

**Galactic Arkestral Orchestra**

Proudly present

**ALL ITALIAN EARLY MUSIC**



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## **Galactic Arkestral Orchestra**

Peter Schrödingerus, *Music Director*

John P. Lagrange, *Conductor Emeritus*

### **Wilhelm Potatoman** Conducting

Monteverdi	Tocatta and Prologue from <i>L'Orfeo</i>
Corelli	Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8
Palestrina	<i>Tu es Petrus</i> Kyrie from <i>Missa Tu es Petrus</i>
DuFay	<i>Nuper rosarum flores</i>
Gabrieli	<i>Sonata pian e forte a 8</i>
Strozzi	<i>Lagrimie mie</i>

Midori Buffety, soprano

Imagine that we ignore any music related to Italy from the western music history, how much will be lost? Perhaps it is easier to ask how much will be left. *The Marriage of Figaro* is sung in Italian (also for *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*). Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* will be gone. Can you imagine a classical music world without *Four Seasons*? Certainly, Italy has been playing a major role in cultivating the musical tradition since the Medieval. Our standard musical notation, though always gradually changing with the new inventions in the twentieth century, is derived mainly from Italian notation system. The standard musical terms Mozart and Beethoven used were all written in Italian. I have always been wondering since my first encounter with piano scores why everything is written in Italian. Carrying a huge volume of Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* was already torturing enough, and the little boy had to also carry a dictionary in order to decipher the incomprehensible words like *dolce* or *sempre staccatissimo*. Not until my musical repertoire expanded beyond Bach (which was a major discovery for me) that I was aware of the importance of pre-Bach or pre-Vivaldi Italian music. The key musical figures in the Renaissance and the early Baroque, continuing from the great ancestors in the Medieval, formed the foundation of the so-called common-practice period, including the theory, instrumentations, forms and philosophy. We celebrate our great ancestors through different musical styles in this all-Italian concert.

Claudio Monteverdi was about forty years old when his first opera, *L'Orfeo*, had its premiere in Mantua in 1607 to the members of Accademia degli Invaghiti. By the letter that Francesco Gonzaga, the dedicatee of the opera, sent to his brother about the performance of February 24, we might conclude that the premiere was given in a small room in an apartment owned by the Duchess of Ferrara—Margherita. However, in the preface of the score edited by Denis Stevens, the editor pointed out that the letter hinted a little bit about the actual premiere date. It was not the first time, as Francesco wrote, that the audience had heard the performance of *L'Orfeo*. The actual premiere date might take place a little bit before February 24. Nonetheless, it is certain that the audience were astonished by the grand scale of the orchestra, though we do not know whether the premiere performance was staged or not. Beside the singers, Monteverdi called for two descant recorders, two cornetti, five trumpets, five trombones, two violini piccoli, four violins, four violas, two cellos, two double-basses and two harpsichords, three archlutes, three bass viols, two archcitterns, two organs, one regal and one harp for the basso continuo. Fortunately, these instruments are not played simultaneously, so some doublings allow us to reduce the number of players. Also, an instrument such as the regal does not appear until Act III.

The Toccata, acting like an overture to the opera, is energetic and festive. The block D-major chords are restated in every downbeat in every

measure in the Toccata, which is only sixteen measures in length. The rising D-major scale in the upper instrumental group (consisted of two recorders, one violin, one trumpet and one oboe) is followed by the descending scale of the same notes in dotted-rhythm. This simple melody and even simpler harmonic structure establish the mood of this overture very effectively. The Toccata is repeated three times. In the second time the performers might choose to soften the dynamics and leave out the brass (which will be done in this performance), but the full orchestra comes back in the third repeat.

The Toccata is so effective that it is almost shocking to suddenly change from D-major to D-minor in the Prologue. Now the orchestra consists of only strings. The mood becomes more solemn and almost serious. Unlike the Toccata, the harmonic structure in the Prologue is more complicated with more movement in the basso continuo. The upper two instrumental groups (each consisted of one violin and one oboe) together form the melody line of the so-called ritornello, which literary means returning. The intervening melody between these two groups almost sounds like one group is playing it. The voice crossing and rhythmic crossing of the two pairs, like in the first five measures of the Prologue as shown here, is

### Monteverdi's

The image shows a musical score for a Ritornello section, measures 19 and 20. The score is for Violin 1/Oboe 1 and Violin 2/Oboe 2. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The music shows a rhythmic and melodic exchange between the two instrumental pairs. Measure 19 starts with a half note G4 in the upper part and a half note F4 in the lower part. Measure 20 continues with a half note E4 in the upper part and a half note D4 in the lower part, followed by a dotted quarter note C4 in the upper part and a dotted quarter note B3 in the lower part.

ingenious orchestration. The walking bass line is fluid, creating the flow towards the entrance of *La Musica*, or the Spirit of Music. The recitative acts like a solo section in the classical ritornello form. Every ritornello has the same harmonic or even melodic structure, but the richness lies within the change in instrumentation of every ritornello. In the liner note of his celebrated recording of *L'Orfeo*, Sir John Eliot Gardiner says that, “[t]he fascination of the instruments and of the range of colors they bring to Monteverdi’s score is boundless. They contribute enormously to the atmosphere and flavor of the music...” I must add that these instruments also undoubtedly reinforce to the most important philosophy of this great opera—the power of music.

Although the outputs from Arcangelo Corelli were mostly instrumental music, the *Concerto Grosso* Op. 6 No. 8, or the *Christmas Concerto*, which was published in a set of twelve concerti in 1714, one year after his death, was undoubtedly influenced by Monteverdi orchestration. By looking at the first six measures of the *Allegro* in the first movement, the two solo violins’ interaction resembles Monteverdi’s orchestration when the two intervening melodic lines

are played in the Prologue of *L'Orfeo*. This is not so



The image shows a musical score for two violins. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is common time (C). The Violin 1 part starts with a treble clef and a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violin 2 part starts with a treble clef, a dynamic marking of 'f' (forte), and a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The two parts are in a duet, with some overlapping notes.

surprising since Corelli started composing this concerto in 1690 when the opera was the most popular genre of music in Italy, and Monteverdi's works must have influenced Corelli in terms of orchestration technique. Corelli dedicated his *Christmas Concerto* to Pietro Ottoboni, a great patron of music in Italy. So why did it take so long for his *Christmas Concerto* to be published? Michael Talbot, in his article in Grove Music Online, pointed out that Corelli made quite substantial change from the original sonata da chiesa, or a four-movement work for instrument ensemble without a fast dance-like movement, to be more virtuosic and more compelling to be able to “stand comparison with the concertos of Torelli, Albinoni...” Obviously Corelli was somewhat a perfectionist who focused more on quality. His works only went up to Op. 6, and this might justify how much time he put in for each published work.

Corelli was quite specific in the instrumentation. In the opening *Grave*, he marked *Arcate sostenute e come sta*, meaning that the passage must be played with sustained bowing and as written—no embellishment is allowed. This was done probably to make sure that what Corelli intended for

the mood of the first *Grave*, as Christopher Hogwood called it “[the] thought to evoke Christmas night,” remained unaltered. He further indicated that if the concerto is performed not for Christmas occasion, then the last Pastorale could be omitted. However, omitting the Pastorale still preserves the overall four-movement structure. Within each movement, there are subsections with contrasting tempo and mood. The first movement is divided into *Vivace—Grave—Allegro*. The solo instruments (two violins and one cello) are accompanied by the strings orchestra. However, the basso continuo also includes a harpsichord, but the figuration might be more restrained and allows less room for improvisation compared to its role in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. In this performance, the harpsichord will be playing only block chords, doubling the orchestra. The Pastorale, marked *Largo*, can be thought of like an apotheosis of this concerto. The solo duet is very lyrical. The solo cello, besides holding the pedal bass with the orchestra, joins the duet occasionally. The large leap in the cello expressively adds the pastoral mood to this beautiful section. The concerto ends softly in *pianissimo*, leaving us with the stillness and uplifting feeling. Even though it is still early for the Christmas, we will hear this amazing Pastorale in this performance.

While the power of music that Orfeo processes might sound too mythical (actually to be able to put someone into sleep is not at all unrealistic for some kinds of music), one of our great Italian ancestors is

considered to be the wizard of music, since Giovanni Palestrina is sometimes called “the savior of church music.” Whether it is true or not that Palestrina actually prevented the ruin of sacred polyphonic music by composing *Missa Papae Marcelli* and successfully convinced the Council of Trent that the ban of polyphonic music was unnecessary through the beauty and power of music, Palestrina’s contribution to the practice of polyphony was immensely undisputable. When Fux wrote his treatise on counterpoint, the model that he based on was the so-called “Palestrina style.” The use of sixths and thirds in writing multi-voice piece was standardized by Palestrina. This was a major shift from the Medieval, when these ear-pleasing intervals were still not widely used.

Palestrina was born in (unsurprisingly) Palestrina, a town near Rome, in 1525. Throughout his life, he composed 104 masses (also Haydn’s magic number), around 300 motets and many pieces in other genres. Palestrina is known for his parody mass, which does not mean a comical mass or a mass for fun, but a mass that based on the material borrowed from other secular music. In his *Missa Tu es Petrus*, the opening trio sung by the tenor, baritone and bass is the same in the opening of the motet *Tu es Petrus*, but only in different voices. However, in his mass, the rhythm is slightly different because of the text. Both the mass and the motet require six voices. The whole *Missa Tu es Petrus* is about half an hour long. In this concert, only the *Kyrie* will be performed after the motet that this mass based on.

In contrast to Palestrina’s sound, which our ears are used to, Guillaume Dufay’s *Nuper rosarum flores* is a great example of pre-Palestrina sound. One key musical element in this famous motet is the so-called Landini cadence. Take a look at the music at the end of the word “flores” in the first line, and you might want to challenge

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Triplum

Motetus

rum flo - - - res

rum flo - - - res

yourself to count how many times such cadence, which rather is the end of the phrase and not so strong as the “ending” like what we are used to when talking about cadence, occurs in this motet. This small but crucial musical element is the characteristic of late medieval music. Francesco Landini, born in Florence, invented this cadence (hence the name) to put some musical gestures at the end of each musical phrase around fifty years before Dufay’s time. Although Dufay was not born in Italy, his connection to Florence, especially the cathedral of Florence, tied him closely to the Italian musical tradition, including Landini’s influence. However, Dufay and Florence had a deeper connection than just the use of Landini cadence as everyone who studies early music history knows.

In 1436, the cathedral of Florence was built and finished by Filippo Brunelleschi, and to celebrate the grand opening of the cathedral, Dufay, at that time a visitor to Florence from the Burgundian land, was a key figure in music to take part in celebrating this grand opening of an amazing cathedral. Dufay composed *Nuper rosarum flores* for this occasion. The music itself was already beautiful enough to the Florentine audience, but there was deeper connection between Dufay motet and the dome of the cathedral in Florence—at least that was what Charles Warren believed in his article *Brunelleschi's Dome and Dufay's Motet*.

It is well known that Dufay's *Nuper rosarum flores* exhibits a simple arithmetic ratio between its four sections (6:4:2:3) by considering the ratio of the total beats in each section. This magic ratio, according to Craig Wright, did not appear anywhere in music literature. So this ratio is special. Charles Warren claimed that this ratio reflected the basic architectural structure of the dome of the cathedral of Florence, and Dufay, according to Warren, was fully aware of this fact so he composed this motet to imitate the number derived from the dome. Everything fits together perfectly until Wright pointed out that, although the motet indeed carries such simple arithmetic ratio, the dome of the cathedral of Florence, on the other hand, did not at all exhibit the ratio in its structure. Dufay, on the other hand, reflected the ratio of the Solomon Temple from older sources, may be from the bible, but obviously not from the cathedral of Florence. But does

this have anything to do with the music itself? I think the fact that the arithmetical connection between the motet and the dome has been broken does not pale the musical essence of Dufay's motet. The beauty of the music itself is well justified, and we should not allow anything to interfere our perception of Dufay's mastery in composition.

Not long before Monteverdi held the position of *Maestri di Cappella* at St. Mark's Basilica, Giovanni Gabrieli was a principal organist at the very same place. Gabrieli held the position from 1585 to 1612, only a year before Monteverdi arrived in 1613. His early life was not fully known, but his contribution to the music in St. Mark's Basilica was immense. With the nature of the structure of the Basilica, allowing basically two sets of musicians performing together, Gabrieli explored the use of *Cori spizzati*, or the separated chorus to enhance any dramatic effect he wanted. In his *Sonata pian e forte a 8*, which was included in his *Sacrae symphoniae* published in Venice in 1597, Gabrieli was the first to clearly indicate the dynamic markings in the score. He also fully specified the instruments used in the piece. The original score called for two choirs, each with three trombones and one violin or cornetto. Before that time, instrumentalists might perform any pieces with any instruments, and playing pieces for violin on a cornetto might completely change the intended mood of the piece. Gabrieli hence specified what he intended. To celebrate this authoritarianism of a composer, we will instead make the second brass Coro



## **For Further Reading**

### ***L'Orfeo* (Monteverdi)**

Denis Stevens's edition of *L'Orfeo* printed in 1968 (London: Novello & Company Ltd.) contains a thorough discussion of instrumentation and historical background of the premiere of the opera. While most historical details about the actual premiere date are often omitted, Stevens pointed out some possibilities of the actual first performance date.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner recorded a highly acclaimed set of two CDs under Archiv Produktion. The liner note included discussed the piece in from somewhat philosophical point of view by Silke Leopold and more musical point of view of the conductor himself.

### **Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No. 8 (Corelli)**

A wonderful recording by Christopher Hogwood is also a great collection of Baroque Christmas Music. The liner note was quite short but it discusses the metaphors in Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*. Christopher Hogwood is well known for his re-interpretation of early music through period instruments.

Alfred Einstein in his preface to the miniature score of the concerto gives concise details about the history of the piece and some reference to the bible. The basso continuo is notated in figured bass.

### ***Nuper rosarum flores* (Dufay)**

For detailed explanation of the connection between Dufay's motet and the dome of the cathedral of Florence, the 47-page article by Craig Wright, "*Nuper rosarum flores*," *King Solomon's Temple, and the Veneration of the Virgin*, provides everything you need to know in response to Charles Warren's original article.

## **General Reference**

Grove Music Online is always your friend. The article is broad but thoroughly detailed. I also always consult The Harvard Dictionary of Music by Randel for quick reference and some definitions for musical terms. An anthology compiled by Timothy Roden, Craig Wright and Bryan Simms, *Anthology for Music in Western Civilization* (Belmont, CA: Thomson and Schirmer, 2006), gives a good reference for key pieces for important composers. It also contains a short analysis of each piece with some historical backgrounds.