

La Fresca Rosa

Galway Early Music Festival 2021

Aisling Kenny (soprano)
Eamon Sweeney (lute & guitar)
Yonit Kosovske (harpsichord)

Amarilli, mia bella

*Amarilli, mia bella,
Non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio,
D'esser tu l'amor mio?
Credilo pur: e se timor t'assale,
Prendi questo mio strale.
Aprimi il petto e vedrai scritto in core:
Amarilli, Amarilli, Amarilli è il mio amore.*

(possibly Giovanni Battista Guarini or Alessandro Guarini)

Guilio Caccini (1551–1618), arr. John Dowland (1563–1626)

Amaryllis, my beloved,
don't you believe, oh my heart's sweet desire,
that you are my love?
Believe only this: and if you are overcome by fear,
take this arrow for mine.
Open my chest and see written in my heart:
Amaryllis, Amaryllis, Amaryllis, is my beloved.

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Mio ben, teco il tormento (*Eurydice, Orfeo Act 2*)

*Mio ben, teco il tormento
più dolce io troverei,
Che con altrui il contento.
Ogni dolcezza è sol dove tu sei,
E per me, amor aduna,
Nel girar de' tuoi guardi ogni fortuna.*

(Francesco Buti)

Luigi Rossi (ca.1597–1653)

My dear, I would be tormented
more happily where I find you
than with the contentment of others.
There is only sweetness wherever you are,
and for me, in the return of your glances
love gathers together every fortune.

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Partite sopra l'aria di Monica

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)

Aura Soave

*Aura soave di segreti accenti
Che penetrando per l'orecchie al core
Svegliasti la dove dormiva Amore
Per te respiro e vivo
Da che nel petto mio
Spirasti tu d'Amor vital desio
Vissi di vita privo
Mentre amorosa cura in me fu spenta
Hor vien che l'alma senta
Virtù di quel tuo spirito gentile
Felice vita oltre l'usato stile.*

(Giovanni Battista Guarini)

Luzzasco Luzzaschi (ca.1545–1607)

Gentle breeze of secret whispers,
which, piercing through my ears to my heart
awakened Love from her sleep.
For you I breathe and live
ever since into my breast
you aroused Love's desire.
I lived a deprived life
while love's care was eclipsed in me.
Now come, so that my soul may feel
because of your gentle spirit
a happy life beyond the ordinary.

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Ch'amor sia nudo

*Ch'amor sia nudo, e pur con l'ali al tergo
Stia sotto il cielo non procuri albergo è vanità.
Ma che per gli occhi, egli dicend' al petto
Et ivi posi et ivi abbia ricetto è verità.*

*E ch'ei sia cieco, e che non mai rimiri
Ove percota, e così l'arco tiri è vanità.
Ma ch'apra il guardo, e senz' alcuna benda
E' pigli mira, e quindi l'arco tendae è verità.*

*Che fra mortali, e che fra cor celesti
Legger sen voli, e non già mai s'arresti è vanità.
Ma ch'ove posi un giorno sol le piume
Eternamente abbia di star costume è verità.*

*Et io mel so, che s'egli avv'en ch'io neghi,
Ch'a suoi fier gioghi questo collo io pieghie è vanità.
Ma s'io dirò, che n'amorose tempore,
Et ardo, et arsi, et arderò mai sempre è verità.*

(anonymous)

Francesca Caccini (1587–ca.1641)

That love is naked with wings on its back,
and lives under the sky seeking no shelter, that is useless.
But it is through the eyes where love enters and reaches the breast,
where it settles and is welcomed. That is the truth.

That love is blind and never looks
at what it strikes, and thus love aims its bow, that is pointless.
But as love opens its eyes, and is without a blindfold,
it shoots and then returns the bow. That is the truth.

That among mortals and among heavenly hearts
love flies fleetingly and never rests, that is foolish.
But wherever love places its feathers even for a day
it tends to remain forever. That is the truth.

And I know that if I should refuse
to bend my neck to his proud yoke, that is futile.
But if I say that with no amorous temper,
I burn, I have burned, and will always burn. That is the truth.

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Lagrimie mie (*Diparti di Euterpe op 7*)

*Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Perché non isfogate il fier dolore
Che mi toglie'l respiro e opprime il core?*

*Lidia, che tant'adoro,
Perch'un guardo pietoso, ah, mi donò,
Il paterno rigor l'imprigionò.
Tra due mura rinchiusa
Sta la bella innocente,
Dove giunger non può raggio di sole;
E quel che più mi duole
Ed' accresc'al mio mal tormenti e pene,
È che per mia cagione
Provi male il mio bene.*

*E voi, lumi dolenti, non piangete?
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?*

*Lidia, ahimè, veggio mancarmi
L'idol mio che tanto adoro;
Sta colèi tra duri marmi,
Per cui spiro e pur non moro.*

*Se la morte m'è gradita,
Hor che son privo di spene,
Dhe [deh], toglietemi la vita,
Ve ne prego, aspre mie pene.*

*Ma ben m'accorgo che per tormentarmi
Maggiamente la sorte
Mi niega anco la morte.*

*Se dunque è vero, o Dio,
Che sol del pianto mio
Il rio destino ha sete,
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?*

(Pietro Dolfino)

Capriccio sopra la Chiaccona

Quel sguardo sdegnosetto

*Quel sguardo sdegnosetto
lucente e minaccioso,
quel dardo velenoso
vola a ferirmi il petto,
Bellezze ond'io tutt'ardo
e son da me diviso
piagatemi col sguardo,
Sanatemi col riso.*

*Armatevi, pupille
d'asprissimo rigore,
versatemi su'l core
un nembo di faville.
Ma 'labro non sia tardo
a ravvivarmi ucciso.
Feriscami quel sguardo,
ma sanami quel riso.*

*Begl'occhi a l'armi, a l'armi!
Io vi preparo il seno.
Gioite di piagarmi
in fin ch'io venga meno!
E se da vostri dardi
io resterò conquiso,
feriscano quei sguardi,
ma sanami quel riso.*

(Bartholomeo Magni)

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

My tears, why do you hesitate?
Why don't you give in to the intense pain
that stops my breath and burdens my heart?

Lidia, whom I greatly adore,
oh how she glanced so adoringly at me,
she is imprisoned by her strict father.
Between two enclosed walls
stands the beautiful innocent one
where she cannot feel the sun's rays;
and what pains me the most
and adds torment to my anguish
is that it is on my account
that she is forced to suffer.

And you, sorrowful eyes, why don't you cry?
My tears, why do you hide?

Lidia, alas, how I miss her,
the favoured one I so greatly adore;
she's held inside within hard marble,
for her I sigh and do not die.

If I welcome death,
now that I am without hope,
Ah, take away my life,
I beg you, please, take away my pain.

But how well I realize that to torment me
even more than this
fate even denies me of death.

Since this is true, oh God,
that horrible fate
yearns only for my anguish,
my tears, why do you hide?

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Giovanni Battista Granata (ca.1620–1687)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

That haughty little glance,
bright and menacing,
that poisonous dart
is flying to strike my breast.
O beauties for which I burn,
by which I am severed from myself:
wound me with your glance,
but heal me with your laughter.

Arm yourself, O eyes,
with sternest rigor;
pour upon my heart
a cloud of sparks.
But let lips not be slow
to revive when I am slain.
Let the glance strike me;
but let the laughter heal me.

O fair eyes: to arms, to arms!
I am preparing my bosom as your target.
Rejoice in wounding me,
even until I faint!
And if I remain vanquished
by your darts,
let your glances strike me,
but let your laughter heal me.

(www.cdpl.org)

Si dolce è'l tormento

*Si dolce è'l tormento
Ch'in seno mi sta,
Ch'io vivo contento
Per cruda beltà.
Nel ciel di bellezza
S'accreschi fierezza
Et manchi pietà:
Che sempre qual scoglio
All'onda d'orgoglio
Mia fede sarà.*

*La speme fallace
Rivolgam' il piè.
Diletto ne pace
Non scendano a me.
E l'empia ch'adoro
Mi nieghi ristoro
Di buona mercè:
Tra doglia infinita,
Tra speme tradita
Vivrà la mia fe*

*Per foco e per gelo
riposo non hò.
Nel porto del cielo
riposo avrò.
Se colpo mortale
con rigido strale
Il cor m'impiagò,
cangiando mia sorte
Col dardo di morte
il cor sanerò.*

*Se fiamma d'amore
Già mai non sentì
Quel rigido core
Ch'il cor mi rapì,
Se nega pietate
La cruda bellate
Che l'anima invaghì:
Ben fia che dolente,
Pentita e languente
Sospirimi un dì.*

(Carlo Milanuzzi)

Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa

*Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa,
la fresca rosa ridente sta,
la siepe ombrosa di bei smeraldi
d'estivi caldi timor non ha.*

*A balli, a balli, liete venite,
ninfe gradite, fior di beltà.
Or, che sì chiaro il vago fonte
dall'alto monte al mar sen' va.*

*Suoi dolci versi spiega l'augello,
e l'arboscello fiorito sta.
Un volto bello al l'ombra accanto
sol si dia vanto d'haver pieta.*

*Al canto, al canto, ninfe ridenti,
Scacciate i venti di crudelta.*

(anonymous)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

So sweet is the torment
that lies in my heart,
that I live happily
because of its cruel beauty.
May beauty's fury
grow wide in the sky
without compassion;
for my devotion shall hold
like a rock against
pride's unrelenting wave.

False hope,
keep me wandering!
Let no peace
nor pleasure befall me!
Evil woman, whom I adore,
deny me the rest
that compassion would give;
amidst infinite pain,
amidst broken hopes
shall survive my devotion.

There is no rest for me
in the warmth or the cold.
Only in heaven
shall I find rest.
If the deadly strike
of an arrow injured my heart,
I shall heal still,
and change my destiny,
death's very heart
with the same arrow.

If the frigid heart
that stole mine
never has felt
love's ardour;
if the cruel beauty
that charmed my soul
denies me compassion,
may she die one day
by me pained,
repenting, languishing.

(www.cdpl.org)

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)

When the winds blow ever charming,
the budding rose laughs,
and the shady edge of emerald green
isn't afraid of the summer heat.

To the dances, to the dances, come happily,
fair maidens, flowers of beauty.
Now the clear source from the mountain
flows out to sea.

The birds sing their sweet tunes,
and all the saplings blossom.
A beautiful face in the neighbouring shade
alone rejoices in showing affection.

Sing, sing, giggling maidens,
chase away the winds of cruelty.

(trans. Yonit Kosovske)

Programme notes

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Aisling Kenny (soprano)
Eamon Sweeney (lute, theorbo, bandora, baroque guitar)
Yonit Kosovske (harpsichord)

If we do a Google word search on the song texts from 17th century Italy, it would include the following (just for starters): hearts, breasts, eyes, lips, desire, hope, sweetness, fortune, sorrow, torment, gentle, harsh, glances, burning, fire, tears, pain, anguish, suffer, breath, death, sigh, innocence, poison, darts, arrows, wounds, cruel, pleasure, devotion, loyal, faithful, denial, betrayal, laughter, sparks, hot, cold, repent, languish, birds, nymph, maiden, shepherd, dance, bird, fountain, wind, flower, rose, amarilli, and last but not least, love. Today's programme, *La Fresca Rosa*, overflows with all of these symbolic images in the eight secular songs we have selected, all of which express themes of love—desired, lost, returned and unrequited.

Music during this period was believed to be all powerful, capable of moving the listener and affecting the emotions. It was also an age of extreme contrasts. Artists employed *chiaroscuro* in their paintings, strategically contrasting light and shadow for evocative, dramatic, and symbolic purposes. In music, composers incorporated contrasts into their pieces in numerous ways, but especially via tempo, rhythm, and harmony—juxtaposing fast and slow sections in close proximity, altering major and minor chords in fast succession, pairing quick motion with sudden halts and dramatic silences, employing stunning dissonances, and writing truly bizarre, hair-raising key modulations, often aimed at dramatizing the text and word painting. Even in pieces that were simple in form (harmonically, rhythmically, and in poetic structure), contrasts were created through the seriousness or intensity of the texts. Composers also contrasted structured sections with through-composed sections, or recitative with aria. Contrasts were created through ornamentation, adding highly decorative and ornate embellishments over an otherwise simple melody. And, of course, the texts themselves were full of contrasts, such as “cruel beauty” or “in love I die” or “sweet sorrow”.

Terms such as *stile moderno*, *seconda pratica*, and *nuove musiche* (modern style, second practice, and new music) are often used to describe musical practices being explored throughout Italy in the first part of the 17th century. Composers embraced a Renaissance ideal of moving and transforming the listener through music through all kinds of expressive rhetorical devices. In vocal music, the music served the text. Alongside other disciplines in Art, Philosophy, and Science, composers experimented wildly with new styles and techniques, breaking ancient rules of harmony and tonality in ways not heard again until the 20th century. One could argue that some composers (Gesualdo, Michelangelo Rossi, Monteverdi, and several others) were the *avant-garde* of their time.

17th century Italy held the musical virtuoso in high regard. He or she was valued not only for being well trained and possessing technical mastery, but for being well rounded as a complete artist. Virtuosos were often skilled in multiple instruments (and song), able to sing and accompany themselves on lute, viola da gamba, harp, guitar or harpsichord. They could compose, improvise, and ornament. They were knowledgeable in a variety of subjects outside of music, and often were taught to dance. Many, if not all, of the composers on today's programme were considered to be amongst virtuosos from this period.

Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) was a composer, tenor vocalist, harpist, and lutenist associated with humanist poets and scholars, especially the musicians in the Florentine Camerata under the patronage of Count Giovanni de' Bardi, Caccini's mentor. Caccini is often credited with *stile recitativo* (recitative, spoken-song style) and was one of the founding fathers of Italian monody and opera. Today's concert begins with Caccini's most famous madrigal *Amarilli, mia bella*, published in Caccini's *Le nuove musiche* (1602), but which had already been in print by other composers for several years. In the preface to *Le nuove musiche*, Caccini discusses rules for interpreting this new style of music, he emphasizes ornamentation, calls for nuanced, detailed expression, but recommends *sprezzatura* (nonchalance or effortlessness) when performing in this dramatic style. From a continuo perspective, Caccini was also one of the few composers to write figured bass chords beyond intervals within the octave, so we see figures of a 10th and 11th etc. *Amarilli, mia bella* is amongst the most well-known songs from the 17th century, and is included in the *24th Italian Songs and Arias*. However, given that it is usually considered “easier” repertoire that voice teachers assign to young students in their early collegiate years of lessons and undergraduate degree recitals, the exquisite song is performed much too infrequently by advanced singers and professionals, which is a pity! The song text refers to the myth of the nymph Amaryllis, who, while picking flowers, fell in love with a shepherd named Alteo, who was strong and beautiful, but did not love her back. Hoping to win his love by finding him a rare flower that he'd never seen before, Amaryllis sought advice from the oracle of Delphi, who advised her to dress in white and appear at Alteo's doorstep for thirty nights, each

time piercing her breast and heart with a golden arrow. When Alteo finally opened the door, he found a stunning new flower with white petals dipped in crimson from the blood of Amaryllis's heart.

Luigi Rossi (ca.1597–1653) moved to Naples at a young age where he studied with composer and organist Jean de Macque. He composed hundreds of chamber cantatas but wrote only two operas, *Il palazzo incantato* and *Orfeo*, from which Euridice's lament *Mio ben, teco il tormento* performed on today's concert. Rossi's *Orfeo* was composed upon invitation from Cardinal Mazarin to premiere it in France in 1647, shortly after which Rossi went to Rome, where he was likely employed under Cardinal Antonio Barberini, one of the cardinal-nephews of Pope Urban VIII.

Luzzasco Luzzaschi (ca.1545–1607) was a composer and organist in the court of Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. While he was said to have been a brilliant keyboard player, very few of his keyboard compositions survive. In addition to having been Girolamo Frescobaldi's teacher, he is known for his vocal compositions and for his activities in the Court in Ferrara. It was in that setting that he wrote numerous pieces of music for the virtuoso female singers of the *Concerto delle donne* (Ladies of Ferrara) or *Concerto della dame*. He also accompanied them, directing from the harpsichord. The music, often highly ornamented (as evident in his scores with notated *passaggi*), were performed in the context of the *concerto segreto*—private, exclusive concerts for distinguished and honourable guests at the court. Today's programme features Luzzaschi's solo madrigal *Aura Soave* from his collection *Madrigali per cantare e sonare* (1601).

Francesca Caccini (1587–ca.1641) was a composer, singer, poet, and teacher. She was employed at the Medici court by the time she was twenty. She also played harp, guitar, lute, theorbo, and harpsichord, and would accompany herself while singing. She received a well-rounded education in multiple languages, literature, math, and music. As a child she frequently performed with various members of her family, the most well-known member of whom was her father Giulio Caccini. Francesca composed hundreds of songs, sacred and secular, although only a few survive. She composed *La liberazione di Ruggiero*, which is considered to be one of the oldest operas, especially by a woman composer. On today's concert we will hear *Ch'amor sia nudo* from *Il primo libro delle musiche* (1618), a collection of a wide variety of songs in Italian and Latin with solo and duets, laments, and lighter strophic songs, many of which use her own poetry.

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677) was a composer, a skilled singer, and a prolific publisher. While 17th century Italy saw some positive changes in the role of women musicians that were, perhaps, more advanced than in earlier centuries, (as certain segments of society deemed it more acceptable for women to both compose and perform professionally), it was still much less common for women to publish, and yet Barbara Strozzi managed to publish eight volumes with over one hundred vocal pieces that contained arias, motets, madrigals, and especially secular cantatas, for which she is credited with popularizing. She was born in Venice and was the adopted (and probably illegitimate) daughter of the librettist and poet Giulio Strozzi, whose progressive attitudes towards women (and the fact that he was well-connected socially) helped to facilitate and advance his daughter's successful career, including her involvement and membership in the *Accademia degli Unisoni* (society for the like-minded), a group that discussed music and poetry. Members of the *Accademia degli Unisoni* encouraged her to set their poems to music, and in fact, several publications were dedicated to her, including by Nicolo Fontei, who in 1635 published a volume of lyrics dedicated to her, calling her *La Virtuosissimo Cantatrice* (the very virtuosic singer). Just how accepted she was within the boys' club and wider music circles remains uncertain. Was her artistry fully respected or mocked, welcomed or harassed, or a bit of both? *Lagrimie mie* is at the heart of today's programme. From her collection *Diporti di Euterpe op 7*, this piece is thought by some scholars to have been inspired by a conversation she had with the *Accademia degli Unisoni*. Someone from the group asked: which better expresses emotions, tears or song? She then performed her piece, and remarked: "I don't doubt your preference for song; I would not have received the honour of your presence this evening had I asked you to watch me cry rather than listen to me sing." *Lagrimie mie* is a lament and solo cantata with contrasting sections in the form of recitative, arioso and aria. While the author of the text is unknown, it may have been written by her father, since she often set his poems to music. The composition begins with a truly remarkable and intense opening line in which the singer descends a full octave from a high E down to middle E over the word *Lagrimie* (tears). This blatant case of mournful text painting is then punctuated along the way with dissonant intervals of a 7th, 4th, and 2nd over the bass note E. The story is told from the perspective of a tormented man sobbing over his lost love, Lidia, to whom he cries out as she is trapped inside marble walls, held captive by her strict father. And yet, despite his internal anguish over a forbidden love, his own tears remain trapped deep within himself. "*Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?*" he cries out repeatedly, "My tears, why do you hide?"

Giovanni Battista Granata (ca.1620–1687) was a composer and guitarist whose prolific publications focused on solo and chamber music for guitar. His outputs included dance suites in the French style, along with preludes, toccatas, and chaconnes. Today's piece, *Capriccio sopra la Chiaccona*, is from his publication *Soavi concerti di sonate musicali per la chitarra spagnuola*, Op. 4 (1659) and was dedicated to the Venetian nobleman Signor Conte Lelio Pioveni.

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) was a composer, string player, and choir master. His copious output includes sacred and secular works, the majority of which are vocal pieces, although not all of his music survives. Most often-performed are pieces from his first eight books of madrigals and his *Scherzi musicali*, as well as *Vespro*

della *Beata Vergine* and his opera *L'Orfeo*. He was a key supporter of the *Seconda prattica*. Today's concert features two of his vocal pieces, *Quel sguardo sdegnosetto* and *Si dolce è'l tormento*, both of which are from his *Scherzi musicali* (1632), although *Si dolce è'l tormento* was actually published earlier in *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze* (1624) in a collection of secular songs by different composers, including several songs by Monteverdi. *Quel sguardo sdegnosetto* is a highly virtuosic vocal line varying over the repeating bass pattern in the form of a well-known ciaccona. Each verse closes with the same two lines: "Wound me with your glances, but heal me with your laughter." In contrast to this piece, *Si dolce è'l tormento* has a simple melody. The structure is a 4-verse canzonetta set in triple meter on a popular text set often by 17th century composers. And yet, this simple form and strophic structure is set against the serious emotion of the lamenting text. The canzonetta form is less common for Monteverdi, but very popular for other composers, with hundreds of canzonettas (almost always in triple time) being printed in Venice throughout the first part of the 17th century.

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643) was a virtuoso keyboardist at the organ and harpsichord who was known to have been a phenomenal improviser. He devoted most of his compositional energy into writing solo keyboard music, in addition to a few songs, madrigals, and chamber works. *Fiori Musicali* (Musical Flowers) is a collection of liturgical organ music, much of which is also played on harpsichord. In his formative years he was immersed in the sound world of sacred polyphony and secular madrigals, especially those by his teacher Luzzasco Luzzaschi. We can detect Luzzaschi's influences throughout Frescobaldi's rhapsodic toccatas, free in form, somewhat sectional, with jarring contrasts in texture, tempo, and rhythm. We can also see Luzzaschi's influence in his writing-out of ornamental passages, as Luzzaschi often did for the female singers in at the court of Ferrara. Frescobaldi's rich output of keyboard music also includes several variation sets, such as the *Partite sopra l'aria di Monica*, performed on today's programme. It is from Frescobaldi's *Toccate e partite d'intavolatura, Libro 1* (1637), which contains other variation sets over *La Folia*, *Ruggiero*, and *Romanesca*, along with the monumental *Cento partita sopra passacaglia*. Today's concert also features one of his solo songs, *Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa*, published in his *Primo libro d'arie musicali* (1630).

Programme notes by Yonit Kosovske