

Lachenmann Music

Ensemble Castor – biography

Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt (violin)

Claudia Delago-Norz (violin)

Martin Kalista (violin)

Peter Aigner (viola)

Hana Hobiger (viola)

Philipp Comploi (violoncello)

Barbara Fischer (double bass)

Erich Traxler (harpsichord)

Ensemble Castor is one of Austria's most distinguished ensembles specialising in period-instrument performances of Baroque chamber music. Founded in 2010 by the violinist Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt, this renowned ensemble from Linz is dedicated to the historically informed performance of music from the 16th to 18th centuries.

Named after the twin star Castor, the ensemble is distinguished by its uncompromising musical interplay that combines technical virtuosity with a passionate joy of performing.

Comprising top-class Austrian and international musicians, its musical focus is on the Italian Seicento, the Venetian school, and the rediscovery and exploration of forgotten Baroque gems from Upper Austria and Bavaria.

The ensemble regularly performs at renowned international festivals (including the International Baroque Days at Melk Abbey, the Carinthian Summer, the Handel Festival Halle, the Boston Early Music Festival, Vancouver Early Music Festival, Frankfurt Monastery Concerts, Innsbruck Festival, Bad Arolsen Festival, and the Danube Festival), as well as in major concert halls such as the Brucknerhaus in Linz and the Elbphilharmonie.

In addition to purely instrumental concerts, the Castor Ensemble collaborates closely with leading international figures in early music, including the Italian Baroque violinist Enrico Onofri and outstanding vocal soloists such as Silvia Frigato, Alois Mühlbacher and Christina Gansch. In recognition of its artistic achievements, the ensemble was awarded the City of Linz's Kulturförderungspreis.

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Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt

Born in Linz, she received her first violin lessons from Gunar Letzbor. After graduating from the Akademisches Gymnasium Linz, she studied violin at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg, where she discovered her passion for Baroque music and the Baroque violin at an early stage. During this time, she began her studies with Hiro Kurosaki and Michi Gaigg. After completing her diploma in Salzburg in both Instrumental and Vocal Pedagogy (IGP) and Performance (Konzertfach), she continued her studies of the Baroque violin with Andrew Manze and Ingrid Seifert at the Royal College of Music in London, where she completed a postgraduate degree with distinction. In June 2012, she completed a Master's degree with distinction under Michi Gaigg at the Anton Bruckner Private University. She subsequently continued her studies with Enrico Onofri in Italy, with whom she regularly performs as a concert partner.

In 2016, Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt was invited for the first time to serve as concertmaster at the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, for the XL Project with Howard Arman. She is a member of the orchestra Il Pomo d'Oro. Numerous engagements have taken her to some of the most prestigious festivals in Europe and South America.

Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt also serves on the board of Musica Sacra Linz. She worked as a teacher for more than ten years within the Upper Austrian State Music School System and is passionately committed to music and music education. She is also deeply dedicated to supporting regional and emerging young artists.

Claudia Delago-Norz

Claudia Delago-Norz initially studied modern violin at the Mozarteum in Innsbruck before specializing in Historically Informed Performance Practice in London. In 2012, the Tyrolean violinist graduated with distinction from the Master's programme in Baroque violin at the Royal Academy of Music. Her teachers included Walter Reiter, Elizabeth Wallfisch and Rachel Podger.

Today, Claudia divides her time between Innsbruck and London, enjoying a diverse career as a freelance musician and teacher. She is a permanent member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (UK), performing under conductors such as Maxim Emelyanychev, Riccardo Minasi, Adam Fischer and András Schiff. She regularly performs with ensembles including the Academy of Ancient Music, Opera Settecento and The Mozartists, and frequently serves as concertmaster and section leader with the Tiroler Barockinstrumentalisten and the Academia Jacobus Stainer. Claudia is particularly passionate about her own ensemble, Klingzeug, whose debut album *Memento Mori* was released on the international label BIS.

Since 2014, she has taught Historical Performance Practice and Baroque violin at the Tyrolean State Conservatory. Together with her colleague Anne-Suse Enßle, she also directs the Early Music Academy programme.

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Martin Kalista

Martin Kalista's musical career began after graduating from the Prague Conservatory, when he joined the orchestra of the Prague State Opera as a section leader. Already during this time, he developed a strong interest in historically informed performance practice, which subsequently became the central focus of his artistic work.

Today, as an accomplished freelance musician, Martin Kalista is a sought-after collaborator with renowned ensembles such as the L'Orfeo Barockorchester, Collegium 1704, the Deutsche Händel-Solisten, L'Onda Armonica and Ensemble Castor. In this capacity, he has worked extensively with internationally acclaimed figures in the music world, including Michi Gaigg, Václav Luks, Sergio Azzolini, Attilio Cremonesi, Lars Ulrik Mortensen and Andrea Marcon.

The exceptionally broad range of Martin Kalista's repertoire is documented in numerous CD recordings. These span a wide spectrum, from Baroque music by J.-Ph. Rameau, J. S. Bach and G. Ph. Telemann, through the pre-Classical period, including works by G. Chr. Wagenseil and I. Holzbauer, to compositions by Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Smetana. His extensive concert activity as a soloist and chamber musician has taken Martin Kalista to concert stages throughout Europe, as well as to South Africa, Canada and the United States.

Peter Aigner

Peter Aigner received his musical training at the Bruckner Conservatory in Linz, studying with Franz Wall, and at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where his teachers included Hatto Beyerle and Thomas Kakuska. He also attended masterclasses with, among others, members of the La Salle Quartet.

Peter Aigner was principal violist of the "ensemble aktuell" under Franz Welser-Möst and of the "Wiener Akademie" orchestra (1992–2013). From 2002 to 2022, he was a member of the OÖ. David Trio. He also created an arrangement of Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* for viola, piano and actor. He regularly performs with ensembles such as Ars Antiqua Austria, Les Musiciens du Louvre and Concentus Musicus Wien. As a soloist, he has performed at venues and festivals including the Musikverein in Vienna, the Carinthian Summer Festival and the Prague Spring Festival. He has taught at the Neuhofen/Krems Music School and has led workshops at institutions including the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. His most recent CD releases include the complete string trios by Johann Nepomuk David on CPO and Anton Bruckner's String Quintet on GRAMOLA.

Since 2007, he has served as artistic director of the "International Chamber Music Days St. Marien", and since 2017 as chairman of the Brucknerbund Ansfelden. For the anniversary year marking 200 years since the birth of Anton Bruckner, Peter Aigner curated a series of events for the Linz-Land district. From 2026 onwards, he will serve as artistic director of the "Brucknertage St. Florian".

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Hana Hobiger

Hana Hobiger is an Australian-Swiss violist with a particular focus on chamber music and historically informed performance practice. She studied at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University in Australia and at the University Mozarteum Salzburg, where she completed her Master's degree with Veronika Hagen and her postgraduate studies with Thomas Riebl. In the field of historically informed performance practice, she received important artistic impulses through chamber music and Baroque orchestra projects with, among others, Midori Seiler, Mayumi Hirasaki, Vittorio Ghielmi, Alfredo Bernardini and Marcello Gatti.

Hana regularly performs on both modern and historical viola with ensembles such as Ensemble Castor, Bach Consort Wien, Wiener Akademie and Haydn Philharmonie. Her orchestral experience also includes performances with the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg and Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra. Chamber music is a particular focus of her artistic work; in 2026, she co-founded the Trio Noria.

Philipp Comploi

Philipp Comploi grew up in Salzburg and South Tyrol. At the age of seven, he asked for a cello, got one, and has rarely been seen without his instrument ever since. Today, he is a sought-after solo cellist, performing with ensembles including the La Folia Barockorchester, the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble and the Wiener Akademie Orchestra, as well as a chamber musician with ensembles such as Trio Alba, Quadriga Consort, Ensemble Delirio and Ensemble Castor. His concert engagements have taken him around the world and to major festivals and concert halls, including the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Berlin, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Heidelberger Frühling, Teatro Gran Rex in Buenos Aires and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

To date, Philipp has recorded numerous CDs for labels including MDG (Musikproduktion Dabringhaus & Grimm), Carpe Diem, Challenge, SONY Classical and Deutsche Harmonia Mundi. His recordings have received awards including the Pasticcio Prize from Austrian radio station Ö1 and the Opus Klassik. He plays a violoncello made by Anthony Posch in 1721.

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Barbara Fischer

Barbara Fischer attended the Music High School in Innsbruck before studying double bass with Walter Rumer at the Tyrolean State Conservatory and with Frank Reinecke at the University Mozarteum Salzburg. Already during her school years, she developed an interest in historically informed performance practice.

Today, she works as a freelance musician and regularly performs with a wide range of historically informed ensembles in Austria and abroad, including *Barruca*, *Ensemble Castor*, *La Banda*, *Europa Galante*, *Les Passions de l'Ame*, *Concentus Musicus Wien*, *Ensemble Pallidor* and *Paluselli-Consort*, among others. Her musical work has taken her to major festivals such as the *Chopin Festival Warsaw*, the *Innsbruck Festival of Early Music*, *Styriarte*, the *Carinthian Summer Festival*, *Trigonale* and the *Aix-en-Provence Opera Festival*, among many others.

Alongside her career as a freelance musician, she also works as a qualified psychosocial counsellor, mental coach and coach, with a particular focus on resilience and personal development.

Erich Traxler

Erich Traxler is a harpsichordist and specialist in historical keyboard instruments, with a particular focus on music from 1600 to 1800. His concert activities include performances as a chamber musician, soloist and conductor with various ensembles, including the L'Orfeo Barockorchester, Ars Antiqua Austria, Ensemble Castor and Ensemble Pallidor. His concert tours have taken him to most European countries, as well as the USA, South America, South Africa and Japan. Numerous CD, video and radio recordings document his artistic work.

Erich Traxler received his musical training in Linz and Vienna, studying with, among others, Michael Radulescu, August Humer, Wolfgang Glüxam, Gordon Murray, Brett Leighton and Augusta Campagne. He continued his studies in Basel at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, where he received important artistic impulses from musicians such as Andrea Marcon, Wolfgang Zerer, Jean-Claude Zehnder and Jesper Christensen. As an organist, he won first prizes at international organ competitions in Goldrain, Italy (2003), and Bochum, Germany (2005).

From 2005 to 2018, Erich Traxler taught at the Vienna Conservatory Private University. Since 2018, he has been Professor of Harpsichord at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna.