

Canzona feconda detta la Bernardinia.

VIA  
FRESCOBALDI

1583 - 1643

GIÀ VIA BELVEDERE

La Romanesca

# VIA FRESCOBALDI LA ROMANESCA

Ros Bandt: recorders  
Ruth Wilkinson: recorders and viola da gamba  
Hartley Newnham: counter tenor  
Ann Murphy: harpsichord

**move**

with Katherine Henshall and Alexandra Williams: recorder consort

**1 Canzona decimanona, detta la Capriola** 3'30"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
recorder (RB), viola da gamba and harpsichord

**2 Sonetto spirituale, Maddalena alle croce** 3'07"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice and harpsichord

**3 Toccata settima** 3'10"

From Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo, libro secondo 1637  
harpsichord

**4 Canzona decimaterza, detta la Bianchina** 3'13"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
2 recorders (RB and RW) and harpsichord

**5 Se l'aura spira** 1'26"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630 voice  
and harpsichord

**6 Canzona seconda sopra la Romanesca** 2'52"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1634 recorder  
consort

**7 Canzona settima, detta la Superba** 3'51"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
viola da gamba and harpsichord

**8 Ohime, che fur, che sono (Sonetto spirituale in stile recitativo)** 2'38"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice and organ

**9 Canzona seconda detta la Bernadina** 3'07"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
recorder (RB) and harpsichord

**10 Aria detta la Frescobalda** 4'53"

From Toccate e partite d'intavolatura di cimbalo,  
libro primo 1615  
organ

**11 Canzona vigesima prima, detta la Tegrimuccia** 2'42"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
recorder (RB), viola da gamba and harpsichord

**12 Non mi negate, ohime** 2'20"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice and basso continuo

**13 Toccata settima** 4'11"

From Toccate d'involutura di cimbalo et organi, il  
primo libro 1637  
harpsichord

**14 Canzona terza detta la Lucchesina** 3'04"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
recorder (RW) and harpsichord

**15 Troppo sotto due stelle** 3'00"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice and harpsichord

**16 Canzona seconda** 4'01"

From Ricercare, et canzoni alla francese 1615  
recorder consort

**17 Così mi disprezzate: Aria di passicaglia** 3'33"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice and basso continuo

**18 Bergamasca** 5'34"

From Fiori musicali 1635  
(Messa della Madonna)  
organ

**19 Canzona terza, detta la Donatina** 2'44"

From Il primo libro delle canzoni 1628  
recorder (RB) and organ

**20 Occhi che sete di voi pomposi** 1'41"

From Il primo libro d'arie musicali 1630  
voice, recorder (RB) and basso continuo

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# The diversity of Frescobaldi's music

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The life of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643) spans one of the most exciting and innovative periods of European music. More than many of his Italian contemporaries, he was one of the principal protagonists in the move to effect rapid and fundamental transformations in musical taste and style, an activist in the quest for more extravagant and passionate forms of musical expression. Paradoxically, he was also a conservative: the Frescobaldi who took instrumental music into previously uncharted waters by way of his extraordinary improvisatory toccatas was the very same man whose canzonas present the epitome and summation of the imitative polyphonic tradition of Italian renaissance instrumental music.

Born and raised in Ferrara, Frescobaldi's experience of the famous concerto delle donne, the famed trio of female singers at the court of Duke Alfonso d'Este, must have fuelled his imagination in a way that provided a vivid contrast to the polyphonic sobriety of the church music practised after the reforms of the Council of Trent. As a young organ student under the guidance of the court organist Luzzaschi,



*Frescobaldi by Mellan*

Frescobaldi would become part of both traditions, and develop them equally throughout his professional career as a performer and composer. Luzzaschi's own highly ornamental madrigals for the Ferrarese donne may well have been one of the formative influences that contributed to Frescobaldi's similarly

ornamental keyboard style. Some of the Neapolitan music he heard in Ferrara during the sojourn of the madrigalist nobleman Carlo Gesualdo may have influenced him also, particularly the keyboard music of member's of Gesualdo's retinue, Macque, Trabaci and Mayone.

The death of Alfonso d'Este in 1597 and the change of regime in Ferrara may have been one of the factors that lead Frescobaldi to depart for Rome. From around 1601, Rome was to be his home for the majority of his life. Probably through his connections with the d'Este, Frescobaldi was introduced into the powerful circles of Roman patronage where he grew to be esteemed and admired. He appears to have come first under the protection of Guido Bentivoglio with whom he spent almost a year in Brussels during 1607-1608. His return to Italy saw the publication of his first musical works in Milan, and soon after his arrival in Rome he was appointed organist at St Peter's, without having to compete for the position, probably also due to his powerful connections. Frescobaldi held this position for most of his life, even during his brief absence in Mantua

during 1615 where Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga attempted to secure his services, and his 1628-1634 interlude in Florence at the court of Ferdinando II de' Medici. Life for Frescobaldi was more varied than his position as church organist would suggest. He had associations with several other Roman religious institutions, and he participated regularly in the musical activities celebrated in the palaces and apartments of several prestigious members of the Roman curia. Such diverse activity indicates that he would have performed equally as an organist and harpsichordist and, playing either instrument whether in church or in private chambers, his performances were to earn him an international reputation as the most outstanding keyboardist of his age.

Frescobaldi's compositions are principally in the instrumental domain, whether for keyboard or ensemble. Many of his canzonas, in particular, are virtually interchangeable and the titles under which they were published do no more than specify that they were suited for ogni sorte di stromenti. La Romanesca's recording presents Frescobaldi's music according to this diversity, and also includes a selection of his lesser known solo vocal music. Concerning genre, Frescobaldi's instrumental music displays three principal areas: the keyboard toccatas

for which he became so famous as a virtuoso, variations on popular themes, and the imitative polyphonic forms—especially the canzona—that could more readily traverse the idiomatic peculiarities of a given instrument or ensemble. These genres remain constant throughout his output, simply developing and maturing with age. The earliest compositions in the present selection were published in 1615 when the composer was in his early thirties. The well-known **Aria detta la Frescobalda 10** from his earliest keyboard publication *Toccate e partite d'intavolatura di cimbalo, libro primo* exemplifies the variation genre with a succession of variations on a simple aria melody that casts it into diverse contrapuntal and dance-based guises. The **Canzona seconda 16** from *Ricercare, et canzoni alla francese* also characterises the polyphonic genre, not set to any predetermined formula, but evolving out of a contrapuntal web of idiomatically instrumental themes, punctuated by triple metre passages that recall the common dances of the time. The successive themes in these canzonas are sometimes derived from previous ones, or are freshly introduced in a fashion that builds the rhetorical progression of the piece with unquestioned cogency. Stylistic maturity can be seen by the comparison of this early canzona with the later **Canzona**

**seconda sopra la Romanesca 6** which presents a more complex multiplicity of themes within the restraints of the repeated harmonic scheme of the *romanesca*, effectively combining the *canzona* genre with that of the variation.

Parallel to the way that Monteverdi transformed the madrigal from a vocal ensemble piece to a genre that used fewer voices underpinned by a basso continuo, Frescobaldi's *Il primo libro delle canzoni* of 1628 presents thirty-four instrumental canzonas of between one and four parts with continuo accompaniment. Each presumably named in honour of women from Frescobaldi's circle, the seven presented here—**la Capriola 1**, **la Bianchina 4**, **la Superba 7**, **la Bernardinia 9**, **la Tegrinuccia 11**, **la Lucchesina 14**, and **la Donatina 19**—reflect the more modern approach to instrumental idiom while maintaining the structural framework of the earlier *canzona* style and the polyphonic rigour of the genre. Their greater virtuosity is the product of a mature cross-fertilisation between the traditional *canzona* and the improvisatory extravagance that Frescobaldi perfected in his keyboard toccatas.

Scholarly opinion sees the two books of *arie musicale* published by Frescobaldi in 1630 during his employment by the Medici in Florence as something of an anachronism. The seven presented here

# Texts and translations

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vary between the recitative style of **Ohime, che fur, che sono** **8** or **Sonetto spirituale, Maddalena alle croce** **2** and the dance-like chordal repetition of **Se l'aura spira** **5**, and are in keeping with the monodic style of the early seventeenth century. Recent research has pointed out, however, that this style fell from fashion in Florence in the early 1620s, and that the style of the works accords more closely with a Roman style some fifteen to twenty years earlier. Irrespective of whether they were freshly penned in 1630 or recycled from older unpublished material, they display Frescobaldi's mastery as a composer of vocal music sensitive to the exigencies of their poetic texts.

The late maturity of Frescobaldi is seen in two **Toccatas** **3**, **13**, both published in 1637 and his variations on the **Bergamasca** **18** that form part of the *Messa della Madonna* that appeared in his 1635 *Fiori musicali*. In these works, Frescobaldi's accomplishment is experienced through the integration of instrumental and compositional dimensions: virtuosity is not gratuitous but is embraced within the architectural conception of his music in a way that makes it absolutely inseparable from the development of the musical rhetoric.

John Griffiths, 1999

## **2** Maddalena alla croce (Sonetto spirituale)

A più della gran croce, in cui languiva  
vicino à morte il buon Giesù spirante,  
scapigliata così pianger s'udiva  
la sua fedele addolorata amante;  
e dell'umor, che da begli occhi usciva,  
e dell'or della chioma ondosa, errante  
non mando mai da che la vita è viva,  
perle od oro più bel l'India o l'Atlante.

Come far (dicea) lassa, o Signor mio,  
puoi senza me quest'ultima partita?  
Come, morendo tu, viver poss'io?  
Che se morir pur vuoi; l'anima unita  
ho teco, il fai, mio Redentor, mio Dio  
Però teco haver deggio e morte, è vita.

## **2** Magdalene at the cross

At the foot of the great cross, on which  
Jesus  
was languishing, close to death,  
His faithful sorrowful lover,  
with her disheveled hair, could be heard  
weeping.  
And of the tears that sprang from her  
eyes,  
and of the gold of her wavy hair,  
no wanderer ever spoke  
pearls or gold more beautiful than of  
India or Atlantis.

Tiredly she said, 'How can you, Lord,  
make this final departure without me?  
How, with you dying, can I live?  
Because even if you want to die, my soul  
is united  
with yours, my Redeemer, my Lord,  
yet I must share death with you in order  
to live.'

**5** Se l'aura spira ... (Aria)

Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa,  
la fresca rosa ridente stà  
la siepe ombrosa di bei smeraldi,  
d'estivi caldi timor non hà.

A balli liete venite  
ninfe gradite,  
fior di beltà,  
or, che si chiaro il vago fonte  
dall'alto monte al mar sen v`a.

Suoi dolci versi spiega l'augello,  
e l'arbuscello fiorito stà,  
un volto bello all'ombra canto,  
sol si dia vanto d'haver piet`a,  
al canto ninfe ridenti,  
scacciate i venti di crudelt`a.

**5** When the charming breezes blow

When the charming breezes blow,  
the fresh rose stands smiling,  
the hedge a shady emerald,  
fears not the summer's heat.

Come and dance gaily, dear nymphs,  
flowers of beauty!  
Now, that the lovely spring  
flows so clear from  
mountain to sea.

The bird sings its sweet verses  
and the branches are full- blossomed;  
only a beautiful face near the shadow  
can boast of showing compassion.  
Come and sing, laughing nymphs,  
scatter the winds of cruelty.



*The recorder consort is featured on tracks **6** and **16**.  
L to R: Alexandra Williams, Katherine Henshall,  
Ruth Wilkinson, Ros Bandt*

**8 Ohimè, che fur, che sono**  
**(Sonetto recitativo in stile recitativo)**

Ohimè, che fur, che sono, e che faranno  
quest'empie membra! Ahi rimembranza dura!  
Scese l'alma dal ciel candida, e pura,  
e con le colpe lor macchiata l'hanno.  
Lasso, in breve di morte esposte al danno,  
Poca polvere fien, fredda, ed oscura.  
E l'eterno penar quella non cura,  
tanto il senso è di lei fatto tiranno  
pria che d'Atroporea preda rimanga.  
Spira, O Signor le fiamme tue soavi,  
ch'il gelo del mio cuor si scaldi, e franga.  
Veggio, ed accuso homai le colpe gravi,  
onde convien, ch'eternamente pianga,  
perchè le macchie di quest'alma io lavi.

**12 Non mi negate, ohimè (Aria a voce sola)**

Non mi negate, ohimè, lumi sereni, ch'io  
vi mostri la mia fè, vi narri il mio desio;  
mi struggo ardendo, vivo piangendo,  
e chieggo al mio servir qualche mercè.

Penso, ch'ogn'hor soffrì foco immortal il seno.  
Penso, ch'in vano un dì bramai lieto e sereno;  
ne volli mai,  
Lucidi rai, scovrir la fiamma, ch'il mio cor nutri.

Ma, poi ch'io sento già, ch'a morte il duol m'invita,  
chieggio, chieggo pietà, chieggo, o begli occhi, aita,  
Un guardo solo tempererà il duolo,  
un guardo solo in vita mi terrà.

**8 Alas! What was, what is?**

Alas! What was, what is, and what will become of this wicked body?  
Ah what a bitter remembrance!  
The soul descended pure and candid from heaven  
and it is now tainted with sins.  
I leave this body, near death, exposed to its own damnation.  
It amounts to a little dust, cold and obscure.  
And the soul doesn't care about its eternal suffering,  
for so much of her is dominated by its senses,  
before falling prey of Atroporea, (the goddess of Death).  
Oh Lord, breath your subtle flames,  
that the ice of my heart may melt and break!  
I already see and feel the grave sins,  
for which I must atone eternally,  
so that I can wash away the blemishes of this soul.

**12 Oh don't deny me**

Alas! Don't deny me, serene eyes, the chance of showing you my faith,  
of telling you about my desire;  
I am slowly consumed with this burning,  
I live in tears and ask for a reprieve from its intensity.

If I think, that I have suffered every hour the immortal fire in my breast,  
I think, that in vain, I wished to be happy and serene  
For one single day; nor, shining eyes, did I ever want  
to obscure the flame that was burning in my heart.

But, because I already feel that this pain is leading me to my own death,  
I ask, oh beautiful eyes, for aid.  
One glance only will alleviate this suffering,  
one glance only will keep me alive.

## 15 Troppo sotto due stelle

Troppo sotto due stelle  
Alme e dolcissime,  
sotto un bel crin,  
sotto un sembiante nobile voglie celonsi,  
ohimè, crude e asprissime,  
e mente sol negli altrui danni immobile.

Ciò ben prov'io,  
Ch'in van sospiro, e dogliomi,  
amante fatto di beltà indicibile,  
in van m'affligo, in van di vita spogliomi,  
che pi l'inaspra ogni mio strazio orribile.

Ed io più l'amo e mentre gli occhi stillano,  
col pianto l'alma, e queste man m'uccidono,  
fiamme più vive in me sempre sfavillano,  
i mie pensier da lei mai si dividono.

## 15 Too often under two stars

Too often under two stars desires hide,  
vibrant and sweet,  
under a mane of beautiful hair,  
under a noble face, alas  
so crude and bitter, treacherous,  
unmoved by the suffering of others.

This is what I feel,  
While I yearn in vain  
And ache for a lover of indescribable beauty:  
In vain I grow sad, in vain I deny myself a life,  
Which this appalling torture makes so bitter.

And while my eyes filter the soul through tears  
And these hands kill me,  
Brighter flames are always buning inside me,  
My thoughts never move away from her.



*L to R: Ros Bandt, Hartley Newnham,  
Ruth Wilkinson, Ann Murphy in Move's studio*

**17 Così mi disprezzate? (Aria di Passaglia)**

**Aria:** Così mi disprezzate?  
Così voi mi burlate?  
Tempo verrà, ch'amore  
farà di vostro core  
quel che fate del mio,  
non più parole, addio!

**Recit.:** Datemi pur martiri,  
burlate i miei sospiri,  
negatemi mercede,  
oltraggiate mia fede,  
ch'in voi vedrete poi  
quel che mi fate voi.

**Aria:** Beltà sempre non regna,  
e s'ella pur v'insegna  
a dispregiar mia fè,  
credete pure a me,  
che s'oggi m'ancidete,  
doman vi pentirete.

**Recit.:** Non nego già ch'in voi  
amor ha i pregi suoi,  
ma so che'il tempo cassa  
Beltà, che fugge, e passa.  
Se non volete amare,  
io non voglio penare.

**Aria:** Il vostro biondo crine,  
le guance purpurine,  
veloci più che maggio  
tosto faran passaggio,  
prezzategli pur voi  
Ch'io riderò ben poi.

**17 So, you scorn me ?**

**Aria:** So, you scorn me?  
So, you make fun of me?  
Time will come,  
when love will do to your heart  
what you are doing to mine;  
no more words, farewell!

**Recit.:** Torture me even,  
make fun of my yearnings,  
deny me mercy, offend my faith,  
that you will see one day  
what you are doing to me,  
mirrored in yourselves.

**Aria:** Beauty doesn't always reign  
and even though she teaches you  
to insult my faith,  
believe me,  
that if today you are killing me,  
tomorrow you will regret it.

**Recit.:** I cannot deny that in you  
love has its most precious qualities  
but I do know that time annihilates beauty,  
beauty that slips by and fades away.  
If you are not willing to love,  
I do not want to suffer for it.

**Aria** Your bond hair,  
Your rosy cheeks, faster than May  
Will soon fade,  
You can boast that's all yours,  
but will have a good laugh later.

## 20 Occhi che sete di voi pomposi

Occhi che sete di voi pomposi,  
ver mi pietosi  
voi vi fingete.  
E mi giurate,  
che non fu vero,  
che Amor argete,  
Arciero con seritate  
da' vostri sguardi l'armi prendeste.  
Occhietti ladri chi vi credesse?

O falsi sguardi,  
falso dolore,  
ma del mio core  
veraci dardi,  
in van fingevi  
a' miei martiri,  
versar sospiri,  
e vi dolevi,  
che fuor del petto l'alma vivesse.  
Occhietti ladri chi vi credesse?

## 20 Eyes so full of yourselves

Eyes, so full of yourselves,  
you feign mercy towards me,  
and you swear to me,  
that it wasn't true,  
that you burn with Love,  
The Archer that, in all earnest,  
took all my defenses away.  
Sweet thieving eyes,  
who could believe in you?

Oh, false glances,  
false sorrow,  
but true arrows  
in my heart.  
In vain you feigned  
mercy towards my torment,  
you sighed and pained  
as if your soul lived outside your breast.  
Sweet thieving eyes,  
who could believe in you?

*La Romanesca was formed in 1978 and still comprises the same core members Ros Bandt, John Griffiths, Hartley Newnham and Ruth Wilkinson.*

*Their repertoire encompasses music from the middle ages to the twentieth century and is based on extensive research and original compositions. They have enjoyed collaboration for many years with harpsichordist Ann Murphy.*

*~ La Romanesca would like to express their sincere thanks to Fred Morgan for his expert tuning and maintenance of the harpsichord, and his support and friendship during the recording sessions.*

*~ Digital recording and editing at Move Records studio 1997-99 by Vaughan McAlley and Martin Wright.*

*~ Photos: Jonathan Lawrence except front cover Ros Bandt*

*~ Notes and commentary: John Griffiths.*

*~ Translations: Cristina Piccinno and Hartley Newnham.*

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