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Alessandro Stradella Tyrants and Heroes Cantatas for Bass

Mauro Borgioni

Gruppo Cameristico Academia Montis Regalis





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Alessandro Stradella 1643–1682

Tyrants and Heroes – Cantatas for Bass

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|---|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | La morte di Seneca | 8'47 |
| 2 | Nero (Il Nerone) | 11'18 |
| 3 | Sonata a violino solo e basso | 8'06 |
| 4 | La canzone di Belisario | 9'49 |
| 5 | Sinfonia a tre | 5'35 |
| 6 | Già le spade nemiche | 11'46 |

Total time 55'50

Mauro Borgioni Baritone

Gruppo Cameristico Academia Montis Regalis

Laura Andriani Violin

Alessandro Palmeri Violoncello

Francesco Romano Theorbo

Lorenzo Feder Harpsichord

Alessandro Stradella Helden, Weise und Tyrannen

»Der Name Alessandro Stradella ist weniger durch seine Opern als vielmehr wegen der romanhaften Legende seiner Liebesaffären und seiner Unglücksfälle auf uns gekommen.« Mit dieser perfekten Zusammenfassung beginnt Oscar Chilesotti 1882 in seinem Buche über *I nostri maestri del passato* («Unsere Meister der Vergangenheit») das Kapitel über einen Komponisten, dessen »romanhafte« Lebensgeschichte so reich ist an Intrigen, dass sie das beste Libretto des 17. Jahrhunderts verdiente und als Inspirationsquelle für Komödien, Romane, Filme und Opern diene – nicht zuletzt für Salvatore Sciarrino *Ti vedo, ti sento, mi perdo*, das 2017 an der Mailänder Scala aufgeführt wurde.

Alessandro Stradella wurde am 3. Juli 1643 in Bologna als Sohn der Adligen Marc'Antonio und Vittoria Bartoli geboren und verbrachte seine Kindheit in Nepi, der Heimatstadt seines Vaters. Nach dessen Tod kam er nach Rom, wo die Familie Lante ihn, seine Brüder und seine Mutter aufnahmen. Als Page des Herzogs Ippolito wird er wohl in das Studium der Musik eingeführt worden sein, da dieses auch noch im 17. Jahrhundert – Baldassare Castigliones perfektem *Cortegiano* («Höfling») von 1549 entsprechend – als eine der Tugenden der Aristokratie galt. Tatsächlich muss Stradella schon seit dem Ende der sechziger Jahre ein so bekannter Komponist gewesen sein, dass man ihn mit verschiedenen Festmusiken für die einflussreichsten römischen Adelsfamilien (zum Beispiel der Pamphilj, Chigi, Altieri, Della Rovere und Colonna) und für Königin Christina von Schweden beauftragte. In diesem kulturellen Kontext entstanden auch diverse Prologe und Intermedien für das Teatro

Tordinona sowie die meisten Oratorien und Kammerkantaten – das beliebteste Genre der Vokalmusik, das die sogenannten »conversazioni« unter Kardinalen, Fürsten, Gesandten und so weiter begleitete. Obwohl diese gelegentlichen Verpflichtungen sehr prestigeträchtig waren, fand Stradella weder bei adligen Mäzenen noch bei kirchlichen Institutionen eine feste Anstellung.

Im Jahre 1677 begab er sich nach Venedig, nachdem es ihm auf Grund eines »gewissen Unglücks«, wie er selbst sagte, nicht länger möglich war, in der Stadt des Papstes zu leben. Es scheint, als habe er versucht, die Hochzeit zwischen einem Neffen des Kardinals Alderano Cybo und einer Frau niederen Standes zu arrangieren, was dazu führte, dass man ihn verhaftete und vor Gericht stellte: Nur die nachweisliche Bekanntschaft mit dem französischen Gesandten in Rom vermochte ihn zu retten. Die venezianische Episode endete bald und war von einem weiteren Skandal gekennzeichnet: Stradella sah sich zur Flucht nach Turin gezwungen – und zwar mit seiner jungen Gesangsschülerin Agnese van Uffel, dem »Augenstern« des adligen Alvisе Contarini. Im Oktober 1677 wurde der Komponist von zwei Auftragsmördern, die Contarini höchstwahrscheinlich selbst angeheuert hatte, auf der Piazza San Carlo angegriffen und niedergestochen. Nachdem er diesen Hinterhalt überlebt hatte, musste er Turin verlassen. Er verfügte sich nach Genua, wo er die Gastfreundschaft des Dogen Franco Imperiale Lercari genoss. Dank seiner kam es zur Zusammenarbeit mit dem Teatro Falcone, für das Stradella in der Spielzeit 1678/79 mehrere Opern schrieb. In derselben Zeit beschäftigte er sich mit dramatischer Musik sowie mit Serenaden und geistlichen Werken, bis er am 25. Februar 1682 auf der Piazza dei Banchi zum Opfer eines Mordanschlags

wurde, dessen Gründe die Gelehrten bislang noch nicht ans Licht gebracht haben.

Heute zählt man Alessandro Stradella zu den einflussreichsten italienischen Komponisten der Generation zwischen Claudio Monteverdi und Alessandro Scarlatti. Diese Auffassung ist schon in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts durch relevante Aussagen belegt. So schreibt der englische Historiker Charles Burney im vierten Band seiner *General History of Music* (1789), Stradellas Musik »scheine allem überlegen, was im letzten Jahrhundert geschaffen wurde.« Eine ähnliche Wertschätzung findet sich einige Jahre vor Burney bereits bei dem Bologneser Theoretiker und Lehrer Giovanni Battista (»Padre«) Martini, der 1775 in seine *Esemplare o sia Saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto* (»Grundlegende Abhandlung über den Kontrapunkt«) ein Duett aus Stradellas Oratorium *S. Giovanni Battista* aufnahm. Dieses Stück des Komponisten, ein Beispiel für eine zweistimmige Fuge, schätzt Martini besonders, weil der »Verfasser sich bemüht, die Bedeutung der Worte [in einem solchen Maße] hervorzuheben, dass »man erkennt, wie weit die Kunst kommen kann, um die Emotionen des Zuhörers zu bewegen«.

Die gewissenhafte Beziehung zwischen dem dichterischen Text und der Musik sowie die Fähigkeit, die »Emotionen der Zuhörer zu bewegen« oder bestimmte Empfindungen gemäß jener musikalischen Stilmeregale zu wecken, die in der sogenannten »Affektenlehre« festgeschrieben sind – diese beiden Aspekte finden zweifellos ihren höchsten Ausdruck in der Gattung der Kammerkantate, die Alessandro Stradella in besonderem Maße gepflegt hat. Dutzende dieser Werke hat er geschaffen, und unter diesen bilden die hier vorgestellten Stücke

eine besonders wertvolle Anthologie allein schon deshalb, weil sie für einen Bass geschrieben sind, der in derartigen Kompositionen weitaus seltener Verwendung fand als das Sopranregister, das für die vielen Virtuosen in den Adelshäusern des 17. Jahrhunderts bestimmt war, oder als die Kastratenstimme, die am Ende desselben Jahrhunderts im italienischen Theater immer mehr in Mode kam.

Wenngleich wir chronologisch noch zu früh liegen, als dass wir behaupten könnten, der Komponist habe sich auf der Suche nach einem »dramat(urg)ischem Realismus« für dieses tiefe Register entschieden, so lässt sich doch nicht leugnen, dass die maskuline Stimme des Basses gut zu den Sujets passt, von denen die poetischen Texte dieser Kantaten sprechen. Sie beschäftigen sich nicht mit allgemeinen Themen aus der pastoralen und arkadischen Welt, sondern beziehen sich – ein weiterer seltener Aspekt der hier vorgestellten Werke – auf vier reale Gestalten der römischen Antike, deren Lebensgeschichten sich mit Legenden gemischt hat. *Sopra un'èccelsa torre* (»Nerone«) auf einen Text des Dichters und Librettisten Giovanni Filippo Apolloni aus Arezzo sieht als Hauptdarsteller die umstrittene Figur des Kaisers Nero, der mit zynischer Genugtuung das brennende Rom betrachtete, in dem er selbst hat Feuer legen lassen. Derselbe Tyrann steht auch im Hintergrunde der Kantate *Se Neron pur mi vuol morto* (»Der Tod des Seneca«). Hier hören wir die letzten Gedanken des weisen Seneca, der sich auf Geheiß seines Schülers Nero die Pulsadern aufschnitt. In *Privo delle sue luci* (»Canzone di Belisario«) geht es um das Leben des byzantinischen Generals Flavius Belisarius, einem der berühmtesten *magistri militum* des oströmischen Reiches. Trotz unzähliger Siege auf dem Schlachtfeld wurde er des Verrats bezichtigt und schließlich

von Kaiser Justinianus verurteilt; dieser ließ ihn blenden und machte ihn so zum Bettler. Già *le spade nemiche* («Il Marc'Antonio») schließlich ist dem großen römischen General Marcus Antonius gewidmet, der sich in einem herzerreißenden Gedicht vom Leben, von der Heimatstadt und vor allem von seiner geliebten Kleopatra verabschiedet.

In der Gegenwart antiker Gestalten, die als Träger so beeindruckender und bedeutungsvoller Geschichten wie hier fungieren, manifestiert sich nicht allein und klar die Bildung der Textdichter; sie verweist möglicherweise auch auf moralische Bedeutungen, hinter denen sich oftmals sogar soziale und politische Realitäten aus der Entstehungszeit der Kantaten verbergen. Aus diesem Blickwinkel erscheint als roter Faden der vier Kantaten ein Aufruf an die Machthaber, politische und zivile Verantwortung walten zu lassen – wobei selbst ein Tyrann wie Nero letztendlich der Gerechtigkeit unterworfen sein wird («in der Bank von Astrea kann man keine Schuld begleichen, ohne sie zu bezahlen») und selbst die tugendhaftesten Helden wie Marcus Antonius dem unausweichlichen Tode nicht entfliehen können («jedes Gesetz ist veränderlich, aber das Gesetz des Sterbens ist unvermeidlich»).

Auf der vornehmlich musikalischen Ebene sind Stradellas Kantaten aus einer Folge geschlossener Stücke gebildet, oder besser gesagt: aus einem Wechsel von Rezitativen und Arien, die perfekt mit den melodramatischen Entwicklungen des 17. Jahrhunderts harmonisieren. Die Arien zeigen unterschiedliche formale Lösungen von ein- oder zweiteiligen Arietten über größere strophische Abschnitte mit eingestreuten Refrains bis hin zu einfachen, neuartigeren ABA-Strukturen, in denen man embryonale Beispiele der *Arie col da capo* erkennt. Eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit widmet

Stradella auch dem Rezitativ. Um bestimmte emotionale Aspekte der Gestalten oder Schlüsselwörter des Textes zu unterstreichen, greift er zu »Madrigalisten«, die mit kleinen Melismen das syllabische Fortschreiten des Gesangs unterbrechen, oder er verfällt in einen ariosen Stil beziehungsweise intensiver dialogisierende Momente zwischen der Stimme und ihrer Begleitung durch den *basso continuo*,

Die vokale Anthologie wird durch zwei Sonaten ergänzt. Zwar hat uns Stradella nicht sonderlich viel an Instrumentalmusik überliefert, doch hat er bei der Entwicklung dieses Gebietes eine bedeutende Rolle gespielt. Im 17. Jahrhundert bezeichnete der Begriff »Sonate« (der unterschiedslos neben der »Canzona« und der »Sinfonia« gebraucht wurde) eine Komposition, die Streicher oder Bläser und Generalbass miteinander kombiniert und aus einer Folge kurzer Abschnitte besteht, die nach Rhythmik und melodischer Artikulation miteinander kontrastieren. Die beiden hier vorgestellten Sonaten sind Beispiele der »Sonata a tre« für zwei Soloinstrumente (einmal Violine und Cello, einmal zwei Violinen) und *basso continuo*. Hier wie dort ist Stradellas ausgeprägtes Streben nach *varietas* zu erkennen: Kontrapunktische Lösungen, in denen sich die beiden Soloinstrumente miteinander in imitierenden Dialogen bewegen, wechseln mit langsameren, homorhythmischen Sätzen, die an polyphone Deklamationen erinnern – allesamt Mittel, die den emotionalen Ausdruck der Musik auch auf dem *instrumentalen* Gebiete verstärken, dem es ja an der Semantik des Wortes gebricht.

– Giacomo Sciommeri

Der Bariton **Mauro Borgioni** studierte Gesang an der Städtischen Musikschule von Mailand sowie am Konservatorium von Cesena und an der Fondation Royaumont in Paris.

Er hat mit verschiedenen Orchestern und Ensembles wie der Capella Real de Catalunya, dem Concerto Italiano, dem Kammerorchester Mantua, dem Orchestra Sinfonica della RAI, Il Giardino Armonico und der Accademia Bizantina zusammengearbeitet. Seine Auftritte mit so bedeutenden Dirigenten und Musikern wie Jordi Savall, Rinaldo Alessandrini, Giovanni Antonini, Diego Fasolis, Ottavio Dantone, Jonathan Webb und Federico Maria Sardelli führten ihn unter anderem ins Wiener Konzerthaus, an das Teatro Regio Torino und die Cité de la Musique Paris, in die Kölner Philharmonie und das Auditorium de Madrid, das National Centre for Arts of Pechino und die University of California in Los Angeles.

Als Barockspezialist hat er den *Orfeo* von Claudio Monteverdi am Teatro Regio in Turin und am Teatro Comunale in Ferrara sowie am Teatro Ponchielli in Cremona gesungen, wo er auch in der Titelpartie des *Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* zu hören war. Diese Rolle sowie den Acrimante in Alessandro Melanis *L'Empio punito* gab er ferner beim römischen Reate Festival. Am Teatro Ponchielli zu Cremona, im Teatro Alghieri von Ravenna und am Teatro Verdi in Gorizia sang er zudem Henry Purcells *Aeneas*, am Teatro Comunale in Ferrara stellte er Georg Friedrich Händels Haman (*Esther*) und Polyphemus (*Acis und Galatea*) dar.

Sein Repertoire umfasst barocke Meisterwerke wie die Marienvesper und die Opern von Claudio Monteverdi, die Passionen und die h-Moll-Messe von Johann Sebastian Bach, den *Messias* und *La Resurrezione* von Georg Friedrich Händel

sowie klassische Werke wie Joseph Haydns Pauken- und Nelson-Messe oder Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts Vespers und Messen. Daneben ist Borgioni auch auf zeitgenössischem Gebiete tätig. Zu nennen sind hier beispielsweise Benjamin Brittners *Reisender (Curlew River)* und Noah (*Noyes Fludde*) mit dem Kammerorchester Prato unter Jonathan Webb und Aye in Philip Glass' *Akhnothen* mit dem Orchester des Teatro Regio in Turin unter Dante Anzolini.

Mauro Borgioni hat an verschiedenen Festivals und Konzertserien in Italien und dem europäischen Ausland sowie in Mexiko, Kanada und den USA teilgenommen. Seine Diskographie enthält Produktionen für Zig-Zag Territories, Alpha Classics, Brilliant Classics, Elucevanestelle Records, Stradivarius, K617, Glossa, ORF, Arcana und Ricercar. Dazu kommen Aufnahmen für Rundfunk und Fernsehen.

Die piemontesische Stiftung **Academia Montis Regalis** wurde zur Förderung der Alten Musik gegründet. Im Jahre 1994 entstand in Mondovi ein Orchester, um die Musik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts auf Originalinstrumenten in philologisch korrekter Weise aufzuführen. Das Ensemble musizierte unter renommierten Spezialisten wie Ton Koopman, Jordi Savall, Christopher Hogwood, Reinhard Goebel, Monica Huggett, Enrico Onofri, Luigi Mangio-cavallo und Enrico Gatti und tritt bei bekannten internationalen Festivals für Alte Musik in Erscheinung. Von 2010 bis 2018 war die Academia Montis Regalis Residenzensemble der renommierten Innsbrucker Festwochen, wo sie alljährlich eine barocke Oper aufführte und zudem verschiedene Kammermusikprojekte realisierte. Unter der Leitung von Alessandro De Marchi hat das Ensemble eine umfangreiche Diskographie mit Werken von

Alessandro Scarlatti, Antonio Vivaldi, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi und Georg Friedrich Händel für Naïve Records, Hyperion und Sony Classical eingespielt, die mit zahlreichen Preisen ausgezeichnet wurde. Darunter sind ein *Diapason d'Or*, ein *Choc du Monde de la Musique* und eine Gramophone Editor's Choice sowie der renommierte *Premio Abbiati* von 2005. Von der Gründung bis zum Jahre 2018 stand die *Academia Montis Regalis* unter der Leitung von Giorgio Tabacco; seine Nachfolger waren Gaston Fournier Facio und Maurizio Fornero, der gegenwärtig auch die Rolle des Geschäftsführers innehat. Von 2019 bis 2023 lag die musikalische Leitung in den Händen von Enrico Onofri, der kürzlich für das Label Passacaille *Concerti particolari* von Antonio Vivaldi eingespielt hat.

Das **Centro Studi sulla Cantata Italiana** (CSCI) ist ein interdisziplinäres Forschungszentrum, das 2014 an der römischen Universität *Tor Vergata* gegründet wurde. Seit 2023 gehören diesem Zentrum auch die Universitäten von Pavia-Cremona und Siena an.

Das CSCI fördert, organisiert und koordiniert interdisziplinäre Aktivitäten in den Bereichen Ausbildung sowie wissenschaftliche Forschungsarbeiten zum Thema der italienischen Vokalmusik vom 17. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. Zu diesem Zweck initiiert und koordiniert das Zentrum nationale und internationale Forschungsprojekte, wobei es aktiv mit Institutionen, Universitäten, Unternehmen, öffentlichen und privaten Einrichtungen sowie mit gleichartigen in- und ausländischen Forschungszentren zusammenarbeitet und den wechselseitigen Austausch und die internationale Mobilität auf allen Ebenen fördert. Eines der vom CSCI geförderten und koordinierten Projekte ist *Clori. Archivio della cantata italiana* (Archiv der italienischen Kantate).

Alessandro Stradella Heroes, sages and tyrants

“The name of Alessandro Stradella has come down to us not so much for his works but for the fictional legend of his loves and his misfortunes”. A perfect synthesis, the one with which Oscar Chilesotti opens the paragraph dedicated to the composer in his volume *I nostri maestri del passato* of 1882, to describe Stradella’s “novelistic” biography, so rich in intrigue worthy of the plot of the best seventeenth-century libretto, a source of inspiration for comedies, novels, operas—the latest of which, *Ti vedo, ti sento, mi perdo* by Salvatore Sciarrino, performed at La Scala in Milan in 2017—and even films.

Born in Bologna on 3 July 1643 to Marc’Antonio and Vittoria Bartoli, both of noble birth, Stradella spent his childhood in Nepi, his father’s hometown. After the death of the latter he moved to Rome, where he was welcomed with his mother and brothers by the Lante family. Having become a page to Duke Ippolito, he was most likely also introduced to the study of music, still considered in the seventeenth century one of the virtues of aristocratic status on the sixteenth-century model of the perfect courtier of Baldassarre Castiglione. In fact, starting from the end of the 1660s Stradella must have already been quite well known as a composer, so much so that various pieces of music were commissioned from him for celebratory occasions linked to the most influential families of the Roman nobility, such as Pamphilj, Chigi, Altieri, Della Rovere and Colonna, as well as Queen Christina of Sweden. The same cultural context is also responsible for the genesis of various prologues and interludes for the Tordinona Theater and of the majority of oratorios and chamber cantatas, the most popular

vocal genre to accompany the so-called “conversations” that took place between cardinals, princes, ambassadors, etc. Despite the prestige of such occasional commitments, Stradella never obtained a stable position in the service of some noble patron or in an ecclesiastical institution.

In 1677 he moved to Venice, following “a certain misfortune” (his words) which no longer allowed him to “live” in the papal city. It seems, in fact, that he had tried to arrange the marriage of a nephew of Cardinal Alderano Cybo with a low-ranking woman, a fact that led him to be arrested and tried, saving himself only thanks to his documented acquaintance with the French ambassador in Rome. The Venetian stay ended soon and was marked by another scandal, which saw Stradella flee to Turin with Agnese van Uffel, a young woman to whom he gave singing lessons and a ward of the noble Alvisè Contarini. In October 1677 two hitmen, most likely hired by Contarini himself, attacked and stabbed the composer in Piazza San Carlo. Having survived the ambush, Stradella was therefore forced to leave Turin for Genoa, where he enjoyed the hospitality of the noble Franco Imperiale Lercari. Thanks to the latter the composer was able to collaborate with the Falcone Theatre, setting various works to music for the 1678–79 theater season. In the same period he was engaged in the composition of dramatic music, serenades and sacred compositions, until, on 25 February 1682, he was murdered in Piazza dei Banchi for reasons not yet brought to light.

Alessandro Stradella is today counted among the most influential Italian composers of the generation between Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Scarlatti. This consideration finds significant evidence already in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The English historian Charles Burney, for example, in the fourth volume of his famous *A General History of Music of 1789*, states that Stradella's music "seems superior to any other that was produced in the last century". A similar declaration of esteem was also expressed, a few years before Burney, by the Bolognese theorist and teacher Giovanni Battista Martini, who included a duet from Stradella's oratorio *S. Giovanni Battista* in his essay *Esemplare o sia Saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto*, 1775. The composer's piece, taken as a model of a two-voice fugue, is appreciated in particular for "the author's commitment to making the meaning of the words stand out", so much as to "know how far the Art goes to move the affections of the listener."

The careful relationship between poetic text and music, as well as the ability to "move the affections of those who listen", or to arouse certain feelings according to musical stylistic features codified in the so-called "theory of affections", are undoubtedly two elements that find their maximum expression in the most abundant musical genre of Stradella's production: the chamber cantata. Of the dozens and dozens of cantatas that Stradella set to music, the four pieces presented here constitute a particularly precious anthology, starting from the entrustment of the singing to the bass voice, much less frequent in compositions of this kind compared to the soprano register intended for the intonation of the numerous virtuosos present in the aristocratic houses of the seventeenth century or of the castrato register increasingly in vogue in Italian theaters at the end of the century.

Although we are still too far back in time to assert that this choice is the result of a search for "dramaturgical realism" on the part of the composer, it is undeniable that the male bass voice is well suited

to the subjects of the poetic texts of the four cantatas. In fact, they are not dedicated to generic themes taken from the pastoral and Arcadian world, but refer—another element of rarity of the compositions proposed here—to the story mixed with legend of four characters from ancient Rome who actually existed. *Sopra un'èccelsa torre* ("Nerone"), sung to a text by the Arezzo poet and librettist Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, features the controversial figure of Nero as its protagonist, observing with cynical satisfaction the fire in Rome caused by himself. The same tyrant is also the backdrop to the cantata *Se Neron pur mi vuol morto* ("The death of Seneca"), centered on the last reflections of the wise Seneca, Nero's teacher, slashed his wrists on his orders. *Privo delle sue luci* ("Canzone di Belisario") instead refers to the story of the Byzantine general Flavius Belisarius, one of the most famous *magister militum* of the Eastern Roman Empire, who, despite his innumerable victories on the battlefield, ended up being accused of betrayal, then condemned by the Emperor Justinian who had him blinded, reducing him to a beggar. *Già le spade nemiche* ("Il Marc'Antonio"), finally, is dedicated to the great Roman general Marc'Antonio, in a heart-breaking poem of farewell to life, to his own city, but above all to his beloved Cleopatra.

The presence of characters from antiquity, bearers of stories so strongly evocative and full of meanings like those just mentioned, as well as being a clear manifestation of the erudition of the authors of the related poetic texts, leads to possible moral meanings which often even conceal references to the social and political reality of the time in which the cantatas were conceived. From this point of view, the *fil de rouge* of the four cantatas seems to be the call to the political and civil responsibility

of those who hold power, where even a tyrant like Nero will ultimately be subject to justice (“in the bank of Astraea debt cannot be done without being paid”) and not even the most virtuous heroes like Marc’Antonio will be able to escape the inescapable death «every law is mutable but that of dying is inevitable».

On a more exquisitely musical level, Stradella’s cantatas are made up of a succession of closed pieces, or rather the alternation of recitatives and arias, in perfect harmony with developments in seventeenth-century melodrama. The arias present different formal solutions, ranging from mono or bipartite ariettas to larger strophic sections interspersed with refrains, up to simple—and more innovative—tripartite structures (ABA) which give life to embryonic examples of *arie col da capo*. Stradella also pays particular attention to the treatment of the recitative. In order to underline particular emotional aspects of the characters or certain key words of the text, the composer introduces “madrigalisms” which interrupt the syllabic progression of the song through small melismas, or makes use of sections in an *arioso* style or moments of greater dialogue between the voice and the accompaniment of the *basso continuo*.

To embellish the anthology of vocal pieces there are also two sonatas. Although the *corpus* of Stradella’s instrumental music that has survived to us is not particularly large, the composer played a significant role in the development of this genre. During the seventeenth century, the term “sonata” (used indiscriminately together with “canzona” or “sinfonia”) meant a composition intended for a combination of strings or wind instruments with the accompaniment of the *basso continuo* organized on a formal level with the succession of short sections

contrasting in rhythm and melodic articulation. The two proposed sonatas are examples of “sonata a tre”, that is, intended for two solo instruments (in one violin and cello, in the other two violins) and *basso continuo*. In both cases it is possible to appreciate Stradella’s empathic search for *varietas*. Contrapuntal solutions in which two solo instruments move together in imitative dialogues alternate with slower, homorhythmic sections reminiscent of polyphonic declamation—an expedient which intensify the emotional expression of music even in a repertoire, the instrumental one, devoid of the semantic contribution of words.

– Giacomo Sciommeri

The baritone **Mauro Borgioni** studied singing at the Civic School of Milan, Conservatory of Cesena and Fondation Royaumont of Paris.

He has collaborated with various orchestras and ensembles like La Capella Real de Catalunya, Concerto Italiano, Mantova Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica della Rai, Il Giardino Armonico, Accademia Bizantina as well as with important conductors including Jordi Savall, Rinaldo Alessandrini, Giovanni Antonini, Diego Fasolis, Ottavio Dantone, Jonathan Webb, Federico Maria Sardelli in some of the most important halls and theaters including Wien Konzerthaus, Teatro Regio Torino, Cité de la Musique Paris, Kölner Philharmonie, Auditorium de Madrid, National Centre for Arts of Pechino, UCLA Los Angeles.

Specialized in baroque repertoire, he has sung the roles of Orfeo in *L'Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi (Teatro Regio of Turin, Teatro Comunale of Ferrara, Teatro Ponchielli in Cremona); Ulisse in *Il ritorno di Ulisse in patria* by Claudio Monteverdi (Roma Reate Festival, Teatro Ponchielli in Cremona); Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Teatro Alighieri of Ravenna, Teatro Verdi of Gorizia), Acrimante in *L'Empio punito* by Alessandro Melani (Reate Festival); Haman in *Esther* and Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea* by George Frideric Handel (Teatro Comunale di Ferrara).

His repertoire includes baroque masterpieces like Monteverdi's vespers and operas, Passions and Mass in B Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach; Handel's *Messiah* and *La Resurrezione*; classical works like *Missi in angustis* (Nelson) and *in tempore belli* (Timpani) by Haydn, Mozart's *Vesperae* and *Missae*; He is also active in contemporary repertoire; he has interpreted The Traveller in *Curlwe River* and Noye

in *Noye's fludde* by Benjamin Britten with the Prato Chamber Orchestra and Jonathan Webb; Aye in *Akhnaten* by Philipp Glass with the Orchestra of Teatro Regio in Turin with Dante Anzolini.

He has participated in various festivals and concert seasons in Italy, Europe also in Mexico, Canada and USA, and has recorded for Zig-Zag Territories, Alpha Classics, Brilliant Classics, Elucevanlestelle Records, Stradivarius, K617, Glossa, ORF, Arcana, Ricercar and for radio and television.

The Fondazione **Academia Montis Regalis** is a Piedmontese institution that was established for the purpose of promoting early music. In 1994 a Baroque and Classical orchestra was founded in Mondovi for the performance of music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a philologically correct manner and with the use of original instruments. The ensemble has performed under the direction of eminent specialists in early music such as Ton Koopman, Jordi Savall, Christopher Hogwood, Reinhard Goebel, Monica Huggett, Enrico Onofri, Luigi Mangiocavallo, and Enrico Gatti and is a presence at prestigious international festivals in the field of early music. From 2010 to 2018 the Academia Montis Regalis was the ensemble in residence at the prestigious Innsbrucker Festwochen für Alte Musik, where it performed a Baroque opera every year and realized various chamber projects. Under the conductor Alessandro De Marchi the ensemble has recorded a vast discography including works by Alessandro Scarlatti, Antonio Vivaldi, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, and George Frideric Handel for Naïve Records, Hyperion, and Sony Classical and has received numerous awards, among them a Diapason d'Or, a Choc du Monde de la Musique, and a Gramophone Editor's Choice

as well as the prestigious Premio Abbiati in 2005. Giorgio Tabacco was the ensemble's artistic director from its founding until 2018; he was succeeded by Gaston Fournier Facio and then by Maurizio Fornero, who currently also serves as managing director. From 2019 to 2023 the post of music director was entrusted to Enrico Onofri, who recently recorded Vivaldi's *Concerti particolari* for the Pasacaille label.

The **Centro Studi sulla Cantata Italiana** (CSCI) is an interdepartmental research centre established in 2014 at the University of Roma "Tor Vergata." As of 2023 it has become an inter-university research centre to which belong the Universities of Roma "Tor Vergata," Pavia-Cremona and Siena.

The CSCI promotes, organises and coordinates, within its own aims, training and scientific research activities of an interdisciplinary nature in the field of studies on Italian vocal music between the 17th and 19th centuries. To this purpose, it proposes and coordinates national and international scientific research projects by actively cooperating with institutions, universities, public and private entities, and similar Italian or foreign research centres, fostering reciprocal processes of knowledge, exchange and international mobility at all levels.

One of the projects promoted and coordinated by the CSCI is Clori. Archivio della Cantata Italiana.

Gesangstexte

[1] Se Neron pur mi vuol morto (La morte di Seneca)

"Se Neron pur mi vuol morto
cedo al fato mio terribile
e soffrendo il colpo orribile
col'mirar mi guido in porto.
Sia giustizia anche il mio danno
poiché giusto è ben che mora
chi diè legge ad una fiera
chi fu mastro ad un tiranno.

Discepolo infedele
Precettor sfortunato
Imperator crudele
suddito condannato
siamo infelice esempio
io d'huom saggio
tu d'un empio.

Ma trionfi di tanto rigore
la virtù che sempre costante
ch'io con petto di forte adamante
sosterrò gl'estremi dolori.
Di mano pietosa nell'opra più cruda
cadrà gloriosa quest'anima ignuda
io quello sarò che lieto nel duolo
disciolta in un volo mia vita vedrò.

Sempre di chi più merta il ciel fa scempio
ne il saggio ha loco dove comanda un empio."

Song Texts

[1] If Nero wants my death (The Death of Seneca)

"If Nero wants my death,
I'll surrender to my terrible fate,
and while enduring the horrible blow
with eyes wide open guide myself into the port.
May justice be done in my demise
because it's right for somebody to perish
who gave lessons to a wild beast,
who was tutor to a tyrant.

Traitorous pupil,
unfortunate preceptor,
cruel emperor,
condemned subject,
together we form an unhappy example,
I, of a sage,
you, of a malefactor.

But may virtue, which is always firm,
triumph over such rigor,
for with my heart of strong iron
I'll bear the final hour's throes.
This glorious soul laid bare
will fall by a dutiful hand's cruelest deed.
I'll be the man who, happy in sadness,
sees my life released in flight.

Heaven always torments the man of greater merit;
nor does a sage have a place in a malefactor's
rule."

Fra gl'ultimi sospiri anche facendo Seneca,
moribondo, si disse in mezzo all'acque
indi svenossi e tacque.

E' un mar la corte, è un mar,
stan l'onde tranquille,
fra scogli, fra stille torbide ancora
quando paran più chiare,
è un mar la corte, è un mare.
Son dolci son belle
l'aurette, le stelle
ma fugace da te quanto più care
è un mar la corte, è un mare.
Fortuna severa, v'appare
è un mar la corte, è un mare
è un mare, è un mare.

Da questo mar si torbido e profondo
chi salvo è mai, s'un Seneca va al fondo.

2 Nero (Il Nerone)

Sopra un'èccelsa torre
Cui le nubi del cielo eran confine
Delle mura latine
L'incendio a rimirar seדה Nerone
E del troiano scempio
Rileggendo l'esempio
Struggea quel cor di pietra
Di sangue sitibondo
La Regina del mondo
A suon di cetra alle fiamme alle strida
Parea Roma l'inferno
Pluto Nerone ed Acheronite il Tebro
Sol di gioia tutt'ebro
Alle lagrime altrui Claudio ride

While he breathes his last, the moribund Seneca
continues to be eloquent, in soliloquy, in the midst
of the waters, and then he slashes his veins and
is silent.

The court is a sea, it's a sea;
the waves may be tranquil,
but among crags, among shoals,
they're turbid when they seem to be clearer;
the court is a sea, it's a sea.
They're sweet, they're beautiful,
the little breezes, the stars,
but they're fleeting the dearer they are;
the court is a sea, it's a sea.
Unpitying Fortune shows her face:
the court is a sea, it's a sea;
it's a sea, it's a sea.

Who can ever be safe from this sea so turbid and
deep if a Seneca sinks down to the bottom?

2 Nero

On top of a lofty tower
with the sky's clouds its limits,
from the Latin walls,
Nero sat watching the conflagration,
and while reenacting the precedent
set by Troy's destruction,
that heart of stone,
thirsting for blood,
consumed the queen of the world
to the sound of the lyre, to the flames, to the
shouts. Rome had the look of the infernal regions,
Nero of Pluto, and the Tiber of Acheron.
Alone completely intoxicated with joy,
Claudius laughed at others' tears,

E con superbo scherno
Moltiplicando a' miseri gl'affanni
Queste voci spargea l'empio tiranno.

Claudio rida e Roma abbruci.

Ardi Troia latina
Face dei miei trionfi
Corran superbi e gonfi
A sfidar la marina
Delle fiamme i torrenti
Che in pochi momenti
I colossi i trofei di cento lustri
Cadano a' cenni miei disfatti ed arsi
Che non potete mirarsi
Spettacolo più bello
Da tiranniche luci.

Claudio rida e Roma abbruci.

Voi, che in soglio di pace
Adulati sedete
Voi che di volgo altero
Che di plebe contumace
L'insidie non temete
E per soverchia facilità d'impero
Le corone avviliate;
In cattedra di foco
Io leggo tirannia principi udite:

Chi desia di salde tempore
Fabricar l'usbergo ai troni
S'armi d'ira e mai perdoni
Creda poco e finga sempre.
Ferri, veleni e lacci
Traggono i rei di vita i re d'impacci.

and with haughty derision,
multiplying his wretched people's afflictions,
the cruel tyrant uttered these words:

May Claudius laugh and Rome go up in flames.

Burn, Latin Troy,
torch of my triumphs;
may the torrents of flames
rush, haughty and proud,
to consume the shore.
May in a few moments
the colossal monuments, the trophies of five
hundred years, fall dashed to pieces and burnt at my
commands,
for a spectacle more beautiful can't be witnessed
by tyrannical eyes.

May Claudius laugh and Rome go up in flames.

You who sit in adulation
on thrones of peace,
you who don't fear the insidious schemes
of haughty commonfolk,
of contumacious plebeians,
but vilify crowns
with an excessive facility of command:
on this professorial chair of fire,
I'll lecture on tyranny—listen, princes!

He who desires to fabricate
a firm and solid defense for thrones,
let him arm himself with wrath and never pardon,
let him believe little and always pretend.
Swords, poisons, and nooses
deprive villains of life, rid kings of embarrassment.

Giove è solo al governo
A lui cede ogni stella
Il suo volere è legge
Punisce e non corregge
E se tal ora favella
Altra lingua non ha che tuoni e lampi.

Claudio rida e Roma avvampi.

Sì sì viva Nerone
E per maggior suo vanto
Ogni legge calpesti
Cupra di reggio manto
Le rapine e l'incesti
Britannico s'uccida
Ottavia s'avveleni
Il Maestro si sveni
Mora Pompea
Sia da ferine squadre
La madre trucidata
Gema il lazio arda Roma ingombri tutto
Foco e sangue furor spavento e lutto.

La mia raggion di stato
È la forza è l'inganno
Che s'io nacqui privato
Saprò morir tiranno.

Vuò tributo di pianti
Incenso di sospiri
E chi m'odia rimiri
Pria della notte mia la propria sera

Claudio rida e il mondo pera.

Jove is alone in his rule,
every star obeys him;
his will is law,
he punishes and doesn't correct;
and if on occasion he speaks, he doesn't use
any other language but thunder and lightning.

May Claudius laugh and Rome be set on fire.

Yes, yes, may Nero live,
and for his greater boast,
may he tread underfoot every law,
and cover with his royal robe
the crimes of pillage and impurity;
let Britannicus take his life
and Octavia poison herself;
let his teacher cut his veins,
Pompeia die,
and his mother be slain
by wild bands;
may Latium moan, may Rome burn,
may everything be consumed
by fire and blood, rage, terror, and lament.

My reason of state
is force and deception;
though I was born in meekness,
I'll know how to die a tyrant's death.

I want tribute in tears,
incense in the form of sighs,
and may he who hates me
see his own evening before my night.

May Claudius laugh and the world perish.

Con sì barbari accenti
Della tragedia sua non ben presaghi
L'empio mostro fremea
Ma nel banco d'Astrea
Debito non si fa che non si paghi.

4 Privo delle sue luci (canzone di Bellisario)

Privo delle sue luci sen giace à terra
Bellisario infelice
e chiedend mercè si duole e dice:

“Imparate o mortali a sostener gl'augusti
a difender gl'Imperi
alla mia cecità le luci aprite.

Dal precipitio mio di bugiarda fortuna
l'incostante imparate a schernire e le speranze.
Bellisario son io quel fortunato
ch'alle stelle innalzato precipitai dal mondo
delle miserie al centro più profondo.

Questi sono i trionfi, i trofei,
le glorie, i mausolei
d'un Guerrier che soffrì.
Cesar così le piramidi avesse
à un invito Guerriero
che con valori sincero
i nemici oppugnò,
vinse ed oppresse.

Perfida Teodora, Tesifone infernale
così convien che mora Bellisario il Campion forte
e leale?
O' Cesare abbagliato Imperator crudele,
Giustiniano ingrato.
Sovengati, ch'i vandali, gl'Etiopi, i Medi,

With such barbarous words,
not fully predicting his own tragedy,
the cruel monster raged;
but in Astraea's court
a debit isn't made that won't be paid.

4 Deprived of his vision (Belisarius's Canzone)

Deprived of his vision, the unhappy Belisarius
finds himself lying on the ground,
and begging for mercy he grieves and says:

“Learn, O mortals, to sustain the mighty
and to defend empires;
open your eyes to my blindness.

Learn from my precipitous fall how to disdain
false Fortune's inconstancy and hopes.
Belisarius I am, the fortunate man
who, lifted up to the stars, crashed down
from the heights to the deepest abyss of miseries.

These are the triumphs, the trophies,
the glories, the mausoleums
of a warrior who suffered.
If Caesar only had pyramids
for an invincible warrior
who with sincere valor
fought, conquered, and oppressed
his enemies.

Perfidious Theodora, infernal Tisiphone,
is this how Belisarius, the strong and loyal cham-
pion, should die?
O wrong-minded Caesar, cruel emperor,
ungrateful Justinian,
remember that the Vandals, the Ethiopians, the

i Persi, mercè questo mio brando
si prostano a tuoi piedi al tuo comando.
Sovengati o Tiranno della forte congiura
di Dionisio e d'Atanasio estinta del mio braccio
al furore del mio ferro, al valore.
Delle città, delle provincie e Regni,
degli'Imperi acquistati, de' miei sudori,
de' miei perigli a forza più non parolo ch'indarno
spargo le voci al vento, crucio me stesso
e accresco il mio tormento.

Non m'affana il soffrir
non mi duole il morir
che mille volte e mille esposi la mia vita
alla morte, al martir.
Più non curo la vita, vieni pur morte morte
gradita!"

Qui diè fine al parlare ed alla vita
l'intrepido campion Bellisario l'invitto.
E con l'istesso core, col medesimo valore ch'ebbe
della sua sorte
vinse i nemici e superò la morte.

6 Già le spade nemiche (II Marc'Antonio)

Già le spade nemiche del trionfante Augusto
per le campagne apriche dell'arenoso Egitto
scorrean vittoriose a nel fiero confitto
facea già trucidato al suolo d'estinti Heroi
un infinito stuolo.

Già per ogni parte dell'oriente tutto
il sanguinoso Marte seminava furor,
spavento e lutto.

Medes, the Persians, thanks to this sword of mine,
prostrated themselves at your feet, to your
command. Remember, O tyrant, the mighty con-
spiracy of Dionysius and Athanasius quashed by
my arm, by the rage of my iron, by my valor.
Remember the cities, the provinces and kingdoms,
the empires acquired; remember my labors,
the dangers to which I was exposed: I cease to
speak, for I scatter my words to the wind, I torture
myself, and I increase my torment.

Suffering doesn't afflict me,
it doesn't pain me to die,
for a thousand times and a thousand more
I exposed my life to death, to martyrdom.
I no longer want life; come, death, welcome
death!"

Here the intrepid champion, Belisarius the invinci-
ble, put an end to his words and to his life.
And with the same courage, with the same valor
granted him by fate,
he conquered his enemies and vanquished death.

6 Now the inimical swords (Mark Antony)

Now the inimical swords of the triumphant
Augustus were hurrying in victory over sandy
Egypt's sunny fields, and in the fierce conflict were
leaving behind in their wake an infinite multitude
of dead heroes lying slaughtered on the ground.

Now over every region of the entire East,
Mars, bent on bloodshed, was spreading rage,
terror, and mourning.

Quando un funesto avviso di Cleopatra estinta
all'infelice Antonio fa tremar l'alma
e impallidire il viso, gelo in un punto
avvampò d'ira e pianse
poi scaricando contro sé lo sdegno
fe naufragar della sua vita il segno.

Al moribondo Eroe accorse Cleopatra
ed egli intanto molle di sangue e pianto
all'amata beltà le luci affisse
ma credutolo un sogno, un spettro, un'ombra
agitato dal duol proruppe e disse.

"Godi, godi Ottavio
Antonio more!
Tu vincesti, io resto esangue
a caratteri di sangue ti fo noto
il mio dolore"

Ma sull'estremo punto dell'Heroica sua vita
Antonio giusto conobbe se ben tardi
non larva non fantasma
ma vivo e lacrimante il suo tesoro
ed ah! lasso esclamò "Cleopatra, Cleopatra
io moro!"
Poi mirando quel volto che fu già del suo Core
Anima e vita, sospese per brev'ora
all'alma sua l'uscita.
Quindi al suo ben rivolto negl'estremi momenti
questi disse morendo ultimi accenti:

"Deh, deh ferma il pianto e rasserena il ciglio
tormentata Reina, adorato mio bene,
Cleopatra infelice!
S'accrescono le pene a un misero che muore
se chi vita gli dà, langue e si duole,
non far ch'io miri oh Dio prima del morir mio

When the sad news of Cleopatra's death
made the unfortunate Antony's soul tremble
and his face turn pale; he felt a moment's icy chill
and next burst into rage's flames and wept;
then, unloading his wrath against his own person,
he took action to bring his life to a violent end.

Cleopatra hastened to the moribund hero,
and, by now moist with blood and tears,
he fixed his eyes on his beloved beauty,
but believing it to be a dream, a specter, a shade,
racked with grief, he blurted out these words:

"Rejoice, rejoice, Octavian;
Antony dies!
You won; I lie lifeless in defeat;
with letters written in blood
I make my grief known to you."

But during his heroic life's final moment,
Antony rightly recognized, though rather late,
that his treasure wasn't a ghost or a phantom
but alive and in tears,
and, alas, he sorrowfully exclaimed:
"Cleopatra, Cleopatra, I die!"
Then looking at that face that was once his heart's
spirit and life, he delayed for a brief moment
his soul's departure. Next, turned to his love,
in his very final moments,
he spoke these last words while dying:

"Ah, ah, cease this lament and brighten your brow,
tormented queen, my adored love,
unfortunate Cleopatra!
The pains increase for a miserable man who dies
if the one who gives him life languishes and
grieves; don't make me see, oh God, before my

del tuo bel volto oggi eclissato il sole.
Dov'è la tua fortezza?
Dov'è la tua costanza fregi l'alma reale?
Non sai tu che la morte anco ai Regi è fatale?
Ch'ogni legge è mutabile
ma quella del morir è inevitabile.

Al suono di tromba che sfida battaglia
di nera gramaglia si copra ogni tomba.
Piangendo il martire, sgravarmi non puoi
ch'ancora agl'eroi comune è il morire.

Cleopatra io moro, Addio!
Almen piacesse al Ciel che la mia morte
della tua libertà fosse lo scampo.
Il lasciarti o mio bene in poter d'un nemico di sì
forte possanza turba la mia costanza.
Il trionfo et il giogo ch'Ottavio ti minaccia
potrai, bella potrai, con l'esempio d'Antonio
anche schivarlo.

Tu nascesti Regina e più non parlo.
Ma già vacilla il core, già perdo la favella
questo tremor di membra
questo sudor gelato
son forieri di morte
per sottrarti dai lacci il camino s'addita
il morir mio!
Addio mondo, Addio Roma, Bella Cleopatra
addio."

death the sun of your beautiful face eclipsed on
this day. Where is your fortitude, where is your firm
resolve, the adornments of your royal soul!
Don't you know that death also brings down king-
doms? For every law is mutable,
but the law of death is inevitable.

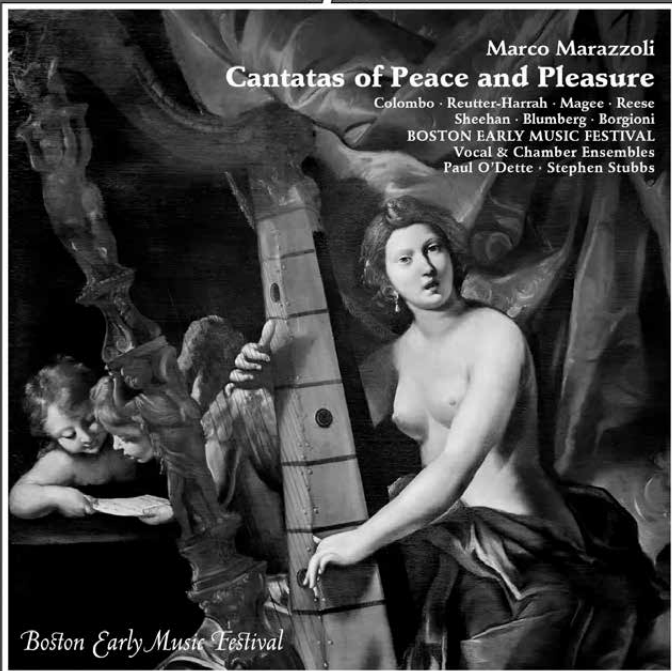
At the sound of the trumpet summoning to battle,
let every tomb be covered with black mourning cloth.
By lamenting my martyrdom you can't release me
because even heroes are subject to death.

Cleopatra, I die, farewell!
May it at least please heaven that my death
serve to secure your liberty.
Leaving you, my love, in the hands of an enemy
of such great power shakes my firm resolve.
The triumph and the game with which Octavian
threatens you, you'll be able, my beauty, you'll be
able, you too to elude them by following Antony's
example.
You were born a queen, and I won't utter another
word. But already my heart wavers, already I lose my
speech; this trembling of my limbs,
this icy sweat,
are heralds of death;
my death shows you the path
to release you from your chains!
Farewell, world; farewell, Rome; beautiful Cleopatra,
farewell."

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Marco Marazzoli
Cantatas of Peace and Pleasure

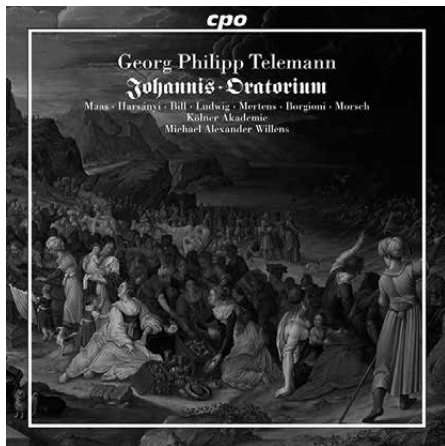
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