



Nicola Vicentino (1511 - 1572)

# Madrigali

a cinque voci libro quinto

*Ensemble del Dipartimento di Musica Antica  
del Conservatorio di Vicenza*

Stefano Lorenzetti, Harpsichord and Conductor

With the contribution of Fondazione Scuola di San Giorgio

To Piervito Malusà, *in memoriam*

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# Nicola Vicentino (Vicenza, 1511 - Rome, 1577)

## MADRIGALI A CINQUE VOCI LIBRO QUINTO (Milano 1572)

### and Other Harpsichord Works

|           |   |       |
|-----------|---|-------|
| <b>01</b> | Poiché 'l mio largo pianto (Poem by Anonymous)  | 02:07 |
| <b>02</b> | Donna s'io miro (Poem by Pietro Barignano)  | 02:25 |
| <b>03</b> | GIOVANNI DE MACQUE (1548/1550 - 1614)<br>Consonanze stravaganti <sup>1</sup> (Harpsichord)      | 02:42 |
| <b>04</b> | Onde tolse amor l'oro (Alta Cappella)   | 03:26 |
| <b>05</b> | Treccie di fila (Poem by Marcantonio Terminio)  | 02:57 |
| <b>06</b> | TARQUINIO MERULA (1525 - 1605)<br>Toccata e genus chromaticum <sup>2</sup> (Harpsichord)        | 07:52 |
| <b>07</b> | L'aura ch'el verde lauro (Poem by Francesco Petrarca)   | 04:47 |
| <b>08</b> | Non pur quell'una (Poem by Francesco Petrarca)  | 03:54 |
| <b>09</b> | Quando fra l'altre donne (Viol Consort)   | 03:12 |
| <b>10</b> | GIOVANNI MARIA TRABACI (1575 - 1647)<br>Consonanze stravaganti <sup>3</sup> (Harpsichord)       | 02:07 |
| <b>11</b> | Occhi lucenti e belli (Poem by Veronica Gambara)  | 04:00 |
| <b>12</b> | O messaggi del cor (Poem by Ludovico Ariosto)   | 05:07 |
| <b>13</b> | La pastorella mia che m'innamora <sup>4</sup> (Lute)  | 02:04 |
| <b>14</b> | Quando fra l'altre donne (Alta Cappella)  | 03:51 |
| <b>15</b> | Occhi miei dolci (Poem by Anonymous)  | 03:47 |
| <b>16</b> | GIOVANNI MARIA TRABACI (1575 - 1647)<br>Toccata e recercar cromatico <sup>5</sup> (Harpsichord) | 05:58 |
| <b>17</b> | Non s'incolpi la voglia (Poem by Pietro Barignano)  | 02:03 |
| <b>18</b> | Canzon La Bella (Alta Cappella)   | 02:45 |

**World Première Recording  
except for tracks Nos. 03, 06, 10 and 16**

<sup>1</sup> I-Nc: Ms. mus. str. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. S. 609, Zentralbibliothek, Solothurn.

<sup>3</sup> *Ricercate, canzone francese, capricci*, Book One, Naples, 1603.

<sup>4</sup> Iulio Abondante, *Intabolatura di lautto libro secondo*, Venice, 1548 (tablature of the first madrigal in the Primo libro di madrigali by Vicentino, Vicenza, 1546).

<sup>5</sup> *Il Secondo Libro de Ricercate, & altri varii Capricci*, Naples, 1615.

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Ensemble del Dipartimento di Musica Antica del Conservatorio di Vicenza

Stefano Lorenzetti, *Harpsichord and Conductor*

Italian Chromatic Harpsichord by Tony Chinnery, 1992

Voices

Floriana Fornelli, Arianna Lanci, *Sopranos* - Aurelio Schiavoni, *Countertenor*

Alberto Allegrezza, Hirai Haryuki, *Tenors* - Guglielmo Buonsanti, Marcello Vargetto, *Basses*

Alta Cappella

Andrea Inghisciano, Pietro Modesti, *Cornetts*

Ermes Giussani, Mauro Morini, David Yacus, *Trombones*

Viol Consort

Bettina Hoffmann, *Soprano Viol and Conductor*

Massimiliano Varusio, Margherita Tomasi, *Tenor Viol* - Laura Caroniti, Elena Ponzio, *Bass Viol*

Simone Vallerotonda, *Lute*

Patrizia Vaccari and Davide Bonsi, *Artistic Directors*

Madrigali a cinque voci libro quinto

*Recording*: Studio Basement - *Editing*: Stefano Lorenzetti and Piervito Malusà

*Mixing & Mastering*: GRAIM, with the supervision of Andrea Carli

Tracks 03, 06, 10, 13 and 16

*Recording, Mixing & Mastering*: GRAIM, with the supervision of Andrea Carli

*Editing*: Stefano Lorenzetti and Andrea Carli

Nicola Vicentino's work represents one of the most captivating and radical reform projects of musical language ever attempted. The author operates on three inter-related levels: practical experimentation, theoretical codification, and the design and construction of new keyboard instruments, in which the octave is divided into thirty-six parts in two keyboards. This allows for a comprehensive exploration of the three genres of Greek theory: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic, within the compositional practices of his time.

The new music envisioned by Vicentino introduced an entirely different sonic horizon, profoundly heterodox in relation to the conventions of his era. This radicality is fully realized in the works that punctuate his treatise, *L'Antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (1555), which stands as one of the masterpieces of Renaissance music theory.

In contrast, his output appears more conservative in the two surviving books of madrigals, the First and Fifth books: the alpha and omega of his madrigal compositions. Among these two remaining volumes, the latter, which is the focus of this recording, is undoubtedly the boldest, where chromaticism is employed with both skill and restraint, yet does not refrain from producing strikingly captivating effects. This is exemplified in the opening madrigal of the CD, "Poiché'l mio largo pianto" [track 1], perhaps the most beautiful in the entire collection, wherein Vicentino allows performers the discretion to choose which ficta alterations to sing, thus granting freedom regarding whether to carry out a hexachord mutation.

From a purely statistical perspective, the use of chromaticism in the Fifth Book of Madrigals appears widespread—seventy percent of all measures across the madrigals contain chromatic alterations—yet its impact on perception must be critically assessed, both in terms of compositional strategies and perceptual experience. For instance, the transition at measure 20 of *Non pur quell'una bella ignuda mano* [track 8] is exceptional melodically, featuring the simultaneous presence of a diminished third and a diminished fifth corresponding to the words "timido e piano". However, the dissonant effect of these intervals is significantly mitigated by the introduction of a pause, which imparts an unexpected sweetness to the passage, rendering the syntactical solution perfectly coherent with the meaning of the text.

Vicentino is acutely aware of the difficulty in executing such chromatic intervals, advising "the student to learn to adapt to singing such passages and leaps." This difficulty is emphasized by the extensive use of major triads and fourths and fifths chords in root position, which are distinctive characteristics of the chromatic progressions employed by Vicentino. The shift at the conclusion of *Trecce di fila* [track 5] towards previously unused flats combined with a sequence of fifths produces profound instability in the modal texture, yet it is once again perfectly legitimized by the nature of the text ("metto 'l languir che soffrendo io celo") and remains coherent from a perceptual standpoint. Particularly noteworthy is the alternation between flat and natural (minor and major

third) that characterizes the initial subject of the madrigal *Laura che il verde lauro* [track 7]. This alternation generates an intense melodic tension that permeates the entire madrigal. While chromaticism is a hallmark of Vicentino's late style, it should not be overestimated. The chromatic passages are embedded within a strongly conventional context (and convention is not a limitation), and their effectiveness arises precisely from their relationship with this context. Furthermore, as we have seen, there is often a discrepancy between what appears on the written page and the resultant perceptual experience.

The performance of the madrigals from the *Fifth Book* is interspersed with instrumental pieces that explore the chromatic universe on the keyboard. In particular, Giovanni Maria Trabaci's *Toccata e recercar cromatico* [track 16] requires the use of a chromatic harpsichord, an instrument widely used in Italy during the 17th century, which features nineteen divisions per octave. Additionally, the lute tablature of the madrigal *La pastorella mia che m'innamora* [track 13], originally published in his *First Book of Madrigals* (1546), is rediscovered and performed for the first time.

In his treatise, Vicentino precisely defines the contexts for musical experience. These contexts profoundly influence both compositional aspects and the characteristics of performance practice. Regarding style, it is the contexts of 'reserved music'—private and secret settings in which only a select few were admitted—that favour the experimentation of chromatic and

enharmonic genres, while the diatonic genre is preferred in public contexts, such as churches. The dialectic between reserved/profane and public/sacred engenders a further differentiation between two singing styles, as the singer must understand that in church and public chapels "one sings loudly... while in rooms one sings with a softer, sweeter voice, without making any noise".

By the end of the century, Lodovico Zacconi expresses a similar statement, establishing a connection between chamber acoustics and a soft voice on one side, and church performance with elevated volume on the other. In Florence, the emergence of the recitative style was linked to the subtleties of a sweet voice in small rooms, establishing a threefold correlation between physical space, genre peculiarities, and performance characteristics. Vicentino demonstrates this awareness by categorizing churches and public chapels together, while rooms—potentially inclusive of private chapels—, belong to another category. This addition may be implicitly suggested by the presence in the treatise of the chromatic motet *Alleluia Haec dies*, which likely represents not so much an exception to the previously codified styles but rather a sacred piece intended for performance in private chapels: the private/public dialectic thus emerges as significantly more meaningful than the profane/sacred dichotomy. This dialectic demonstrates that musical space can be conceived as the interrelation between physical places and the activities of the beings who inhabit them.

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What spaces, according to Vicentino's typology, would be most suitable for the performance of his last book of madrigals, published in 1572? In the dedication that student Ottavio Resini addresses to Lucilio Canevago, he alludes to the wonders of the noble knight's house, a receptacle of magnificence, generosity, and virtue. Beyond the customary laudatory tone, one might speculate a private and intimate context in which Vicentino's madrigals could have found their most appropriate setting.

According to Vicentino's observations, what type of performance would have been ideal? The first condition for achieving the aesthetic outcome desired by Vicentino pertains to the sweetness of the voice. This precept is linked to two interacting conditions: the first concerns the intrinsic requirements of the repertoire being performed, while the second relates to the likely limited dimensions of the rooms. This precept is organically connected to the subsequent one, which prescribes singing "the music by hearth" (from memory). Singing from memory means freeing the face from any visual interference that reading from a score might introduce; it means leaving the hands free for gestural mimicry, which will effectively and measuredly accompany the music, without the need for any exaggeration in movements to make them perfectly visible to an audience likely positioned at a minimal distance from the performer in an ideal continuum that speaks of communion and not of otherness.

Vicentino is perfectly aware of this when he states that music is sung from memory to bet-

ter imitate the emotions of the words, a performance mode particularly suitable for the solo performance of the madrigal, as seen in *O messaggi del cor* [track 12], where the harpsichord fully performs the polyphony while only the soprano voice sings with diminutions. Although the chromatic character of the *Fifth Book of Madrigals* primarily legitimizes performance in a reserved environment, with sweet and refined voices singing in a small room for the benefit of music connoisseurs, the almost archaic and strongly conservative 'flavour' of some madrigals has prompted experiments with cornetti and sackbuts, more suited to celebratory and public contexts as in *Trecce di fila* [track 5] and *Non si'incolpi la voglia* [track 17], where only the altus voice is sung. In *Non pur quell'una* [track 8], all voices are doubled with instruments, not neglecting entirely instrumental performances, according to the practices of the time, as in *Onde amor tolse l'oro* [track 4] and *Quando fra l'altre donne* (two versions: viol consort [track 9] and alta cappella [track 14]). Finally, the CD concludes with the first instrumental canzona ever published: *Canzon la Bella* [track 18], performed here with cornetti and sackbuts.

**Stefano Lorenzetti**

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**Stefano Lorenzetti** studied organ and harpsichord with Kenneth Gilbert and at the same time earned his PhD at the European University Institute in Florence. His dual vocation as a musician and musicologist has led him to explore forgotten practices, which he has experimented with in CDs dedicated to the works of Giovanni Paolo Cima, Gerolamo Malvezzi, Giovanni della Casa, Ludovico Balbi, Giovanni Gabrieli, Domenico Cimarosa, Jean-Baptiste Forqueray, François Couperin etc., which have met with international critical acclaim. His monograph on *Musica e identità nobiliare nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Olschki 2001) was received with great interest by the international scholarly community. He has also published more than fifty essays, the most recent of which are dedicated to the relationship between 16th-17th century music and the art of memory, a subject on which a new monograph has been recently published by Libreria Musicale Italiana, entitled *Nata per morire. Memoria della musica e musica della memoria in Età Moderna* (LIM 2023).

He has given concerts, conferences and lectures in Europe and the United States, and in particular at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, at the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, at the Festival delle Nazioni, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours, University of California, Davis (Valente lectures), Harvard University, and Stanford University (Ron Alexander Lectures). Stefano Lorenzetti is a former fellow of

the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University in the City of New York, and currently director of the Vicenza Conservatory of Music.

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**Simone Vallerotonda** was born in Rome in 1983 and began his musical studies on the classical guitar. At the age of eighteen his fascination for early music led him to buy a lute. He studied the instrument with Andrea Damiani at Rome's "Santa Cecilia" Conservatory, earning his diploma with full marks. There followed a Master's diploma in theorbo and baroque guitar, with full marks, obtained from the "Staatliche Hochschule für Musik" of Trossingen under the guidance of Rolf Lislevand.

Vallerotonda also graduated with full marks in Philosophy from Rome's "Tor Vergata" University, then earned a master's degree in Aesthetics, with full marks and honours, focusing on the relationship between 18<sup>th</sup>-century music and the Encyclopaedists.

In 2011 he came first (soloists' section) at the "Maurizio Pratola" International Lute Competition and won the REMA Competition (Réseau Européen de Musique Ancienne) in the chamber music section.

He has appeared at some of the most prestigious venues in the USA, Australia, South America, South Africa, China, and all over Europe, among them: Carnegie Hall in New York, Sydney Conservatorium, Teatro de la Ciudad in Mexico City, Teatro Municipal of Santiago de Chile, Singapore Lyric Opera, Concertgebouw



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in Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall in London, Theater an der Wien, Theatre des Champs Élysées in Paris, Casa da Musica in Oporto, Liszt Academy in Budapest, Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia in Rome.

He has recorded for important radio and television networks: RAI, ABC, BBC, Sky-Arte, Mezzo, France Musique, Radio4, Arte, Polskie Radio, Kulturradio, RSI, Radio Classica, Radio Vaticana; and for record companies such as Naïve, Sony, Erato, EMI, Decca, Amadeus, Brilliant, Aparthé, E Lucevan Le Stelle Records, Arcana.

In addition to his career as soloist, he plays the continuo in various ensembles, among them: Modo Antiquo, Rinaldo Alessandrini & Concerto Italiano, Imaginarium Ensemble, Cantar Lontano, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Ottavio Dantone & Accademia Bizantina. Open to experimentation, he has played with Vinicio Capossela.

At the age of 38 he became a professor at the Conservatory of Vicenza.

He has founded "I Bassifondi", an ensemble with which he performs the repertoires with basso continuo for guitar, theorbo and lute from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As a soloist and with his ensemble he is supported by CIDIM – Comitato Nazionale Italiano Musica.



Simone Vallerotonda © Damiano Rosa



Stefano Lorenzetti © Alessandro Lorenzetti



Italian texts with parallel English translation are available on the Dynamic website  
Poems drawn up by Elisa Quarello

**CDS8064**

Dynamic Srl

Via Mura Chiappe 39, 16136 Genova - Italy  
tel. +39 010.27.22.884 fax +39 010.21.39.37

[dynamic@dynamic.it](mailto:dynamic@dynamic.it)

visit us at [\*\*www.dynamic.it\*\*](http://www.dynamic.it)



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