the cello came to feature as an obbligato instrument in numerous highly virtuosic passages. The tradition of having challenging, highly figurative bass-clef parts played by a cello, which came to be characteristic of the Viennese court, developed quite rapidly during this period thanks to resident composers such as Giovanni and Antonio Bononcini, Attilio Ariosti, and Antonio Caldara, who were also cellists. For this reason, the most brilliant cello writing from Vienna is to be found in operas and oratorios—in contrast to the Italian baroque repertoire, where numerous solo concertos and sonatas were dedicated to the instrument. My research in various European collections and archives has, however, yielded a few previously unknown pieces of solo cello literature from these circles, for which reason I have the privilege of presenting you with world première recordings of five works on this CD.

Though it must remain a matter of conjecture, it is tempting indeed to imagine that some of this repertoire might possibly have been played on the Posch cello heard on this recording, at a time when it was still new and these composers were still alive...

The cellist and composer **Antonio Maria Bononcini** (1677–1726) was born in Modena as the younger sibling of his more famous brother Giovanni (1670–1747). Together with his brother, Antonio studied in Bologna under Giovanni Paolo Colonna. Unfortunately, little is known about his life or about the period that he spent in Vienna. Between 1690 and 1693, both brothers belonged to the orchestra of the papal legate Cardinal Pamphili in Bologna. And in 1694, Antonio followed his older brother to Rome, where he lived until 1700. In 1702, he went with his brother to Berlin and composed for the Prussian queen. It was during this period that the two received their first commissions from Emperor Joseph I. Reports refer to Antonio as the Kapellmeister of King Charles III of Spain, Emperor Joseph's younger brother and eventual successor. Giovanni brought him to Vienna in 1705, where Joseph I was to retroactively appoint him *Hofkomponist* in 1711. Following Joseph's death, the brothers were let go by the new emperor, Charles VI, whereupon Antonio returned to Italy and went on to work in Rome, Modena, Naples, and Milan. His career saw him compose a total of 11 works for the stage, of which only three were for Vienna, and he also wrote six serenatas and four oratorios.

We still have 12 cello sonatas written by Antonio Maria Bononcini during his youth, when the two brothers' careers were beginning in Bologna and environs. Since this was precisely *the* time and place at which the very first virtuoso pieces for cello were heard, it is quite probable that the two brothers had become acquainted with cellists from the Bolognese circles of Domenico Gabrielli and Giuseppe Maria Jacchini as well as with these two composers' works

for cello, and that it was from them that they had learned of the new, modern playing techniques. These 12 sonatas by Bononcini, however, are quite distinct—both stylistically and in terms of cello-specific playing technique—from the sonatas by him that were chosen for this recording. In fact, the unique way in which he wrote the earlier set suggests a technique associated more with the „violoncello da spalla", which was held at the shoulder.

Antonio Bononcini's *Sonata a Violoncello Solo* and *Sinfonia da camera* may have been written later on, during his period in Vienna from 1707 to 1711. This supposition is supported by the copies of these sonatas preserved in the Austrian National Library, as well as by the fact that a third cello sonata, the *Sonata da Camera detta la Comodina,* is extant in two copies that belonged to Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn-Wiesentheid (1677–1754), whose career developed contemporaneously with that of Antonio and who is strongly associated with Vienna. The count, as a well-regarded diplomat who served the Habsburg emperors up to 1733, and also in his capacities as a chamberlain and privy councilor at the Viennese Court between 1700 and 1710, used his extensive travels to enlarge his music collection—and he doubtless also established personal contact with various composers. So it is no wonder that at least 11 composers connected with Vienna are represented in his collection. It was around 1700 that he had begun to compile his music collection, which was eventually to include works by around 200 composers of his era. An outstanding position among these works, which consist largely of instrumental music, is occupied by the enormous number of compositions for the cello. The count not only composed,

but was also a competent cellist in his own right. And in the years following the death of his wife and his brother (i.e., from around 1724), he seems to have concentrated on the acquisition of chamber music works in which he may have played the cello part himself. In time, he came to possess over 100 cello concertos and 80 cello sonatas! Schönborn-Wiesentheid may have already met the two Bononcinis in Rome and then reencountered them later on in Vienna. His fondness for their music is documented by two letters that he wrote to his brother Friedrich Karl, the imperial vice chancellor in Vienna, in which he explicitly requested that Friedrich Karl send music by Bononcini—precisely which pieces he meant is open to conjecture.

Antonio Caldara (1670–1736), another composer who played the cello, was born either in Venice or in Padua. He probably studied in Venice under Giovanni Legrenzi, and beginning in 1688—in other words, at the young age of 18—he became a cellist and violinist at San Marco. It is interesting to note that he must have played there together with Giovanni Battista Vivaldi (1655–1736), father of Antonio Vivaldi, who had been appointed violinist at the basilica in 1685 and was himself well known as a violin virtuoso. 1689 saw Caldara compose his first work for the stage, and he spent the period between 1699 and 1707 working as *maestro di capella* at the court of Ferdinando Carlo Gonzaga in Mantua, thereafter continuing on to Rome, where he composed oratorios and cantatas. It was during this phase of his career that he made his first contact with future emperor Charles VI and the court that Charles maintained in Barcelona from 1703 to 1711 as pretender to the Spanish throne. It is not known how long Caldara stayed in Spain,

but it is certain that he spent the summer of 1708 at Charles's court. I suspect that this period must have seen him become acquainted with a great number of outstanding musicians who had moved there from Naples due to the higher pay—including the outstanding cellist Francesco Paolo Supriano. In 1708, Caldara probably also led the performance of an opera on the occasion of King Charles's wedding to Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. But even so, Caldara failed to obtain an employment contract and hence returned to Italy. In 1709, he was appointed maestro di capella to Prince Francesco Maria Marescotti Ruspoli in Rome, for whom he would compose four operas.

When Charles left Barcelona in order to succeed his brother Joseph I as Emperor Charles VI, Caldara set about attempting to regain access to him. He did so, for example, when the new emperor visited Milan in November of 1711. And in early 1712, Caldara even traveled to Vienna. But as he once again failing to gain employment, he returned to Rome. In 1715, following the death of Emperor Charles's Hofkapellmeister Marc'Antonio Ziani, Caldara made a second journey to Vienna, his hopes renewed. And this time, they were fulfilled: from April 1716 until his death—exactly 20 years—he was to serve as vice-Kapellmeister. Caldara probably also served the imperial family as a music teacher. And he enjoyed a cordial relationship with Emperor Charles, who conducted several of his vice-Kapellmeister's operas himself. Caldara was obligated to compose works for all name days and birthdays of the emperor and his spouse. Altogether, he composed 87 operas and serenatas—46 of them for Vienna—as well as 35 oratorios. Following Caldara's appointment, his music became fashionable in

many parts of the Habsburg Empire, and commissions began arriving from cities including Salzburg and Prague. His popularity and the competence he displayed at the Viennese court are borne witness by the fact that, as vice-Kapellmeister, he received a higher salary than the famed first Kapellmeister Fux. This is probably also associated with the fact that it was usually Caldara, and not Fux, who was charged with composing large operas. Caldara died in Vienna.

The Venetian composer Caldara's adeptness at combining Italian and German-Austrian elements, along with a great richness of melody, spelled great success for his music in Vienna. Due to his obligation to compose ever-new oratorios paying homage to the emperor, he only got around to composing for his own instrument during the penultimate year of his life—and even then, he wrote these pieces for others, not for himself. But his fondness for the cello is reflected not least by the prominent parts for this instrument in numerous solo arias from his vocal works. In the holdings of the Austrian National Library, there exist works including a cello treatise by Caldara as well as two copies of the *Sinfonia a Violoncello solo in D major*. The composition of the 16 sonatas, to which the *Sonata No. 4 in D minor* belongs, may also have had to do with the music lover Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn-Wiesentheid. They were written in 1735, and in the count's collection of cello sonatas, they represent the largest contribution by any single composer. The extent to which they reflect Caldara's own technical abilities or those of the collector is difficult to ascertain, of course, but in any case, they represent invaluable counterparts to the better-known cello sonatas

written by his contemporaries Vivaldi, Geminiani, Barrière and de Fesch.

As a composer, the Neapolitan **Nicola Antonio Porpora** (1686–1768) was famous for the virtuosity of his Italian arias. He produced an extensive oeuvre of vocal repertoire including over 50 operas, sacred works, and a multitude of chamber cantatas and homage cantatas, alongside outstanding instrumental music. His beginnings were in Naples and Venice, to where he returned following his unsuccessful initial attempt to procure a position at the Viennese court in 1725. In Venice, Porpora was one of the most sought-after voice teachers, with pupils including the castrati Farinelli, Porporino and Caffarelli. During this period, Porpora also competed with Leonardo Vinci (1690–1730) for the status of Italy's most popular operatic composer. Vinci had Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782) on his side; Metastasio had rapidly advanced to become the most popular operatic poet, and for the most part he entrusted his coveted libretti to Vinci, whom he esteemed greatly as a composer, for their initial musical settings. Porpora, on the other hand, usually had access to the more famous singers, many of whom were his former students. In 1733, Porpora went to London to head the Opera of the Nobility, which entered into competition with Georg Friedrich Handel's operatic undertakings at the King's Theatre and the Covent Garden Theatre. The third rivaling party in this field was none other than Giovanni Battista Bononcini, and the three composers gave rise to several pasticcio works while in London. After four seasons, the battle for the London audiences' favor had driven both Handel's and Popora's theatrical enterprises to ruin. Following Caldara's death,

Porpora attempted to gain an initial appointment at the Viennese court in 1737 with his oratorio *Geodone.* But this outstanding music, rich in wonderful arias of a dramatic, even operatic character, did not conform to the Viennese court's conservative tastes, and Porpora was once again denied the professional breakthrough for which he so yearned. He went on to work in Dresden, after which he finally moved to Vienna in 1752 to spend several years there as a private singing teacher. In Vienna, he lived in the same building as Pietro Metastasio—in the Großes Michaelerhaus, which still stands directly across from the Imperial Hofburg. While there, Porpora was served as a valet and as a piano accompanist for his voice students by none other than the approximately 20-year-old Joseph Haydn, to whom he gave instruction in return.

Since Porpora had not received any opera commissions in Vienna, 1754 saw him attempt to remind the public of his prowess as a composer by publishing the accomplished 12 *Sonate da chiesa* for violin and bass. It remains incomprehensible to me that nobody there took note of these ingenious works. Perhaps Vienna was not home to any violin virtuosos at that time who would have been capable of playing and disseminating this challenging music. The simpler *Sonata for Violoncello and Basso Continuo in F major,* on the other hand, was surely written earlier on, and since the copy that has come down to us today is held by the British Library in London together with that of his Concerto for Violoncello and Strings in G Major, one can assume that Porpora probably composed it either during his London period or earlier, while still in Naples. Metastasio reported to Farinelli in a letter that Porpora, who had been

unsuccessful in attaining his goal of becoming an honored Hofkapellmeister in Vienna and thereafter returned to the place of his birth in 1760, died poor and lonely at the age of 81.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) was likewise unsuccessful in procuring an appointment in Vienna. He, too, is another representative of the interesting phenomenon of how life events and misunderstandings of their art caused numerous outstanding musical personalities whom we so value today, and without whose music we could not imagine our world, from enjoying success in Vienna. Vivaldi arrived in Vienna in 1740 in order to seek support from his patron, the Habsburg emperor Charles VI. But Charles died that October, and Vivaldi, once Europe's most famous musician, was ignored by the city's musical circles. On 28 July 1741, ten months after having arrived there, Vivaldi, too, passed away and was buried in a simple grave outside the city wall and before the Kärntnertor on the *Spitaller Gottsacker,* a location now occupied by the main building of the Vienna University of Technology on today's Karlsplatz.

In the baroque cello repertoire, the works by Antonio Vivaldi occupy a special position, with no other composer having made a comparable contribution. Vivaldi wrote at least 27 cello concertos, one concerto for two cellos, and three concertos for violin and cello, and he also assigned the cello solo parts in a total of 18 concertos for multiple instruments. Several of his opera arias, as well, feature the cello as a solo instrument. In addition to Vivaldi's nine cello sonatas, there is also a sonata for violin and cello, and a Breitkopf catalog from 1766 indicates that there was even a

tenth sonata for cello (which has since been lost). The nine sonatas *à violoncello solo* have come down to us in a total of five different manuscripts as well as in a 1740 printed edition by Le Clerc in Paris. And some of the manuscripts held by the library at the Conservatory of Naples are autographs. The library of Count von Schönborn-Wiesentheid, already mentioned frequently here as one of the most important sources on baroque cello music thanks to the tireless collecting efforts of the nobleman and amateur cellist Rudolf Franz Erwein, itself contains copies of no less than 17 works by Antonio Vivaldi including eight cello concertos, a concerto for violin, cello and strings, and two cello sonatas. But the fact that his library also holds a further copy of a cello sonata by Vivaldi has until now largely escaped general notice. Since manuscript 532 came down to us without a title page and therefore with no indication of the composer, the Wiesentheid librarians had long mistakenly attributed this work to the Abbot del Cinque, by whom the library owns manuscript copies of two further cello sonatas done in the same hand. But it is, in fact, the *Sonata for Violoncello and Basso Continuo in A Minor, RV 44* recorded here and already known from the Neapolitan collection. Vivaldi's authorship of the uncredited work in the Schönborn-Wiesentheid library is therefore confirmed beyond a doubt, being documented by additional autograph material in Naples. It was probably composed sometime around 1725.

Francesco Paolo Supriano (Scipriani) (1678–1753), once again a Naples native, went to work in 1708 as first cellist at the Spanish royal court of future Emperor Charles VI in Barcelona under the leadership of Giuseppe Porsile (1680–1750). Charles returned to Vienna upon his ascension to the

imperial throne in 1711, whereupon Porsile and many of the new emperor's best musicians, including Supriano, likewise moved to the imperial residence. Today, Supriano is known as the first of the outstanding Neapolitan school cello players. He was held in high regard at the courts of Barcelona and Vienna, and with cello technique not yet very advanced in his era, Supriano's playing was admired far and wide. The relative lack of present-day knowledge about Supriano's life is probably due to the fact that his fame was soon overshadowed by that of his pupil, Francesco Alborea, who was 13 years his junior. The two were constant collegial competitors both in Naples and in Vienna. In contrast to Alborea, Supriano never succeeded in finding permanent employment at the Viennese court, and he eventually returned to Naples, where he was to serve in the „Real Capella" until 1730. The presence of these two cello virtuosos in Naples is borne witness by the numerous concertante parts for the cello in opera and oratorio arias by Alessandro Scarlatti and Leonardo Leo, who were active there at the time.

An important early instructional work for the cello was Supriano's collection *Principij da imparare a suonare il violoncello e con 12 toccate a solo,* which featured explanations on technique. The twelve sonatas contained therein, which are also extant in a version including diminutions with virtuosic ornamentation and basso continuo by the composer, allude both to Supriano's own virtuosity and to the diminutions and techniques of ornamentation common at the time as realized on the cello. This authentic cello part, thus arranged, is the only one of its kind in the entire cello repertoire. In mentioning this, I

think it important to also point out that these challenging pieces–due to their use of certain notes in high registers simultaneously combined with two open bass strings, as well as due to their evident employment of thumb position–must have been written for a 4-stringed cello! This makes Supriano and his pupil Francesco Alborea the first cellists who used thumb position and, what's more, who are documented to have not used a 5-stringed instrument. By way of comparison with the cello works in this treatise, a simpler but quite wonderful *Sinfonia di Violoncello a Solo in C major* has also come down to us; this piece, which may also have been written for instructional use, was published with the composer credited as „Scipriani".

Francesco Alborea (1691–1739), also known as „Franciscello" or „Francischello" and likewise born in Naples, is virtually unknown today compared with the fame he achieved during his successful performing career. He studied in his hometown, where he received his first music lessons from the violinist and composer Gian Carlo Cailó at the Conservatorio Santa Maria di Loreto, and he went on to become one of the best cellists of his era. Thanks to the interest of Alessandro Scarlatti, it was quite early on that Alborea became a member of that period's most famous orchestra, the Chapel Royal of the King of Naples, where he was to serve as first cellist until 1727. Word of his virtuosity was quick to reach the imperial court in Vienna. According to an account by Ludwig von Köchel (1800–1877), author of the well-known Köchel Catalog, a request by Emperor Charles VI to Aloys Thomas Raimund Count Harrach (1669–1742), Viceroy of Naples, brought Alborea to Vienna that same year in order to accompany the lute virtuoso

Gioacchino Sarao. And in Vienna he was to remain until his death in 1739, working as a musician of Count Uhlenfeld and as first cellist of the Vienna Hofkapelle with an annual salary of 1,260 florins/gulden.

Alborea, thanks to his exceptional talent, is considered to have been the very first cello virtuoso to truly succeed in establishing the cello as a solo instrument. According to contemporary reports, those who heard him were left with an unforgettable impression. He was also the first person to introduce the art of cello playing to more eastern parts of Europe, and his activities hastened the process by which the viola da gamba, still quite well represented in Europe's orchestras at the time, was superseded by the cello for once and for all. A similar development can be observed in France, where the gamba could look back upon a rich tradition: according to the Belgian composer and music biographer François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871), the French cellist Martin Berteau (ca. 1709–1771), regarded as the founder of the French school of cello playing, was at first an outstanding viola da gamba player. After hearing Alborea, however, he switched to the cello. Once returned to Paris following his studies with Alborea in Vienna, Berteau was celebrated as a cello sensation when he performed for the *Concert Spirituel*. Since a further French cellist, Jean-Baptiste Barrière (1707–1747), was likewise a pupil of Alborea, one can ascertain that Alborea also played an indirect role in establishing the cello's popularity in France.

Francesco Geminiani (1687–1782) is said to have attended a concert in Rome in 1713 where Alborea played the obbligato cello part in a cantata by Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725),

who accompanied him and the castrato Nicoló Grimaldi, known as „Niccolini“, on the harpsichord. According to Fétis's notes, Geminiani proclaimed following the concert that *„only an angel in human form could play so sweetly“.* The English music author Charles Burney (1726–1814) wrote a bit differently about the same event: that Franciscello had played so sensationally that *„the company, being good Catholics and living in a country where miraculous powers have not yet ceased, were firmly persuaded it was not Francischelli who had played the violoncello but an angel that had descended and assumed his shape“.* The flutist Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), as well, heard him in Naples in 1725 as part of a concert honoring the Prince of Lichtenstein at which the famous Farinelli sang; Quantz described Alborea as *„extraordinary“* and *„without compare“.* The violinist Franz Benda (1709–1786) heard him in Vienna in 1730, took music lessons from him, and always spoke of him with the highest admiration and the greatest enthusiasm.

Alborea's fame during his lifetime could only spread due to the lively impression left by his concerts and appearances, since to this day no other compositions by him are known that could have helped him to more lasting renown. But the German composer Ernst Ludwig Gerber (1746–1819), writing in his lexicon of composers, opined that Alborea may well have published anonymously for his instrument in Vienna. Today, Alborea's *Sonatas for Cello and Basso Continuo in D major* and *in G major* are held by the Czech National Library in Prague. Alborea died in Vienna, his memory soon to fade into undeserved oblivion.

A large oil painting by the Italian painter Niccolò Maria Rossi (1690–1758), entitled *La festa dei Quattro Altari,* shows–according to the Italian historian and painter Bernardo de' Dominici (1683–1759)–the greeting of Aloys Thomas Raimund Count Harrach, Viceroy of Naples, and *„nearly all of his ministers and musicians of the Chapel Royal of Naples, including first maestro di cappella Francesco Mancini, Domenico Sarro, and Francesco Alborea with his world-famous violoncello, who was called to Vienna on account of his enchanting cello playing...“*

When composing new works, 17th and 18th-century composers reckoned with both the improvisational and the technical abilities of the musicians, as well as with their good taste, their musical experience and training, and their richly faceted, emotional renditions. After all, the success of any work was dependent on the performers in a very crucial way! Composers often wrote with specific musicians or singers in mind, custom-tailoring their pieces and arias. In many cases, the composers also performed their own works, and it stands to reason that there was no need to notate every minor detail in pieces for their own use. Only in those cases where their music served instructional purposes were baroque composers far more thorough, since the point was to provide carefully devised examples for practical execution. Otherwise, the notation used in their works was typically reduced to the essence in order to allow performers a great deal of latitude for their own interpretations.

Hence, that via which music becomes music—*the words between the lines, the notes between the notes*—was left to the musicians, who in every performance were confronted anew with the written musical „data" and could thus express and animate such pieces a bit differently every time. It thus probably went without saying that the notation set forth by the composer was a basic framework, and by no means the ultimate audible result or a work's only possible version.

I have attempted to develop the material supplied by the original musical text in keeping with this idea, in order to come as close as possible to an authentic rendition and a performance practice typical of the 18th century. Ornamentation, the variation of repeats, variety in

diminutions, and variations in phrasing enhance music's liveliness and allow every affect presented by the passage or movement at hand to be more easily discerned.

I am very happy that this recording—thanks to the opportunity to collaborate with the Esterházy Private Foundation and their friendly loan of an instrument—could be realized at the Palace Chapel in Eisenstadt. Virtually no other place could be more authentic than that space for which this cello was most probably intended. And virtually nowhere could the atmosphere when playing on this instrument be more magical than in the very spot where it was heard at the beginning of its long life, nearly 300 years ago.

Michal Stahel

Period illustrations:

La festa dei Quattro Altari, 1745
Oil on canvas, by Niccolò Maria Rossi (1690–1758)
Graf Harrach'sche Familiensammlung, A-2471 Schloss Rohrau, NÖ

Francesco Alborea (1691–1739)
Engraving by Johann Jakob Haid (1704–1767) after a painting by Martin de Meytens (1695–1770)
Austrian National Library, Vienna, Picture Archives and Graphics Department, Portrait Collection

The „Basettl“ violoncello by Antony Posch and its history at the Esterházy court

The history of courtly and aristocratic musical life in the Pannonian region would be impossible to write without taking into account the doings of the Esterházy family. At their various residences, especially in Eisenstadt and at Eszterháza, this important dynasty of Hungarian magnates spent centuries as patrons of a blossoming and magnificent musical life, the highpoint of which would be reached with the tenure of Joseph Haydn during the second half of the 18th century.

Prince Paul II Anton Esterházy (1711–1762) was appointed successor to his prematurely deceased father Joseph (1688–1721) at the tender age of ten. The young prince went on to study in Vienna and in Leyden, and he soon exhibited an exceptionally intense interest in music and literature. Study tours to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands helped to nurture his musical talent, as did the experiences that he would have later on as ambassador to the Neapolitan royal court. For these reasons, and probably also due to the encouragement of his mother, Maria Octavia, Paul II Anton became the first prince in the history of the Esterházy family to make it his goal to establish a rich culture of music-making at his court and have his own residences become musical centers of their era. What's more, he was himself a skilled and enthusiastic player of the violone and the cello.

In 1728, Paul II Anton called the composer Gregor Josef Werner (1693–1766) to join him in Eisenstadt as

Kapellmeister of the princely music establishment. Even just Werner's 1-month preparatory period in Vienna, during which he was already on the payroll and which he used to procure a large collection of church music and purchase numerous instruments for the organ loft, shows how the young prince intended to touch off an initial flowering of Viennese musical culture—then at its zenith under Emperor Charles VI and his Hofkapellmeister Johann Josef Fux (ca. 1660–1741)—in Eisenstadt, as well.

Upon his appointment as Kapellmeister, Werner was also charged with procuring a cello for Paul II Anton in Vienna, which he was to bring along when he commenced his duties in Eisenstadt. This is documented by an invoice, dated 29 Nov. 1728 and still present in the archives at Forchtenstein Castle (as AM 0756), from court luthier Antony Posch. It is interesting to note that the instrument is described as a *„Pasettl“;* this term, which can be taken as a reference to the body's unusual size, allows the instrument to be identified today. For the archives also indicate the purchase of a further cello in 1739 (Acta Varia F117 N2/ 33), at the very point in time when the court music establishment's records stopped listing a professional cellist in its ranks (which was to change again in 1742); this may mean that a "personal instrument" was being procured for the Prince himself.

During his years with the Esterhazys, Werner led their Hofkapelle to new levels of quality—particularly in terms of church music. And very soon after having assumed his post, he also composed a cello concerto.

In 1761, the prince appointed Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) as

his court's vice-Kapellmeister. And Haydn, who was at first to be responsible for developing chamber music activities, soon composed his own solo concerto for the cello, probably at the behest and commission of the prince.

In 1762, Paul II Anton passed away at the age of 51. It was possibly at that point in time that the Posch cello passed into the inventory of the Esterházys' Hofkapelle (to this day, the instrument bears a historical seal stamped with the Esterházy coat of arms and a reference to this effect). In 1765, the instrument was modernized with a new neck. The work was done by the workshop of Viennese violinmaker Johann Joseph Stadlmann (1720–1781), and the invoice written up for this job contains an exceptional detail—referring to the repair of the *„Poschische Bassettl";* in other words, to an instrument that had been built by Antony Posch: *„An ein Paßetl ein Neürn Hals gemacht, den Griff abgericht ein Griff bainl und Neur besait"* [Renewed the neck on a violoncello, adapted the fingerboard, new nut and new strings].

If we cast a glance at the further purchase invoices concerning cellos for the Esterházys' Hofkapelle, we learn of the acquisition of two further instruments in 1783 (AM 1164 and 1166) and of at least four additional cellos that arrived during the period between 1799 and 1808. This would suggest that our *Basettl* may have fallen into disuse at some point during that period due to its „baroque" playing characteristics.

After the court music establishment was largely dissolved in 1813 (it ceased to exist entirely in 1866), this cello—along with a large number of other string instruments—was no

longer played, according to then-Kapellmeister Carl Thomas. It did, however, remain in the Hofkapelle's inventory, as indicated by the „Inventarium über alle in Eisenstadt befindlichen fürstlich Esterházyschen Musique Instrumente [...]" [Inventory of all Princely Esterházy Musical Instruments in Eisenstadt (...)] (AM 3840 and AM 3842). In 1858, we once again find traces of it in the copy of the above-quoted inventory by Carl Thomas that was prepared in connection with the transfer of Thomas's duties to the new Kapellmeister, Karl Zaglitz. And during the years that followed, the *Basettl*—together with a few selected musical instruments from the Esterhazys' Hofkapelle, including the famous baryton of Nikolaus I. Esterházy „the Magnificent"—was brought to Eszerháza, where it was stored and presented in a display case; this is indicated by a solitary historical photo that has come down to us.

Later on, the instrument was once again transferred to a new place of storage: the 1936 inventory of the family's palace in Eisenstadt lists it as Inv. No. 1471 with the simple description: *„cello, without label, broken"*. And it was there, in Eisenstadt, that it survived the turmoil of the Second World War and the postwar period. In 2007, the cello was rediscovered in a small servant's chamber during a general inventory of the collection holdings. Eisenstadt-based cellist Hannes Gradwohl, who was brought in to consult, was the first person to recognize the significance of this instrument, which was subsequently entrusted to violinmaker Gerlinde Reutterer on 19 June 2007 for repairs.

Since 2009, the young Slovak cellist Michal Stahel has been performing successfully on this unique instrument. Built

around 1720 at the workshop of Antony Posch, it stands out for the historical proportions of its setup, representing the prevalent conventions of construction and playing up to around the middle of the 18th century. Just like its enchanting golden-yellow varnish, the instrument's fittings are also—with few exceptions—originals from the same period. Due to its provenience and its exceptionally original condition, the *„Esterházsche Basettl"* can be viewed as a one-of-a-kind instrument—and for the last few years, it has once more been delighting numerous music lovers with its unmistakable sound thanks to the virtuosic playing of Michal Stahel.

Dr. Florian T. Bayer
Head of Collections, Esterházy Privatstiftung

Michal Stahel was born into a musical family in Bratislava. He started playing the cello at the age of six. After graduating from Bratislava Conservatory, he continued to study the cello at the Royal College in London, music universities in Vienna, Mannheim and Conservatoire Supérieur CNR in Paris.

He won the first prize at competition of Slovak conservatories in 1997, a year later becoming a finalist of international competition Eurovision Grand Prix in Vienna, and winning international competition Talent of the Year in Prague in 1999. In 2000 he became a finalist of the TIJI Unesco competition in Lisbon and received the prize of music critics at the Central European Music Festival of Concert Art in Žilina. Later, he was several times awarded scholarships of Solti Foundation, scholarship of French Government and Academia Montis Regalis.

His solo career includes performances with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, Prague Chamber Philharmonic, Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Košice Philharmonic Orchestra, Žilina Chamber Orchestra and Bohdan Warchal Chamber Orchestra. He has collaborated with conductors such as Andrew Parrott, Dennis Russel Davies, James Judd, Jiří Bělohlávek, Oliver Dohnányi and Mario Košík.

Since 2006 he has been regularly performing with Slovak ensembles of ancient music Solamente Naturali and Musica Aeterna, which completely changed his artistic and musical direction towards the so-called „historically informed performance“. In recent years Stahel has been mostly involved in performing music of the 17th and 18th century. His knowledge in this field has been positively influenced by several master classes, workshops and regular lessons with the famous baroque violinist and former leader of Musica Antiqua, Reinhard Goebel, gambist Lorenz Duftschmidt, 18th century clarinet player Lorenzo Coppola, members of the Freiburger Barockorchester ensemble and baroque cello player and musicologist Marc Vanscheeuwijck.

Stahel closely cooperates with personalities of ancient music, such as Steven Stubbs, Skip Sempé, Anton, Steck, Simon Standage, Amandine Bayer, Leila Schayegh, Ricardo Minasi, Enrico Onofri, Paul McCreesh, Martin Haselböck, Václav Luks, Marek Štryncl, Miloš Valent and Peter Zajíček.

He regularly performs with ensembles Freiburger Barockorchester, Wiener Akademie, Collegium 1704, Das Neue Orchester, Capriccio Stravagante, Academia Montis Regalis, Collegium Marianum Prague, Solamente Naturali and Musica Aeterna.

Stahel plays a restored valuable baroque violoncello made by Anthony Posch in Vienna in 1728, which has been kindly lent to him by Esterházy Foundation Eisenstadt.

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