



STILL LIFE

EARLY BAROQUE FANTASY

MÚSICA D'OUTRORA • DIR. PABLO DEVIGO

I. PROLOGUE: LOVE'S FIRE

*(Amore): "Arderò, ferirò: stragi funeste
Farò di ogni mortale: altri arme,
Altra rabbia, altri fulmini, altro foco
Vedrai nel regno mio, fabbro inesperto,
Incenerirò i più superbi cuori."*

*(Love): "I shall burn, I shall wound: devastating carnage
I shall wreak upon all mortals; other weapons,
Other fury, other thunderbolts, other fire
You shall see in my realm, inexperienced craftsman,
I shall reduce the proudest hearts to ashes."*

In the first half of the seventeenth century, music burned with transformative power. Venetian librettist and poet Giulio Strozzi (1583-1652), in his dramatic poem *Il Natale di Amore* (1621), captures not just the

intensity of love, but the raw emotional force that defined an era. This was a time when art sought to wound and transform, when composers wielded dissonance and harmony as weapons to pierce the soul, when music's power to move the passions was understood as a force of nature itself. The works in this collection emerge from this aesthetic world, where emotional truth reigned supreme over tradition, and where art's highest purpose was to shake the foundations of the human heart. ■

Facing Page: Pietro della Vecchia (1603-1678), Jupiter and Semele, Venice, c.1640s. The painting captures divine love's destructive force, as Jupiter's celestial fire consumes his mortal beloved Semele, who demanded to see him in his true form.

II. PATHWAYS TO THE DIVINE

This revolutionary spirit manifested differently across Europe, shaped by distinct intellectual and religious traditions. From the dramatic

expressivity of Italian opera to the profound devotion of Lutheran Germany, composers forged new musical languages to speak directly to the ►



soul. In both Catholic and Protestant territories, a sophisticated dialogue emerged between reason and passion, between earthly experience and divine truth.

The Catholic Church, through Counter-Reformation theology, crystallized its approach to religious experience through sensory engagement, emotional persuasion, and artistic grandeur. This approach was refined in post-Tridentine thought, where sacred art became a transformative force requiring the faithful's active participation - their inner disposition essential to achieving transcendence.

Lutheran theology emphasized the unity of body and soul, understanding music's power to work directly on human physiology while simultaneously elevating consciousness. This understanding transcended confessional boundaries - music was understood as a force capable of affecting the entire human being, physical, emotional, and metaphysical.

In seventeenth-century Europe, listening to music was conceived as a sophisticated practice demanding

both intellectual rigor and inner receptivity. Sound was believed to flow through the body like an invisible current, creating a direct path between physical sensation and divine elevation. Composers created works expecting them to resonate through their listeners' entire being. The characteristic features of baroque music - its rhetorical power, dramatic contrasts, and emotional depth - emerged



from this understanding. Every musical gesture was crafted as a sophisticated tool for transformation, capable of leading listeners toward deeper truths through the gateway of physical and emotional experience. ■

Below: Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, Rome, 1658-1670. The

church's oval design creates a dynamic upward movement, where natural light from hidden windows mingles with gilt decoration and colored marble to dissolve architectural boundaries. This sophisticated manipulation of space and light embodies Counter-Reformation principles of using sensory experience to facilitate spiritual transformation.





III. SUSPENDED TIME

The musical works in this collection embody these philosophical and religious ideals through a distinctive approach to time and expression. Like a painted still life of the period, where carefully arranged objects create meaning through their relationships and symbolic resonance, these compositions present us with a series of ecstatic moments - concentrated states of emotional or spiritual intensity. Each section captures a complete affective world - be it devotional, dramatic, or

dance-like - that demands to be experienced in its full power before yielding to the next. Rather than seeking continuous development, these composers worked through powerful contrasts and sudden transformations, creating a musical form where meaning emerges through the juxtaposition of distinct emotional states.

This approach to musical time aligns with what theorists of the period called *stylus phantasticus* - a

manner of composition that privileged freedom and fantasy, where sudden shifts between contrasting sections created a sense of spontaneous invention. Like the carefully arranged objects in a painted still life, these seemingly improvisatory moments were in fact meticulously crafted to create maximum emotional impact. ■

Facing page: Pieter Claesz (1597-1661), Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait, Haarlem, 1628. This meditation on mortality creates an otherworldly atmosphere through its mysterious combination of violin, skull, and translucent glass sphere, suggesting realms beyond the physical.

IV. VENETIAN TABLEAUX

In early 17th century Venice, at the forefront of musical innovation, Dario Castello (c. 1590 - c. 1630) emerged as one of its most radical voices. His *Sonate Concertate in Stil Moderno* – in particular the two included in this album – embodied the spirit of the time through their bold harmonic language, striking use of dissonance, and virtuosic writing, fully embracing the principles of the *Seconda Pratica* championed by Claudio Monteverdi (1567 - 1643), where emotional expression took precedence over traditional compositional rules.

Castello's sonatas represent the height of the *stylus phantasticus* in instrumental music. Their

unpredictable alternation between free, rhapsodic passages and more structured sections creates a sense of constant invention. Each section functions like a distinct tableau, a musical still life where time seems to pause as a single affect is explored in its full intensity. These moments - whether expressing grief, joy, or contemplation - are connected not through gradual transition but through dramatic juxtaposition, yet the overall effect is carefully calculated to move the listener through a series of powerful emotional states.

Though historical records remain elusive, we know he identified himself as leader of a ▶

company of instrumentalists in Venice, and claimed a connection to San Marco, where Monteverdi served as *maestro di cappella*. This proximity to Venetian opera's birthplace provides crucial insights for interpreting his sonatas. Our performance draws direct inspiration from Monteverdi's detailed continuo orchestration in *L'Orfeo* (1607), where specific

instrumental combinations heighten dramatic moments: the somber pairing of organ and theorbo underscores Orpheus's grief upon learning of Euridice's death; the agitated combination of harpsichord, viola da braccio, and theorbo captures his fearful questioning as he leads her from the underworld; we apply these documented practices to Castello's sonatas, using a full palette



of instruments found in Monteverdi's opera: organ, harpsichord, theorbo, guitar, lirone, and violone. While this approach represents a departure from traditional performance practice, it reveals a composer deeply attuned to the dramatic possibilities of his era. His sonatas emerge as works of remarkable emotional depth, speaking with the same expressive

power that characterized the great Venetian operas of his time. ■

Facing Page: Bernardo Strozzi (1581-1644), Street Musicians, Venice, c.1630. This theatrical scene transforms a moment of street performance into a dramatic tableau, capturing the intersection of popular entertainment and artistic elevation characteristic of baroque Venice.

V. LIGHT AND SHADOW

The aesthetic of contrast lies at the heart of Baroque sensibility. Moving beyond Renaissance ideals of proportion and balance, Baroque artists employed dramatic juxtapositions as powerful tools for emotional and spiritual affect. Just as painters mastered *chiaroscuro* - the dramatic interplay of light and shadow - to create depth and emotional resonance, composers crafted musical works where contrasting sections create complete emotional worlds, each heightened by its relationship to surrounding moments.

The Sonata VI in D minor, Op. 1, BuxWV 257
by the Danish-German composer Dieterich

Buxtehude (1637-1707) alternates between passages of profound devotional character and spirited dance-like sections, creating an almost theatrical effect of shifting perspectives. The *stylus phantasticus* found unique expression in his work, where its characteristic freedom became a vehicle for exploring the tension between spiritual contemplation and earthly celebration. Our performance emphasizes this duality through the contrasting timbres of chamber organ and harpsichord. The bright *chiaro* of the harpsichord illuminates the worldly passages, while the organ's solemn voice carries the *oscuro* of religious affect. ▶

In the *Sinfonia a Tre* by the Italian master Alessandro Stradella (1643-1682), a similar interplay unfolds, though here the contrast manifests through different means. Sections of strict vocal polyphony, enhanced by the organ doubling the parts, evoke the solemnity of sacred music. These alternate with dance-like passages where the guitar takes prominence - an instrument that brought with it the flavor of popular culture. This juxtaposition reflects the complex cultural landscape of 17th-century Italy, where Spanish influence permeated many regions under

Habsburg control, creating a rich dialogue between sacred and secular traditions. ■

Facing Page: Matthias Stom (1600-1652), Supper at Emmaus, Naples, c.1633-1639. In this composition, extreme contrasts of light and shadow transform a nocturnal scene into a study of opposites. Stom's masterful chiaroscuro technique creates stark boundaries between illuminated and darkened areas, perfectly exemplifying how baroque artists used dramatic contrasts to heighten emotional and psychological tension.

VI. VIRTUOSIC VISIONS

In the Habsburg courts, the *stylus phantasticus* found one of its most brilliant expressions in the works of Ignazio Albertini (1644 - 1685). His *Sonatinae*, posthumously published in Vienna in 1692, represent the pinnacle of virtuosic violin writing at the time. These works showcase a fascinating synthesis of Italian and Austrian stylistic elements, combining the florid virtuosity characteristic of Italian violin music with the bold experimentation of composers like Heinrich Biber (1644 - 1704).

In both *Sonata III* and *Sonata X*, Albertini creates moments of suspended time through extended pedal points, where the harmony stretches across prolonged periods. During these passages, freed from the rhythmic and harmonic constraints of the baseline, the violin soars in displays of extraordinary virtuosity. These passages explore the instrument's full range, revealing a kaleidoscope of tonal colors through imaginative figurations. Such moments of suspended animation contrast ►



dramatically with the more structured dance-like sections, where violin and *basso continuo* engage in intimate dialogue.

Like light playing across faceted crystal, the violin's brilliance takes on different qualities within these static harmonies. At times it sparkles with jewel-like intensity in its highest register; at others, it plumbs darker depths with rich, velvet tones. This interplay of technical display and expressive depth exemplifies how Albertini uses virtuosity not as mere display but

as a vehicle for heightened emotional expression. Each virtuosic passage serves to intensify the emotional state it embodies, creating moments where technical brilliance and expressive power become inseparable. ■

Below: Johann Michael Rottmayr (1656-1730), St Benedict's Triumphal Ascent, Vienna, 1721. This ceiling fresco demonstrates baroque illusionistic virtuosity, as multiple figures spiral upward through architecturally impossible space toward divine light.



VII. TRANSFORMATIONS

The intellectual richness of Baroque musical culture is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the tradition surrounding the work *Ancidetemi* pur by Jacques Arcadelt (1507-1568). This madrigal, first published in 1539, captured the imagination of generations of composers through its sophisticated exploration of love's transformative power:

***“Ancidetemi pur gravi martiri
Che'l viver mi sia noia
Che'l morir mi fia gioia
Ma lassate ir gli estremi miei sospiri
A trovar quella ch'è cagion ch'io muoia
E dir a l'empia fera
Ch'onor non gli è che per amarla io pera”***

*“Kill me then, grievous torments
For living is but trouble to me
And dying would be joy
But let my final sighs go forth
To find she who is the cause of my death
And tell the cruel beast
That it brings her no honor that I die for loving her”*

The text embodies fundamental aspects of Baroque aesthetics: the dramatization of inner conflict, the embrace of emotional extremes, and the relationship between suffering and transcendence. Like the verses of Giulio Strozzi, Arcadelt's text understands love as a force of violent transformation. Where Giulio Strozzi's Love declares “I shall burn, I shall wound,” Arcadelt's protagonist embraces death itself as the ultimate expression of love. Both texts explore annihilation - one promising to “reduce the proudest hearts to ashes,” the other finding joy in death for love's sake. This understanding of emotional extremes as pathways to transcendence would become a defining characteristic of Baroque artistic expression.

This complex emotional landscape inspired a remarkable tradition of instrumental elaborations. Composers like Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643), Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575-1647), and Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger (1580-1651) created sophisticated treatments of Arcadelt's madrigal, using its structure as a framework for exploration. In his *Avertenze* to his 1615 edition of the *Toccate* ►



e Partite d'Involatura, Frescobaldi articulates a sophisticated approach to virtuosity through his discussion of *passi* (technical passages) and *affetti* (emotional affects). He instructs performers to carefully integrate these elements, adjusting tempo and articulation to serve expressive purposes - slowing for emotional intensity, accelerating for brilliant display, pausing to emphasize significant moments. This understanding of virtuosity as a

means of emotional communication, rather than mere technical display, pervades the imaginative transformations these composers created on *Ancidetemi pur*.

The *Ancidetemi pur* by Gregorio Strozzi (1615 - 1687) stands as a masterful contribution to this tradition. His treatment of Arcadelt's material creates an expansive new composition that



reimagines the original piece. Drawing on the improvisatory spirit of *stylus phantasticus*, each section seems to spring forth spontaneously while maintaining a profound connection to the original's emotional essence. The work proceeds through distinct moments of virtuosic intensity, each one capturing a different facet of the original's emotional power while building upon Arcadelt's fundamental structure. ■

Above: Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), "Apollo and Daphne," Rome, 1622-1625. Like our composers' transformations of Arcadelt's madrigal, this sculpture captures a single moment of metamorphosis in suspended animation. Bernini freezes the precise instant where human form begins its transformation into nature - a virtuosic display of technical mastery that turns dynamic motion into eternal art.



VIII. PATHS TO TRANSCENDENCE

Our journey through seventeenth-century musical thought and practice reveals profound transformations - from sensory experience to spiritual enlightenment, from dramatic gesture to contemplative stillness. The works in this collection chart various paths toward transcendence: through virtuosic display in Albertini's sonatas, through the careful juxtaposition of sacred and secular in Buxtehude's trio sonata, through the

dramatic contrasts of Castello's works, and through the meditative variations of Gregorio Strozzi.

In these distinct approaches, we find a common understanding: that beauty, carefully crafted and deeply contemplated, offers a path to spiritual elevation. As Giulio Strozzi writes in the conclusion to *Il Natale de Amore*:



***“L'intelletto divino
Fà che l'huom tutto spiri,
Tutto seco il rapisce:
Né per viltà de' sensi
Tropo in terra il ritiene:
Ond'è che tutto inteso
A contemplar bellezza,
Tutto spirto diviene.”***

*“Divine intellect
Makes man all spirit,
Takes him all with itself:
Not through the baseness of senses
Does it keep him too much on earth:
Hence he who is entirely intent
On contemplating beauty,
Becomes all spirit.”*

This transformation - from physical sensation to spiritual understanding - lies at the heart of seventeenth-century musical aesthetics. In performing these works today, we seek to reignite that transformative fire - where each suspended moment, like objects in a baroque still life, stands in stark relief, piercing through time to wound, transform, and elevate the soul, just as it did when it first burned through the hearts of seventeenth-century listeners. ■ — Pablo Devigo

Facing Page: Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669), Divine Providence and Barberini Power, Rome, 1633-1639. This monumental ceiling fresco in Palazzo Barberini unites technical virtuosity with allegorical complexity to create a comprehensive vision of divine and earthly power.

MÚSICA D'OUTRORA

(meaning “Music of Times Past” in Galician), founded in 2022, is currently dedicated to exploring the vibrant repertoire of 17th-century Italian music. The ensemble combines bold interpretative choices with historically-grounded practice, examining the interplay between rhetoric, gesture, and musical expression. Their innovative programming reveals compelling dialogues across the baroque repertoire, from rediscovered works to established masterpieces. Their debut album *Still Life*, recorded at St Alban’s Church in Birmingham with support from Angel Early Music and the Continuo Foundation, demonstrates this distinctive artistic vision. Through concerts and educational initiatives, the ensemble cultivates meaningful engagement with baroque music. ■

www.musicadoutroira.com







PABLO DEVIGO

Pablo Devigo is a conductor and historical keyboardist specializing in period performance practice from Galicia (Spain). As Artistic Director of *Música d'Outrora*, he explores innovative approaches to 17th-century repertoire. He has served as Guest Conductor with the *Real Filharmonía de Galicia* (Spain) and assisted orchestras throughout Europe and the United States. A Fulbright Scholar (2015-2017) and doctoral candidate at Indiana University (USA) researching Spanish baroque theater music, Devigo holds degrees from the Royal Academy of Music (London) and Royal Conservatoire The Hague (The Netherlands). He was a Conducting Fellow at the 2018 Aspen Music Festival and finalist at the 2021 Khachaturian Conducting Competition. His artistry in historical performance has been shaped through collaborations with specialists Fabio Bonizzoni, Patrick Ayrton, Carole Cerasi, and James Johnston. ■

www.pablodevigo.com



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This recording would not have been possible without the generous support of our principal sponsors, Angel Early Music and the Continuo Foundation. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to both organizations for their faith in this project.

We are deeply indebted to the Church of Saint Alban the Martyr in Highgate, Birmingham (UK) [www.saintalban.co.uk], for providing us with their magnificent space and allowing us to capture its extraordinary acoustics in this album. ►

Our sincere appreciation goes to:

The Royal Academy of Music (London, UK)

Margaret Faultles, Carole Cerasi,

James Johnstone, Elizabeth Kenny

The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Martin Perkins

We are privileged to have received artistic guidance and inspiration from:

Fabio Bonizzoni and La Risonanza

Gli Incogniti (Amandine Beyer, Anna Fontana,

Olivier Fourés, Manon Viau & Amanieu Thibault)

Patrick Ayrton, Elisabeth Wright,

Emile Naoumoff, Ashley Solomon

Special thanks to Deux-Elles and Matt Wadsworth for their unwavering belief in this project.

Finally, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to all those who supported this journey from its inception, and to our families and loved ones for their constant encouragement and understanding. ■



Pablo Devigo,
chamber organ, harpsichord, and direction





Christi Park, *violin*



Claas Harders, *liron*



Timothy Lin, *viola da gamba and cello*



Dávid Budai, *violone*



Asako Ueda, *theorbo and archlute*



Louis Moisan, *guitar*

- 1 DARIO CASTELLO (1602-1631)
*Sonata No. 1, from Sonate Concertate in Stil Moderno, Book II (Venice, 1644).....*6:02
- 2 IGNAZIO ALBERTINI (c.1644-1685)
*Sonata No. 10, from Sonatinae (Vienna, 1692).....*7:56
- 3 ALESSANDRO STRADELLA (1643-1682)
Sinfonia a Tre, No. 2 from 6 Sinfonie (MS, n.d.)8:50
- 4 GREGORIO STROZZI (1615-1687)
Ancidetemi pur, from Capricci da Sonare Cembali et Organi (Naples, 1687)11:13
- 5 DIETERICH BUXTEHUDE (1637-1707)
*Trio Sonata in D minor, Op. 1 No. 6, BuxWV 257 from VII Suonate à doi,
Violino & Viola da gamba, con Cembalo (Hamburg, 1694)9:44*
- 6 IGNAZIO ALBERTINI (c.1644-1685)
Sonata No. 3, from Sonatinae7:01
- 7 DARIO CASTELLO (1602-1631)
Sonata No. 2, from Sonate Concertate in Stil Moderno, Book II6:06

Total playing time: 56:52

