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Vivaldi fanciers may know of the Ospedale Della Pietà, the orphanage in Venice where that composer spent much of his career, teaching music to young women. But for most music lovers, the Pietà undoubtedly remains an abstraction.

The searching and virtuosic Italian violinist Fabio Biondi and his excellent period ensemble, Europa Galante, fleshed out skeletal notions of the institution and its denizens at Zankel Hall on Saturday evening in a revelatory program, “Chiara’s Diary: A Life at the Pietà Orphanage in Venice, 1730-1770.” The concert largely replicated their fine 2014 CD, “Il Diario di Chiara” (Glossa Music), which comes with an even more valuable DVD, a beautiful and touching documentary by Lucrezia Le Moli and Mr. Biondi, with fragmentary performances by Europa Galante.

Mr. Biondi, in his various accounts of the Pietà, both narrows and broadens the context, simultaneously sketching the life story of one of the foundlings, Chiara, and noting how musical activities at the Pietà reflected the larger shift in Europe from complex Baroque toward streamlined Classical styles.

Chiara, who was abandoned on the orphanage’s steps at the age of 2 months in 1718 and died there in 1791, was evidently a commanding violin virtuoso, second at the Pietà only to her teacher Anna Maria. (She also sang and played viola d’amore and organ.) Vivaldi dedicated two concertos to Chiara, and Antonio Martinelli, a later “maestro di strumenti” at the Pietà, several more.

Neither Vivaldi nor Martinelli is entirely central to this story, though each was represented by two works in the Zankel program. Other more or less formative figures associated with the Pietà, like Giovanni Porta, Nicola Porpora, Andrea Bernasconi, Fulgenso Perotti and Gaetano Latilla, were also included. Clearly, to judge from the later works, all signs were pointing toward a new era and the so-called galant style, which would stress, in Mr. Biondi’s words, “a straightforward and cheerful melodicism.”

Many of these works have come down incomplete, and the editions here were listed as arrangements by Mr. Biondi, who, as soloist, also supplied cadenzas in Martinelli’s Violin Concerto in E. The fascinating cadenzas in Martinelli’s Viola d’Amore Concerto in D and in a movement for violin and organ by Perotti were credited to Chiara.

The Galante performances, led from the violin by Mr. Biondi, were typically energetic and refined, and beautifully suited to the differing qualities of each work. But the Chiara project as a whole amounts to so much more than the sum of these musical parts.