

EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION presents

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR

*Mediterranean
Meditations*

17th-century Italy: *L'arte del basso ostinato*

First Church of Christ, Scientist
Central Park West at 68th Street, NYC

Saturday, 16 March 2013, 8:00 PM

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ - DIRECTOR

Laura Heimes - soprano • Sherezade Panthaki - soprano

Dann Coakwell - tenor • David Vanderwal - tenor

Paul Shipper - bass & guitar

Christa Patton - harp • Jason Priset - theorbo, guitar

Charles Weaver - theorbo, lute, guitar

Dongmyung Ahn - violin • Aaron Brown - violin

David Bakamjian - cello

and the

Dark Horse Consort

Greg Ingles - alto, tenor trombone • Erik Schmalz - tenor trombone

Mack Ramsey - bass trombone

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK's 2012-2013 SEASON continues -

SPRING 2013 - Orchestra

First Church of Christ, Scientist - Central Park West at 68th Street

London's Musical Bridge: The Enlightened English

Saturday, 4 May, 8:00 PM

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The composer and lutenist **Andrea Falconiero's Battalla de Barabaso yerno de Satanas** (Battle of Barrabas, Son-in-law of Satan) takes us into the heart of the conflict between good and evil. Through the religious implications of the title of this piece, Falconiero was also making a political statement. During the Spanish reign in Naples, which was accompanied by upheavals and fierce resistance by the Italians, the Spanish invaders enjoyed operatic pieces which ridiculed the oppressed people of Naples. Falconiero, despite being a Neapolitan, supported the Spanish and the devils were symbols of the insurgent Italians who despised their invaders.

Falconiero's itinerant life took him to Parma, Mantua, Florence and then to Modena. After years of travelling in Spain and France, he was appointed lutenist to the royal chapel at Naples in 1639 and finally, in 1647, maestro di capella.

The Cremonese organist **Tarquinio Merula** was attuned to instrumental music. He published more than a hundred of his mostly three-part instrumental works during his lifetime. In 1631 Merula succeeded Alessandro Grandi, who had succumbed to the plague, at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. Merula also fell under the spell of the new Venetian theater scene, as can be seen by his participation in the production of "Finta Savia" (The Treacherous Wise Woman) after a libretto by Giulio Strozzi in 1643.

Cristoforo Caresana (ca. 1640-1709) was an Italian Baroque composer, organist and tenor - an early representative of the Neapolitan operatic school. Born in Venice, he studied under Pietro Andrea Ziani and then moved to Naples late in his teens, where he joined the theatre company of Febi Armonici, which produced early examples of melodrama. Later, in 1667, he became an organist and singer in the Chapel Royal and director of the Neapolitan Conservatorio di Sant'Onofrio a Porta Capuana, a type of orphanage-cum-music school, until 1690. He is remembered for his cantatas, especially for the Nativity season as well as instrumental duos. Amongst others, the Spanish guitarist and composer **Gaspar Sanz** studied music theory under Caresana's tutelage.

A much more forceful personality was the composer **Massimiliano Neri** of Brescia, whose father had been an esteemed singer and theorbo player at German courts. He was organist in the Venetian churches of San Marco and SS. Giovanni e Paolo for twenty years. His works arguably represent the most superior attempt to achieve a synthesis of the Gabrieli tradition and the "stile moderno." Unfortunately, his sonata collections have survived only incomplete due to war damage. We are only able to perform and hear Massimiliano Neri's outstanding sonatas thanks to the copies made by passionate nineteenth-century musicologists.

Stefano Landi was a Roman by birth and early training. He would have grown up in the musical culture of Southern Italy, somewhat isolated from the Franco-Flemish polyphony of the late Renaissance that dominated most of Europe. Landi went north, however, to Padua and Venice, where he acquired all the forms of the Second Practice associated with Monteverdi, the forms of monody and of composition with basso continuo. Interestingly, Monteverdi himself had probably turned to southern Italy for inspiration in his ritornellos and 'stubborn' (ostinato) basses.

Basso ostinato (ground bass) is a music form based on the repetition of an unchanging theme over and over in the lowest voice (bass); this theme is accompanied by melodic variations in the higher voices. As a result, while thematic unity is preserved, a constant renewal of the many-voiced musical texture evolves often as if by improvisation.

The *basso ostinato* form is very appropriate for the creation of a unified musical image and the embodiment of a single mood. The *basso ostinato* was used as the lowest voice in the accompaniment in arias and choral works in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (H. Purcell and J. S. Bach's Crucifixus from the Mass in B minor). It was also used in instrumental forms such as the *passacaglia* and *chaconne*, still popular today.

"Some people interpreted the name of Venice as VENI ETIAM, which means 'come back again and again.' For in each and every one of your visits, you will discover new things and new beauties."

Zefiro torna is one of two madrigals composed by **Claudio Monteverdi** with the same title and not to be confused with his five-voice a cappella setting of a sonnet by Petrarch published in his *Sixth Book of Madrigals* in 1614. This madrigal sets a text by Ottavio Rinuccini, the poet who authored the librettos for the first two surviving operas, Peri's *La Dafne* and *Euridice*, as well as Monteverdi's lost opera, *Arianna*. *Zefiro* was published in the collection *Scherzi Musicali*, and in the composer's *Ninth Book of Madrigals* (1632). Scored for two tenors and continuo, most of the piece is in the form of a ciaccona (chaconne) or passacaglia, which uses a constantly recurring bass line, and it is the first known example of a vocal duet that uses a ciaccona accompaniment.

The poem, a sonnet, is a rhapsodic pastoral ode to Zephyr, the west wind that brings Spring and its attendant opportunities for romance, or at least dalliance. Here, as in many of his madrigals, Monteverdi's exceptionally fluid text-setting skillfully subverts the structure of the sonnet so that its poetic effusions seem spontaneously improvised rather than constructed according to strict formal standards. The catchy repeated figure of the ciaccona, the lively rhythms, and the graceful but florid vocal lines give the work an infectious exuberance. The composer's playful tweaking of the *seconda prattica* is

evident throughout in his exaggeratedly obvious text painting. “Mormorando,” (murmuring), for instance, is set to a wavy murmuring figure that runs on for a little longer than is strictly necessary. Later, the first voice sings ‘e da monti’ to a line that leaps upward to the extremes of the singer's range, while the second voice’s ‘e da valli’ precipitously tumbles down in the opposite direction. In the final tercet of the sonnet, the mood changes and the author succumbs in despair because he has not found his beloved. The ciaccona figure halts, and these lines are set as a slow quasi-recitative. In the final line, ‘piango’ (weep), is given a balefully pathetic treatment with a harmonic progression that droops almost irretrievably below the home key, before recovering on the final word, “canto” (sing), which brings a return of the ciaccona figure and the original mood of joy and optimism. These and many other examples give performers the opportunity to showcase the music’s humor, making Zefiro torna one of the Composer’s most popular and frequently performed madrigals.

Claudio Monteverdi’s **Laetatus sum** for six voices and five instruments is a gloriously exuberant setting for Vespers of Psalm 121 (Psalm 122 in the Book of Common Prayer). It would probably have been lost forever had it not been for the intervention of Monteverdi’s publisher, Alessandro Vincenti, who included it in the *Messa a quattro voci e salmi* of 1650. Most of the setting is based on a four-note ostinato – the first four notes of the ‘Ruggiero’ bass with which Monteverdi began his setting of the same text in the Vespers of 1610.

Where the 1610 setting is one of Monteverdi’s most complex and intellectually challenging pieces, in this setting, he seems to take a simple delight in overcoming the restrictions of the ostinato, introducing variety not only through melodic invention but by introducing a number of obbligato instruments – violins, trombones and bassoon. There are echoes of the well known Beatus vir setting in the opening violin melodies, and of the fast-note roulades of the great seven-part Gloria. There is humor too, perhaps, in the seemingly endless sequences with which Monteverdi sets ‘ascenderunt’ in verse four and ‘Amen’ towards the end of the setting. The ostinato is presented in triple time in verses eight and nine and abandoned for the beginning of the ‘Gloria Patri’, but returns in its original meter to round off the setting.

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

Featuring Compact Disc

“MUSIC OF VENICE”

available at the sales table immediately following this performance.

ABOUT EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

Now celebrating its 38th Anniversary season, EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK - FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR is known worldwide for its performances of music and music-drama from the medieval through classical periods. Profiled on the award-winning national news programs, CBS Sunday Morning and ABC Nightline, EM/NY performs an annual subscription series in New York City. EM/NY has performed at the Lincoln and Kennedy Centers, Library of Congress, regularly performs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and has toured throughout the United States and abroad at many international music festivals including Athens, Brisbane, Caramoor, Charleston, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Krakow, Paris, Ravinia, Regensburg, Spoleto, and Tokyo. EM/NY records for *Ex cathedra* Records, Lyrichord, Musicmasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, and Foné, and has produced several recordings in collaboration with The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Frederick Renz, Founder/Director of the Early Music Foundation (EMF) has delved into all forms of music and music-drama from the 11th through the 18th centuries and is recognized internationally for his work as conductor, producer, director and performer while leading Early Music New York (EM/NY). He has received commissions from the Spoleto Festival and The Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as Producer's Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Mr. Renz is the recipient of a doctorate *honoris causa* by the State University of New York.

ABOUT THE EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION (presenter)

EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION (EMF) was founded in 1974 by Frederick Renz and other members of the New York Pro Musica Antiqua. Upon its inception, the EMF was invited to be and continues as Artist in Residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The mission of the Early Music Foundation is to enrich public understanding of western culture through the highest quality, historically informed performances and recordings of music and music drama from the 11th to the 18th centuries.

EMF presents EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK (EM/NY), administers an in-house recording label *Ex cathedra* Records, and manages a service project for NYC historical performance artists - New York Early Music Central.

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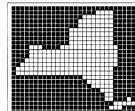
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