

Legrenzi

Bass Cantatas & Sonatas

Mauro Borgioni *baritone*

MUSICA PERDUTA

David Brutti *cornetto*

Renato Criscuolo *bass violin*

Giovanni Legrenzi 1626-1690

Bass Cantatas & Sonatas

1. **Amore e virtù**
cantata for bass and B.C. 6'26
from Cantate e canzonette a voce sola Op.12 (1676)
2. **Sorgea dal sen di Lete**
cantata for bass and B.C. 7'58
Edition: Mus. Ms. 1527 – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München
3. **Sonata a 2 “L’Obizza” Op.8 No.4**
for violin, bass violin and B.C. 5'34
4. **A’ Pié d’eccelso monte**
cantata for bass and B.C. 6'59
Edition: Mus. Ms. 1527 – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München
5. **Son canuto e d’un bambin**
canzonetta for bass and B.C. 3'22
from Cantata e canzonette a voce sola Op.12 (1676)
6. **Sonata “La Crispa” Op.8 No.16**
for violin, bass violin and B.C. 3'36
7. **Cessa d’essere amante**
cantata for bass and B.C. 3'34
from Cantate e canzonette a voce sola” Op.12 (1676)
8. **Il mio core non è con me**
canzonetta for bass and B.C. 3'02
from Cantate e canzonette a voce sola Op.12 (1676)
9. **Sonata a 2 “La Foscari” Op.2 No.8**
for violin, bass violin and B.C. 4'59
10. **Dal calore agitato**
cantata for bass and B.C. 6'52
Edition: Mus. Ms. 1527 – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

MVSICA PERDVTA

Mauro Borgioni *baritone* · David Brutti *cornetto* · Renato Criscuolo *bass violin*
Dario Landi *theorbo* · Lorenzo Antinori *harpsichord*

Giovanni Legrenzi was born in the northern Italian town of Clusone in 1626. By that time the cantata for voice and basso continuo had already acquired official recognition with the publication in 1620 of the *Cantate et arie a voce sola* by Alessandro Grandi. Printed in Venice, Italy’s foremost centre for music publishing, the collection was the first anthology of a genre that for many years was to prevail as the most important form of vocal chamber music. It developed in the wake of a lengthy process of change: the polyphonic madrigal had gradually abandoned counterpoint in favour of a style that increasingly tended towards melodic harmony, with the instruments often accompanying just one voice, that of the soloist. The birth of the new musical genre also involved the role attributed to the basso continuo, which replaced the instruments previously entrusted with the vocal parts, and the choice of the solo voice, which did not necessarily coincide with the highest in pitch.

During the 17th century, the structure of the cantata was still relatively open, with various musical episodes that were shaped to suit the text. It was only in the following century that the form came to be codified in two or three arias and recitatives.

As for the words, they were no longer as important as they had been earlier, when verse by Tasso and Petrarca was used for madrigals. Indeed, by the 17th century the texts were often anonymous poems on the subject of love that made no great claim to originality or refinement. It was common for the sections of a cantata to mirror the verse structure, indicated by the composer with a number. However, a single verse could also give rise to an individual piece, which in its turn became the more frivolous *canzonetta*.

In the second half of the 1600s all the principal Italian composers addressed the new genre. Apart from Giovanni Legrenzi, mention should also be made of Bernardo Pasquini, Alessandro Scarlatti, Alessandro Stradella and Giacomo Carissimi, as well as Marcantonio Cesti and Francesco Cavalli, especially in relation to Venice. Most of these composers likewise turned their hand to other genres of vocal music, both sacred and secular, often revealing considerable stylistic differences between their

handling of “grand” forms such as sacred music and opera, and their approach to the lesser genre of the cantata. This was not, however, the case with Legrenzi, whose vocal works bear witness to remarkable unity of form and style. Moreover, the constant progress he achieved generally steered clear of fashionable innovations and the desire to astound at all costs. In his cantatas as well as the operas there are highly lyrical sections that often coincide with the feelings expressed in the text, especially in the recitatives, thereby offsetting other sections that are handled more conventionally.

Legrenzi’s cantatas are longer than those of other Venetian composers of the period, with richer counterpoint between the vocal part and the continuo, more frequent use of the instrumental refrain and *obbligato* instruments, and greater ease in the passages from recitative to aria. Just as the recitatives are often rich in pathos, so the arias reveal great variety of form in both the vocal and the continuo part. While the basso line can be *ostinato* or *libero*, it is often also deliberately pictorial, conceived along the lines of a vocal part. There are frequent instances of imitation of the vocal melody, and also of progressions that clearly serve the dynamics of the text.

Legrenzi wrote a total of eight cantatas and canzonettas for bass voice with a continuo accompaniment. Five of them are relatively long works, while the other three are much shorter, and thus closer to the single-verse canzonetta. The composer often conjures up comical situations for the bass voice: for instance, in the canzonetta *Son canuto e d’un bambin*, where the words revolve around the idea that there are slaves of love even in old age; or in the cantata *Dal calore agitato*, where the subject is the erotic dreams of a poor Arcadian shepherd. Elsewhere the theme is the sense of estrangement brought on by love: for example, in the canzonetta *Il mio core non è con me* and in the cantata *Cessa di essere amante*. The remaining cantatas, which centre around the classic topic of unhappy love, are some of Legrenzi’s finest longer vocal chamber compositions. Of these, *Ai piè d’eccelso monte* and *Sorgea dal sen di Lete* are truly outstanding.

The three trio sonatas in this recording are among Legrenzi’s best instrumental compositions. They come from the six printed collections of instrumental sonatas, and are all *à violino* (played in this version on the cornett, which was common practice in the 17th century) and *viola da braccio* (bass viola da braccio). Although the formal structure adopted is relatively conventional for the time, the composer invests these works with a remarkably advanced sense of melody. The impression is that he chose to devote his finest works to the *hortus conclusus* of a small ensemble, rather than to the larger groups of instrumentalists that were already common in musical performance in Venice. Alongside his considerable output of trio sonatas for two violins and basso continuo, he also wrote numerous works for violin and *basso di viola da braccio* (or bass violin), which had gained from the technical progress achieved by virtuoso players such as Giovanni Battista Vitali and Giuseppe Colombi, to the extent that by the end of the 1600s it was able to hold its own in expressive dialogue with higher pitched instruments of the same family. During the following century, this development was destined to herald the birth of the great Venetian cello repertoire.

© Renato Criscuolo

Translation by Kate Singleton

1.
Love and virtue assault my soul,
and striving to prevail make me a slave.
O heart torn asunder, what will you do?

Those shining golden tresses
are Cupid's ensign,
and he takes as allies
two brilliant stars as archers.

I am wounded and can take no more.
O heart torn asunder, what will you do?

The other side is full of light
where virtue takes up arms,
and with glory advances,
to win me over with burning ardour.

I am beaten and can take no more.
O heart torn asunder, what will you do?

I know not how to act;
my heart is torn evenly;
virtue is powerful, and Cupid too.

So, warring gods,
if it's your aim
to win the heart over
then fight with each other.

Find a battlefield
far from my heart,
and wide enough
to reveal who comes out top,
Love or Virtue.

Then return to me so that my soul
can crown whoever is victor.

1.
Amore e virtù mi battano l'alma,
e voglion la palma di mia servitù.
Combattuto mio cor, che farai tu?

Su bel crin che d'oro splende
spiega Amor le sue bandiere,
e poi seco in lega prende
da la fronte d'un sol due stelle arciere.

Già mi fere e già non posso più.
Combattuto mio cor, che farai tu?

D'altra parte tutta luce
la virtù bell'armi afferra,
e la gloria seco aduce,
con fiamme generose à farmi guerra.

Già m'atterra e già non posso più.
Combattuto mio, cor che farai tu?

Io non so che farò;
prova egualmente il core;
possente è la virtù, possente Amore.

Ma, numi guerrieri,
se prender volete
d'un petto gl'imperi
tra voi combattete.

Trovate dal mio sen
campo lontano,
e in largo piano
si veda chi possa più,
Amore o virtù.

Tornate poi da me che giusta l'alma
a chi vince di voi darà la palma.

2.
from Lethe's depths emerging,
shrouded in the darkness
of slumbering night,
surrounded by silence, respite's progeny
could be heard in flight.

When full of ardour, a despairing Lover,
turned to a gelid heart
that had wounded him, in pain
pronouncing these words:

"I nurture the snake at my breast,
I feed my heart with flames;
my sustenance is poison,
and my grief grows apace.

Slowly am I consumed
in hoping for fulfilment
like a moth drawn to the flame,
and I dally with the thought of death".

Thus did he sing, when the miracle of Love
revealed among the shadows
the wondrous sight of his beloved sun
in the festive light of day; halting his lament,
he greeted her with these words:

"Light of my eyes whom I adore,
relinquish for ever your severity.
Beloved chains, hold me in your embrace;
a faithful heart does not fear pain.
Suffering grief is part of a loving life".

2.
Sorgea dal sen di Lete,
con manto tenebroso
sonnacchiosa la notte,
e solo fra silenzi, le figlie del riposo
volar s'udia.

Quando tutto di foco, un disperato Amante,
contro un alma di giel,
che lo ferì agitato dal duol,
dicea così:

"Nutro il serpe nel mio seno,
alimento fiamme al core;
mi sostento di veleno,
sempre cresce il mio dolore.

Mi consumo à poco à poco
fra la speme di gioire;
qual farfalla intorno al foco,
scherzo ogn'or col mio morire".

Così cantava, quando per miracol d'Amore
vidde in seno dell'ombre
del suo pietoso sol il bel splendore,
in di tutto festante; tralasciando i lamenti,
la salutò cantando in questi accenti:

"Pupille adorate mio lucido ardor,
sbandite scacciate il vostro rigor.
Amate catene, stringetemi al sen;
non teme le pene un'alma costante.
Chi non soffre il dolor non vive amante".

4.

At the foot of the towering mount

whose pleasant slopes
nourished with their waters
a simple spring,
mocked and derided
by Phyllis
for his restrained affection,
seated on the bank
charming Illysus in pain
wept and sang:

Aria

“My life is wretched, as everyone knows;
my suffering
and grief are caused
by merciless beauty.

I'm vanquished and spurned
and destined to languish
in the fetters
that Cupid has set.

Tell me, tell me cruel Phyllis,
when will it be
that my heart can enjoy
peace from distress?

And you, my bold senses
that dare to depart from my sun,
if you fly up high
and turn tail on my idol
you'll wither and fade before her brightness.

4.

A piè d'eccelso monte,
le di cui falde amene
con sue linfe bagnava
umile un fonte,
poiché un di, vilipeso,
vidde da Filli
il suo pudico affetto,
in su la sponda assiso
così piangea dolente
il vago Illiso:

Aria

“Quant'io viva infelice ognun lo sa;
ch'a note d'affanni
segnat'ha i miei danni
spietata beltà.

Già vinto e negletto
son scopo alle pene
e sol le catene
Cupido mi dà.

Dimmi, dimmi Filli inumana,
e quando mai
fin che goda il mio sen
pace a' suoi guai?

E voi, miei sensi audaci
che lungi dal mio sol cotanto osate
se sublimi il volo alzate
quando lungi sta il mio nume
fulminati vi vedo al suo bel lume.

Aria

Sweet hope pray come
and console me for my constancy
for only you can ensure
that I don't live as a slave.”

Thus Ilyssus pined
and his laments
were heard only by the wind.
So when he saw
that along with his words
he was wasting his feelings
in silence he let
his flowing tears
merge with the water.

5.

Despite my age I am
in Cupid's thrall;
my heart is full of ardour
though my hair is snowy white.

Grief has come late,
and I'm enslaved by the winged god.

Amor inflicts his wounds,
now that time has consumed me;
I am reduced to ashes,
yet the flame prevails.

How rash my choice of a guide;
I am decrepit and my mentor is blind.

Aria

Dolce speme vieni tu
e consola un dì mia fede
ch'a te sola si concede
ch'io non viva in schiavitù.”

Così languiva Illiso
e i suoi lamenti
solo udivano i venti.
Onde quando s'avvide
ch'insieme co' suoi detti
gettava anco gl'affetti
al fin si tacque
e confuse i suoi pianti
in un coll'acque.

5.

Son canuto e d'un bambin
pur mi trovo esser seguace;
né le fiamme il cor si sface,
benché sia di neve il crin.

Tarde al moto son le piante,
e pur seguo un dio volante.

Mi distrugge il dio d'Amor,
or ch'il tempo m'ha consunto;
à le ceneri son giunto,
e pur vivo pien d'ardor.

Guida incauta presi meco;
son cadente e seguo un cieco.

7.

Cease your Loving,
my heart, that is enough;
if you always desire
to pursue new Loves;
if your unhappy goal
is misleading beauty,
you'll agonize day and night.

Worn with suffering
you've made Cupid's acquaintance,
and that of the unfair sex
who are full of deception.

Two smiling eyes
can provoke tears,
and amongst the roses
the unwary hand finds thorns.

Run away, wretched fool, run away
from a balmy firmament,
for even Etna conceals
her lightning bolts behind the stars.

May Cupid return no more
to disturb my peace;
and may his torch
no longer enflame my heart.

Blind Amor, beautiful women, follow God.

7.

Cessa d'esser Amante,
mio cor, basta così;
s'a tracciar novi Amori,
hai la voglia costante;
fatto scopo infelice
di beltà meritrice,
penerai nott'e di.

Con usura d'affanni
già provato hai Cupido,
e d'un sesso ch'è infido
sol e pregno d'inganni.

Due pupille ridenti
son ministre di pianto,
ed in seno alle rose
trova incauta la man le spine ascose.

Fuggi, misero, fuggi
di bel volto il sereno
che pur l'Etna ne cela
dietro à scena di stelle i suoi fulgori.

Crudo Amor, più non torni
à turbarmi la pace;
ne la sua face
non le fiamme risvegli al seno mio.

Cieco Amor, belle donne, ite con Dio.

8.

My heart is no longer mine
It was stolen by a lovely gaze,
which in its place
left hope for mercy.

My heart is no longer mine

And the longing that replaced it
is undermined by fear.
So I live and have no heart,
I hope and know not what for.

My heart is no longer mine

10.

In the heat of anguish
while a scorching summer
consumed the days
Phylen was kept awake by his thoughts
and one night uttered these words:

"What with resting and without a lady
I don't even live in freedom.
But who strikes, who's knocking, who's
calling?
It seems to be the Court.
To judge from the cunning,
if the Court is not involved
it's one of Cupid's tricks.

Aria

I know that, alas, you'll open no more
Such was my resolution
on leaving the prison
when it happened before.
I know that, alas, you'll open no more.

8.

Il mio core non è con me
Un bel guardo me l'involò,
e in sua vece vi lasciò
la speranza di mercè.

Il mio core non è con me

E la speme ch'egli mi die
me la strugge un rio timor.
Così vivo e non ho cor,
così spero e non so che.

Il mio core non è con me

10.

Dal calore agitato
mentre un acceso estate
i dì struggea
e dai pensier svegliato
una notte Filen così dicea:

"Fra i riposi e senza dama
io men vivo in libertà
Ma chi batte, chi batte olà, chi chiama?
Par la Corte in verità.
E' un modo scaltro
se la corte non è
fu Amor senz'altro.

Aria

So che t'apri, oibò, non più
Feci tal risoluzione
quando uscii già di prigione
quella volta che sai tu.
So che t'apri, oibò, non più.

My heart can withstand
and its portals endure
the blind assault.
But what a terrible noise!

Aria

Cupid I will offer you nothing
I give no charity
to one who shows no pity

So cease your knocking
(it's my business!)
You're a blind ensign,
and not a God.

What a rascal you are
with no fear at all
of being admonished.

Listen, just listen,
and be content at last.
Too long I suffered,
I've had enough of pain.
What's done is a bygone
and I'd have to be mad
to return to such grief.

May Heaven forbid
you should forget
that you promised
my silly heart
it would win over
that lovely being.
But you were lying
and she rebelled
and I lived as a slave.

May Heaven forbid
you should forget.

Ma pur crollan dal petto
le porte di diamante,
urti di cieco.
O ch'importuno rumore!

Aria

Amor non ho che darti
io non fò carità
a chi non ha pietà

Cessa pur di picchiare
(a chi dic'io!)
Sei un cieco guidon,
tu non sei Dio.

O vedi ch'importuno
e l'ingurie non curi
e non paventi.

Senti, deh senti,
contentati omai.
Pur troppo penai,
son sazio di strazio.
Già quel che fatto è fatto
ma che torni a penar
io sarei matto.

Può fare il Ciel,
non ti ricordi più
che promettesti
già sicuro impero
al facile mio cor
sopra due stelle.
Ma, tu mentisti
et esse fur rubelle
e vissi in servitù.

Può fare il Ciel,
non ti ricordi più.

I even believed
that one day I'd be happy
because you vouched for a kindly sun;
but that day was never part of the month
and I never saw
the dawn of that sun.

Just what happened
you can recount.
May Heaven forbid
you should forget.

Ah, you tell me,
aplomb is required. Granted,
I admit that I never
was able to feign,
so put it as you will:
there's no hope of joy
without giving jewels,
that's what I believe.

Aria

I largely adopted
your behaviour
and now I regret it.
I fasted and never tasted
at your court
either meat or fish.
If hope alone is served
throughout the meal
I shall always be hungry
and likewise chaste."

Thus spoke Phylen
to the God of Love who had stirred him,
mocked and scorned him.
Then he said "good night" and rested.

Translation by Kate Singleton

Pure credulo ancora
sperai un dì felice
perché tu m'offeristi un sol cortese;
ma questo dì nol ritrovai nel mese
né di tal sole
io viddi mai l'Aurora.

Come passò
raccontalo poi tu.
Può fare il Ciel,
non ti ricordi più.

O, mi dirai,
che ci vuol flemma. Bene,
che mai finger non seppi
io lo concedo,
ma dilla come vuoi:
mai non ottiene gioie
chi non da gemme
e ciò sol credo.

Aria

Praticai anco assai
tuoi costumi
ed or mi rincresco.
Digiunai né gustai
in tua corte
o carne o pesce.
Se dai speme
a tutto pasto
sarò sempre affamato
e sempre casto."

Filen parlò così
ad un spirito d'amor che l'agitò,
lo burlò, lo schernì.
Poi disse "buona notte" e riposò.



MVSICA PERDVTA

Clockwise from top left:

Mauro Borgioni, Renato Criscuolo, David Brutti, Dario Landi, Lorenzo Antinori

Dedicated to prof. senator Alberto Bagnai



Recording: 2-4 September 2020, Centro Studi Europeo di Musica Medioevale Adolfo Broegg, Spello, Italy

Recording and Mastering: Baltazar Zúñiga

Editing: David Brutti and Baltazar Zúñiga

Artist photos: Ribalta Luce (Mauro Borgioni) & © Mvsica Perdvta (others)

Cover: William Stanley Haseltine, Santa Maria della Salute, Sunset, 1870-85, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Helen Haseltine Plowden, in memory of the artist, 1954

© & © 2021 Brilliant Classics