

PARTHENIA

Rosamund Morley, treble viol

Lawrence Lipnik, tenor viol

Beverly Au, bass viol

Lisa Terry, bass viol

with

Sherezade Panthaki, soprano

ITALIA MIA: Music of Renaissance Venice

Canzon Quinta: <i>La Maggia</i>	Florentio Maschera (c. 1540-1548)
Non val aqua al mio gran foco	Bartolomeo Tromboncino (c.1470-1535)
Gagliarda: <i>La Cara Cosa</i>	Anon. early 16 th c.
Capriccio: <i>La Gamba</i>	Vincenzo Ruffo (c.1508-1587)
O sacrum convivium	Jacques Arcadelt (c. 1505-1568)
Ricercare III	Julio Segni da Modena (1498-1561)
Ricercare X	Adriano Willaert (c. 1490-1562)
Ricercare XIII	Julio Segni da Modena
Asia Felice	Andrea Gabrieli (1542-1585)
Canzona seconda	Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612)
Ricercar del secondo tuono	Andrea Gabrieli (1532-1585)
Canzon Sexta: <i>La Sincopata</i>	Nicolò Corradini (1585-1646)
Gagliarda del Principe di Venosa	Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613)
O Rossignuol	Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Canzona Francese: <i>La Guamina</i>	Gioseffo Guami (1542-1611)
Ancor che col partire	Cipriano de Rore (1515-1565)/ Diminutions by Riccardo Rognoni (c. 1550-1620)
Passa Galli per la lettera E	Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632-1692)
Pavana & Saltarello	Giovanni Cavaccio (c.1556-1626)
Da pacem	Girolamo Parabosco (c. 1524-1557)
Italia mia	Philippe Verdelot (c. 1470-1542)

PROGRAM NOTES

Renaissance Venice was a proud, prosperous and cosmopolitan city, famous in many ways – for its dominance on the seas and trade with the east, for its independence from the Pope in Rome, for having the most beautiful women in Europe, and for its music and musicians. It was governed with remarkable stability from the Doge's Palace by a council of elected aristocratic officials, headed by an elected Doge subject to detailed laws written so that no single family could ever dominate Venetian society. Venetian patricians were expected to enshrine the virtues of integrity, prudence, gravity, charity and eloquence, and they were notoriously thrifty even with their vast wealth. Venice was also home to a large and diverse community of foreigners – princes, ambassadors, merchants from all around the Mediterranean, Europe, and even from Japan, traders, artists, travelers, refugees, self-exiled citizens of Florence and other Italian cities and beyond. “The Miracle of the Cross on the Rialto,” a painting in the Accademia Gallery by Vittore Carpaccio, attests to the bustling multiculturalism of Venice at this time. It was a fertile environment for all the arts. The patrician families were not the only Venetians with the resources and desire to patronize artists and musicians. By 1575 the population of Venice had reached 175,000, among whom were many wealthy citizens not from the aristocracy who, because excluded from actual political power, had formed confraternities, known as the Scuole Grande, through which they could rise in influence in Venetian society. The civic work of the Scuole was primarily to distribute food and money to poor citizens, and to sponsor festivals and processions to honor their patron saints, but by the 16th century they were also important employers of musicians and artists. The richest of the Scuole Grande was that of San Rocco, whose meeting room and chapel walls were decorated by Tintoretto with scenes from the Bible and the life of San Rocco. Concerts were played in these rooms as at the other Scuole; Thomas Coryat, an English traveler to Venice writing in 1608, attended a musical event at the Scuola di San Rocco in which he marveled at hearing “musicke so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so super excellent, that it did even ravish and stupifie all those strangers [foreigners] that never heard the like.” Venice was also a renowned center of instrument building and it is likely that the first viols to be built in Italy were made there by the luthier Lorenzo da Pavia. Isabella d'Este, the most important patron of musical arts in Ferrara, and of the frottola composer Bartolomeo Tromboncino, had a long correspondence with Lorenzo about the viols she commissioned him to make for her, and asked him also to procure books of music printed in Venice. In fact, Venice also dominated the music publishing industry in Europe for most of the 16th century, and composers from many places well beyond Italy came to Venice to supervise the publication of their works. Such trips by composers helped to spread Venetian musical styles everywhere in Europe. The most long-lasting influences came from the musical

establishment at the Basilica of San Marco; at that time it was still the chapel of the Doge and the location of many official Venetian ceremonies. Adrian Willaert was organist and choir master there for 35 years, from 1527 until his death in 1562. Several of Willaert's works (and that of some of his students) are preserved in the ground breaking 1540 Venetian publication, *Musica Nova*, the first collection of purely instrumental *ricercars* attesting to the existence of a school of composition centered around Willaert and San Marco. Although from Belgium, Willaert is credited with being the founder of this “Venetian School” of composing. The basilica had two choir lofts on either side of the main altar, each with an organ. Willaert divided his choir into two sections, one in each loft, and had them sing both together and answering each other across the vast space. This grand antiphonal style for both instrumental and choral compositions became the trademark of Venetian music, and was imitated by composers all over Europe for grand religious motets as well as for the more intimately scaled music, heard here most clearly in the *canzonas* of Giovanni Gabrieli and Gioseffo Guami; chamber music such as this might have been heard in palaces, Scuole, and academies throughout the city.

Willaert's students, colleagues and successors included Cipriano de Rore, Julio Segni da Modena, Guami, Parabosco, Maschera, the Gabrieli (Andrea and his nephew Giovanni, who succeeded him as organist), and Monteverdi. All the other composers on our program, even when a direct association with Willaert himself cannot be established, were likely well known to him via publications of their madrigals, motets and canzoni, which survive for us today in hundreds of music books produced in the workshops of the Venetian music printers.

It is clear from the existence of a large number of publications of virtuosic solo music that musicians and singers in Venice reached high levels of technical skill and could improvise diminutions, intricate and fast ornamental passages, over existing melodies. Our program includes two such dazzling solo pieces, one by Rognoni on a madrigal of de Rore, and another by Vitali on a repeating bass melody; this later piece affirms the enduring popularity of 16th century musical styles well into the 17th century and beyond.

We end our program with two works making a plea for peace in a world ravaged by religious and political strife. Published in *Musica Nova*, Parabosco's *ricercar* is based on the antiphon for peace, “*Da pacem Domine*,” and may have been written to celebrate the end of a four decades long war that the Venetians waged against the Ottomans and the resumption of trade between the two empires. Verdelot set to music Petrarch's *canzona* “*Italia Mia*,” which was a plea to the Italian nobility to end their destructive warring, opt for peace and become true and noble leaders. Though Petrarch's poem was written two centuries before Verdelot's setting was published in Venice, its message clearly resonated in his time as it does in ours.

~ Rosamund Morley, New York City