

*Lunchtime Recital*

# SCHERZI MUSICALI

SONGS SCENES & MADRIGALS BY  
CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI & OTHERS

Nicola Said *Soprano*  
Alicia Gurney *Mezzo-soprano*  
Dionysios Kyropoulos *Bass*  
Henry Drummond *Viola da gamba*  
James Bramley *Theorbo & Baroque guitar*  
Mie Ito *Baroque harp*



Thursday 25th July 2013, 1.15pm

ST PANCRAS CHURCH

# S C H E R Z I M V S I C A L I

Claudio Monteverdi  
(1567-1643)

Ed è pur dunque vero

Sì dolce è'l tormento

Di misera Regina (Penelope)

from *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (Venice, 1640)

Girolamo Frescobaldi  
(1583-1643)

Canzona quinta detta La Tromboncina

Claudio Monteverdi

Quel sguardo sdegnosetto

Toccata per l'arpa doppia

from *L'Orfeo* (Mantua, 1607)

Benedetto Ferrari  
(1603-1681)

Amanti, io vi sò dire

Hieronymus Kapsberger  
(1580-1651)

Preludio & Capona

Claudio Monteverdi

Oblivion soave (Arnalta)

from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Venice, 1643)

Parlo, miser, o taccio?

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**Claudio Monteverdi's** first book of *Scherzi musicali* ('musical jests' or 'flirts') of 1607 is often cited as a milestone in music history. In it he addresses upholders of the historical polyphonic (many-voiced) style who had previously criticised the harmonic and stylistic liberties found in his madrigals. This was a manifesto for the new 'second practice', whereby composers should 'make the words the mistress of the music, and not the servant' - in other words, outlining the course of music for the next two centuries. The title *Scherzi* was itself taken from the humanist poet Chiabrera's (1552-1638) synonymous works, who in turn was inspired by the the French Pléiade poets' quest to innovate from Ancient poetic forms and directly move the listener through use of the vernacular. As Chiabrera wrote: "Take a young man, or young woman, in love, in whose breast passion rages beyond reason and the speculation of philosophy. Of what would they sing? Surely of everything they feel in their hearts, and this would be nothing other than those emotions, happy or sad, that naturally fill all persons who are in love. In my opinion, out of one hundred persons, ninety would forget what Socrates divinely taught Phaedrus, and everything that Plato includes in his dialogue... Do you not obtain solace from seeing such *scherzi* represented, which require neither art, nor comment, nor explication?"

More importantly, with their strong melodic lines and repetitive strophic form, the *Scherzi* had immense popular appeal. Indeed, the strophic aria had always existed in more lowly forms, but had been neglected by erudite composers of high polyphony. For someone of Monteverdi's standing to embrace this form was new. Furthermore, there was no better place for this than the powerful, liberal and cosmopolitan carnival city of Venice, where Monteverdi was a fashionable name. While the first book of *Scherzi* contains mostly block chord bacchanalian love songs for three voices, we find more refined models his 1632 book.

Here the composer makes full use of the humanist trends towards monody (a single vocal line with bass accompaniment), but now with mostly anonymous and more profound texts. **Ed è pur dunque vero** ('And so it is true') tells of an abandoned lover whose only solace is to face a precipitous death without fear, 'for he who is not alive cannot die.' **Si dolce è'l tormento** ('So sweet is the torment') is found in Carlo Milanuzzi's 1624 *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze* ('Fourth jest book of whimsical songs'), a compilation complete with play-along guitar chord symbols. Short and sweet on the surface, the bass line soon descends into despair, slowly and inevitably slipping away from the held notes of the melody.

The aria also made its way into the nascent operatic form, which was flourishing both commercially and culturally in Venice's unique environment. Just as important, however, was the new *recitar cantando* ('speaking in song') style, praised for its directness of delivery and proximity to Ancient Greek performance practice. In the opening scenes of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, we see **Penelope** wandering her palace alone, longing for Ulisse's return with powerful introspection and desperately fleeting emotions. While there is not a single surviving textless work by Monteverdi, **Frescobaldi's Canzoni da sonare** ('Songs to be played') are free from the weight of words, and all power is entrusted to the suggestive abilities of instruments alone. **Quel sguardo sdegnosetto** ('That haughty glance') again comes from Monteverdi's 1632 book of *Scherzi*, with three verses set to a *ciaccona* - a syncopated dance originating in West Africa which then took root in Latin America and found its way to Europe as a popular ground bass. Symbolically conquered by the darts of love, this seductive and militaristic call to arms ends with an indulgent smile of relief.

Considered one of the earliest 'operatic' works, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* purposefully takes the mythical original musician as its subject matter. With Orfeo descended into Hades to bring back his Euridice, he enchants Caronte with the sound of his lyre. Here, the harp (defined in Monteverdi's score for the first time as *arpa doppia*) imitates Orfeo's forlorn sound in a dramatic **Toccata**. Impresario and theorbo-player **Benedetto Ferrari** was responsible for the first commercial public performances of musical drama in Venice. **Amanti, io vi sò dire** ('lovers, I will tell you') is taken from the last of his three books of *Musiche varie a voce sola* published in 1641. These humorous words of advice against the follies of love are set to an (almost) unrelenting *ciaccona*. Born in Venice to Germanic aristocratic parentage, **Hieronymus Kapsberger** was considered responsible for developing the theorbo as solo instrument. The **Preludio** and **Capona** (a relative of the *ciaccona*) are taken from his fourth and final book of tablature for theorbo of 1640. *L'incoronazione di Poppea* was Monteverdi's final work, and shows a tendency towards the aria/recitative divide that would come to characterise 'opera'. Here the historical figure of Poppea (mistress and later empress to Nero) is put to sleep with a haunting lullaby from her nurse **Arnalta** in a (failed) attempt to have her slain. We end with a three-voice madrigal from Monteverdi's seventh book of 1619. While the single voice may have had a say, Monteverdi remains an undisputed master of the timeless power of voices in harmony. Perhaps his true skill lies in the ability to manipulate the old polyphonic technique, whereby more human depth is harnessed than would be possible with one voice alone. But as the lovestruck protagonist asks us all, **Parlo, miser, o taccio?** ('should I speak, wretched one, or be silent?').

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**Nicola Said** is studying for a Master's in Music Performance with Yvonne Kenny at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. The Maltese soprano won the Alfred H. Caplan Opera Scholarship and the President's Honor Award at the Bob Cole Conservatory, CSULB, where she studied with Shigemi Matsumoto. Roles performed include Barbarina, La Fée, Olympia, Sandman/Dew Fairy, and partial roles of Sophie, Madame Herz, Zerbinetta, Musetta, Madame Mao, and Carolina. She has worked with Marilyn Horne, Emma Kirkby, Cheryl Studer, Benjamin Luxon, Roberta Alexander, and received support from the Ian Tomlin Scholarship Fund, Frieda Caplan, Janatha Stubbs Foundation, and the Malta Arts Scholarship. Nicola has given various recitals in the UK, US and Malta, and has recently performed for His Royal Highness Prince Edward of Windsor, Earl of Wessex for a World Fellows Dinner (Duke of Edinburgh Award). Nicola has recently been offered a place at the Samling Academy.

**Alicia Gurney** studies with Ryland Davies. She has completed the Birkbeck Certificates of Higher Education in Concert Singing and Opera, performing extracts from roles including Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* and Helen in Tippett's *King Priam*, and performs with the Morley Baroque Consort. This year she was interviewed on Resonance FM for the *Renaissance FM* show, also

singing music by Purcell, and has performed in opera scenes with City University Opera Ensemble including Handel's *Orlando* and La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica*. She also covered the role of Háta and sang in the chorus for British Youth Opera's production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* last year. Other roles include Dorabella, *Così fan tutte* (Elemental Opera), and Second Witch/Chorus, *Dido and Aeneas* (Iris Theatre). She won second prize in the Association of English Singers and Speakers' Courtney Kenny Competition in 2010. Alicia also holds the DipABRSM in Singing with Distinction. She sings regularly at St Simon Zelotes' Church in Chelsea and with several choirs including the Herschel Singers, the Syred Consort and Convivium Singers. She has a MA in Medieval Studies, specialising in the troubadours of twelfth-century Occitania.

**Dionysios Kyropoulos** read music at City University London while having performance tuition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Robert Dean. Some of his full operatic roles include Father Philippe in Holst's *The Wandering Scholar*, Uberto in Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*, Plutone in Peri's *L'Euridice*, Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Simone in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Polyphemus in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, Bartolo in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Badger in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Dionysios has sung with several opera companies including MidAmerica Productions, Riverside Opera, Mantissa Opera, Barefoot Opera, Skull of Yorick Productions, Rose Opera Company, Lucid Arts, Unexpected Opera and Longborough Festival Opera. He participated in the British Youth Opera 2011 Easter Workshops and their 2012 production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* in which he sang in the chorus and understudied the role of Mícha. He has recently directed a production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* at the Teatro Principal in Burgos, Spain, and in October he will begin studying for the MPhil in Music Studies at Clare College, University of Cambridge, further developing his research on historical stagecraft. His studies will be supported by the Onassis Foundation and the South Square Trust.

**Henry Drummond** began studying the viola da gamba as a bachelor student at Jesus College, Cambridge. Following studies with Alison Crum in London, Henry moved to Germany last October to study with Hille Perl at the Hochschule für Künste, Bremen, where he is currently completing a Bachelor's in viola da gamba. Henry has performed for various ensembles including RCM's Royall Consort, the Marnaves Consort, the Bremer Barock Consort, Stile Moderno and Ensemble Tramontana. He has also played as a soloist in masterclasses for Wieland Kuijken, Alison Crum, Jonathan Manson, Paolo Pandolfo and Fretwork, and performed chamber music with Andrew Lawrence-King, Veronika Skuplik, Walter Reiter, Margaret Faultless and Dan Laurin. He has also performed live on BBC Radio 3's *Early Music Show*, *In Tune*, and *Choral Evensong*. In October Henry will be starting a Master's in Musicology at Trinity College, Oxford - which he will pursue whilst continuing his studies in Bremen.

**James Bramley** began his musical education on the violin, piano and percussion. He went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music and then then read languages and history at King's College London before taking up the lute. He studies with Manuel Minguillón in London and Madrid, and has also taken lessons with Paul O'Dette, Evangelina Mascardi, Nigel North and Jacob Heringman. From September James will continue his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with William Carter and David Miller. As a soloist and accompanist, in ensembles and as a continuo player he has performed throughout the UK and Europe; most recently in *L'Orfeo* at the Teatro Principal in Burgos, Spain, and at Christ Church Spitalfields and at the Foundling Museum in London. In April this year he directed Schola Antiqua Veriensis, a series of early music workshops for all ages in Veria and Thessaloniki, Greece.

**Mie Ito** was born in Kobe, Japan, and started her musical journey on the piano at the age of three. She studied singing and organ at the Tokyo College of Music and graduated with a distinction. She also took part in masterclasses with Emma Kirkby, Agnes Mellon, and Evelyn Tubb. Mie was one of the organists at Maita Church, Yokohama from 2000 to 2010. In 2011 she moved to London to study baroque harp with Andrew Lawrence-King at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She is supported by the Worshipful Guild of Freeman and the Christopher Kite Memorial Fund. Highlights of her career have been performances at Handel Festival, the Cobbe Collection, King's College Chapel, Cambridge and at the Wallace Collection. She has also performed with a Baroque ensemble for BBC Radio 3.