

Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble

"Bringing music of the 17th and 18th Century to life"

Patrick Terry - countertenor
and

Gillian Giglierano - baroque viola
Nathan Giglierano - baroque violin
Leanne Kelso - baroque violin
Eric Miller - viola da gamba
Anton TenWolde - baroque cello
Max Yount - harpsichord

August 12 and 13, 2023

Tarquino Merula (1595-1665)

Ciaccona for two treble instruments and bass, opus 12 no. 20

From *Canzoni overo Sonate concertate per chiesa e camera*, book 3 (1637)

Rosanna Scalfi Marcello (1704 or 05- after 1742)

"Arder di due puppile", Cantata #10 (ca. 1730)

Recitative - Aria

Recitative - Aria

Johann Rosenmüller (1619-1684)

Sonata decima á 5 (1682)

Allegro

Adagio

Adagio

Allegro

Adagio

Fuga: allegro

Intermission

Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759) "He was despised"

From *Messiah* (1741-2)

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Sonata for two violins and basso continuo, opus 1 no 12, "Folia"

Theme with 19 variations

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) "Erbarme dich"

From *Saint Matthew Passion*, BWV 244

Next concerts:

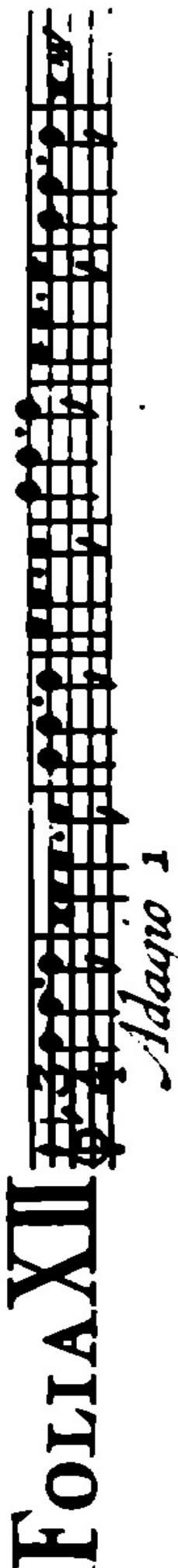
Saturday October 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM, St Andrew's Episcopal Church, Madison, WI

Sunday October 15 at 3:00 PM, First Congregational Church, Beloit

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Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble, 2624 Stevens Street, Madison, WI 53705

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We start with the Ciaccone for two treble instruments and bass, opus 12 no 20, by Tarquino Merula. Merula was an Italian composer mainly active in Cremona. The Ciaccone (or Chaconne in France) is a series of variations over a repeated two-bar bass line.

Rosanna Scalfi was a Venetian gondola singer, who was taken on as a vocal student by Italian nobleman, magistrate, writer, and composer Benedetto Marcello about 1723. The two were secretly wed in a religious ceremony on 20 May 1728, when she was twenty-four years old. However, this marriage to a commoner was unlawful and they never completed the civil requirements. After Marcello died of tuberculosis in 1739, the marriage was declared null by the state, and Rosanna was unable to inherit his estate. Left destitute, she filed suit in 1742 against Benedetto's brother Alessandro Marcello, seeking financial support, but her claims were rejected.

She composed twelve cantatas for alto and basso continuo, writing most if not all of the texts, as well. The manuscript volume, *Twelve Cantatas for Alto Voice and Basso Continuo* (ca. 1730), has been published in modern edition by ClarNan Editions, Fayetteville, AR 2012). Cantata no. 10, *Arder di due pupille* follows a common plan of recitatives followed by lyrical arias. The four sections are listed below along the beginnings of the love text for each section.

Recitative: *Arder di due pupille* -- Burning of two eyes

Aria: *Se il mio male è piacer del mio pene*-- If my unhappiness pleases my lover

Recitative: *Dimmi che far degg'io* -- Tell me what I have to do

Aria: *Mi sei tanto caro* -- You are so dear to me.

Incidentally, Rosanna Marcello appears as a character in Joachim Raff's 1878 opera *Benedetto Marcello*, sung by a mezzo-soprano.

Johann Rosenmüller was a German baroque composer who was accused of homosexuality and forced to flee to Italy. He later returned to Germany and died there. The Sonata decima is from a set of 12 sonatas for 2,3,4 or 5 instruments, published in Nuremberg in 1682. Sonata 10 is for 2 violins, 2 violettas, viola da gamba and basso continuo. The term "violetta" was used for a variety of instruments (various types of viola, viola da gamba, or cello).

The second half of the program contains two of the best known arias depicting sorrow at the time of Christ's Passion, composed by two immortal composers: Händel's "He was despised" from his *Messiah*, and Bach's "Erbarme dich" from the *Saint Matthew Passion*. The librettist for Handel's *Messiah* (1741-2), Charles Jennens, drew his entire text from Scripture, the majority from the Jewish Old Testament. For this aria, Jennens drew from Isaiah 53, vs 3 and Isaiah 50, vs 6. Handel's setting of the text shows great emotional power; it is noted that in the first performances of *Messiah* in London, he chose for singing this aria a certain Mrs. Cibbers, who was a famous actress but not a very good singer—seemingly for the emotional impact she would have. One can only imagine such a beginning of this aria, known by millions. Note the text: "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, He hid not His face from shame and spitting."

The sonata for two violins and basso continuo, opus 1 no 12 is Vivaldi's take on the popular Folia melody. Numerous others, such as Lully, Corelli, Marais, Scarlatti, Bach, and Purcell have done the same. The Folia was probably originally a form of improvisation, but by the 18th century had evolved into a series of variations on a specific chord progression.

"Erbarme dich" from Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* is last on the program. It expresses the inner feelings of the disciple Peter after he has denied knowing Jesus three times and feels profound remorse. Much praise has been uttered about this music, but let me refer only to personal experience, that when I attended performances of *St. Matthew Passion* in Germany and Holland, at the emotional moment when this divine but painful aria appears, it was notable to hear many folks quietly singing along with the soloist, and seeing heads gently swaying with the phrases of the obbligato violin. I thought to myself that this emotional sing-along is known to happen when couples hear the song with which they fell in love, or when a Beatles tune of 55 years ago reappears, but it must be rare in cases of such profound and intricate music as this. Of course, the composer is Johann Sebastian Bach, who first performed some version of *St. Matthew Passion* on Good Friday 1727 in St. Thomas Church, Leipzig, and again in 1729, and again after extensive revision with his poet, Picander, in 1736. In 1746 he completed a fair copy of the work. Picander's poetry in this aria is based loosely on the Gospel of Matthew:

Erbarme dich, mein Gott,

Um meiner Zähren Willen!

Schaue hier, Herz und Auge

Weint vor dir bitterlich.

Erbarme dich, erbarme dich!

Have mercy my God

For the sake of my tears

Look here. Heart and eyes

Weep bitterly for you

Have mercy, have mercy