

*Lunchtime Recital*

# RECITAR CANTANDO

SONGS SCENES & MADRIGALS BY  
CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI & OTHERS

Belén Barnaus Mendez *Soprano*  
Alicia Gurney *Mezzo-soprano*  
Dionysios Kyropoulos *Bass*  
Donald Bennet *Viola da gamba*  
James Bramley *Theorbo & Baroque guitar*  
Mie Ito *Baroque harp*



Monday 8th July 2013, 1.05pm

AT THE CHURCH OF ST MARTIN  
WITHIN LUDGATE

# RECITAR CANTANDO

Claudio Monteverdi  
(1567-1643)

Prologo (Musica)  
Toccata per l'arpa doppia  
from *L'Orfeo* (Mantua, 1607)

Di misera Regina (Penelope)  
from *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (Venice, 1640)

Sì dolce è'l tormento

Benedetto Ferrari  
(1603-1681)

Amanti, io vi sò dire

Claudio Monteverdi

Lamento d'Arianna

Hieronymus Kapsberger  
(1580-1651)

Preludio terzo & Capona

Claudio Monteverdi

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

Parlo, miser, o taccio?

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*Recitar cantando* (speaking in song) was at the heart of changes in music that took place around 1600, the lasting effect of which have come to define music as we know it today. The polyphony of the previous centuries had progressively become so technically impenetrable, it was sensed that any real expression was lost. Musicians, writers and aristocrats of Count Bardi's Camerata in Florence, the heart of renaissance humanism and science, were compelled to look back to the music of ancient Greece, and concluded that a single melody line (monody) with all the inflections of human speech would serve to move the listener better. The composer Caccini (1551-1618) clearly stated the new priorities in his *Nuove Musiche* ('new musics') of 1602: "...music is nothing other than speech, then rhythm, and lastly sound..." Together with fellow Camerata member Peri, they are credited with writing the first 'operas' (then called *favole in musica*, or 'tales in music', and both entitled *L'Euridice*) in the years 1600-2. However, it was **Monteverdi's** *L'Orfeo* presented at Mantua in 1607 which attained a fully effective dramatic dimension.

It was no coincidence that these composers chose the Orpheus-Eurydice myth, where the emotional and physical powers of music itself take centre stage - for both audience and protagonists. Music personified opens Monteverdi's tale, salutes the audience and signifies start of a soul-wrenching journey. With Orfeo descended into Hades to bring back his Euridice, he enchants Caronte with the sound of his lyre. Meanwhile, the harp (defined in Monteverdi's score for the first time as *arpa doppia*) imitates the hopelessly forlorn sound in a **Toccata**. Months after *L'Orfeo* premiered, Monteverdi's own wife Claudia died - a blow from which he would not fully recover. Still, he was employed to compose *L'Arianna* for 1608, and during his lifetime this remained his most famous composition. Sadly, the full work is no longer extant, but the lament was published independently in various forms

which have survived. Here, Arianna (Ariadne) sings as she awakes on Crete to find that her hero and lover Theseus has abandoned her.

By 1613 Monteverdi had fallen out with the Mantuan court and moved to Venice as *maestro di cappella* at San Marco. He remained a fashionable name in the liberal carnival city and his stand-alone secular songs appeared in popular compilations of the time. **Si dolce è'l tormento** ('so sweet is the torment') is found in Milanuzzi's 1624 *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze* ('fourth joke book of whimsical songs'), 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. There is not a single surviving work by Monteverdi that does not use the human voice, so here we will let only the music speak for itself. Impresario and theorbist **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 words of advice are set to an (almost) unrelenting *ciaccona* - a voluptuous dance originating in West Africa which then took root in Latin America and eventually found its way back to Europe. Born in Venice to Germanic aristocratic parentage was **Hieronymus Kapsberger**, a virtuoso considered responsible for developing the theorbo as solo instrument. The **Preludio** and **Capona** (a dance related to the *ciaccona*) are taken from his fourth and final book of tablature for chitarrone (an alternative name for the theorbo) of 1640.

Monteverdi was in his seventies when commissioned to compose *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* for the now fully-fledged public theatres in Venice. By now both composer, audience and the *recitar cantando* style had matured. Ulisse's wife **Penelope** is seen wandering her palace, longing for his return in a scene of powerful introspection and desperately fleeting emotions. *Poppea* was Monteverdi's last work, and shows a tendency towards the aria/recitative divide that would come to characterise 'opera'. Indeed, it was the first such work with the official title of *opera reggia* ('staged work') - a name that would stick. Here we see the historical figure of Poppea (mistress and later empress to Nero) put to sleep with a haunting lullaby from her nurse **Arnalta** in a (failed) attempt to have her slain. We end our performance with a three-voice madrigal from Monteverdi's seventh book of 1619. While monody may have had a say, Monteverdi remains an undisputed master of the multiplied power of human voices working in harmony. Perhaps his true skill is revealed in his manipulation of the 'old' polyphonic technique, whereby more human depth is revealed than is 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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**Belén Barnaus Mendez** was born in Barcelona and graduated from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2010 where she is now on the Master's Degree programme in Historical Performance. Her singing career started at the age of thirteen with Aninka in *Brundibar* by Hanz Kráza (Mercat de les Flors) and Third Genius in *Die Zauberflöte* (El Gran Teatre del Liceu and International Festival of Granada). She took part in the 2012 British Youth Opera Easter Workshops and was chorus member in their production of *The Bartered Bride*. She has recently performed Euridice and Musica in *L'Orfeo* (Hampstead Garden Opera), as the singing soloist of the Baroque Orchestra project at GSMD, and was a semi-finalist in the 2013 London Handel Competition. Belén also conducts the vocal group Alma Mater Ensemble with whom she has performed at the Wigmore Hall, LSO St Luke's and many churches around London. Belén is generously supported in her studies by the Guildhall Trust.

**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 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 Hata 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 12th-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. In October he will begin studying for the MPhil in Music Studies at Clare College, University of Cambridge.

**Donald Bennet** was born in Rochester, Minnesota and grew up in Sheffield before a maths degree as an Instrumental Award holder at Clare College, University of Cambridge. Following this Donald completed a master's degree in cello and gamba study with Richard Lester and Jonathan Manson at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has performed in a wide range of settings including BBC Breakfast, Wigmore Hall and at the Greenbelt Music Festival. He freelances in London with Poeticall Musicke and other chamber ensembles, including regular performances on the lirone, a 14-string early Italian instrument. Alongside concerts and recordings, Donald works internationally as a Director of BYT Tuition. Donald lives with his wife in North London.

**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 at the Semana Internacional de Música de Ávila in Spain, at Christ Church Spitalfields and at the Foundling Museum. In April this year he directed Schola Antiqua Veriensis, a series of early music workshops for all ages in Veria and Thessaloniki, Greece. Later in July he will perform in *L'Orfeo* at the Teatro Principal in Burgos, Spain.

**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.