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The Origins of Bel Canto

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Capriole

Ensemble in Residence at the College of William and Mary

The Origins of Bel Canto

Friday February 1, University of Richmond
North Court Recital Hall, 8:15 p.m.

Saturday February 2, Williamsburg Regional Library
Arts Center Theatre, 8:15 p.m.

Sunday February 3, Chrysler Museum Theatre,
Norfolk, 3:00 p.m.

CAPRIOLE
The Origins of Bel Canto

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>I. <i>Musiche a una, due e tre voci</i>, 1615
Mie speranze lusinghiere
Io vidi in terra
Valli profonde</p> | <p>Marco da Gagliano
(1582-1643)</p> |
| <p>II. What if I never speede, 1603
Can she excuse my wrongs with vertues cloake, 1597
Sorrow stay, lend true repentant teares, 1600
His goulden locks time hath to silver turned, 1597
Sir John Langton His Pavan for lute
Fantasie from <i>Varietie of Lute Lessons</i>, 1610
It was a time when silly bees could speake, 1603
In darkness let me dwell</p> | <p>John Dowland
(1562-1626)</p> |
| <p>III. <i>Arie Musicali</i>, 1630
Non vi partite
Aria de Romanesca: Dunque dovro
Aria di Passacaglia: Così mi disprezzate
Eri già tutta mia</p> | <p>Girolamo Frescobaldi
(1583-1643)</p> |
| Intermission | |
| <p>IV. Jubilate Domino</p> | <p>Dietrich Buxtehude
(c. 1637-1707)</p> |
| <p>V. Dialogue: Ich leide billig</p> | <p>Andreas Hammerschmidt
(1612-1675)</p> |
| <p>VI. Partita XI
Preluda (1645-1700)
Allemanda
Corrente
Sarabanda
Giga</p> | <p>Auguste Kuhnel
(1645-1700)</p> |
| <p>VII. Dalla guerra amorosa</p> | <p>George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)</p> |
| <p>VIII. Lungi da me, pensier tiranno</p> | <p>G.F. Handel</p> |
| <p>IX. Voi che cercate amore, <i>Duetti e terzetti</i>, 1705</p> | <p>Antonio Lotti
(1667-1740)</p> |

Capriole
Derek Lee Ragin, countertenor
James Weaver, bass-baritone
Wayne Moss, viola da gamba
Howard Bass, lute and archlute
Gayle Johnson, harpsichord, director

Program Notes

Secular songs for the solo voice first began to be an important art form in the last twenty years of the sixteenth century. As professional singers began to find an appreciative secular audience in the courts of Northern Italy, they were eager to show off their technical virtuosity and the music written from approximately 1580-1600 was extremely florid and highly ornamented. In his *Nuove Musiche* published in 1600 Giulio Caccini heralded a new, less ornamented style that subjected vocal virtuosity to the overall dramatic and emotive content of the poem. Ornamentation became more expressive than technical, with trills expressing exultation and joy while dissonances emphasize the sweetness of the resolution to consonance on words such as love or kindness. Caccini was the first to describe subtle dynamic ornaments that crescendo and decrescendo on a long note to emphasize important words. Light dance-like songs such as *Mie speranze lusinghiere*, however, are less concerned with expressing the emotions of the text and can use fast stepwise ornaments that tickle the ear and are simply virtuosity for its own sake. Marco da Gagliano's *Musiche a una, due e tre voci*, published in 1615 is an excellent example of this monodic style of which he, as *maestro di capella* to the Medici for thirty five years, was a leading proponent. In both *Io vidi in terra* and *Valli profonde* the character of each poem is clearly evoked, serenity in the first and despair in the second. The singer can show off his prowess in the ornamentation at specific words which add to the poetic imagery such as the fast motion on *aer* (air) depicting winds; the jagged melodic line and rhythms at *precipitanti sassi* (hurled rocks); and the twisting, writhing sixteenth-note line on *serpenti* (snakes).

The *Arie Musicali* of Girolamo Frescobaldi were published in 1630 during a six year sojourn in Florence; the rest of his life was spent in Rome. The duets are strophic canzonettes which repeat the same melody and bass for all three verses based on dance-like rhythms, like Gagliano's *Mie speranze lusinghiere*. The *Aria di Romanesca* and the *Aria di Passacaglia* are both based on stock bass patterns. The *Aria di Romanesca* is a strophic song whose melody is carefully crafted to express the emotional contents of the text of each verse and is thus a tribute to the Florentine style led by Caccini & Gagliano. The *Aria di Passacaglia*, on the other hand, reflects the early cantatas being written by Frescobaldi's Roman contemporaries at that time, both in the sectional alternation of aria and recitative and in the flowing lyricism of the melody.

It was soon after this, in 1640, that the term *Bel Canto* was first used in an Italian treatise on the art of singing and it was probably referring to this new lyrical Roman style which, while emphasizing the beauty of the voice, still offered plenty of opportunity for the singer to show off his technical skill through the effortless delivery of florid ornamentation. It is this combination of a naturally beautiful voice, technical skill and mastery of emotive communication that were to continue as the style of Italian singing that became known as *Bel Canto*.

Elizabethan England was particularly taken with Italian ideals and, in response to them, developed the genre of the English lute song, beginning in 1597 with the publication of John Dowland's *First Book of Songs or Ayres*. The English show an equal sensitivity to expressing high quality poetic texts yet lyricism prevails over the more self-conscious manipulations of the Italians via word painting or ornamentation. There is often a play on words, such as in "It was a time when silly bees could speake" where time and thyme are often both implied. The lute pieces were published by Dowland's son, Robert Dowland, in 1610.

The Germans were particularly fond of the Italian style and many went to Italy to study, bringing home music and ideas. Andreas Hammerschmidt's Dialogue between Jesus and the repentant thief being crucified with Him hearkens back to the sacred duets of Heinrich Schutz who studied with Monteverdi in Venice. Dietrich Buxtehude's *Jubilate Domino* unites technical virtuosity which expresses the joy of the text with Italianate word painting such as melismas at *cantate* and *psallite* (let's sing) or the arpeggiated figure to evoke trumpet battle cries at *in buccinis et vocae tubae* (with the sound of cornettes & trumpets).

George Frideric Handel studied in Italy from 1705-1710, during which time he wrote many Italian cantatas such as *Lungi da me* and *Dalla guerra amorosa*. He undoubtedly heard the music of Antonio Lotti, *maestro di capella* in Venice at the time. Lotti's *Duetti e Terzetti* were published in 1705 and may well have been the model for Handel's Italian chamber duets. The works of both composers show the maturation of the cantata and the establishment of fixed forms based on the experiments from the seventeenth-century. Both clearly separate and alternate recitative and aria and use the Da Capo form where the first half of the aria is repeated, creating a tri-partite form. Both require a virtuoso command of brilliant figurations and of affective communication to express the text, thus synthesizing the seemingly opposing focuses of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries of virtuoso ornamentation vs. emotive rendering of the text.

- Gayle Johnson

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I. Mie speranze lusinghiere

Mie speranze lusinghiere
Desiato in van piacere
Falsi sguardi, Ben che tardi
Da voi sciolto pur mi volto
Al sentier di libertade
E d'Amore sgombro 'l core
Che languì senza pietade.

Bacco amico a desir miei,
Fugator de' pensier rei
Sol m'arrida Meco arrida
Festeggiante, Fiammegiante
Tra le tazze rubinose
E m'inviti Co'suo inviti
Cinto il crin d'Edera e rose.

Chi d'amor mal fortunato
Porta 'l core arso, e piagato
I suoi duoli, Riconsoli
Co'i possenti Lenimenti
Di che Bacco sana l'alme
Bacco pio, Bacco Dio
Donator di lauri, e palme.

Io vidi in terra

Io vidi in terra angelici costumi
E celesti bellezze al modo sole
Tal che di rimembrar mi giova e dole
Che quanto io miro par sogni, ombre, e fumi;
E vidi lagrimar que' duo bei lumi
C'han fatto mille volte invidia al Sole
Et udi sospirando dir parole
Che farian gir i monti e star i fiumi.
Amor, Senno, Valor, Pietate e Doglia
Facean piangendo un piu dolce concento
D'ogni altro che nel mondo udir si soglia
Ed era il Ciel a l'armonia sì intento
Che non se vede' in ramo mover foglia
Tanta dolcezza havea pien l'aere e'l vento.

Valli profonde

Valli profonde al Sol nemiche Rupì
Che'l ciel superbe minacciate grotte
Onde non parte mai silentio e notte
Aer che d'atra nube il Ciel occupi
Precipitanti sassi alte de rupi
Ossa insepolti herbose mura e rotte
D'huomini albergo già hor pur condotte
Che temon gir tra voi serpente e lupi
Erme campagne inhabitati lidi

Mie speranze lusinghiere

My hopes that were so promising,
Vainly wished for pleasures,
Deceitful glances, although so late
I am finally freed from you;
So now I turn toward the path of liberty
And love-free is my heart
That was languishing without pity.

Bacchus, friend of my desires
Ouster of bad thoughts
He alone will favor me with a true welcome
Celebrating and beaming
Among the ruby wine-cups;
And may he entice me with his lure
his head crowned with ivy and roses.

Whoever is unfortunate in love
His heart is seared and wounded.
May his sorrows be consoled
By the powerful sensations
With which Bacchus cures all souls.
Pius Bacchus, Godlike Bacchus
Giver of Laurels and of palms.

Io vidi in terra

I have seen on earth angelic habits
and celestial beauties unique in this world
Which gladden and pain my memory so much
That all else I look at seems like dreams, shadows and vapor,
And I have seen tears from those two beautiful eyes
That have made the sun envious a thousand times.
And I have heard sighing words that were so moving
That they would displace mountains and hold back floods.
Love, Wisdom, Courage, Pity and Pain
Joined, weeping in a sweeter concert
Than any that has been heard in the world,
And heaven was so intent upon this harmony
That not a leaf could be seen moving in the branches
So full of sweetness was the air and the breeze.

Valli profonde

Deep valleys, enemies of the Sun,
Proud cliffs menacing the sky,
Grottos which silence & darkness never leave,
Winds that cover the sky with black clouds,
Rocks hurled down from high cliffs,
Unburied bones, walls overgrown with weeds
Once the abode of men, but now reduced to dens
Where even wolves and serpents fear to go;
Lonely fields, uninhabited shores

Cantata: Dalla guerra amorosa

Recitative

Dalla guerra amorosa or che ragion mi chiama
o miei pensieri, fuggite, pur fuggite.
Vergognosa non e in amor la fuga
che sol fuggendo un'alma del crudo amor
puo riportar la palma.

Aria

Non v'alletti un occhio nero
Con suoi sguardi lusinghiero
Che da voi chieda pietà.
Che per far le sue vendette
e con arco e con saette
ivi amor nascoso sta.
Non v'alletti...

Recitative

Fuggite, si fuggite! Ah! di quanto veleno,
amore asperge i suoi piaceri.
Ah! quanto ministra duol, e pianto,
a chi le seque, e le sue leggi adora!
Se un volto v'innamora, sappiate o pensieri miei,
Che cio che piace in brev'ora svanisce
e poi dispiace.

Aria

La bellezza e com' un fiore
sul mattin di primavera vivace e bella,
Che la sera langue e more
si scolora e non par quella.

Recitative & aria

Fuggite, si fuggite!
A chi servo d'amor vive in catena
E dubbioso il gioir, certa la pena.

Cantata: Lungi da me

Recitative

Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!
Tu mi vorresti rendere infelice
col farmi credere Tirsi un traditore.
Ah! sento ch'il mio core mi dice,
che non puo l'alma si bella esser a me rubella.
Dunque da questo sen fugga l'affanno!
Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!

Aria

Pensier crudele, se vuoi ch'io creda
ch'il mio bel Tirsi sia ingannator!
Fia ch'il mio amore meco l'unisca,
poi lo bandisca da questo cor.
Pensier crudele...

Recitative

Ma se amor cio contrasta e'l cor ripugna
la sua virtu mel vieta
e la sincerita del suo bel genio
non vogliono ch'io creda che sia Tirsi ingrato.
Lungi, dunque da me, pensier spietato!

Dalla guerra amorosa

Recitative

Now that Reason calls me, flee from the amorous
war, o my thoughts!
Fleeing from love is not shameful,
for only in fleeing can a soul receive the palm
of victory from cruel Love.

Aria

So be not enticed by beautiful black eyes
with their deceiving looks
which ask you for mercy.
In order to take their revenge
they make love grow by means of
the bow and arrows of Cupid.
So be not enticed...

Recitative

Flee, yes, flee! Ah! Love sprinkles its pleasures
with so much poison.
Ah! how much he administers sorrow and tears
to those that follow him and adore his laws!
If you once fall in love, know, o my thoughts,
that peace vanishes in that brief hour
and then you will regret it.

Aria

Beauty is like a flower,
lively and beautiful in the spring morning,
but in the evening it languishes
and dies discolored.

Recitative & aria

Flee, yes flee!
Those who serve love lie in chains
The joy is doubtful but certain the pain.

Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!

Recitative

Away, tyrannous thought!
You want to make me unhappy
by making me believe that Tirsi is a traitor.
Ah! I hear my heart say to me
that such a beautiful soul could not betray me.
Thus, flee from this breast, anxiety!
Away, tyrannous thought!

Aria

Cruel thought that wants me to believe
that my fine Tirsi is a deceiver!
If my love were to unite him with me,
then I would banish this thought from my heart.
Cruel thought...

Recitative

But if love resists it and the heart is reluctant,
his merit prevents me
and the sincerity of his genius
do not let me believe that Tirsi is a deceiver.
Far away from me, pitiless thought!

Cantata: Dalla guerra amorosa

Recitative

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Far away from me, pitiless thought!

Aria

Fuggi da questo sen, o barbaro pensier!
Lasciami in pace!
Sebben m'aduli amor,
per te consente il cor perche ti piace.
Fuggi da questo sen...

Recitative

Non sa il mio cor sincero
creder d'error capace un'alma grande.
Dunque torna, o pensiero,
coi segni a funestar la mente oppressa
e lascia a me la libertade intiera
di cedere Tirsi mio d'alma sincera.

Aria

Tirsi amato, adorato mio Nume!
Vieni, o caro, ritornami in sen
Farfalletta son io, che le piume ardo al lume
del caro mio ben.

Duetto: Voi che cercate amore

Voi che cercate Amore, poveri amanti,
io vi diro dov'e.
Nelle guance d'Eurilla, il traditore,
qual serpe infra le rose
gia si nascose, ed essa il ricovero.
Credete, amanti, a me
che per tormento mio, purtroppo, il so
purtroppo, il vedo, e tardi
lo conosco all face, all'arco, ai dardi.

Aria

Flee from this breast, barbarous thought!
Leave me in peace!
Though you cajole me, love,
my heart yields to you because it pleases you.
Flee from this breast...

Recitative

My sincere heart does not know how to
believe a great man capable of error.
Thus go back, terrible thought,
with your tokens to distress the oppressed mind
and leave me the freedom to believe my Tirsi sincere.

Aria

Beloved Tirsi, my adored god!
Come, beloved, return to my arms.
I am like a butterfly whose wings burn in
in the light of my beloved.

Voi che cercate amore

You who seek Love, poor lovers
I will tell you where he is.
In the cheeks of Eurilla, the traitor,
like a snake amongst the roses
he hid himself already & she gave him shelter.
Believe me, lovers,
that through my torment, alas, I know it,
alas I see it, and too late
I recognize him by his torch, his arrows and his darts.

**Gala Performance and Reception
The legendary artist from Holland
Max van Egmond
performs with Capriole**

Tuesday, February 26, Ewell Recital Hall
College of William and Mary, 8:00 p.m.

His only concert in Virginia!

Reservations suggested due to limited seating; call 220-1248
Tickets available at Box Office \$25.00

**Last Concert of Capriole Series
Odes to Joy & Sorrow**

**Music of Henry Purcell & John Blow
featuring Steven Rickards & James Weaver**

Friday, April 26, University of Richmond North Court Recital Hall, 8:15 p.m.
Saturday, April 27, Chrysler Museum Theatre, Norfolk, 8:15 p.m.
Sunday, April 28, Williamsburg Regional Library Arts Center Theatre, 3:00 p.m.

The Artists

Countertenor **Derek Lee Ragin** is in great demand throughout Europe and the United States, particularly for baroque opera. A native of Newark, Mr. Ragin is constantly on the move and since his last performance with Capriole last February has performed in Washington D.C., New York, Cologne, Munich, Salzburg, and London. Some of his most exciting recent performances include Gluck's *Orfeo* at the London Proms with John Elliot Gardiner, in New York City and in his Salzburg debut. He will be recording it in May on the Phillips label. He particularly enjoys the music of Handel and since his Metropolitan Opera debut in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* he has sung Handel's *Amadigi* at the Early Music Festival in Utrecht, Holland; *Terpsichore*, directed by Nicholas McGegan, recorded in Hungary last June; the role of Guido in *Flavio* in Monte Carlo and Caen, France, directed by Rene Jacobs and recorded on the Harmonia Mundi France label; a recording of Handel cantatas on the CCS label; and *Tamerlano* on the Erato label. Other recent recordings include a set of Vivaldi cantatas on the Etcetera label and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. Mr. Ragin received his B.M. at the Oberlin Conservatory where he and Ms. Johnson first performed together in the Collegium Musicum. He then studied with Max van Egmond at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Holland.

Bass-baritone **James Weaver** is best known as an oratorio soloist and has appeared throughout the United States including Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Baltimore, the Bach Festival in Philadelphia, and the Berkeley Early Music Festival in California. His most recent appearances include Handel's *Joshua* with Basically Baroque in Chicago; a series of Bach cantatas with the American Bach Soloists in Marin County, California; Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers* directed by Philip Brett at the Berkeley Early Music Festival; Bach's *St. John Passion* with the San Francisco Bach Choir; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *St. John Passion* with the Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra and Chorus, the latter recorded on the Smithsonian label; and "Bawdy Ballads", a program of seventeenth-century English music with the Baltimore Consort which is soon to be released on the Dorian label. He was recently heard in two national broadcasts on National Public Radio: one of J.S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra and Chorus on Christmas eve and one of Bach cantata 80 performed by the American Bach Soloists on Performance Today in January. A native of Detroit, Michigan, he studied at the University of Michigan and then received a performance degree from the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam where he studied with Max van Egmond.

Howard Bass has performed throughout the United States in solo, lute song and ensemble programs. He is a member of La Rondinella and the Baltimore Consort and has performed with the Santa Fe Opera, the Smithsonian Chamber Players, the Theater Chamber Players of the Kennedy Center, the Folger Consort, and many other Washington-area ensembles. He has recorded with La Rondinella, the Smithsonian Chamber Players, the Folger Consort, the Baltimore Consort, the Choral Arts Society of Washington and the New England Consort of Viols. As a soloist he gives recitals across the country for the Smithsonian National Associates Program. Mr. Bass is a program coordinator in the Department of Public Programs at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Wayne Moss, a native of Virginia, is a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he studied with Catherina Meints & Auguste Wenzinger. He has appeared extensively in the southern and southwestern United States and in Europe both as soloist and as member of various ensembles. He was associate faculty for viola da gamba and performance practice at North Texas State University, Southern Methodist University, University of Texas at Austin, and Rice University as well as coaching at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. He has performed and recorded with Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Gayle Johnson, Artistic Director of Capriole, is a scholar-performer who specializes in seventeenth-century Italian music. She has conducted cross-disciplinary studies of Renaissance and Baroque dance, Italian poetry, and the relationship between music and the graphic arts. A native of Richmond, Ms. Johnson studied harpsichord with Margaret Irwin-Brandon and John Gibbons and holds degrees from the Oberlin College and Conservatory.

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