

LA PRIMA STRAVAGANZA

Sonatas of 17th Century Italy
CAPELLA CORELLI



LA PRIMA STRAVAGANZA

Arcangelo Corelli
(1653-1713)

Sonata op. 5 no. 1 (1700)

1 Grave:Allegro 2'32"

2 Allegro 2'21"

3 Allegro 0'59"

4 Adagio 2'42"

5 Allegro 1'27"

6 Giovanni Paolo Cima
(c1570-c1622)

Sonata per il violino

from Concerti Ecclesiastici
(1610) 4'14"

7 Bartolomeo Montalbano
(1600-1651)

Sinfonia no.4 'Geloso' from
Sinfonie ad uno e doi violini
(1629) 3'12"

8 Giovanni Battista
Fontana (c1630)

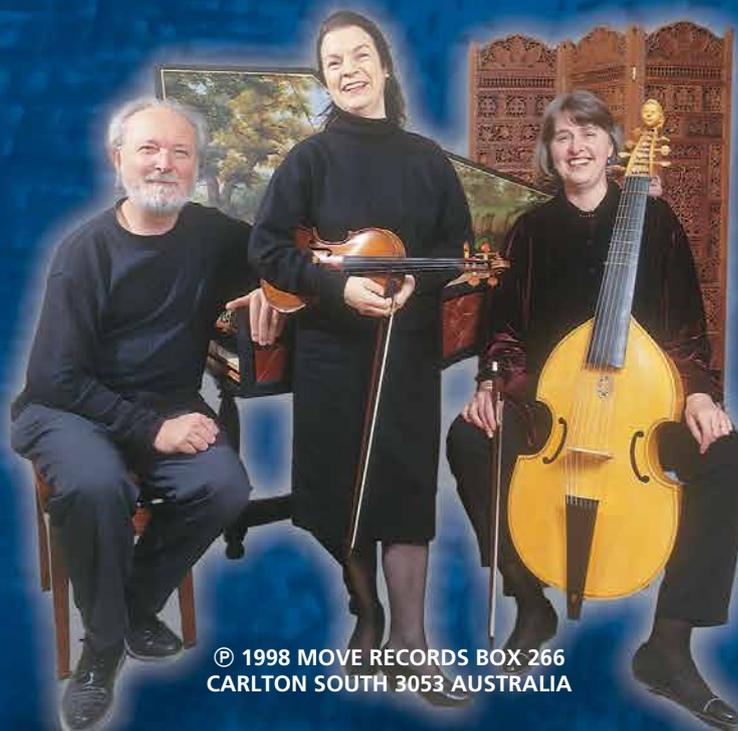
Sonata terza Sonate A 1,
2, 3 per il violino o cornetto
(1641) 4'32"

9 Girolamo Frescobaldi
(1583-1643)

**Cento partite sopra
passacagli** from Toccate ...
Libro primo (1637) 11'28"

Sonatas of 17th Century
Italy from Cima to
Corelli
including La Follia

CAPELLA CORELLI



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10 Dario Castello
(fl early 17th century)

**Sonata prima a soprano
solo** from Sonate
Concertante in stile
moderno ... Libro secondo
(1629) 4'43"

11 Marco Uccellini
(c1603-1680) **Sonata op.5
no 8** from Sonate over
Canzoni da farsi à violino
solo (1649) 4'10"

12 Giovanni Battista
Fontana **Sonata prima**
(1641) 3'39"

13 Dario Castello **Sonata
seconda** (1629) 5'18"

14 Giovanni Battista
Fontana **Sonata quarta**
(1641) 4'33"

15 Biagio Marini
(c1587-1663)
**Sonata per il violino per
sonar con due corde** from
Sonate, symphonie ... e
ritornelli (1629) 6'45"

16 Arcangelo Corelli
Sonata op. 5 no. 12 'Follia'
(1700) 10'27"



This recording celebrates 21 years of Capella Corelli. The violin works of the great Italian virtuoso Arcangelo Corelli and of his Italian predecessors were the initial inspiration for the group. For its first ten years the group was based in Canberra. Working with harpsichordist and philosopher Paul Thom, they quickly established a name for performances based on the rich repertoire and newly-researched performance practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There have been many tours throughout Australia and New Zealand, especially with the support of Musica Viva Australia, and the group has been in demand for workshops and teaching. Since 1988, with the distinguished harpsichordist and scholar John O'Donnell, Capella Corelli has continued its touring more frequently in Europe particularly to Austria where the group's violinist Cynthia O'Brien

now resides. Capella Corelli is delighted to have recorded some of the great solo instrumental music of seventeenth century Italy on the Move label. Their recording Capella Corelli plays Handel and Telemann is also produced by Move.

Australian born **Cynthia O'Brien** lives in Vienna where she plays principally with Duo Amadeo which is devoted primarily to the classical violin and fortepiano literature. She originally studied modern violin in Vienna with Professors Odnoposoff and Melkus and at the Accademia Chigiana with Salvatore Accardo. She later studied baroque violin in Holland with Lucy van Dael. For Capella Corelli's first performance she received the National Critic's Circle Award. She is a tutor at the University of Vienna for Professor Erich Vanecek in his research in Moto-Cognition instrumental method. Cynthia has performed

extensively in Australia and Europe, recorded with Decca, Phillips and Novalis and performed on radio and television. She returns each year to fulfil concert, lecture and teaching engagements.

Ruth Wilkinson teaches and performs early music in Melbourne with La Romanesca, a group specializing in medieval and Renaissance music and the Elysium ensemble. She studied the recorder with Hans-Martin Linde and viola da gamba with Jordi Savall at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Switzerland. Ruth has been involved in many recording projects with the Ensemble of the Fourteenth Century, La Romanesca and the Elysium ensemble, as well as a solo recording of the Suites for Voice Flute by Charles Dieupart — all with the Move label. Ruth teaches recorder and viola da gamba at the Early Music Studio of the University



of Melbourne and is Director of Junior School Music at St. Michael's Grammar School, Melbourne.

John O'Donnell received his early music training at the New South Wales Conservatorium, Sydney, and University of Durham. Since performing the complete organ works of Bach in 1974 he has enjoyed an international reputation as an organist and harpsichordist. John is a renowned director of several choirs in Melbourne and in 1990 founded the Ensemble Gombert to perform choral music of the High Renaissance. He has published articles on performance practice, has published an edition of the complete keyboard works of Johann Casper Kerll and is completing a monograph on High Renaissance *musica ficta*. He has given recitals in Europe and North America and has served on competition juries in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Germany.



This recording gives a glimpse into the rich world of instrumental music in seventeenth-century Italy from the experimental works of Cima, Castello, Montalbano, Fontana, Frescobaldi,

Marini and Uccellini to Corelli. During this century instrumental music was gradually drawing itself away from being an adjunct to vocal music and being dominated by the more conservative 'church' style to becoming a truly instrumental idiom. These changes reflected the shift from the belief in the all-pervading and governing hand of providence; of a God who knew and directed all things; where the material world counted for nothing and one's reward was always to be sought in the next, to the belief in the immutable laws of nature — laws which could be investigated, tamed and turned to his advantage. This environment of thinking coincided with an increase in instrumentalists' skills. These players were often composers, and through their works that have been handed down to us we are able to admire from afar their skill as performers.

The violin gradually became the favoured solo instrument of the Italians owing to its ability to imitate the human voice and at the same time to produce breathtaking melismas. The new style of playing demanded considerable technical skill from the player. In the second half of the century composers such as Uccellini and Corelli extended the range of the instrument far above that of any wind instrument. This was the period of the



great violin makers such as the Amati family and Antonio Stradivari. Except for the modernizing of the neck, raising of the bridge and the addition of metal strings, the design of the violin has remained essentially the same as it was in the seventeenth century.

Wind players in Italy were also highly esteemed, especially those employed to play in the quadrasonic acoustics of St Mark's in Venice. Dario Castello was a cornetto player alongside the Bassano brothers whose influence spread as far as England. Treatises on ornamentation and articulation practice from the late sixteenth century reveal a sophisticated and virtuosic technique already in existence in Italy. In the seventeenth century wind players were encouraged to play much of the music performed on this recording. The title to Fontana's volume of sonatas commences *Sonate A 1, 2,3 per il Violino, o Cornetto, Fagotto, Chitarone, Violoncino o simile altro istromento, ...* ‘

The sonata ‘la Gelosa’ and the sonata no. 1 of Fontana are performed in this spirit on the recorder.

String playing was also important at St Mark's. Biagio Marini worked there from 1615 to 1620 as a violinist under Claudio Monteverdi. After sojourns in Brescia and the court in Parma he was appointed Kapellmeister at the Wittelsbach court at Neuburg an die Donau. He worked in Milan, Ferrara and Vicenza. Unusual in the Sonata chosen for this recording is the use of double stops and the improvisatory term *affetti*.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the Italian style of composition and performance had become greatly admired and imitated throughout Europe. Corelli's fame and influence were enormous at this time. In his lifetime his *Sonate a violino, Violone e Cembalo op. 5* (Rome, 1700) was published five times. . His compositions became models of structure and style for the next

generation: Geminiani, Veracini, Vivaldi all quoted his Opus 5.

Several different contemporary editions of Opus 5 provide highly ornamented versions of the slow movements of the six church sonatas. Those used in this performance of Opus 5 no.1, from the 1710 edition, are alleged to be those played by Corelli himself and they give us a clear insight into Corelli's famed style of playing. Contemporary accounts of the fiery look in his eyes as he conjured up the twirling melismas of his improvised ornamentation leave no doubt as to the quality of his playing. Whilst under the patronage of Cardinal Ottoboni, Corelli taught every day at the Real Collegio Germanio where he set a high standard in the teaching of music.

The Sonata op.5 no. 12 ‘La follia’ is the final sonata of the six ‘sonate da camera’. The follia was a popular tune introduced into Spain and Portugal from America. It was Corelli's version of a



set of variations above a basso ostinato which was imitated many times well into the nineteenth century.

Cima's sonata is the earliest work that is known to specify exclusively 'per il violino'. It is found in a collection of church music dated 1610, which contains amongst a fairly conservative vocal collection some monodies and a very early use of the trio sonata medium in the Sonata a tre for violin, cornetto and continuo. The solo sonata on this recording is very much a duo between the soprano and bass lines. An extended bass and continuo solo is equal to any of the violin's melismas throughout the work.

Few facts about the life of Fontana have been found. We know that his short life was curtailed by the plague, but the virtuosity demanded from the player in the few compositions remaining tell us of his great skill. The sonatas nos 1, 3 and 4 come from his posthumous publication of 1641. These are all single-movement works in contrasting sections. There are many highly ornamented phrases, and all three works have extended solo continuo passages. The stylized slow sections often have complex rhythmic movement.

Marco Uccellini, whilst holding the post of maestro di cappella in Modena, as well as being in charge of instrumental music at the Este court and from 1665 at the Farnese court in Parma, wrote music

for operas, ballets and instrumental ensembles. Nowadays he is remembered chiefly for his works for solo violin. His exploration of more distant keys such as B major, B-flat minor and E-flat minor were very unusual in string writing at the time. The sonatas are more virtuosic than any previously known solo sonatas, Uccellini makes demanding position changes up to the sixth position and uses unusual slurrings and wide leaps.

Frescobaldi's Cento partite sopra passacagli is an intriguing composition. Just how the composer counted the "hundred variations" of the title is not certain. It is possible to arrive at this figure by concluding where the work seems to come to a close in its home key of D minor (though even here Frescobaldi's newest editor counts one hundred and one variations), but a further twenty-three variations are then tacked on, eventually finishing in the foreign Phrygian mode. Moreover, despite the 'passacagli' of the title, the work alternates sections labelled 'ciaccona' and 'passacagli', with a brief 'corrente' thrown in for good measure. Further, it wanders into remote tonalities seldom explored in music of this time. And on top of this Frescobaldi burdens the player with a virtual minefield of mensurations (or time signatures), whose interpretations have also been the subject of much argument.

For all this it is a highly attractive and exhilarating piece, the product of a seemingly endless imagination, regarded by some as the high point of Frescobaldi's keyboard writing.

NOTES © 1998 CAPELLA CORELLI

- Digital recording and editing at Move Records studio 1996, 1997, 1998 by Vaughan McAlley and Martin Wright

- Thanks to Stephen Freeman for assisting during the recording sessions

- Illustrations are based on the map by Seutter (1730) and the title page of Frescobaldi's Toccate ... Libro Primo (1637)

- Cover designs by Simon Wright

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“Nova et Exactissima
Totius Italiae,
Sardiniae et Corsicae
Delineatio Opera
et Impensis Matth.
Seutteri Chalc.
August.” Original
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