



Monteverdi String Band

The Madrigal Reimagined

National Centre for Early Music

12 July 2021 6.30 pm & 8.45 pm

Online Premiere

16 July 2021 7.30 pm

Monteverdi String Band

Oliver Webber, Theresa Caudle *violins*

Wendi Kelly, David Brooker *violas*

Mark Caudle *bass violin*

with

Hannah Ely *soprano*

Toby Carr *lute, theorbo*

The Madrigal Reimagined

Canzona 18

Claudio Merulo (1533–1604)

Cruda Amarilli

Johann Nauwach (1595–1630)

Cruda Amarilli

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Reading: *The Imperfections of Modern Music*

Giovanni Artusi (1540–1613)

Prelude

Toby Carr (b. 1988)

Diminutions on *Anchor che col partire*
(Cipriano de Rore, c.1515–1565)

Giovanni Battista Bovicelli (1550–94)

Diminutions on *Signor mio caro*
(de Rore)

Oliver Webber

Reading: *Pleasant and Unpleasant Sounds*

Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675)

Entrata and Ballo (from *Il Ballo dell'Ingrate*)

Monteverdi

Ah, dolente partita

Ahi, troppo è duro (from *Il Ballo dell'Ingrate*)

Reading: *Of the music of our age*

Pietro della Valle (1586–1652)

Diminutions for soprano and bass on *Vestiva i colli*
(Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, c.1525–1594)

Oliver Webber

Diminutions on *Così le chiome mie*
(Palestrina)

Oliver Webber

Reading: *You powers that sway the world beneath the earth* Publius Ovidius Naso
(43 BC–c. AD 18)

(translated by George Sandys, 1578–1644)

From *L'Orfeo*

Toccata

Prologue

Lasciate i monti

Ahi caso acerbo

Ma io ch'in questa lingua

Sinfonia (Act II)

Sinfonia (Act III)

Vanne Orfeo

Moresca

Monteverdi

The poet, staunch defender of Dante and member of the fascinating and fruitful Strozzi family, Giambattista the Blind, published a treatise on the madrigal which he presented at the Accademia Fiorentina in 1574. From this we learn that it was a short poetic form of variable rhyme and structure, ideally suited to the depiction of gentle scenes of love; tragic love, great deeds, or epic romances, by contrast, were better represented by more serious forms such as the sonnet, canzone or the heroic stanzas of ottava rima.

In an attempt to encapsulate the madrigal's elusive charm, Strozzi uses the phrase *un non so che di frizzante* – a little something sparkling...or perhaps, according to some dictionaries of the period, stinging. The range of contemporary definitions of *frizzante* is intriguing: for John Florio, in 1610, it can be 'smacking in taste as good wine', while the related verb *frizzare* means 'to bite, to burne or be tarte upon the tongue', or 'to quaver and run nimbly upon any instrument'; the Accademia della Crusca, the newly formed authority on the developing Italian vernacular, offers an even wider range of connotations: a stinging sensation in the skin, the feeling in the mouth of certain kinds of wine, or, curiously, 'false, graceful writing which moves' – and it is perhaps this enticing cross section of qualities and associations which gave enduring life to a form which, on the surface, may not seem to have offered much in the way of profundity.

Musicians quickly came to love the madrigal, and honed their compositional craft in book after book of settings, most commonly (at first) for four or five voices; the paradoxical, multifaceted quality of *frizzante* seemed to spark a creative spirit in the best composers, whose endeavours enabled this relatively minor poetic form to lead an extraordinary, independent life and to play a decisive role in the transformation of musical style.

Over the course of the next two generations, the musical embodiment of the madrigal evolved in a number of different directions: madrigals are at the heart of the transgressive *seconda prattica*, in which harmonic conventions were deliberately subverted for emotional impact, as we hear so powerfully in Monteverdi's fourth and fifth books. Instrumental performances transformed madrigals into virtuoso showpieces through spectacular ornamentation; and madrigal-writing techniques were used to profound effect in some of the most moving scenes composed for the stage.

Today's programme explores some of these reinventions and transformations, in a variety of textures from solo voice or violin with lute, through strings alone, to the full ensemble. We present a series of five, themed, tableaux:

Cruda Amarilli, the madrigal which inspired Monteverdi's original 'sin', inspires the first scene: after an opening canzona for strings, we hear a lesser-known solo setting of the madrigal by the composer Johann Nauwach, student of Heinrich Schütz, followed by the famous Monteverdi version played by string band alone.

The fluid, twisting diminutions of singer Giovanni Battista Bovicelli form the heart of scene two, in which, after a short lute improvisation, we hear ornamental versions of two madrigals by Cipriano de Rore. *Anchor che col partire*, with the essential message that 'parting is such sweet sorrow', is heard in Bovicelli's own hands, while *Signor mio caro*, in which Petrarch mourns, at a distance, the death of both his lover and his lord, has been ornamented for violin by Oliver Webber in the style of Bovicelli, combining measured *passaggi* with syncopations and rubato to create an ethereal, other-worldly effect.

The next scene focuses on the pain of departure with no hope of return: the poignant final farewell of *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*, underpinned with bitter harmonic knife-twists, nestles with the hopeless lover's lament *Ah, dolente partita*, performed with all its grating dissonance by strings alone.

In scene four we visit the 'modern' ornamental style of Francesco Rognoni, used as a model for our own diminutions on Palestrina's 'madrigal' version of the Petrarchan sonnet *Vestiva i colli*, a celebration of springtime and blossoming love; part one is set for voice and strings, part two (*Così le chiome mie*) for violin and lute. We conclude with a brief tour of one of Monteverdi's masterworks, *La Favola d'Orfeo*, in which the techniques developed in his madrigal books underpin an ancient tale of loss, redemption and the power of music. The prologue, containing

some of Monteverdi's most extraordinary monodic writing, uses an elaborate counterpoint of poetic and musical rhythm, which, in *La Musica's* own words, draws in our souls, ready to hear the story; there follow well-known scenes of celebration, tragedy and reconciliation. Although Orfeo's godly music won the day at first, he could not overcome his human frailties, and as the end of his story is celebrated with a joyful chorus and dance, we struggle to shake off the haunting memory of his loss, so powerfully imprinted on our souls by Monteverdi's virtuosic interplay of text, harmony and rhythm.

These musical vignettes are interspersed with readings, offering a flavour of the cultural milieu in which these transformations and re-imaginings were developing: the traditionalist Giovanni Artusi – hailed in the introductory sonnets to his book as a quasi-religious musical crusader against the 'heresy' of new practices – stubbornly misses the point of Monteverdi's new approach; the encyclopedist Emanuele Tesauro delights us with a virtuosic range of metaphors for ornamental singing; traveller, scholar and composer Pietro de la Valle marvels at the ornamental skills of ensemble musicians; and finally, Ovid, in the words of English traveller and poet George Sandys, unfurls Orfeo's ultimately futile rhetoric against the powers of the underworld.

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(all translations by Oliver Webber unless otherwise stated)

Johann Nauwach, *Cruda Amarilli*

From *Il Pastor Fido*, Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538-1612)

*Versi sciolti*¹

Cruda Amarilli², che co'l nome ancora,
D'amar, ahi lasso! amaramente insegni;
Amarilli, del candido ligustro
Più candid'e più bella,
Ma de l'aspido sordo
E più sord'e più fera e più fugace;
Poi che co'l dir t'offendo,
I mi morrò tacendo.

Cruel Amaryllis, whose very name
Teaches bitterly, alas, of love,
Amaryllis, whiter and more beautiful
Than the white privet,
But than the deaf adder
Deaf, fiercer, and more fleeting
Since in speaking I offend you
I will die in silence.

Alternative translation by Richard Fanshawe (1608-66):

O Amarillis, Authresse of my flame,
(Within my mouth how sweet now is thy name!
But in my heart how bitter!) Amarillis,
Fairer and whiter then the whitest Lilies,
But crueller then cruell Adders far,
Which having stung (least they should pitie) bar
Their ears and flie: If then by speaking I
Offend thee, I will hold my peace and die.

Cipriano de Rore, *Anchor che col partire*

Alfonso d'Avalos (1502-1546)

*Madrigal*³

Anchor che col partire
Io mi sento morire
Partir vorrei ogn'hor, ogni momento
Tant'è il piacer ch'io sento
De la vita ch'acquisto nel ritorno
Et così mill'e mille volte'l giorno
Partir da voi vorrei
Tanto son dolci gli ritorni miei.

Even though on parting
I feel myself dying
I would depart every hour, every
moment,
Such is the pleasure I feel
In the life I gain on my return
And so, a thousand, thousand times a day
Would I part from you,
So sweet are my returns.

¹ *Versi sciolti*, literally 'free lines' are a common poetic form in Italian plays in the 16th century. They have much more rhythmic variation than English blank verse, using a mixture of lines of seven and eleven syllables. *Versi sciolti* became the standard form for recitative.

² The speaker is Mirtillo, whose love for Amaryllis is – at this early stage of the play – hopeless, since she is promised to another.

³ This is in fact the only 'true' madrigal sung in the programme. The form is freer than the sonnet or canzona, with no fixed metre or rhyme.

Claudio Monteverdi, *Ahi troppo è duro* (*Il Ballo dell'ingrate*, final scene)

Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621)

Versi scolti

Ahi troppo, ah troppo è duro
Crudel sentenza e viè più cruda
pena
Tornar a lagrimar ne l'antro oscuro

Ah, too, too hard
Is the cruel sentence and even harsher
punishment
To return to weep in the dark cave

Aer sereno e puro
Addio per sempre, addio ò Cielo ò
sole
Addio lucide stelle
Apprendete pietà Donn'e Donzelle

Clear, pure air
Farewell for ever, farewell O Heaven, O sun
Farewell shining stars
Learn pity, ladies and maidens

Al fumo a' gridi a' pianti
A sempiterno affanno
Ahi dove son le pompe ove gli
amanti
Dove, dove sen vanno
Donne che sì pregiate al mondo
furo?

To the fumes, to the cries, to the weeping
To everlasting torment
Ah, where is the ceremony, where are the
lovers
Where, where are they going,
Ladies who once enjoyed such worldly esteem?

Aer sereno e puro
Addio per sempre, addio o Cielo o
sole
Addio lucide stelle
Apprendete pietà Donn'e Donzelle.

Clear, pure air
Farewell for ever, farewell O Heaven, O sun
Farewell shining stars
Learn pity, ladies and maidens.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Vestiva i colli*

Anonymous Petrarchist, 16th century

Sonnet (first part)

Vestiva i colli e le campagne intorno
La primavera di novelli onori
E spirava soavi arabi odori,
Cinta d'erbe, di fronde il crin
adorno,
Quando Licori, a l'apparir del
giorno,
Cogliendo di sua man purpurei fiori,
Mi disse in guidardon di tanti ardori:
A te li colgo et ecco, io te n'adorno.

Spring clothed the hills and countryside around
With fresh honours⁴
Wafting sweet Arabian fragrances,
Encircled by grasses, her hair adorned with
blossoms,
When Licori, at break of day,
Gathering purple flowers in his hand,
Said to me, in recompense for such longing,
I gather these for you, and see, I adorn you
with them.

⁴ *Novelli honori* was a common metaphor in the 16th and 17th centuries, with Petrarchan origins, for the budding flowers and fragrances of spring.

Claudio Monteverdi, from *L'Orfeo*
Alessandro Striggio (c. 1573-1630)

Prologo (La Musica)

*Hendecasyllable quatrains, ABBA*⁵

Dal mio Permessus⁶ amato à voi ne vegno,
Incliti Eroi, sangue gentil de' Regi,
Di cui narra la Fama eccelsi pregi,
Né giunge al ver, perch'è tropp'alto il segno⁷.

From my beloved Permessus I come to you,
Glorious heroes, noble blood of royalty,
Of whom Fame relates such high praises
Yet falls short of the truth, for the mark is too high.

Io la Musica son, ch'ai dolci accenti
Sò far tranquillo ogni turbato core,
Et hor di nobil ira, et hor d'Amore
Poss'infiammar le più gelate menti.

I am Music, who, with sweet accents,
Knows how to sooth every troubled heart,
And now with noble anger, now with love
Can inflame the iciest of minds.

Io su Cetera d'or cantando soglio,
Mortal orecchio lusingar talora;
E in questa guisa à l'armonia sonora
De la lira del ciel più l'alme invoglio.

Singing to my golden cithara, it is my wont
Now and then to flatter mortal ears;
And in this guise, I draw souls in
To the sonorous harmony of the heavenly lyre

Quinci à dirvi d'Orfeo desio mi sprona,
D'Orfeo che trasse al suo cantar le fère,
E servo fé l'Inferno à sue preghiere,
Gloria immortal di Pindo e d'Elicon.

And so, desire spurs me on to tell you of
Orpheus
Orpheus, whose singing drew in wild beasts,
And made Hell servant of his prayers,
Immortal glory of Pindus and Helicon.

Hor mentre i canti alterno, hor lieti, or mesti,
Non si mova Augellin fra queste piante,
Né s'oda in queste rive onda sonante,
Et ogni aurette in suo camin s'arresti.

Now while I sing now happily, now sadly,
Let no bird stir among these plants,
Nor murmuring waves be heard upon these shores,
And let every breeze stop in its path.

⁵ This became the standard form for the operatic prologue, with instrumental ritornelli, and sometimes simple choreographic steps, between quatrains.

⁶ Permessus was a river sacred to the muses. It is the first of three such sacred locations named in the prologue, the others being the mountain range Pindus, sacred to Apollo in particular, and the mountain Helicon, when the river Permessus rises.

⁷ This first quatrain is the expected flattering address to the ruling Gonzaga family.

Ma io ch'in questa lingua (Messaggiera)

Versi scolti

Ma io ch'in questa lingua
Ho portato il coltello
C'ha svenato ad Orfeo l'anima amante
Odiosa à i Pastori ed à le Ninfe
Odiosa à me stessa, ove m'ascondo?
Nottola infausta, il Sole fuggirò sempre
E in solitario speco
Menerò vita al mio dolore conforme.

But I, who with this tongue
Brought the knife
Which bled the life from Orpheus' loving
soul
Hateful to the shepherds and the nymphs
Hateful to myself, where can I hide?
An ill-fated bat, I will ever flee the sun,
And in a lonely cave
Lead a life fitting to my sorrow.

Vanne Orfeo (Choro)

Canzonetta melica, ottonari, ABABCC⁸

Vanne Orfeo, felice a pieno,
A goder celeste honore
La ve ben non mai vien meno,
La ve mai non fu dolore,
Mentr'altari, incensi e voti
Noi t'offriam lieti e devoti.

Go, Orpheus, full of joy
To enjoy heavenly honour
Where good never diminishes,
Where sorrow has never existed,
While we offer you altars, incense
And prayers, happy and devoted.

Così va chi non s'arretra
Al chiamar di Nume eterno,
Così gratia in Ciel impetra
Chi qua giù provo l'inferno;
E chi semina fra doglie
D'ogni gratia il frutto coglie.

Such is the fate of him
Who shrinks not from the call of the eternal
Gods,
Thus he gains heavenly grace
Who here below experienced hell;
And he who sows in sorrow
Gathers every grace's fruit.

⁸ The *canzonetta melica* was one of the new forms devised especially for musical setting around the turn of the 17th century. The use of even numbers of syllables per line (typically 4 or 8) favoured easy adaptation to a number of regular musical forms.

Hannah Ely read music at Manchester University before studying postgraduate piano at Trinity Laban. She is a founding member and manager of the Fieri Consort and also sings with ensembles Invocare, Siglo de Oro, Collegium Vocale Gent and Musica Secreta. In 2018 she completed a Masters of Advanced Studies in Advanced Vocal Ensemble Studies at Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Hannah made her opera debut at the Brighton Early Music Festival in 2015 in *La Liberazione di Ruggiero* by Francesca Caccini. She has since returned to BREMF to perform Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and in a double bill of Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and Monteverdi's *Il ballo delle ingrate*. Hannah was selected for the Handel House Talent young artist scheme 2018-19 and is a member of Dame Emma Kirkby's ensemble Dowland Works, with which she made her Wigmore Hall debut in 2019.

hannahely.co.uk/about

A lutenist and guitarist from London, **Toby Carr** is an active soloist, continuo player and chamber musician in the field of historically informed performance, bringing old music to new audiences in exciting and innovative ways. This has included working with the Academy of Ancient Music, Dunedin Consort and The English Concert, as well as augmenting the forces of the Royal Ballet, London Philharmonic Orchestra and RTE Symphony Orchestra. A specialist in the music of seventeenth-century Europe, Toby is particularly fond of the music of early baroque Italy and Restoration-era England.

tobycarr.co.uk

The **Monteverdi String Band** is dedicated to celebrating the sound and style of the early violin consort, in both well-established repertoire and creative new programmes. Our instruments are modelled on originals from the early decades of the seventeenth century using carefully-balanced, pure gut strings to give a rich, grounded and blended tone. Programming has been inspired by the rich cultural milieu of Italy c.1600: *Galileo*, based on the life, thought and music of the great scientist, premiered at the Brighton Early Music Festival in 2016; Monteverdi's *Combattimento* in its original context; an early incarnation of *The Madrigal Reimagined*, performed purely instrumentally. The idioms and literature of Monteverdi's time also inform the approach to well-known repertoire such as the unique Vespers and the genre-defining operas; our 2017 production of *L'Orfeo* in Brighton was co-directed by MSB's Oliver Webber. *MSB in focus* develops smaller-scale projects; the first of these, *Con Arte e Maestria*, in which Oliver Webber and Steven Devine explore virtuosic diminution repertoire from the dawn of the Baroque, was recorded for Resonus Classics for release in summer 2021.

monteverdistringband.com

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL is directed by Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation (registered charity number 1068331)

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