

**REAL OR FAKE?**

## FAMOUS MUSICAL HOAXES

# THE GREAT BAROQUE SWINDLE

Several well-known string pieces were in fact written by modern musicians passing themselves off as earlier composers. How did they get away with it? TULLY POTTER exposes the most notorious cases

**T**he art world goes berserk about fakes, but musicians and music publishers treat them with amused indulgence. How else can you explain that even after so many pieces have been exposed as forgeries, they are still being advertised for sale, still being bought, and still being played and recorded?

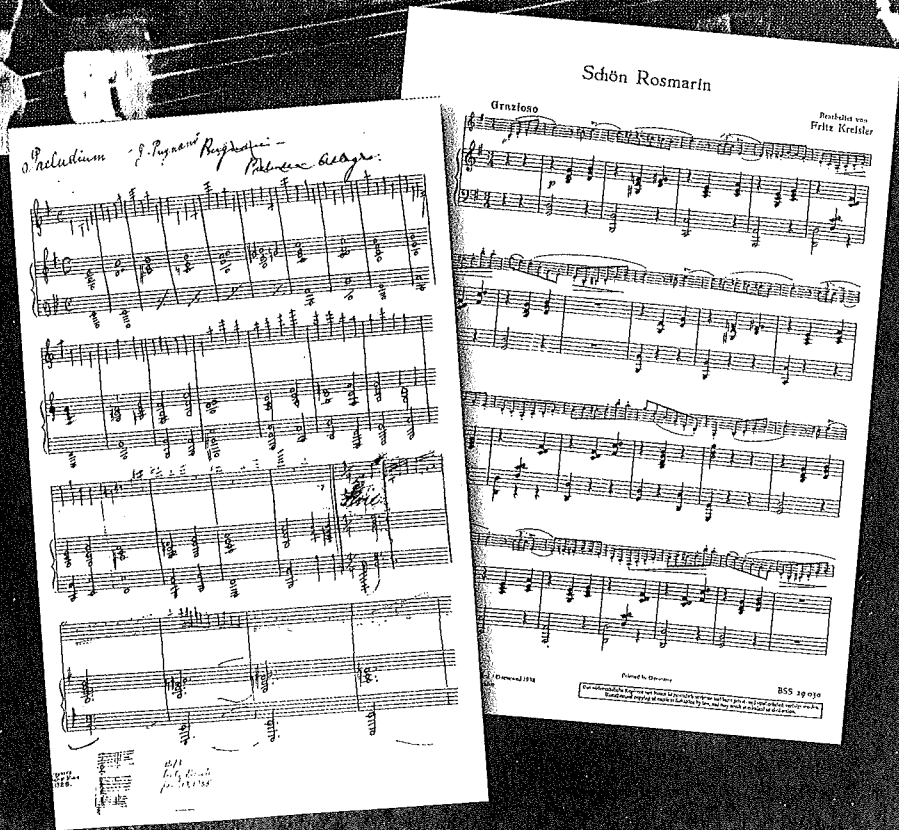
The heyday of the musical forger was the period 1860–1935, when many Baroque and Classical composers had yet to be rediscovered. Hardly anyone knew what their music sounded like, but their names still counted for something, so forgers could gain from attributing pieces to them, with little chance of being caught out.

Enter Fritz Kreisler, the most charming violinist of his time and a composer with a facile knack of churning out appealing melodies. From around the turn of the century, he filled his programmes with his own pieces but slyly presented many as 'arrangements' from 'manuscripts' by such Baroque and Classical composers as Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Louis Couperin, Pugnani, Martini, Porpora, Cartier, Carl Stamitz, Francoeur, Tartini, Dittersdorf and Lully (a minuet that he did not publish). It is hilarious to look

at contemporary critiques and see these 'old' compositions being lauded to the skies, while Kreisler is criticised for cheapening his programmes with pieces he admits to having composed. Typical was the critic who singled out Kreisler's 'devotion to the music of the 18th century', going on to say: 'Of Mr Kreisler's compositions – he played three in the second part of the concert – one must speak in terms of more modest praise' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 11 October 1910).

Most of his fellow violinists took up his forgeries; and of course the 'Pugnani' *Praeludium and Allegro*, to name just one, is a superb piece of violin music. Even the beloved *Liebesleid*, *Liebesfreud* and *Schön Rosmarin* were originally presented as being by Lanner, until Kreisler was stung into revealing their true authorship in 1910.

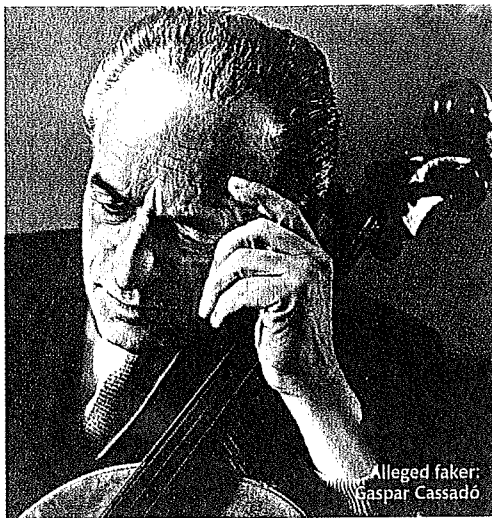
This spat with Berlin critic Leopold Schmidt received little publicity; indeed, that very year Schott started publishing Kreisler's trifles, the 'Lanner' pieces and a few others now bearing his name, but describing many as 'Classical Manuscripts' and attributing them to their famous 'authors'. Within six months, 70,000 copies of the 'Classical Manuscripts' collection had been sold. ▶



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Fritz Kreisler (main picture) passed himself off as earlier composers including (from top) Pugnani, Tartini and Lully, in pieces including the famous *Praeludium* and *Allegro* (shown in an early manuscript, far left) and *Schön Rosmarin* (left)

The scam began to unravel in 1935 when the *New York Times* critic Olin Downes asked where he could find the original manuscript of the 'Pugnani' *Praeludium and Allegro*. He was about to give a lecture recital at which Yehudi Menuhin was to play this piece. Kreisler had to admit that there was no such manuscript and he was the author. On 8 February 1935 Downes broke the story on the front page of his paper, under the heading 'Kreisler Reveals "Classics" As Own; Fooled Music Critics for 30 Years', and a worldwide scandal ensued.



Alleged faker: Gaspar Cassadó

understand that what you had done was to operate upon an *original manuscript* by some famous composer or other when as a matter of fact *there was no such manuscript*'. Kreisler was provoked into an angry reply that ended this particular chapter in the debate; but Basil Maine wrote a more considered piece (reprinted in a 1945 book), stating that 'such deception amounts to a confession that, in the hoaxer's opinion, his supporters are fools'. Rejecting Kreisler's argument that some of his peers had always guessed the truth, Maine said that 'the

whole musical world had a right to know, not so much that the works were by Kreisler as that they were not by Pugnani, Vivaldi etc.'. The controversy still rages today, even as violinists continue to include the controversial pieces in their recitals.

Other fakers kept lower profiles. Ferdinand David (1810–73) was a respected violinist, quartet leader, composer and teacher, a prominent citizen in Leipzig and a friend of Mendelssohn. He may well have been the sole 'discoverer' of the famous Chaconne, allegedly by the Bolognese violinist–composer Tomaso Antonio Vitali (1663–1745). First published by David in 1867, the Chaconne has since been subjected to other editions, departing further and further from Baroque practice. In this particular case, champions of the work's authenticity can point to a manuscript

MOST PEOPLE WERE AMUSED but the very serious English critic Ernest Newman of the *Sunday Times* took enormous umbrage. A Wagnerian who was wont to write rubbish even about Mozart, Newman initially used Kreisler's hoax as a stick with which to beat the Baroque and Classical composers, writing that 'a vast amount of 17th- and 18th-century music was merely the exploitation of formulae, the effective handling of which is within the scope of any ordinarily intelligent musician today'.

After Kreisler had sent quite a mild response, Newman weighed in with the unanswerable riposte that 'you gave the public to

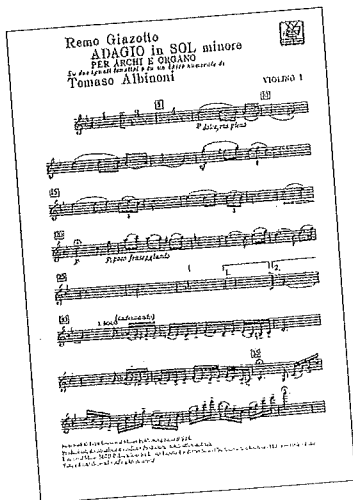
PHOTOS: TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

## MUSICAL FAKES AND FORGERIES

### THE 'ALBINONI ADAGIO'

BUY ONE OF THOSE GHASTLY compilations of Great Adagios and it is certain to include the Adagio in G minor for strings and organ by 'Tomaso Albinoni'. Well, Albinoni (1671–1751) was a respected Venetian Baroque composer but he was not present when the Adagio was composed. Supposedly his biographer Remo Giazotto (1910–98) based it on a fragment of an Albinoni trio sonata, consisting of the bass-line and some of the melody of a slow movement, from the Saxon State Library collection in Dresden.

Published in 1958, the Adagio became as big a 'Baroque' hit as Pachelbel's Canon and was recorded by such a reputable Italian group as I Musici. However, despite his reputation as a musicologist and musical journalist, Giazotto never produced his alleged source material. Since his death, researchers have sought in vain for proof that such a manuscript was ever in the Dresden collection.



GIAZOTTO/ALBINONI ADAGIO COURTESY CASA RICORDI, MILAN

### THE 'VIVALDI VIOLIN CONCERTO IN C MAJOR'

EMBOLDENED BY THE SUCCESS of his shorter forgeries, Fritz Kreisler composed an entire three-movement 'Vivaldi Concerto' with string accompaniment, which he began including in his orchestral programmes in 1907. It sounded nothing like Vivaldi's real music but as virtually all the genuine stuff still languished in libraries, no one cottoned on.

One New York critic called it 'an admirable Concerto in C major by an 18th-century composer named Antonio Vivaldi, a real jewel' (*Post*, 4 January 1908). Another averred that 'Mr Kreisler as a student of history has never exhibited higher scholarship and intuitive grace than in his own writing out of the accompaniments, which the ancients merely sketched in continuo' (*Sun*, 6 January 1908). A London scribe credited it with 'many of the best characteristics of early Italian music' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1909). Kreisler recorded it in 1945, at one of his last RCA studio sessions.



in the Dresden Museum, headed 'Parte del Tomaso Vitali', to which two letters have been added to make 'Vitalino', perhaps to distinguish Tomaso from his father Giovanni Battista; but no one has yet nailed down the manuscript's provenance. Only one thing is certain: no one called Vitali had anything to do with it.

## The most prolific forgers were the French Casadesus family, who built a veritable cottage industry on fakery

### SURELY THE MOST PROLIFIC FORGERS

were the French Casadesus family, who built a veritable cottage industry on fakery. While the great pianist Robert Casadesus was a fine composer of unimpeachable integrity, his uncles Francis, Henri and Marius were less scrupulous. Violist Henri (1879–1947) started the nefarious side of his career by 'finding' early music for the family ensemble he ran from 1901, the Société des Instruments Anciens. For a time the group's harpsichordist was the distinguished Italian pianist-composer Alfredo Casella, who later wrote: "The work did not particularly attract me, because almost all of the music played was either apocryphal or had at least been cleverly "retouched" by that talented and sympathetic rascal of a Casadesus." A number of the 'discoveries' were recorded by the ensemble on 78rpm discs.

Henri also tackled larger projects. For a long time, scholars thought Mozart had based his great D major Violin Concerto, K218, on the 'Boccherini' D major Violin Concerto, G486. The

truth was precisely the opposite, as Henri Casadesus had created the 'Boccherini'. Keen to provide a Baroque and Classical repertoire for his own instrument, Henri turned out viola concertos by 'Handel', 'J.C. Bach' and 'C.P.E. Bach', with help from brothers Francis and Marius. The 'Handel Viola Concerto in B minor' was recorded twice by William Primrose. The 'J.C. Bach Viola Concerto in C minor' has become quite popular and has had at least one CD recording; but the 'C.P.E. Bach Viola Concerto in D major' has

rather lagged behind. None of these pieces sounds anything like the real music of its alleged composer.

The viola was an easy target, because of violists' concerns about the supposed paucity of their repertoire (had they taken the trouble to hunt out all the genuine concertos by composers such as Carl and Anton Stamitz, they might not have worried so much). Many of us greatly enjoyed Rudolf Barshai's recording, with his own Moscow Chamber Orchestra, of the Viola Concerto in C major, said to be by the Russian Classical composer Ivan Khandoshkin (1747–1804). "The Concerto for Viola was written in 1801," a note with a CD reissue tells us, "and it was, apparently, one of the earliest instrumental compositions by a Russian composer." Alas, it turns out to have been wholly the work of the modern Ukrainian musician Mikhail Goldstein (1917–89). It is still a jolly piece, with a final Rondo subtitled

*La chasse*, but once you know its true history, you wonder how you were ever taken in.

## THE 'MOZART "ADELAIDE" CONCERTO'

THE MORE OUTLANDISH the 'provenance' of a forgery is, the more eagerly the public will buy it. In 1928 violinist Marius Casadesus (1892–1981) wrote a 'Mozart' Violin Concerto in D major, telling friends he had discovered and orchestrated its manuscript piano score. Conductor Albert Wolff urged him to present it in public, which he did in Paris on 27 December 1931.

Relatively little Mozart was played then and the concerto was accepted, along with Casadesus's yarn that the ten-year-old Mozart had written it in Versailles for Princess Adelaide. Published in 1933, it was provided with cadenzas by Hindemith, taken up by Jelly d'Arányi and recorded by Yehudi Menuhin, who amazingly even made a 1975 stereo re-recording. In 1977 Casadesus successfully sued Menuhin's French record company, Pathé-Marconi, for recognition as the work's sole composer. 'I defy anyone to come up with Mozart's original manuscript of "Adelaide"; he said with no apparent irony.



THE CATALAN CELLIST Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966) produced a dreadful recomposed version with orchestra of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata. But his sins went further than that. Of the *Collection de six morceaux classiques* that he published through Universal Edition in 1925, the 'Boccherini Minuetto', the 'Couperin Pastoral' and the 'Schubert Allegretto grazioso' are thought to be his own work. The 'Frescobaldi Toccata' which was one of his recital staples – and was taken up by colleagues – was allegedly based on a manuscript he had found in Barcelona. It was orchestrated by the cellist-conductor Hans Kindler, who admitted when pressed that he had used Cassadó's 'arrangement' as his source. Needless to say, the 'manuscript' has yet to turn up. The pity of it is that Cassadó was an excellent composer when he concentrated on writing under his own name.

What I find strangest about society's attitude to musical forgeries is that they seem to sail serenely onward, while genuine works that have simply been misattributed are dropped like hot potatoes. Mozart's delightful Lullaby was sung by every soprano until it was shown to be by a nonentity called Bernhard Flies. Today you never hear it. Nor do you encounter Haydn's once-popular 'Serenade' Quartet, now alleged to be by a nobody called Roman Hofstetter, or various works once attributed to Pergolesi. These pieces have not changed. They are as good or bad as they always were, but no one wants them any more. Most of the fakes mentioned above, however, bear charmed lives. ■