

*MUSIC OF THE
ITALIAN BAROQUE*

*Works by Castello, Gabrieli,
Mealli, Piani, Pergolesi,
Rossi, and Vivaldi.*

Saturday, February 7, 1998

8:00 p.m.

Edythe Bates Old Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PERFORMERS

Phillip Kloeckner, organ
Thomas Jaber, harpsichord
Joyce Farwell, mezzo-soprano
Kenneth Goldsmith, Baroque violin
Zachary Carrettin, Baroque violin
Barbara Downie, Baroque violin
and Baroque viola
Norman Fischer, Baroque cello
Paul Ellison, Baroque bass
Jeffrey Castle, trumpet
Jens Larsen, trumpet
Sean Reed, trombone
Steven Wills, trombone

Baroque violins: Jacobus Stainer, ca. 1675

Matthias Albanus, 1688

Thomas Perry, Dublin ca. 1800

Baroque viola: Ignatio Penze, 1774

Baroque cello: early 19th century, anon. French

PROGRAM NOTES

*This concert of Italian Baroque instrumental and vocal works clearly demonstrates the reasons for Italy's supremacy in the singing style for over one hundred years; melodic lines imbued with ornamental richness and detail which float effortlessly over bass lines of remarkable interest and diversity. The program begins with music written at the end of the 16th century and moves forward to Pergolesi's **Orfeo** of 1735, one of the last of the Italian cantatas, then returns to the earlier style of Gabrieli's 1597 Sonata for eight instruments. Most of the works on this program were composed for a space similar to our organ hall, and we hope that you will find this unusual music deserving of such a marvelous room. I'm quite certain that these works of Rossi, Castello, and Mealli are receiving their Houston premieres.*

*Gabrieli's **Sonata for Three Violins and Organ** was composed for St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, and we have a firsthand report of a performance at the Feast of St. Roch in 1608 by the Englishman, Thomas Coryat, who wrote of*

... Musicke which was both vocall and instrumentall, so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so super excellent, that it did even ravish and stupifie ... for mine own part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with St. Paul into the third heaven ..." (Coryat's travel journal, London 1611)

Salamone Rossi was an official member of the court of Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, an unusual position for a Jew in the Italian musical community of Mantua. A remarkable composer of both vocal and instrumental works, he left us a legacy of eight collections for voices and four for instruments. The instrumental sonatas, sinfonie, and dances contained in books three and four are very novel and modern for their time, and I have chosen two with special features. The dialog is exactly that, a conversation à la "Viena" (someone from Vienna?) and the two voices join at the end. The **Aria di Tordiglione** consists of a melody and a ground bass with twenty-one numbered variations. The aria itself is found in Fabritio Caroso's **Il ballarino** (1581).

Pandolfi Mealli is mentioned in the court records of Innsbruck in 1600, and the two volumes of violin sonatas were published in that same year, although research by Andrew Manze hints that they were probably written in Perugia a few years earlier. The rest of his music, including two earlier volumes of sonatas, was apparently lost when the court was disbanded and the boat carrying the music library to Vienna sank in the Danube. The sonata **La Castella** is dedicated to the Innsbruck court organist, Antonio Castelli. The amazing variations over a ground were an inspiration to Heinrich Schmelzer who knew this collection.

Pergolesi's cantata is remarkable for the wonderful way that the composer has integrated the voice with the instrumental ensemble, one of the characteristics of the Neapolitan school and an unusual one for the Italian composers of this period who usually supplied a florid coloratura surrounding a rather trivial melody with a simple, non-threatening accompaniment. Pergolesi's harmonic pictures of the text are also unusual in their exquisite and elegant naturalistic charm.

Piani's sonatas offer the performer detailed information concerning dynamics, fingering, bowing, ornamentation, tempo, and character. He even indicates the "messa di voce" with a sign he invented for the publication of his *Opus 1*, a collection of twelve sonatas.

The unusual sonata by Vivaldi makes virtuoso demands on the cellist, quite adventurous for this period. The energetic dialog is as much fun for the performers as for the audience, and the composer leaves ample room for ornamentation.

Dario Castello composed mostly instrumental music in Venice, and often for performances at St. Mark's Cathedral. It is unfortunate that his compositional life was simultaneous with Claudio Monteverdi, a talent so great and rare that others were bound to be eclipsed and influenced by it. The Sonata 16 for bowed instruments bears comparison to the stile concitato writing found in Monteverdi's **Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda** (1624).

Split-choir writing was a specialty for the composers writing music for St. Mark's, and no one was more adept at handling vocal and instrumental divided ensembles than Gabrieli. The **Sonata Pian' e Forte** was composed for two groups of four musicians, seven brass, and one violin according to the original scoring. This allowed for one loud and one soft ensemble which faced each other from the side galleries of the basilica. We are using one group of brass with the large organ and one group of strings with the portative organ to achieve the same effect.