

MUSICA SPIRA

An Extraordinary Innovation

Virtuosic Women in the Italian Courts

WASHINGTON, DC

IN-PERSON CONCERT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25 | 8pm

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Le tre grazie a Venere

Bella madre d'Amore, anco non ti ramembra che nuda, havesti di bellezza il grido In sul Troiano lido dal giudice Pastore? Onde, se nuda piace infin a gl'occhi di bifolchi i dei. Vanarella che sei! Perchè vuoi tu con tanti addobi e tanti ricoprirti a gl'amanti, O vesti le tue Gratie e i nudi Amori. Oh getta ancor tu fuori gl'arnesi, i manti e i veli! Di quelle care membra, nulla si celi. Tu ridi e non rispondi. Ah, tu le copri sì, tu le nascondi, che fai ch'invoglia più che più s'apprezza la negata bellezza.

Beautiful mother of Love, do you still not remember that naked, your beauty won the prize of the shepherd judge on the Trojan shore, where your nakedness pleased at last the eyes of the vulgar gods. How vain you are! Why do you wish to cover your charms with such adornments? Or to clothe your Graces or your naked Cupids? Oh throw away your contraptions, your cloaks and your veils. Nothing should hide those dear parts. You laugh, but do not reply. Ah, you cover them, yes, you hide them! For you tempt those more who appreciate your denied beauty.

Lagrimie mie

Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Perché non isfogate il fier dolore
Che mi toglie'l respiro e opprime il core?
Lidia, che tant'adoro,
Perch'un guardo pietoso, ahi, mi donò,
Il paterno rigor l'imprigionò.
Tra due mura rinchiusa
Sta la bella innocente,
Dove giunger non può raggio di sole;
E quel che più mi duole
Ed' accresc'al mio mal tormenti e pene,
È che per mia cagione
Provi male il mio bene.
E voi, lumi dolenti, non piangete?
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Lidia, ahimè, veggio mancarmi
L'idol mio che tanto adoro;
Sta colei tra duri marmi,
Per cui spiro e pur non moro.
Se la morte m'è gradita,
Hor che son privo di spene,
Dhe [deh], toglietemi la vita,
Ve ne prego, aspre mie pene.
Ma ben m'accorgo che per tormentarmi
Maggiormente la sorte
Mi niega anco la morte.

My tears, why do you hold back?
Why do you not let burst forth the pain
that takes my breath and oppresses my heart?
Because she looked on me with a favorable glance,
Lidia, whom I so much adore,
is imprisoned by her stern father.
Between two walls
the beautiful innocent one is enclosed,
where the sun's rays can't reach her;
and what grieves me most
and adds torment and pain to my suffering,
is that my love
suffers on my account.
And you, grieving eyes, you don't weep?
My tears, why do you hold back?
Alas, I miss Lidia,
the idol that I so much adore;
she's enclosed in hard marble,
the one for whom I sigh and yet do not die.
Because I welcome death,
now that I'm deprived of hope,
Ah, take away my life,
I implore you, my harsh pain.
But I well realize that to torment me
all the more
fate denies me even death.

Se dunque è vero, o Dio,
Che sol del pianto mio
Il rio destino ha sete,
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?

Si come crescon

Si come crescon alla terra i fiori
Così a voi la bellezza o mio tesoro
E a me'l foco ond'io mi struggo e moro.

Si come or cresce agli augelli il canto
Così a voi la virtude o mia speranza
E a me un dolor tal ch'ogn'altro avanza.

Ma si come tra fronde e fior, e canti
Cangiansi in frutti, così in gran pietade
Cangiate ancor voi donna la beltade.

Il mio martir

Il mio martir tengo celat'al cuore. Se lo dimostr'ohimè
puoco mi giova. Nessun cred'il mio mal se non ch'il
prova.

Qual si può dir

Qual si può dir maggiore
Pianta dal ciel discesa e in terra nata.
Ch' ambrosia dolce tanto delicata.

Ma se in un verde ramo
Si vedon le virtud' insieme a gara
Unirsi e a tutti dar vivanda rara.

Fa non meno

Fa non meno
Dal bel seno
Mentre tace
Fiera tromba in lieta pace.
Fa sentire o Nume amabile
Di sua gloria il suon mirabile.

Qui si può dire

Qui si può dire
Che del gioire
Ponesse Amor la sede.
Il Dio del giorno
Girando intorno
Coppia simil non vede.
Potente Alcina

Thus since it's true, oh God,
that wicked destiny
thirsts only for my weeping,
tears, why do you hold back?

Like the flowers grow on the ground
Alike grows beauty on you, my darling
And alike on me the fire from which I suffer and die.

Like now the song of birds grows
Alike in you grows virtue, my hope
And in me such a pain that goes above all.

But as in the foliage the flowers and songs
Change into fruits, so into great pity
You change your beauty again, woman.

I keep my suffering hidden in my heart. If I show it,
alas, it helps little, no-one believes my pain, if he does
not suffer.

What greater plant from Heaven,
born on the earth can there be than sweet Ambrosia,
so delicate.

But on a green branch are seen
united virtues together in rivalry,
giving rare sustenance to all.

Do so nonetheless,
from your fair breast
while is silent
the fierce trumpet in happy peace.
Make audible, o kindly Deity,
the wonderful sound of his glory.

Here it can be said
that of joy
Love places his seat.
The God of day,
revolving all around
does not behold a similar couple.
Powerful Alcina

Di noi Regina
D'Amor trionfa e godi.
Tra queste piante
Tuo vago amante
Stringi tra mille nodi.
Gentil Ruggiero,
D'Amor guerriero,
Ben ti puoi dir beato.
Servo d'Amore
Trapassa l'ore
Al tuo bel Sole allato.
Trapassa l'ore
Al tuo bel Sole allato.

Queen of us all
triumphs and delights in love.
Amongst these plants
thy charming lover
you hold with a thousand knots.
Noble Ruggiero
warrior of Love
well can you be called happy.
A slave of Love,
he passes the hours
beside your fine Sun.
He passes the hours
beside your fine Sun.

O bei pensieri

O bei pensieri volate volate,
Volate alla beltate che il Ciel innamora.
Là vè s'infiora più vaga l'erbetta.
Ivi n'aspetta.
Pronti desiri, correte, correte,
correte, dite, che liete venghiamo cantando.
Là vè vagando trà dolci concenti,
scherzano i venti.

O fine thoughts, fly
to the beauty which enchants Heaven.
There, look, the grass is decked more prettily with
flowers. There await her.
Lively desires, run,
say that gladly we come, singing.
There, look, drifting in sweet harmony
the winds sport.

Io veggio i campi

Io veggio i campi verdeggiar fecondi
E le rive fiorite e i colli intorno
E gravidi di pomi arborei e frondi
E d'infinite ville il lido adorno
Sento i venti spirar dolci e giocondi
Serenissimo il sol qui spiega il giorno
Scendete omai prendete alfin riposo
Sperando ai nostri affanni il ciel pietoso.

I see the fertile green fields
And the flowering banks and the hills
And full with apples, trees and leaves
The adorned beach is of infinite villas
I feel the winds blowing sweet and joyful
The sun serenely enlightens the day
Go down now and take some rest
Hoping for a compassionate heaven for our troubles.

Occhi del pianto mio

Occhi, del pianto mio cagione, e del mio duro empio
martire, lasciatemi vi prego oramai morire. E con morte
finir mio stato rio. Che'l vostro darmi aita talor con
dolce et amorosi guardo, più dogliosa mia vita rende e
cresce la fiamma ond'io semp'ardo.

Eyes, cause of my tears, and of my hard, wicked suffering,
let me please die at last. And with death, end my
wretched state. For when you give me help with sweet
and loving glances, it makes my life more painful and
increases the flame which consumes me always.

T'amo mia vita

"T'amo mia vita", la mia cara vita dolcemente mi dice,
e in questa sola si soave parola par che trasformi lieta-
mente il core per farmene signore. O voce di dolcezza,
e di diletto, prendila tosto, amore; stampala nel mio
petto, spiri solo per lei l'anima mia, "t'amo mia vita", la
mia vita sia.

"I love you my life", my dear love sweetly tells me,
and with this single lovely word it seems my heart is
joyfully transformed, to make me its master. Oh voice
of sweetness and delight, take it quickly, love; stamp
it on my heart. Breathe only for her, my soul, "I love
you my life", that you should be my life.

Tropo ben può

Tropo ben può questo tiranno amore per far soggetto un core. Se libertà non val, ne val fuggire, a chi non può soffrire. Quando penso tal'hor com'arde e punge, com'il suo giogo è dispietato e grave, l' dico al core sciolto non l'aspettar, che fai? Fuggilo sì che non ti giunga mai. Ma non so come il lusinghier mi giunge. È sì dolce, e sì vago, e sì soave, ch'i dico ah core stolto, perche fuggito l'hai? Fuggilo sì che non ti fugga mai.

Fan battaglia

Fan battaglia i miei pensieri et al cor dan fiero assalto. Un mi dice: in van tu sperì, perché Filli ha il sen di smalto. Un poi con baldanza il corpo ribatte e'l cor mi combatte gridando: speranza. ...si vincerà ...si perderà. Fuggi, fuggi, timor, fuggi sù sù! Taci, taci speranza tu, non più! Fermate, tacete, pensieri, non più. Così al core empì guerrieri dan battaglia, fan guerra i miei pensieri.

He is too well, this tyrant Love at subjugating a heart, if freedom or escape are of no avail to one who does not suffer. When I consider how cruel, burning, stinging and heavy his yoke is, I say to my unbound heart, do not delay, what are you doing? Run so he never reaches you. But I know not how his flattery reaches me. It is so sweet, so delightful, so gentle, That I say, oh foolish heart why did you fly from him? Escape from him that he should never fly from you.

My thoughts are waging war and fiercely assaulting my heart. One says to me: you hope in vain, because Filli has a heart of enamel. One then with boldness counterattacks and batters my heart shouting: hope. ...If it wins ...if it loses. Flee fear, flee away. Silence, hope, no more of you. Stop, quiet, no more thoughts. So crowded warriors battle against my heart, my thoughts are waging war.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The *concerto delle donne*, an ensemble of virtuosic women singers and instrumentalists at the court of Ferrara, became the envy of numerous Italian courts in the late sixteenth century. Formed by Duke Alfonso II and Duchess Margherita Gonzaga, the ensemble heightened the Este family's grandeur and provided a performance venue for professional women musicians. For centuries, female music-making in convents had been part of the Italian tradition, and amateur women had supplied courtly musical entertainments in Ferrara long before the *concerto delle donne* was formed. What was innovative about the Duke's ensemble, however, was that many of its members were employed as salaried musicians, often commanding extraordinarily high fees. Furthermore, several of the women were recruited from neighboring courts and relocated to Ferrara, which was unusual at the time. Heightening the spectacle surrounding the women was the Duke's desire to keep their performances and the music written for them veiled in mystery. Only exclusive audiences were invited to witness the wonders of the so-called *musica secreta*.

Alfonso II decided to create such an ensemble after being mesmerized by a performance of Tarquinia Molza,

a court singer and instrumentalist in Modena in 1568. The Duke's initial ensemble consisted of noblewomen with good singing voices, but little musical training. After his marriage to Margherita Gonzaga in 1579, the performance level of the *concerto delle donne* increased dramatically. The new Duchess was particularly invested in developing a musical ensemble that would elevate the value and quality of female music at the court. At her request, the Duke negotiated the hire of Laura Peverara (c.1550-1601), a famous Mantuan singer and harpist. Several months later, he hired the Ferrarese singer and lutenist Anna Guarini (1563-1598), and in 1582, the Mantuan singer and violist da gamba Livia d'Arco (c.1565-1611) earned a position in the *concerto delle donne*. These three women formed the core of the ensemble, and their virtuosic performances spurred a significant output of repertoire in Ferrara and beyond.

Many who had the opportunity to experience the women's music-making left awestruck accounts of the ensemble's abilities. The Italian music commentator Vincenzo Giustiniani, for example, wrote:

The ladies were highly competent and vied with each other not only in regard to the timbre and training of

their voices, but also the design of exquisite passages delivered at opportune points, but not in excess. Furthermore, they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing; now slow, breaking off with sometimes a gentle sigh, now winging long passages legato or detached, now groups, now leaps, now with long trills, now with short, and again with sweet running passages sung softly, to which sometimes one heard an echo answer unexpectedly.

Today's program is a celebration of the musical accomplishments of Peverara, Guarini, and d'Arco, highlighting works written for them as well as successive pieces that were inspired by their performances.

In addition to publishing eight collections of songs and being credited with codifying the cantata genre, Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677) was also a skilled singer and instrumentalist. As early as 1634, she was performing her own compositions at meetings of the renowned Venetian *Accademia degli Incogniti*. Several years later, her father founded the *Accademia degli Unisoni* as a means of further promoting her music. Although she never had the support of a court patron or church employer, Strozzi published more music in her lifetime than any of her contemporaries. Her compositions were included in collections that made their way across the rest of continental Europe and England. *Lagrima mie*, a poignant lament, depicts emotive text painting that was particularly characteristic of Strozzi's cantatas.

The late sixteenth-century canzonetta form was used by composers as a technical exercise. At the age of seventeen, Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) published his *Canzonette a tre voci*. Throughout the collection, he demonstrates that he was already familiar with the more advanced compositions of Luzzasco Luzzaschi with his treatment of dissonance and use of three-voice texture. Luzzaschi was the composer most closely associated with the *concerto delle donne*, and Monteverdi's canzonetti were published in 1584 at the height of the ensemble's fame, suggesting that he was imitating the style. The solo *Quel sguardo sdegnosetto* was part of Monteverdi's 1632 *Scherzi musicali*, or musical jokes.

As the highest paid musician at the gynocentric Medici Court, Francesca Caccini (1587-after 1641) is also the first known woman in Western Europe to compose a staged musical-dramatic work in an operatic style. Her 1625 *La liberazione di Ruggiero* is a comic portrayal of

Ruggiero's rescue from the island of the sorceress Alcina. Throughout the work, Caccini composes in trio texture for Alcina's three *damigelle* who accompany the sorceress on her emotional journey from blissful infatuation to vengeful rage. In addition to her work as a court composer, Caccini also performed regularly and taught young noblewomen. Her 1618 *Il Primo libro delle musiche* is a collection of songs of varying difficulty levels for 1-2 voices and continuo that span the breadth of compositional styles of the day, suggesting that the volume served a pedagogical function.

Luzzasco Luzzaschi (1545-1607) was appointed principal organist to the Este family in Ferrara in 1564, and he eventually became the music instructor, director, accompanist, and composer for the *concerto delle donne*. His 1601 *Madrigali per cantare et sonare* for 1-3 sopranos contains works from the secret repertory performed by Guarini, Peverara, d'Arco and their colleagues in the 1580s and 90s. While all of the music on today's program exhibits virtuosity, Luzzaschi's works are by far the most complex. They feature intricate interweaving of the voices, extensive written-out ornamentation, and unparalleled use of dissonance. Luigi Rossi (c.1597-1653) was active as a composer and keyboardist in Naples, Rome, and Paris, writing operas for both the papal family and the French royal court. Our program concludes with his lively *Fan battaglia*.

Laura Peverara, Anna Guarini, and Livia d'Arco achieved monumental success in their posts as professional musicians in the 1580s. Peverara was so acclaimed that musical anthologies were compiled in her honor, and several laudatory poems celebrating her accomplishments were published in the 1580s. By the 1590s, however, the secretive concerts in Ferrara had mostly ceased. Political upheaval resulted in the fall of the Este family in 1597, and Peverara and d'Arco faded into obscurity. Guarini was tragically accused of infidelity and brutally murdered by her husband and brother while she lay ill in bed in 1598. Although the pinnacle of their professional accomplishments lasted less than a decade, the extraordinary music-making of the *concerto delle donne* served as a model for other Italian courts for years to come. Highly-paid virtuosic women musicians became a coveted commodity at courts, thus paving the way for women singers' imminent appearances on the seventeenth-century opera stage.

-- Paula Maust, 2022

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

(Artistic Directors Maust and Srinivasan biographies in program book)

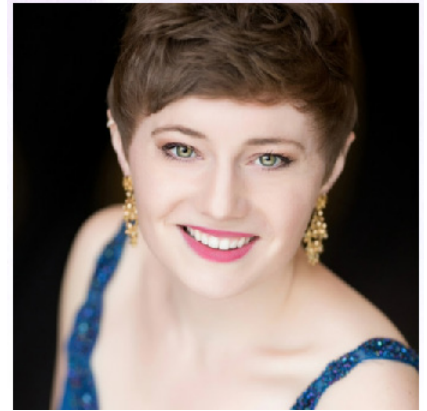
Recognized for having “the richest, most buttery tone” (Washington Classical Review) soprano **Julie Bosworth** finds purpose in collaborating with artists across a vast array of musical genres. This season, Julie looks forward to singing solos with the Handel Choir of Baltimore in their annual Messiah, True Concord in Bach’s Mass in B minor, and American Bach Soloists in concerts of virtuosic early 17th century Italian music.



As soloist and ensemble member, she performs regularly with American Bach Soloists, Tempesta di Mare, Grammy-nominated True Concord, The Thirteen, The Broken Consort, Mountainside Baroque, Kinnara, The Peabody Consort,

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Hesperus, Les Canards Chantants, The New Consort, Chantry, and Istanpitta. Julie can be heard on “Isle of Majesty”, an album of original works by Emily Lau, and The Thirteen’s “Truth and Fable” produced by Acis.

DC-based soprano **Crossley Hawn** enjoys an engaging career in various styles of music. She has performed as soloist with ensembles including The Folger Consort, The City Choir of Washington, Cathedral Choral Society, The Washington Bach Consort,



Choralis, Chatham Baroque, and Cathedra. She is a member of Eya: Ensemble for Medieval Music, an award-winning female trio. Crossley has also appeared chorally with The Washington Bach Consort, True Concord, Kinnara, Chorosynthesis, Cathedra, Chantry, The Thirteen, Bridge, The District Eight, and the U.S. Air Force Singing Sergeants. Crossley enjoys employment at The National Shrine and at the Washington National Cathedral. She recently served as Project Manager and ensemble singer for Experiential Orchestra’s GRAMMY-winning premiere recording of Dame Ethel Smyth’s *The Prison*. Crossley is an Artist Director of Bridge, a professional vocal chamber ensemble specializing in new works for voices.