



Saturday 3 July, 6pm & 8pm

Royal Spa, Queen's Park

THE MADRIGAL REIMAGINED

Monteverdi String Band

Oliver Webber and Theresa Caudle *violin*

Wendi Kelly and David Brooker *viola*

Mark Caudle *bass violin*

with

Toby Carr *lute, theorbo*

Hannah Ely *soprano*

The music

Claudio Merulo 1533–1604

Canzona 18

Johann Nauwach 1595–1630

Cruda Amarilli

Claudio Monteverdi 1567–1643

Cruda Amarilli

Reading: **Giovanni Artusi** 1540–1613 The Imperfections of Modern Music

Toby Carr

Prelude

Giovanni Battista Bovicelli 1550–1594

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

Oliver Webber

Diminutions on *Signor mio caro*
(Cipriano de Rore)

Reading: **Emanuele Tesauro** 1592–1675 Pleasant and Unpleasant Sounds

Monteverdi

Entrata and Ballo (from *Il ballo delle ingrate*)
Dolente partita
Ahi, troppo è duro (from *Il ballo delle ingrate*)

Reading: **Pietro della Valle** 1586–1652 Of the music of our age

Oliver Webber

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

Reading: **Publius Ovidius Naso** 43BC–c.18AD
 You powers that sway the world beneath the earth
 translated by George Sandys 1578–1644

Monteverdi

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

The poet, staunch defender of Dante and member of the fascinating and fruitful Strozzi family, Giambattista the Blind, published a treatise on the madrigal in 1574; having outlined its form (short, with no fixed rhyme scheme or structure) and subject matter (gentle scenes of love), he encapsulates its elusive charm with the phrase *un non so che di frizzante* – a little something sparkling... or, according to contemporary dictionaries, stinging – and this intriguing duality, perhaps, is what 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 craft in book after book of settings, most commonly (at first) for 4 or 5 voices; their paradoxical *frizzante* seemed to spark a creative spirit in the best composers, who gave this minor poetic form an extraordinary, independent life which was to play a profound role in the transformation of musical style.

Over the course of the next two generations, we see madrigals at the heart of Monteverdi's transgressive *seconda prattica*, in which harmonic conventions were deliberately subverted for emotional impact; we see instrumental performances of madrigals transformed by spectacular ornamentation into virtuoso showpieces; and we see madrigal-writing techniques 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; the fluid, twisting diminutions of Bovicelli; the poignant farewell of *Il ballo delle ingrate*; the 'modern' ornamental style of Francesco Rognoni, used as a model for our own diminutions; and finally a brief tour of one of Monteverdi's masterworks, *La favola d'Orfeo*, in which the techniques forged in his madrigal books underpin a tale of loss, redemption and the power of music.

These are interspersed with readings, offering a flavour of the cultural milieu in which these transformations and re-imaginings were developing: the traditionalist Artusi, stubbornly missing the point of Monteverdi's new writing, was hailed in the introductory sonnets to his book as a quasi-religious musical crusader against the 'heresy' of new practices; the encyclopaedist Tesaurus delights us with a virtuosic range of metaphors for ornamental singing; musician 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 rhetoric against the powers of the underworld.

The performers

The **Monteverdi String Band** is dedicated to celebrating the sound and style of the early violin consort. Our instruments are modelled on originals from the early decades of the 17th century, lending the ensemble a rich, grounded and blended tone, 'quite unlike that of any other ensemble I know that plays this music' (Robert Hugill).

Our programming draws on the elaborate cultural milieu of early 17th-century Italy: the literary origins of the madrigal, the life of Galileo, and the private entertainments that featured Monteverdi's spectacular *Il Combattimento* have all inspired performances. Immersing ourselves in this world has also informed our approach to better-known repertoire: BREMF's 2017 production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, co-directed by MSB's Oliver Webber, was praised for its 'immediacy and vitality that I found breath-taking' (The Argus).

2020-21 saw the creation of *MSB in focus*, an opportunity to develop smaller-scale projects; the first, *Con Arte e Maestria*, in which Oliver Webber and Steven Devine explore virtuosic diminution repertoire from the dawn of the Baroque, was recorded for release on Resonus Classics this summer.

monteverdistringband.com

Hannah Ely read Music at the University of Manchester before studying postgraduate piano at Trinity Laban. She is a founding member and manager of the Fieri Consort and sings with ensembles *Invocare*, *Siglo de Oro*, *Collegium Vocale Gent* and *Musica Secreta*.

Hannah recently relocated to Brussels, having lived in London for eight years. In 2018 she completed a Masters of Advanced Studies in Advanced Vocal Ensemble Studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Switzerland. Hannah made her opera debut at BREMF 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 production of Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and Monteverdi's *Il ballo delle ingrate*.

She was selected for the Handel House Talent scheme in 2018-19 and is a member of Dame Emma Kirkby's ensemble *Dowland Works*, with whom she made her Wigmore Hall debut in 2019.

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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 many of the foremost period instrument groups around, such as 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 17th-century Europe, Toby is particularly fond of the music of early baroque Italy and Restoration-era England.

Toby's interests outside of music include cooking and travelling, though when not working he generally tries to do as little as possible.

tobycarr.co.uk

Brighton Early Music Festival gratefully acknowledges support from Arts Council England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport through the Culture Recovery Fund.



Supported using public funding by

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The texts

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 1608–1666:

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 delle ingrate*, final scene)

Ottavio Rinuccini 1562–1621

Versi sciolti

Ahi troppo, ahi troppo è duro
crudel sentenza e viè più cruda pena
tornar a lagrimar ne l'antra oscuro

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

Al fumo a' gridi a' pianti
a sempiterno affanno
ahi dove son le pompe ove gli amanti
dove, dove sen vanno
donne che s'è pregiate al mondo furo?

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

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

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

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?

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, ABBA⁵

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 aretta in suo camin s'arresti.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

Ma io ch'in questa lingua (Messaggera)

Versi sciolti

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.

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.

Vanne Orfeo (Choro)

*Canzonetta melica, ottonari, ABABCC*⁸

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.

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.

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.

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.