

BACH ARIA SOLOISTS

LE DOLCE SIRENE

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CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

Si dolce è'l tormento, SV 332

Claudio Monteverdi is one of a very small number of composers who can be said to have created successfully in every genre of music-making in his long lifetime, having shown in his youth that he could write polyphonic liturgical music in the High Renaissance style and the lively five-part Italian madrigal, of which he was one of the supreme masters. But about midlife he wrote the earliest opera that is still performed with any frequency (*Orfeo*, 1607) followed by several others, many of them, unfortunately, lost. The first decade of the 17th century saw the creation of his magnificent 1610 Vespers, which involved richly varied ways of presenting sacred vocal music, ranging from one voice part over a single *basso continuo* line to movements in ten voice parts (in two choirs) plus continuo, or some with a substantial instrumental accompaniment. From the appearance of his Seventh Book of Madrigals, to which he gave the title *Concerto* (1619), his madrigals were most often designed for two voices and continue, or—as in the case of *Si dolce è'l tormento*—for a single voice over the bass line.

This piece is contained in a collection published in 1624 by Claudio Milanuzzi in a collection with the flowery title *Quarto scherzo delle arie vaghezze* (“Fourth Jest of Yearning Songs”) that contains this one work by Monteverdi for soprano with continuo. The text is cast in four stanzas in a Petrarchan character, with opposing images of love as various kinds of torment and delight, each of which is sung to the same music. But performers in Monteverdi’s day would expect to decorate the repeated stanzas with improvised decoration to project the changing mood of each

[1] *Si dolce è'l tormento
Ch'in seno mi sta,
Ch'io vivo contento
Per cruda beltà.*

*Nel ciel di bellezza
S'accreschi fierezza
Et manchi pietà:
Che sempre qual scoglio
All'onda d'orgoglio
Miafedesarà.*

[2] *La speme fallace
Rivolgam' il piè.
Diletto, ne pace
Non scendano a me.*

*l'empia ch'adoro
Mi neigh ristoro
Di buona mercè:
Tra doglia infinita
Tra speme tradita
Vivrà la mia fè.*

[1] *So sweet is the torment
That resides in my bosom,
That I live, contented,
Through its cruel beauty.*

*In the heaven of beauty
Her pride grows,
And pity is lacking.
Thus like a rock
On the waves of pride
Will my fidelity crash.*

[2] *Let fallacious hope
Turn my step back again.
Neither delight nor hope
Will descend on me,*

*Let the impious one whom I adore
Deny me comfort
Of good mercy.
Between infinite grief
And betrayed hope
My faith shall live.*

[3] *Per foco, e per gelo
Riposo non hò.
Nel porto del Cielo
Riposo haverò.*

*Se colpo mortale
Con rigido strale
Il cor m'impiajà,
Cangiando mia sorte
Col dardo di morte
Il cor sanerò.*

[4] *Se fiamma d'Amore
Già mai non sentì.
Quel riggido core
Ch'il cor mi rapì,*

*Se nega pietate
La cruda beltate
Che l'alma invaghì
Ben fia che dolente
Pentita, e languente
Sospirimi un dì.*

[3] *Through fire and ice
I have no repose.
In the port of heaven
Shall I find repose.*

*If a mortal blow
With a sturdy arrow
Should strike my heart,
Changing my fate,
With death'sd art,
My heart will heal.*

[4] *If the flame of love
I had never yet felt,
That rigid heart
Carried off my heart.*

*If she denies me pity,
That cruel beauty
Who captivates my soul,
Then let it be that she, grieving,
Penitent and languishing,
Will someday sigh for me.*

stanza, a procedure that is also followed in this performance.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

Rejoice Greatly from Messiah

Though he was, like Monteverdi and J.S. Bach, a composer who could write voluminously in almost every genre of music composed during his lifetime, Handel's reputation became affixed largely to one single composition, his oratorio *Messiah*, which is one of his least typical works. Yet it remains performed with greater frequency and in more places than practically any piece of music ever composed. In recent decades Handel's dozens of Italian operas have started to be performed again, and his other oratorios, too, are now heard far more frequently than was the case in the nineteenth century.

Handel's style was strongly influenced by three years he spent in Italy, mainly in Rome, in his early twenties. There he showed the immediacy with which he could absorb the brilliant and expressive vocal style of Italian music that characterized his great output of vocal works. And even when he had settled permanently in England and eventually gave up writing Italian opera in favor of oratorios in English, the arias—such as “Rejoice greatly”—retained the brilliant coloratura he had picked up in Italy and were cast in the standard *da capo* form, in which the opening section comes to a definitive close, followed by a middle section that contrasts in key, mood, tempo, and melody; after this, an instruction in the score reads “da capo” (from the top), directing the performers to repeat the first part, but now with improvised elaboration.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, thy King cometh unto thee;

He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

(Zechariah 9: 9–10)



FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)
Sonata No. 4 for Organ, opus 65, no. 4
Allegro con brio

Mendelssohn is easily named as one of the most extraordinary child prodigies in the history of music, even exceeding Mozart by virtue of completing his first mature masterpiece (the Octet for strings) at the age of 16. Like Mozart he developed with astonishing quickness, also like him, he died at a tragically young age. In the summer of 1844, Felix was offered a commission from Charles Coventry to edit the organ music of J.S. Bach and also to compose a series of organ voluntaries.

He began thinking about these while vacationing with his family at a spa near Frankfurt. The English “voluntary” was a short work, often improvised, in the Anglican service, which Mendelssohn did not know well. He proposed a reconsideration of the new work, to be published as Opus 65, as a set of organ sonatas. In the end, there were six in all. He thought of it as, in some sense, a pedagogical work to introduce organists in England to sonatas cast in the mode of J.S. Bach’s sonatas, which were largely unknown to English organists. He did not ape the forms of Bach’s works, but made use of typical stylistic features, especially including an important role for the pedals (the feet are almost as busy as the hands), and serious fugal construction. In the first movement of Sonata No. 4, the opening and closing sections feature rapidly running 16th notes that all but conceal a structure of slower notes in a contrapuntal web. The middle section becomes a kind of processional marked by sturdy dotted rhythms.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Süsse Stille, soprano aria with violin obligato, HWV 205

Though German was his native language, Handel lived most of his life in either Italy or England. He spoke both languages fluently (with a Saxon accent) and composed most of his vocal music in them. There seems to be only one groups of songs that he wrote in German, drawing on the poetry of Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680–1747), a moralistic poet who published his original poetic work in a nine-volume set with the title *Earthly Satisfaction in God* (1721–1748), It was from the first two volumes that Handel drew the poems that he set nine “German arias,” a set that remained unknown until published in the twentieth century. They all call for a soprano with a melody instrument (normally the violin, though in practice the part could be taken by any instrument that could reach all the notes).

*Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle
Ruhiger Gelassenheit!*

*Selbst die Seele wird erfreut,
Da, in deiner Süßigkeit.*

*Wenn Ich mir hier nach dieser Zeit
Voll mühsel'ger Eitelkeit,
Jene Ruh vor Augen stelle,
Die uns ewig ist bereit.*

—Barthold Heinrich Brockes

*Sweet stillness, gentle fount,
Peaceful ease!*

*The soul itself becomes refreshed,
There, in your sweetness,*

*I myself here, after this period
Full of weary vanity,
Place before my eyes that peace
That has ever been prepared for us.*



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Die Schätzbarkeit der weiten Erden, soprano aria with violin obligato, BWV 204 (4th movement)

The largest part of J.S. Bach's output, in terms of sheer volume, is the enormous body of his cantatas. The Lutheran Church, for which he worked much of his life, called for a cantata to be performed most Sundays (with exceptions for the "penitential" periods of Advent and Lent), as well as special occasions during the church year. A complete set of cantatas for the church year was called a *Jahrgang* (annual cycle), which comprised about 55 works, and Bach is reputed to have composed five such cycles (not all of them survived).

But he also composed cantatas for other occasions. Some were overtly secular, such as celebrations for the birthday of the ruler of the region in which he lived at any given time. And for a dozen years (1729–1741) he directed weekly two-hour concerts by the Collegium Musicum in Zimmermann's coffee shop. The ensemble was made up largely of university students, Bach's private students, and his own talented children. The two-hour programs covered a wide range of styles and genres, often new or recent compositions. There was a category of what Dr. Christoph Wolff calls "moral cantatas," works that dealt via vocal compositions with "moral" issues, whether light-hearted or serious. Cantata 204, *Ich bin in mir vergnügt* ("I am contented with myself"), composed before the actual beginning of the Collegium concerts is a case in point.

*Die Schätzbarkeit der weiten Erde
Lass' meine Seele ruhig sein
Bei dem kehrt stets der Himmel ein.
Der in der Armuth reich kann werden.*

*May the treasures of the wide earth
Allow my soul to be tranquil.
In this constant contemplation of heaven,
Poverty can turn into riches.*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
Sonata in G major for Violin and Continuo, BWV 1021

During the 1730s, Bach's activity in the realm of chamber music was largely focused on the Collegium Musicum. Concerts took place on Fridays—during the summer in the late afternoon, and during winter after dinner. When the trade fairs came to Leipzig in the spring and fall, the performance schedule was doubled with the addition of Tuesday concerts as well.

The bulk of Bach's chamber music (aside from the Brandenburg Concertos) seems to have been performed here, and a large part of it was surely composed for this organization as well. The G major sonata has been dated, on the basis of the manuscript's paper, to the years 1732-35. One intriguing feature of the piece is that it shares its bass line with two other Bach sonatas—BWV 1022 in F for violin and harpsichord, and BWV 1038 in G for recorder, violin, and continuo. Yet on the surface, the three works are markedly different. But this fact suggests that at some time Bach may have needed to turn out a piece very quickly and took this means to do it—by extracting an existing bass line and composing a new melody line above it. (Telemann recommended this procedure as a way to compose quickly, when necessary) The opening Adagio features a soaring, elegant line. The Vivace that follows is a brief but intensely intricate contrapuntal game. Then the Largo relaxes into a poignant melancholy that is routed by the lively good humor of the Presto fugato.

CECILIA McDOWALL (b.1951)

Four Shakespeare Songs

Cecilia McDowall was born in London and educated at the University of Edinburgh, where she studied music, and at Trinity College of Music in London, where she earned her master's degree in composition. Her teachers included Joseph Horowitz, Robert Saxton, and Adam Gorb. She is best known for her large body of choral works, both a *capella* and accompanied by orchestra or smaller instrumental combinations. She has also composed a substantial body of orchestral and chamber music works, and four works for the stage, including the chamber opera (*Airborne*, 2014) and three earlier operatic works for children or for school performance. The body of choral and operatic work suggests that she is entirely at home writing for the human voice. And this face is quite apparent in her *Four Shakespeare Songs*, derived from different plays and different kinds of text. The lyrics of the first song are arranged from a more extended dialogue of Rosalind and Silvius in *As You Like It*. No. 2 has a text drawn from the last words of Cleopatra. No. 3 consists of the words of Ophelia which occur in three separate parts of her lost conversation with Gertrude, here pulled together into a coherent text. And the last song offers the fairy blessing of Titania on the house of the lovers in the play as they sleep off the hectic confusions of that midsummer night in the forest.

The four songs were originally written for voice and piano. With the composer's approval, the members of the Bach Aria Soloists have rescored them to reflect the instrumentation of the ensemble: Nos. 1 and 4 for harpsichord and violin with the soprano; No. 2 for soprano, piano, and cello; and No. 3 for soprano, piano, and violin.

Four Shakespeare Songs

[1] What 'tis to love?

(As You Like It, Act 5, scene 2)

What 'tis to love?

It is to be all made of sighs and tears;

What 'tis to love?

It is to be all made of faith and service.

It is to be all made of fantasy,

All made of passion, and all made of wishes;

All adoration, duty, observance;

All humbleness, all patience, and impatience;

All purity, all trial, all obeisance;

What 'tis to love.

[2] Give Me My Robe

Antony and Cleopatra, Act 5, scene 2)

Give me my robe, put on my crown;

I have Immortal longings in me:

now no more

The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip:

Yare, yare, good Iras; quick.

Methinks I hear Antony call;

I see him rouse himself

To praise my noble act;

I hear him mock

The luck of Caesar,

which the gods give men

excuse their after wrath: husband, I come:

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

I am fire and air; my other elements

I give to baser life. So; have you done?

Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.

Farewell, kind Charmian;

Iras, long farewell.

[3] How should I your true love know?

(Hamlet, Act 4, scene 5)

How should I your true love know from another one?

By his cockle hat and staff, and his sandal shoon.

He is dead and gone, lady; he is dead and gone.

At his head, grass green turf; at his heels, a stone.

White his shroud as the mountain snow, larded with sweet flowers;

Which bewept to the grave did go with true love showers.

[4] First Rehearse

(A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 5, scene 1)

First rehearse your song by rote

To each word a warbling note

Hand in hand with fairy grace

Will we sing, and bless this place.

La Folia Variations

Some tunes have a long history in music, returning again and again in new guises or given new treatments. Often these tunes have an unknown origin, connected with no identifiable composer, and by musicians as an anonymous source for composition or improvisation. Such a tune is the *folia*, for which musical sources appear in the early 17th century, but literary sources refer to a dance called the *folia* as a dance form, described often as fast and noisy, as if the dancers were out of their minds. (Hence the etymological link between the Portuguese word *folia* and cognates in Italian, Spanish, and French, or with the English *folly*). Despite this idea of “crazy” music, the musical *folia* had a simple bass pattern in two balanced phrases, the first of which ends on what would today be called the dominant, while the second is almost a repetition of the first until the end, when it has a closing move to the tonic.

By 1670, a later development of the *folia* pattern appeared first, it seems, in an “air for oboe” by Lully, but other musicians were playing with the idea about the same time. This new, standard pattern served as the basis of *folia* compositions throughout the remainder of the Baroque era, until the middle of the 18th century. This straightforward outline, known to all, was a clear invitation to improvisation. Every performer would offer his or her own personal reaction to both the bass line and the melodic outline. A very similar modern example of this kind of practice is the 12-bar blues, which allows hundreds of performers to create thousands of changes, still identifiable as coming from a familiar source. In the present recording, the performers adopt the same practice as those from about 1700, taking turns to ornament and elaborate the basic framework that is hundreds of years old, but appears constantly renewed.

BACH ARIA SOLOISTS

BAS



Bach Aria Soloists is dedicated to presenting the genius of Johann Sebastian Bach, his contemporaries and those he inspired to today to our community through BAS' critically acclaimed concerts, multi-genre collaborations and our innovative BachReach education. Our repertoire is adventurous, including, but not limited to, chamber music from Baroque to Contemporary, arias, art songs, 21st century music commissioned by BAS, and much more. Collaboration is integral to BAS, selecting regional, international, GRAMMY®-winning artists from multiple genres to work with us. Bach Aria Soloists was invited to the International Composition Festival in Thailand in 2022, where we also served as Ensemble-in-Residence in 2016.

BAS was awarded the USArtists International grant from the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Missouri Arts Council named Bach Aria Soloists *The Arts Organization of 2020*.



Elizabeth Suh Lane is the founder-Executive-Artistic Director and violinist of the Bach Aria Soloists. Acclaimed by Michael Tilson Thomas as, “*a marvelous soloist and chamber musician who exemplifies the most accomplished and creative aspects of our finest musicians today.*” Elizabeth resided in Europe for nearly a decade, concertizing across the globe as a chamber, solo and orchestral musician in the world’s finest concert halls. She was a first violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra under directors Michael Tilson Thomas, André Previn, Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Colin Davis; and toured with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Claudio Abbado, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, and Gidon Kremer, among many others. Her leadership

of Bach Aria Soloists has produced world-class collaborations with leading artists, including Bach scholar Dr. Christoph Wolff, composer Narong Prangcharoen, cellist Matt Haimovitz, Parsons Dance’s Elizabeth Koeppen, to name a few. Elizabeth has also performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and was named *Professional of the Year* by the Asian American Chamber of Commerce for her excellence in the field of music and education. Elizabeth served on the faculties of Snowpond Chamber Music Seminar in Maine; Brian Lewis Young Artists’ Program instructing advanced violin students; and conducts her Orchestral and Chamber Music Clinics throughout the region as part of Bach Aria Soloists’ *BachReach*. She was a member of the London Symphony Orchestra Education team training teachers and students in schools across Great Britain and was the Teaching Assistant for Baroque violinist Jaap Schröder at the Yale School of Music. Elizabeth continues her love of teaching today, mentoring a studio of young violinists who have received scholarships to universities across the U.S.

Sarah Tannehill Anderson Sarah Tannehill

Anderson is a versatile musician, excelling as a singer of opera, oratorio, choral music, contemporary works, and art song. After spending several years performing with national companies, such as Opera Company Philadelphia, Boston Lyric Opera, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Opera Omaha, Fort Worth Opera, and Opera Theater St. Louis, Sarah is now thrilled to make her home and career in the vibrant Kansas City music scene. Sarah has also been a member of popular regional chamber ensembles, such as Lyric Arts Trio, Missouri Choral Artists, Spire Chamber Ensemble, and the Kansas City Chorale. She has appeared as soloist with the Kansas City Symphony, Kansas City Baroque Consortium, Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, Kansas City Ballet, and New Ear Ensemble.



Sarah's main passion, as a soloist and chorister, is her album work. Recordings include the Kansas City Chorale's *Life and Breath - Choral Works by René Clausen*, in which she was featured as a soloist, and that won the GRAMMY® for *Best Choral Performance* in 2013, as well as the Chorale's *Rachmaninoff All-Night Vigil*, winning the GRAMMY® for *Best Choral Performance* in 2016. She has also premiered and recorded new works by composers such as Anthony Maglione, Forrest Pierce, Ingrid Stölzel, and Bonnie McLarty. She is featured on the album, *Vieux Amis - Nouveaux Costumes*, with the Midwest Chamber Ensemble, and has recorded two albums with the GRAMMY®-nominated St. Tikhon Choir. Sarah is the creator of *Raise Your Virtual Voice*, a digital hub for vocal training, which can be found on YouTube. She is also a Realtor® with NextHome Gadwood Group Realty, serving both Missouri and Kansas.



Elisa Williams Bickers, FAGO, is active across the country as a solo organist, continuo harpsichordist, and piano accompanist. She is the harpsichordist, organist, and pianist for the Bach Aria Soloists; and Associate Director of Music and Principal Organist at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas. She performs regularly with the Kansas City Symphony, Te Deum Chamber Choir and the GRAMMY®-winning Kansas City Chorale. She has served on the faculties of the UMKC Conservatory and Washburn University as instructor of organ and harpsichord.

A native of Clinton, Maryland, Dr. Bickers began her organ studies with the Potomac Organ Institute.

She has degrees in church music and organ performance from Texas Christian University and the University of Kansas. Her teachers have included Dale Krider, Joseph Butler and Michael Bauer.

She was awarded the 2009 Carlin Award for excellence in teaching—the highest honor possible for graduate students at KU—and has competed and won prizes in the William Hall Competition, NYACOP and the International Buxtehude Competition. Most recently, she was awarded the Fellow certificate of the American Guild of Organists, the Guild's most prestigious certification.

Dr. Bickers guided the installation of Richards, Fowkes & Co. (Opus 22) pipe organ at Village Presbyterian, which is a landmark instrument in Kansas City. She was also the chair for New Music for the 2018 American Guild of Organists National Convention.

Hannah Collins is a dynamic performer who uses diverse forms of musical expression and artistic collaboration to build community. Winner of De Linkprijs for contemporary interpretation, she takes an active role in expanding cello repertoire through commissions and interdisciplinary projects. *Resonance Lines*, her solo debut album on the Sono Luminus label, is an “adventurous, impressive collection of contemporary solo cello music,” negotiated “with panache” (*The Strad*), pairing music by Benjamin Britten and Kaija Saariaho with commissioned works by Caroline Shaw and Thomas Kotcheff.

Over the past decade, New Morse Code, her “remarkably inventive and resourceful duo” (*Gramophone*) with percussionist Michael Compitello, has developed projects responding to our society’s most pressing issues, including *dwb (driving while black)*, a chamber opera by Roberta Gumbel and Susan Kander, and *The Language of Landscapes*, a multimedia work by Christopher Stark addressing the urgency of the climate crisis. They were the winners of the 2020 Ariel Avant Impact Performance Prize.

Hannah is a member of Bach Aria Soloists, Grossman Ensemble, and A Far Cry, and has recently performed on modern and Baroque cello with The Knights, Quodlibet Ensemble, the Sebastians, and Trinity Baroque Orchestra. She earned a B.S. in biomedical engineering from Yale and holds degrees in music from the Yale School of Music, the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, and City University of New York. She is an alumna of Ensemble Connect and is currently Associate Professor of Cello at the University of Kansas.

www.hannahcollinscello.com





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BACH ARIA SOLOISTS

Elizabeth Suh Lane, Violin—Artistic Director—Founder

Sarah Tannehill Anderson, Soprano

Elisa Williams Bickers, Harpsichord—Organ—Piano

Hannah Collins, Cello

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LE DOLCE SIRENE

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

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GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

2) *Rejoice Greatly from Messiah* 5:05

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

3) *Sonata No. 4 for Organ*, opus 65, no. 4, *Allegro con brio* 4:08

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