



BELLOT ENSEMBLE

LUCINE MUSAELIAN *soprano*
KIERAN WHITE *tenor*



CUPID'S GROUND BASS

- Barbara STROZZI** (1619–1677)
Cantate, ariette e duetti, Op. 2 (1651)
- [1] No. 22. Amor dormiglione [4:03]
Lucine Musaelian *soprano*
- Marco UCCELLINI** (1603–1680)
Sonate, arie et correnti, Op. 3 (1642)
- [2] Aria quinta sopra ‘La Bergamasca’ [2:16]
- Carlo FARINA** (1600–1639)
Pavane, Gagliarde, Libro 2 (1627)
- [3] Capriccio stravagante a 4: La Lira [2:23]
- Francesco CAVALLI** (1602–1676)
Gli amori d’Apollo e di Dafne, Act III (1640)
- [4] Misero Apollo [5:59]
Kieran White *tenor*
- Il Giasone (1649) [5:49]
- [5] Sinfonia [1:46]
- [6] Act I: Delizie, contenti che l’alma beate [4:03]
Kieran White *tenor*
- [7] Musiche sacre: Canzon à 3 (1656) [5:33]
Il Giasone
- [8] Act I: Se dardo pungente [2:60]
Lucine Musaelian *soprano*

Giovanni Girolamo KAPSBERGER (1580–1651)

- 9 Intavolatura di chitarone, Libro 4 (1640): Toccata No. 1 [6:21]
Daniel Murphy *theorbo*

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von BIBER (1644–1704)

- Mystery (Rosary) Sonata No. 1 in D minor, 'The Annunciation' (1674) [5:51]
10 Præludium [2:29]
11 Variatio – Aria allegro – Variatio – Adagio – Finale [3:22]
Edmund Taylor *violin*

KAPSBERGER

- 12 Intavolatura di chitarone, Libro 4: Capona [1:19]
Daniel Murphy *theorbo*

Claudio MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

- L'incoronazione di Poppea, SV308, Act II (1643)
13 Oblivion soave [3:23]
Kieran White *tenor* • **Daniel Murphy** *theorbo*

KAPSBERGER

- 14 Intavolatura di chitarone, Libro 4: Canario [2:26]
Daniel Murphy *theorbo*

STROZZI

- Arie a voce sola, Op. 8 (1664)
15 Che si può fare? [5:03]
Lucine Musaelian *soprano, viola da gamba*

MONTEVERDI

Scherzi musicali cioè arie et madrigali, SV 246–251 (1632)

16 No. 6. Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti, SV 251 [5:28]

Lucine Musaelian *soprano* • **Kieran White** *tenor*

Total Timing: [60:55]

Bellot Ensemble

Lucine Musaelian *soprano, viola da gamba* • **Kieran White** *tenor*

Olivia Petryszak *recorder*

Edmund Taylor, Maxim Del Mar *violin*

Jacob Garside *cello* • **Nathan Giorgetti** *viola da gamba*

Daniel Murphy *theorbo, baroque guitar*

Matthew Brown *harpsichord, organ*



BELLOT
ENSEMBLE

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Produced by **Tom Pickering** • Recorded by **John Croft** (Chiaro Audio)

24bit, 96kHz high resolution recording, editing and mastering

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Artwork by **David Murphy** (FHR)

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CUPID'S GROUND BASS

Of all the shifts in musical aesthetics around the turn of the 17th century, one of the most significant was a fundamental development in the relationship between voices and instruments. A prevailing feature of music of the 16th century and earlier was a split between the deployment of voices and instruments: occasionally replacing each other, or used in alternation such as in liturgical settings, but at least in 'art music', rarely unified into one voice. The innovations of the Florentine Camerata (a group of poets, musicians, and intellectuals in late 16th-century Florence who met to discuss and experiment with the arts, especially music and drama), and the subsequent focus on voices singing with subservient accompaniment fundamentally changed this relationship, paving the way for the development of different relationships between the human voice and instruments.

Alongside this, a more concerted effort in writing dedicated instrumental music with increasing degrees of complexity and virtuosity was taking place. Freed from a contrapuntal format which inherently constrained the possible complexity of any one line, the new approach of setting solo voices to an accompaniment allowed for far greater freedom in the writing for violins, cornetti, recorders, in the same way the voice was also experiencing a new soloistic freedom. Performer-composers began to push the limits of their instruments in a way previously restricted by 16th-century aesthetics.

However, many elements of music taste remained similar, or at least retained their essence while being expressed in a new way. The penchant for writing stories about love in its many forms continued, finding a new home in the developing operatic works as well as the ever-popular madrigal genre, as composers continued to find ways to describe the joy, grief, despair and ecstasy of the human experience of love. Dance forms and ground basses remained popular too, with standard chord progressions and their associated dance formats being used as the groundwork for innovation; the *bergamasca*, *romanesca*, *gagliarda*, *ciaccona* and many more can be found in instrumental works, operas and madrigals throughout the 17th century.

Cupid's Ground Bass is a celebration of these developing musical aesthetics of early 17th century Italy, focusing particularly on the composers' language of love in all its forms.

Francesco Cavalli is a central figure in *Cupid's Ground Bass*, not least because of his central role in the developing artistic medium of public opera in 17th century Venice. He continued the innovations of his more experimental forebears, but developed his style into a more codified, repeatable and dramatically efficient format. From its opening in 1637, Cavalli became almost the house composer at Teatro San Cassiano in Venice, with his many works performed there including *Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne* in 1640, from which *Misero Apollo* is

taken, and *Il Giasone* in 1649, from which come *Delizie contenti* and *Se dardo pungente*. Although it formed a much smaller part of his compositional output, he also wrote some instrumental music, such as his *Canzon à 3*, in the newly evolving format of two melody instruments with basso continuo.

There are few composers who exemplify the peak of the continuo-accompanied solo voice style espoused by the early Florentine Camerata than Barbara Strozzi. She was an extremely prolific publisher and performer, whose emotionally direct and vivid style of writing and performance made her something of a household name in Venetian high society. *Che si può fare* is representative of the most renowned qualities of her composing and performing, utilising the so-called 'lament' ground bass to serve as the foundation for the vivid, emotional cry of a spurned lover. A more light-hearted entertainment comes with *Amor dormiglione*, a playful chastisement of Cupid for his laziness and inability to find love for the protagonist.

Claudio Monteverdi occupies a unique position within the early development of opera. The earliest of his three extant operatic works, *l'Orfeo*, dates from the earliest days of the genre's formation, written for a closed court audience with unlimited budget. His latter two offerings, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, from which *Oblivion soave* is taken, form an obvious contrast to this earlier work, as Monteverdi writes for the burgeoning public opera houses of Venice. His command of text-setting and dramatic flow remains exceptional, but the music takes on something of

the more standard format of the Venetian opera house style, with fewer varieties in instrumental forces than his earlier works allowed for and a more standardised approach to the divisions between monody, dances, *ritornelli* and choruses. A separate element of his compositional ability is displayed in *Zefiro torna*, a lively madrigal from his 1632 collection *Scherzi musicali*, which deploys the famous 'ciaccona' ground bass and the newly fashionable texture of two solo voices with accompaniment.

Finally, we have a collection of composers who exemplify the developing 17th-century interest in writing purely instrumental music, especially where it can display virtuosic ability on the relevant instruments. Fast-paced violin works began to come to the forefront of published instrumental music, such as Marco Uccellini's *La Bergamasca* and, later in the century, Heinrich Biber's *Annunciation* from the *Rosary Sonatas*, alongside dedicated works for new instruments such as Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger's works for solo theorbo: *Canario*, *Capona* and a *Toccata*. Composers also branched out into representative music, as Carlo Farina's *La Lira*, taken from *Capriccio stravagante*, mimics the sound of the lirone with four separate string lines. This growth in instrumental focus throughout the 17th century made a marked impact on the music to come.

Performance Philosophy

Bellot Ensemble strives to embody the spontaneity and improvisational approach that was evidently important to

our 17th century forebears. We are committed to bridging the gap between historical scholarship and vivid, embodied performances: proving that the historical information can serve as an effective tool for modern performers.

Each piece we perform is considered as a piece of living art, and we have performed much of our repertoire in a variety of versions. We do not believe in 'definitive' versions of the works we perform, as we believe that is not how the composers thought of them either. We embrace improvisation, rewriting, arrangement and ornamentation in our rehearsal processes, aiming to always provide a fresh version for every performance and recording.

Manuscript Research and Transcription Process

Our historical research includes much work with various published and manuscript sources of 17th-century music. Of particular note for this album is a particular collection of music known as the Contarini Collection. Girolamo Contarini (1770–1843) was a Venetian nobleman and bibliophile whose legacy significantly impacted the preservation of 17th-century Venetian opera. In 1843, he bequeathed a substantial collection to the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, comprising 956 manuscript scores and nearly 4,700 printed books. This donation includes invaluable sources for operas by composers such as Francesco Cavalli, Claudio Monteverdi, Antonio Cesti, and Antonio Sartorio.

Many of these manuscripts originated from one of Girolamo's

ancestors, Marco Contarini (1632–1689), a prominent Venetian nobleman and Procurator of San Marco. Marco was renowned for his patronage of the arts and constructed two theatres at his estate in Piazzola sul Brenta, where he hosted elaborate opera performances. He amassed a significant collection of musical manuscripts, which were preserved and eventually passed down to Girolamo.

The Contarini Collection is particularly esteemed for its comprehensive holdings of Cavalli's operas. These manuscripts are considered among the most authoritative sources for Cavalli's works, providing critical insights into the performance practices of 17th-century Venetian opera.

Il Giasone in Focus

Cavalli's 1649 opera *Il Giasone*, one of many in the Contarini Collection, is of particular interest in this album. First performed in Teatro San Cassiano in Venice, it was by far one of Cavalli's most popular public operas, and displays a number of the musical features which were becoming standard in public Venetian opera. Its story drawn from Greek myth, intertwining comedic, dramatic and lyrical elements in equal measure, with a standardised three-act structure and a variety of stock scene types; a magical invocation, sleep scenes, and laments.

In *Cupid's Ground Bass*, an instrumental sinfonia and two key arias present Cavalli's ability to write emotionally driven, narratively important music, and display why his operatic style became the norm for subsequent composers of musical drama.

Diminutions and Ornamentation

The practice of ornamentation, often called ‘diminutions’ or ‘divisions’ in this era, as the prevailing style typically involved dividing long notes into many smaller ones, is fundamental to the performance of 17th-century music. As an ensemble, our working method includes much experimentation with ornamentation, with various historical sources serving as a particular inspiration; Francesco Rognoni’s *Selva de varii passaggi* (1620), Girolamo Dalla Casa’s *Il vero modo di diminuir* (1584) and Giulio Caccini’s *Le nuove musiche* (1602) being particularly important.

The ever-changing nature of our ornamentation practices, varying from elaborately written-out diminutions based on examples by 17th-century theoreticians to improvised additions in the moment of performance, helps us retain our emphasis on the music’s fluidity. This album reflects only one moment in our ongoing dialogue with the repertoire, rather than providing a fixed interpretation. We feel that the evolution of our arrangements through multiple performances is an important feature in delivering effective performances of this repertoire.

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Barbara STROZZI (1619–1677)

Cantate, ariette e duetti, Op. 2: No. 22. Amor dormiglione

(text by anonymous)

1 Amor, non dormir più!
Su, su, svegliati omai,
che mentre dormi tu
dormon le gioie mie, vegliano i guai.
Non esser, non esser, Amor, dappoco!
Strali, strali, foco,
strali, strali, su, su,
foco, foco, su, su!

O pigro o tardo
tu non hai senso,
Amor melenso
Amor codardo!
Ahi quale io resto
che nel mio ardore
tu dorma Amore:
mancava questo!

Cupid, sleep no more!
Up, up, awake at last,
for while you sleep
my joys sleep, my troubles keep watch.
Do not be idle, Cupid!
Arrows, arrows, fire,
arrows, arrows, up, up,
fire, fire, up, up!

O slow and lazy one,
you have no sense,
foolish Cupid,
cowardly Cupid!
Ah, what a state I am left in,
that in my ardour
you, Cupid, should sleep
this was just what I needed!

Francesco CAVALLI (1602–1676)

Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne, Act III: Misero Apollo

(text by Giovanni Francesco Busenello, 1598–1659)

4 Misero, misero Apollo i tuoi trionfi or vanta
di crear giorno, ove le luci giri,
puoi sol cangiato in vento di sospiri
bacciar le foglie all'adorata pianta.

Sgorghino omai con dolorosi uffici
dai languidi occhi miei lagrime amare,
vadano in doppio fonte ad irrigare
d'un Lauro le dolcissime radici.

Era meglio per me, che fuggitiva,
ma belle oltre le belle io ti vedessi,
che con sciapiti, e non giocondi amplessi
un arbor abbracciar su questa riva.

Wretched, wretched Apollo, now boast of your triumphs:
of creating day, wherever you turn your lights;
you can only, changed into a wind of sighs,
kiss the leaves of the beloved tree.

Let bitter tears flow now in sorrowful service
from my weary eyes;
let them go as twin streams to water
the sweetest roots of this laurel.

It would have been better for me, to see you fleeing,
yet beautiful beyond all beauty,
than, with empty and joyless embraces,
to clasp a tree upon this riverbank.

CAVALLI

Il Giasone, Act I: Delizie, contenti che l'alma beate

(text by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, 1606–1651)

6 Delizie, contenti che l'alma beate,
fermate, fermate
Su questo mio core, deh più non stillate le gioie d'amore.

Delizie mie care, fermatevi qui:
non so più bramare, mi basta così.

In grembo a gli'amori, fra dolci catene,
morir mi conviene.
Dolcezza omicida, a morte mi guida in braccio al
mio bene.
Dolcezza mie care, fermatevi qui:
non so più bramare, mi basta così.

Delights, joys that bless my soul,
halt, halt.
Upon this heart of mine, ah, no longer pour the joys of love.

Dearest delights, remain here:
I can desire nothing more; this is enough.

In the lap of love, among sweet chains,
I am content to die.
Deadly sweetness leads me to death in the arms of
my beloved.
Dearest sweetness, remain here:
I can desire nothing more; this is enough.

CAVALLI

Il Giasone, Act I: Se dardo pungente

8 Se dardo pungente
d'un guardo lucente
il sen mi ferì,
se in gioia d'amore
si strugge il mio core
la notte ed il dì,
se un volto divino
quest'alma rubò,
se amar è destino,
resista chi può.

Se allor ch'io vi vidi,
begl'occhi omicidi,
io persi il vigor,
se v'amo e v'adoro,
s'io manco, s'io moro
per nobile ardor,
se Amor il mio bene
in ciel stabili,
amar mi conviene,
è forza così.

If the sharp dart
of a shining glance
has wounded my breast,
if in love's joy
my heart is consumed
by night and by day,
if a divine face
has stolen this soul,
if it is my destiny to love,
who can resist?

If, when I first saw you,
Fair fatal eyes,
I lost my strength,
if I love and adore you,
if I falter, if I die
through noble passion,
if Love established
my happiness in heaven,
I must love,
so it must be.

Claudio MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

L'incoronazione di Poppea, SV308, Act II: Oblivion soave

(text by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini)

13 Adagiati, Poppea,
acquietati, anima mia:
sarai ben custodita.
Oblivion soave
i dolci sentimenti
in te, figlia, addormenti.
Posatevi occhi ladri,
aperti, deh, che fate
se chiusi ancor rubate?
Poppea, rimanti in pace!
Luci care, gradite,
dormite, omai dormite

Rest yourself, Poppea,
be calm, my soul;
you shall be well guarded.
Gentle oblivion,
lull to sleep within you, my daughter,
these tender feelings.
Rest yourselves, thieving eyes;
what do you do when open,
if even closed you steal?
Poppea, remain in peace;
beloved and cherished eyes,
sleep now, sleep now.

STROZZI

Arie a voce sola, Op. 8: Che si può fare?

(text by Gaudenzio Brunacci, 1631–1669)

15 Che si può fare?
Le stelle rubelle
non hanno pietà.
Che s'el cielo non dà
un influxo di pace al mio penare,
che si può fare?

Che si può dire?
Da gl'astri disastri
mi piovano ogn'hor;
che le perfido amor
un respiro diniega al mio martire,
che si può dire?

What can be done?
The rebellious stars
have no pity.
If heaven does not grant
A measure of peace to my suffering,
what can be done?

What can be said?
From the stars, disasters
rain upon me at every hour;
if treacherous Love
denies a breath to ease my torment,
what can be said?

MONTEVERDI

Scherzi musicali cioè arie et madrigali, SV 246–251: No. 6. Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti, SV 251

(text by Ottavio Rinuccini, 1563–1621)

16 Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti,
l'aer fa grato e il pié discioglie a l'onde.
e mormorando tra le verdi fronde,
fa danzar al bel suon, su'l prato i fiori.

Inghirlandato il crin Filide e Clori
note temprando amor care e gioconde.
e da monti e da valli ime e profonde
radoppian l'armonia gli antri canori.

Sorge più vaga in ciel l'aurora,
e'l Sole, sparge più luci d'or;
più puro argento fregia di Teti il bel ceruleo manto.

Zephyr returns, and with gentle accents
make the air pleasant and sets the waves to dance
And murmuring among the green branches,
makes the flowers dance to the fair sound upon
the meadow.

With garlanded hair, Phyllis and Chloris
temper their dear and joyful songs of love,
and from mountains and valleys, low and deep,
the echoing caves redouble the harmony.

More lovely in the sky rises the dawn,
and the Sun scatters more rays of gold;
purer silver adorns the fair blue mantle of Thetis.

All translations by the Bellot Ensemble

Bellot Ensemble is a vibrant period instrument group celebrated for energetic performances and a distinctive approach to 17th-century repertoire. Rooted in historical performance practice, the ensemble blends detailed research with spontaneity, particularly through written divisions and the expressive interpretation of early texts. Their work often brings together instrumental and vocal forces, with regular collaborations involving consorts, choirs, and opera companies.

From October 2025, the group begins a two-year term as the New Generation Baroque Ensemble, a prestigious development scheme led by BBC Radio 3, the Royal College of Music, and the National Centre for Early Music. The programme supports emerging UK-based Baroque groups through expert coaching, recording and broadcast opportunities, and a regular performance platform.

Bellot Ensemble has also been selected for the Britten Pears Young Artist Programme 2025–26, where they will take part in the Chamber Music Residency at Snape Maltings supported by the Medd Bursary.

The ensemble is especially grateful for the continued support of the Continuo Foundation, whose grants have supported national touring and the recording of their début album. *Cupid's Ground Bass*, featuring 17th-century love arias with newly composed instrumental divisions, was recorded in 2024 with Lucine Musaelian and Kieran White.

Bellot Ensemble performed at the Brighton Early Music Festival, Live Scheme 2023–24, and maintains close ties with choral and opera groups across the UK. In 2024 they toured John Frederick Lampe's *The Dragon of Wantley* with New Sussex Opera conducted by Toby Purser, and appeared as Featured Artists at the Overstrand Early Music Festival in a semi-staged *Dido and Aeneas* with Norwich Baroque. They are also recipients of the Philip and Dorothy Green Young Artist Award for 2024–25.

Recent highlights include performances at Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht, Newbury Spring Festival, and the London Early Music Festival, where they were finalists in the Young Ensemble Competition.

bellotensemble.com

Lucine Musaelian is an Armenian-American viola da gamba player, singer, and composer. She has a B.A. in music from Yale University, and completed her M.A. in viol and voice at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel with Paolo Pandolfo and

voice with Rosa Dominguez. In 2023, Musaelian completed her Professional Diploma at the Royal Academy of Music, London, studying viola da gamba with Jonathan Manson. With Nathan Giorgetti, she co-founded the duo Intesa, and they were awarded the Royal Academy of Music Chamber Music Fellowship from 2023–24.

Since moving to London, Musaelian has performed with La Nuova Musica, Phantasm, the Dunedin Consort, and the BBC Philharmonic. Her duo Intesa performs regularly in the UK and internationally in festivals including the York Early Music Festival, the Two Moors festival, the Resonanzen Festival in Vienna, the Utrecht Early Music Festival, and the Residenz Woche festival in München. Musaelian is a member of the Bellot Ensemble, which was recently selected to be the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Baroque Ensemble from 2025–27, and was also named a Britten Pears Young Artist from 2025–26. She is also a member of the Idrisi Ensemble as a singer and vielle player, and was featured as a soloist in the group's performance at KOKO in Camden, London. Self-accompaniment in early music and Armenian music is an important element of Musaelian's practice and research and is a feature of much of her performance life. Outside of performance, Musaelian loves playing viol consort and studying mensural notation.

@lucinemusaelian

Kieran White is a British tenor acclaimed for his radiant tone, musical intelligence, and expressive connection to text, particularly in Baroque and early repertoire. *Opera Magazine* praised his ‘extraordinary emotional clarity,’ while *The Guardian* described his voice as ‘pure [and] luminous’. He is increasingly sought after across Europe and the United States as a concert soloist and operatic performer.

Recent highlights include his New York début with the New York Philharmonic under Ton Koopman in *Messiah* at David Geffen Hall, and a recording of Lully’s *Atys* with Les Talens Lyriques and Christophe Rousset, following performances at the Opéra Royal de Versailles and the Vienna Konzerthaus.

White’s operatic roles span Castor in *Castor et Pollux* (Warsaw Chamber Opera), Narete in Vivaldi’s *La fida ninfa* at the Innsbruck Festival (CPO 555646-2), Hippolyte, Oronte, Damon, and roles in works by Monteverdi, Cavalli, and Gagliano. *Opera Magazine* described his solo show *La musica e le ragioni dell’anima* in Cremona as ‘a masterclass in Baroque affect’.

A specialist in Bach’s Evangelist roles, White has performed with Amsterdam Baroque, Concerto d’Amsterdam, Wells Cathedral Choir, and Copenhagen Soloists, under conductors including Ton Koopman, Chiara Cattani, and Sir John Eliot Gardiner. His concert work includes Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and *Messiah* with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C.

He is a prizewinner at the Aria Borealis and Froville competitions, and a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, London. Originally from Dorset, White now balances a thriving international career with life on his family farm.

kieranwhitetenor.com



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