

#### PROGRAM NOTE

ough there exists an extensive literature for piano, four hands (two  
ing at one piano), diligent research has led to the conclusion that  
under consideration is in all likelihood the only work ever to have  
n for two people playing one viola. The fact that it was written  
and least of the great Johann Sebastian Bach's twenty-odd  
no surprise; P.D.Q. Bach (1807-1742)? was certainly the oddest  
and one of his most devious streaks was that which has been  
minally irresponsible approach to instruments". Not only did he  
ings which wiser composers had the good sense to avoid, such as  
ded sewer flute, the double-reed slide music stand, and the  
even when he employed well-established instruments he had a  
king them sound recently invented. This effect, of course,  
elf to the player, and perhaps one of the reasons that this sonata  
ome a part of the standard repertoire is that, when performing  
, the best of players sounds as if his father just bought him the  
few days ago.

ONATA FOR VIOLA FOUR HANDS AND HARPSICHORD  
o. 440) is the only one of the score of rediscovered works by  
to have four movements. If there is any significance to this fact,  
ed generations of historians, whose underwhelming lack of  
e music of P.D.Q. is more to be envied than admired, and whose  
e been passed down from generation to generation since time  
ong before the birth of P.D.Q. Bach gave that ignorance some  
f justification. In other words, the forces that go into shaping a  
Q. Bach composition, of which this is one of the most typical (in  
e rarely shaped in such a way as to render the final product  
e in form, much less in content.

st movement is a typical Andante, which is more than can be  
second movement, marked Molto Fast. The heading of the third  
Ground Round, is a slight misnomer, since it does employ a  
onstantly recurring melody in the bass), but not a round (an  
song such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"); furthermore, it  
a device which is not even mentioned in the heading: pedal  
g held note). Perhaps this omission is due to a failure to notice  
used the device, since P.D.Q.'s interest in pedal point and  
was even less than his interest in needlepoint. Nevertheless, the  
nt, like many modern soft drinks, uses imitation with similar  
marking Allah Breve is a quaint reminder of the composer's  
with the Middle East; years earlier, P.D.Q. had worked his way  
stant warper to head woofer in a Turkish rug factory, and the  
that time is evident in several other pieces as well, such as the  
Trio in the Pervertimento, and, most notably, the Mass in the

*Notes by Professor Peter Schickele*

#### PERFORMANCE NOTE

In the first and last movements, the two viola players sit almost facing each other. Player I holds the instrument and plays in a normal fashion, while player II, who is sitting at the other end of the viola (just beyond the scroll) and facing player I, plays the instrument like a cello, even using thumb position if necessary. It may be found desirable for player II to place the scroll on the front of his chest or on his collarbone, so that all the weight is not borne by player I's left arm. The two bows will look like crossed swords (although of course they must be kept from touching while playing), and, with a little practice, the players will be able to keep out of each other's way on the fingerboard.

For the second movement, the blade of a hacksaw should be removed and replaced by multiple strands of nylon fishing line (it need not be very fine) which is then rosined. Player II stands behind the viola (to the left of player I's left arm) and bows the instrument as if he were sawing wood. As a convenience for player II, the strings to be bowed are indicated above the music in the part. Player I does not use a bow in this or the next movement.

The third movement may be done two ways. In either case player I simply fingers the "B", holding the viola so that the right edge is higher than the left edge, thereby insuring that the "A" string will be easily accessible. His right hand is free to stifle yawns, blow his nose, turn the page, or whatever else might seem suitable. Player II may bow the note using an archery bow which has been prepared in the same manner as the hacksaw. A more effective technique, however, is for player II and a third person to stretch a great length (20-30 feet) of nylon line between them and simply walk slowly back and forth, holding it in such a way that it runs over the "A" string.

The ending of the last movement is open to many interpretations. The last two measures need not be played at all; in fact, P.D.Q. Bach probably put them in just so that the piece would appear on paper to end traditionally. An ending more in keeping with the style of the composer would be to repeat the "repeat ad lib." measure ad infinitum, and bring the curtain down while everyone is still playing. If a curtain is not being used, another possibility would be to have players I and II, after repeating the ad lib. bar suitably excessively, end up by dueling each other with their bows, letting them fence their way off the stage, and leaving the harpsichordist to wander off whenever he notices that the soloists are gone. Other possibilities may occur to the scholarly performer.

*Notes by Professor Peter Schickele*