

THE MONTEVERDI PROJECT - PART II

# HEART / ATTACK

*Madrigals on love and war*

MONTEVERDI & CONTEMPORARIES



**FIVE VOICES**

ANIMATED TEXT PROJECTIONS

**PERIOD INSTRUMENTS**

CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS

SUNDAY 18 / 25 NOVEMBER, 2 DECEMBER 2012 @ 18:00

**THE CAPE CONSORT @ THE FUGARD STUDIO**

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## HEART / ATTACK

Departing from our project's first programme, which focussed on the Arcadian imagery and Monteverdi's hidden dramatizations within that sphere, tonight's concert follows several different leads. Firstly it opens the floor for some novel musical devices, notably the *stile concitato* and the concerted madrigal, which requires musical instruments in addition to the voices. Secondly it introduces several new composers, contemporaries of Monteverdi and akin in their musical pursuits. Finally it expands the love topos to include its opposite – war.

This might seem surprising at first. However, on closer scrutiny it proves, at least in Renaissance or Baroque thought, that these two antagonistic forces are integral and even constitutive to each other. This is most aptly demonstrated in the allegorical figure of Cupid who, as the son of Venus and Mars, symbolizes the ultimate reconciliation between the two. Yet he still carries both identities: while being the god of love he is nevertheless always armed and 'inflicts' love by 'wounding'.

The poetry set to music in tonight's works refers amply to this complex of interrelated images: In a humorous vein the singers sound the alarm and desperately summon all defences in *Gira il nemico*, which portrays 'Love' as an insidious enemy, attacking the feeble battlements of a vulnerable heart. *Ogni amanti* claims that 'all lovers are warriors' or 'love is for the warrior heart', comparing the soldier's vigilance, bravery, persistence and determination to that of the lover's. Surely the 'little death' will feature in a programme such as this and it is indeed the topic of the (embarrassingly explicit) 'amorous dialogue' in *Tirsi morir volea*. Here the fortunate pair 'dies' together, welcoming 'a "death" so exquisite that, just to "die" again, they return to life.'

On a more serious note, *Se tu Silvio* interprets the incident of a fatal wound inflicted in so many metaphorical ways: of hands merely following in the way of lovely

eyes, of seeking the beloved as prey, of scoring a casualty in an assault, which had otherwise always been fended off. *Che si puo fare?* remains a rhetorical question, as *nothing can be done*, about the 'disaster', when love continuously tortures an innocent soul condemned to a 'malicious destiny'.

As may be expected, the music once again follows textual images down to minute nuances. The battle scenes need particular mention, as it is specifically for their truthful representation that Monteverdi devised his *stile concitato*, the agitated and very fast repetition of the same notes. Unheard of until then, this must once again be viewed as a significant and highly effective manner in which to dramatize music – the all important quest of Baroque composers.

For a modern audience to not only indulge in harmonious strains of ancient music, but to be able to fully appreciate the composer's dedicated efforts to quite literally translate poetry into musical expressions, we consider it essential to provide some kind of synchronized translation. The previously introduced concept of animated projections has been developed somewhat further, allowing for a certain measure of 'live' cuing and animation and thus adding an additional element of 'spontaneous performance' on the level of the visual musical interpretation.

-Hans Huysen



## PLOT

Apart from the usual amorous pursuits and ensuing domestic drama, life in Arcadia has been blissfully uneventful for a while (*Amante modesto*). However, this is all about to change. All Arcadians are being called to arms as a Barbarian invasion threatens the borders. Mirtillo, Silvio and Tirsi can hardly contain their excitement and prepare to leave at once. (*Gira il nemico*). By dawn the next day, most shepherd-turned-soldiers have courageously set out for the battlefield. Their enthusiasm is quite obviously not shared by any of the abandoned nymphs or shepherdesses. Clori is inconsolable, at once lamenting the departure of Tirsi and Mirtillo, as well as the fact that she has never before been this confused. Dorinda is beside herself with worry over her lover Silvio, whose aim with the bow and arrow leaves much to be desired on a good day. She realizes that the odds of him returning alive and sane are slim and fearlessly sets out for the battlefield herself (*Che si puo fare*).

After days on the march, the soldiers are yet to encounter the enemy. They while away the tedious hours by pondering the similarities between love and war. (*Ogni amante e guerrier*). Silvio's inquisitive nature and the beautiful countryside have caused him to become distracted and subsequently, lost. His initial excitement at the novel idea of hand-to-hand combat has evaporated entirely. With his nerves in tatters, he roams the woods aimlessly with his bow permanently drawn. When Dorinda finally finds Silvio, she is relieved and ecstatic and lets out a joyful exclamation, startling the already panicked Silvio. He fires an arrow involuntarily and seriously wounds his beloved Dorinda. On their way back to the village, not knowing whether the seriously injured Dorinda will survive, Silvio and Dorinda repeatedly confess their love for one another. Silvio not only regrets his clumsiness with a bow and arrow, but also his recklessness in his relationship with Dorinda (*Se tu Silvio crudele*).

Dorinda, Silvio and Linco finally arrive back in Arcadia. Tales of violent battles have by now reached the abandoned women, who are all either living in constant fear for the lives of their loved-ones, or already grieving their deaths. On the deserted streets of Arcadia, the laments of mothers, wives, daughters and sisters have become a familiar sound. (*Ohime dove il mio ben, Ohime bel viso*). When the battle is finally over, Mirtillo and Tirsi return home thinner, wiser and a little battered, but as heroes nonetheless. After having had plenty of time to think soberly, Clori realizes the depth of her love for the ever-faithful Tirsi. They elope at once so as to commence a honeymoon that would later become the stuff of legends and poetry (*Dialogo amoroso*).

Arcadians have had a close encounter with the harsh reality of their own mortality and are forever cured of their romantic notions about war. For the moment they choose not to remind one another of any arrows, whether it be those of Cupid or the more destructive ones from the bow of Ares. Instead, they revel in the gentle kindness and blissful peace instilled in those who love deeply. Even Mirtillo has found something new to fight for: his marriage. Thus we take our leave from Arcadia, with the Arcadians doing what they do best: making love, and not war (*Priego ad amore*).

- LenteLouw

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## PROGRAMME

Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)  
**L'amante modesto** (a)  
for 5 voices and bc

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)  
**Gira il nemico, insidioso amore** (b)  
for 2 tenors, bass and bc

Barbara Strozzi  
Lamento: **Che si può fare** (a)  
for solo soprano and bc

Claudio Monteverdi  
**Ogni amanti è guerrier** (b)  
for 2 tenors, bass and bc

Sigismondo d'India (1582-1628)  
**Se tu, Silvio crudel** (c)  
for 5 voices and bc

Claudio Monteverdi  
Romanesca: **Ohime dove il mio ben** (d)  
for 2 sopranos and bc

Claudio Monteverdi  
**Ohime il viso** (e)  
for 5 voices and bc

Giovanni Sances (ca.1600-1679)  
Dialogo Amoros: **Tirsi morir volea** (f)  
for soprano, tenor, bass and bc

Barbara Strozzi  
**Priego ad amore** (a)  
for 5 voices and bc

### Sources:

- (a) *Il Primo Libro de' Madrigali... op.1* (Venetia, 1644)
- (b) *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi, Libro ottavo* (Venetia, 1638)
- (c) *Ottavo libro de' madrigali a cinque voci con il basso continuo* (Roma, 1624)
- (d) *Concerto. Settimo libro de madrigali a 1,2,3,4, & sei voci, con altri generi de canti* (Venetia, 1619)
- (e) *Il sesto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venetia, 1614)
- (f) *Cantade... libro secondo* (Venetia, 1633)

## THE CAPE CONSORT

The Cape Consort is a recently founded ensemble, dedicated to stylish and historically informed performances of early music. Part of a wider initiative to introduce HIPPA to South African audiences, it collaborates with international specialist practitioners and strives to connect local musicians to activities and research in the field. In line with prevailing trends within the early music movement, it strives to translate and re-contextualise ancient musical expressions into speaking and credibly contemporary articulations. Conceived as a flexible group, the consort adapts its forces to the requirements of the repertoire. Following its regular performances of a wide variety of rarely heard vocal repertoire, the Consort has gained an excellent reputation for its innovative programs and vivid interpretations. Crowning a series of recent successes, the performance at the Stellenbosch Woordfees in March 2012 was awarded the WOORDtroFEE for Best Classical Music Production.

In February 2012, the group launched its *Monteverdi Project* in collaboration with The Fugard Theatre. Honouring arguably the most important champion of early dramatic music, this ongoing series of concerts intends to not only explore specific, pivotal features in the development of early music, but also to test and apply innovative means of interpreting and re-presenting these innovations. After *The Matrix of the Madrigal, Heart/Attack* is the second programme presented in this series.

**Antoinette Blyth, Lente Louw** (soprano)  
**Nick de Jager, Willem Bester** (tenor)  
**Charles Ainslie** (bass)  
**Quentin Crida** (baroque violin)  
**Emile de Roubaix** (baroque viola)  
**Rebekka Sandmeier** (viol)  
**Erik Dippenaar** (virginal, organ, instrumental arrangements)  
**Hans Huyssen** (baroque cello)  
**Andrew Cruickshank** (programme compilation)  
**Lente Louw** (dramaturgy, translations)  
**André Visage** (poster design)  
**Ragnar Sigrúnarson** (animations)  
**Tessa Roos** (cueing of projections).