

City Summer Sounds
21 June 2021, 7pm
Festival Concert Filmed at Holy Trinity Hoxton

EXAUDI

Gesualdo: *Cruel Ecstasy*

Programme

Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613): Madrigals from Books V and VI (1611)

Gioite voi col canto (Libro V)

Itene, o miei sospiri (V)

Deh, come invan sospiro

'lo parto', e non più dissi (VI)

Asciugate i begli occhi (V)

Patrick Hegarty (*1996): *Recitation* (2019)

Gesualdo: Madrigals from Books V and VI

Se la mia morte brami (VI)

O dolorosa gioia (V)

Al mio gioir (VI)

Mille volte il dì (VI)

Tu piangi, o Filli mia (VI)

Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte (V)

EXAUDI

Juliet Fraser *soprano*

Lucy Goddard *mezzo*

Tom Williams *countertenor*

Stephen Jeffes, David de Winter *tenor*

Jimmy Holliday *bass*

James Weeks *director*

The Department of Music at City, University of London, would like to thank Fr Andrew Newcombe at Holy Trinity Hoxton for his generosity in hosting this event.

Notes on the Music

Gesualdo: Madrigals from Books V and VI

Four hundred years after his death, Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, remains the most tantalising of musicians, the most alluring of myths. We are drawn back to the dark flame of this strange, obsessive music like moths to the candle, like lovers who can't let go. At the heart of his work we sense a mystery, an inward-turning, a kind of silence: its extreme chromatic harmonies and wild polarities no mere artifice or exoticism, but emanating from a soul whose nature is other, lying apart from us, outside our cosmology, orbiting a different sun.

This is music which begets myths, and its composer's sad and troubled life supplies plenty. In his time, Gesualdo was recognised to be of odd character. He was widely described as melancholic (a catch-all term), although we also hear that he 'talks a great deal, and gives no sign, except in his mien, of being a melancholy man.' Music was a consuming obsession for him: he would speak of nothing else, driving listeners to distraction and showing his works 'in score to everybody in order to induce them to marvel at his art.' The scholar Glenn Watkins hypothesises bipolar disorder; others have suggested that the diagnosis of an underlying Type B personality disorder (typified by instability of self-image and tendency to see things as all-good or all-bad) might illuminate his behaviour (and art). It would certainly be simplistic to assume that his notorious uxoricide, committed in 1590 when Gesualdo was 24, was the sole, or even main trigger for his psychological traits; rather, a picture emerges of a man whose underlying personality disorder is exacerbated by various physical and mental traumas at different points in his life into a final state of severe and constant mental torture. The music cannot help but reflect this, and without a doubt the polarities – of mood, texture, harmonic style – on which Gesualdo's style is based are indicative; but this is not incoherent, 'mad' music: it remains, for all its non-normative behaviour, lucid, communicative (albeit in a very extreme way), artfully structured and technically virtuosic.

The madrigals of the Fifth and Sixth Books, from which all the pieces in this concert are taken, are often described as 'late' works, having been published at the end of Gesualdo's life in 1611. Yet by Gesualdo's own assertion they were composed around the time of his extended sojourn at the court of Ferrara between 1594 and 1597, withheld from publication in the manner of *musica reservata* (a private music for the exclusive appreciation of connoisseurs) and only finally published in order to set the record straight and confound his several imitators and plagiarists. Gesualdo was, like many aristocratic composers of the time a natural avant-gardist, and the importance of his visit to Ferrara cannot be overstated. Since Vicentino's Ancient Greek-inspired experiments in chromatic and microtonal music in the 1550s, Ferrara was the undisputed capital of chromaticism: Vicentino's microtonal harpsichord, the *archicembalo*, could still be heard here in the 1590s, played by Luzzasco Luzzaschi, the madrigalist and *maestro* of the fabled *Concerto delle donne*. Gesualdo was highly struck by Luzzaschi's music, and it would seem, from the textual congruences between his Fifth and Sixth books and Luzzaschi's published collections of the mid 1590s, that the two composers became engaged in some sort of madrigal-publishing duel, or at least mutual artistic exchange. If it is true that these works were written by the 30-year-old Gesualdo in Ferrara, we must jettison some of our most cherished ideas about his isolated, 'late' style and embrace instead the idea that these are works written by a young man in the

blazing heat of inspiration, working in the very epicentre of musical innovation. (Comparison with his coeval Monteverdi, making a similarly radical transition in Mantua towards his own books IV and V over the course of the same decade, is inescapable.)

But the sounds of these pieces are not like those of Luzzaschi, still less Monteverdi or any of the others whom the latter cited as exemplars of the *seconda prattica* in 1605. Gesualdo has taken the innovative premise of Ferrarese chromaticism to a place that is overwhelmingly personal and profoundly subjective; in these works he seems to be speaking to himself, composing in order to converse with and alleviate his own melancholy rather than to portray or palliate it for others. *Io pur respiro, lo parto, io moro...* the focus on the first-person singular, the 'I' of the introspective self, is relentless. Emotions oscillate between extremes, of manic joy and lugubrious despondency. Equilibrium is sought but never found, consummation is continually yearned for yet remains fleeting if not entirely illusory. Ungraspable and elusive, too, is the experience of the music. Once is never enough: the consummation we desire, the sense of emotional wholeness and completion, continually evades us, slips away, luring us back again and again, just as almost every madrigal treads and retreads the same expressive ground, the same unreconcilable extremes of emotion, circling and obsessive. We are drawn in, fascinated, haunted – the music blazes then evaporates into the air – we are left to wonder at these strange messages while they last, and let them fade into the silence which surrounds them.

James Weeks

Patrick Hegarty: *Recitation*

In *Recitation*, earpieces feed performers individual cues to perform specific actions which are triggered by the composer's playing of a sampler off-stage. This technique is designed to allow for the direct 'playing' of an ensemble spontaneously and improvisatorially and for a musician situated away from the performance space to facilitate immediate control over a set of materials in real time by without the necessity of a performance score or conductor. In this version, the materials chosen are 7 very short fragments of *Tenebrae factae sunt* from Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories*. *PH*

Texts and Translations

Gioite voi col canto

mentre piango e sospiro
né dal mio lagrimar punto respiro.
Ahi misero mio core,
nato sol al dolore,
piangi, ma piangi tanto
che vinta dal tuo pianto
sia la mia donna e poi rivedi in lei
gli affanni e i dolor miei.

Rejoice you with singing,
while I weep and sigh
and can scarcely breathe through my tears.
Ah, my wretched heart,
born only for pain,
weep, but weep so much
that by your complaining
my lady is won over and then you will see in her
my own care and pain.

Itene, o miei sospiri,

precipitate il volo
a lei ch'è m'è cagion d'aspri martiri.
Ditele per pietà del mio gran duolo
ch'or mai ella mi sia
come bella, ancor pia
che l'amaro mio pianto
cangerò lieto in amoroso canto.

Go, o my sighs,
speed your flight
to her who is the cause of my bitter torment.
Tell her, for pity's sake, of my great suffering –
that if she will be to me
as merciful as she is beautiful,
I shall change my bitter lament
joyfully into a love song.

Deh, come invan sospiro,

deh, come invan vi miro,
poiché, crudel, voi fate ogni un gioire
et a me sol morire!
Infelice mia sorte,
che la vita per me divenga morte.

Ah, how in vain I sigh,
ah! how in vain I admire you,
since, cruel one, you give joy to all
and to me alone death!
Unhappy my fate,
that life for me becomes death.

'Io parto' e non più dissi, che il dolore

privo di vita il core.
Allor proruppe in pianto e disse Clori,
con interotti omèi:
'Dunque ai dolori io resto.
Ah, non fia mai
ch'io non languisca in dolorosi lai.'
Morto fui, vivo son, ché spirit spenti
tornaro in vita a sì pietosi accenti.

'I am leaving', I said, and no more, because grief
deprived the heart of life.
Then Chloris burst out in tears and said,
while sobbing 'alas':
'Thus I stay here in sorrow.
Ah, never may I cease
to languish in lamenting songs.'
I was dead, I now live, for my extinguished spirit
returned to life at such merciful tones.

Asciugate i begli occhi,

deh, cor mio, non piangete
se lontano da voi gir mi vedete!
Ahi, che pianger debb'io misero e solo,
ché partendo da voi m'uccide il duolo.

Dry your lovely eyes,
ah, my love, do not weep
if far from you you see me wandering.
Ah, that I must weep miserable and alone,
for in leaving you, the grief kills me.

Se la mia morte brami,
crudel, lieto ne moro,
e dopo morte ancor te solo adoro.
Ma se vuoi che non t'ami,
ahi, che a pensarlo solo
il duol m'ancide e l'alma fugge a volo.

If you desire my death,
cruel one, I die happy,
And after death adore you alone.
But if you desire that I not love you,
ah, with the thought alone,
grief kills me and the soul flees in flight.

O dolorosa gioia,
o soave dolore,
Per cui quest'alma è mesta e lieta more!
O miei cari sospiri,
miei graditi martiri,
del vostro duol non mi lasciate privo
poiché sì dolce mi fa morto e vivo.

O painful joy,
o sweet suffering,
through which this spirit is sad and dies happy!
O my dear sighs,
my happy torments,
of your suffering do not leave me deprived
for so sweetly it makes me dead and alive.

Al mio gioir il ciel si fa sereno,
il crin fiorito il sole ai prati inaura.
Danzano l'onde in mar al suon de l'aura,

cantan gli augei ridenti,
scherzan con l'aria i venti.
Così la gioia mia versando il seno
io d'ogni intorno inondo,
e fo, col mio gioir, gioioso il mondo.

At my joy the heavens become calm,
the sun gilds the meadows' florid locks.
The waves dance in the sea to the sound of the
breeze,
the laughing birds sing,
the winds play with the air.
Thus, my joy overflowing my breast,
I flood everywhere around me,
and with my joy, make the whole world joyous.

Mille volte il dì moro.
E voi, empì sospiri,
non fate, oimè, che in sospirando io
spiri?
E tu, alma crudele, se il mio duolo
t'affligge sì, ché non ten fuggi a volo?
Ahi, che sol Morte al mio duol, aspro e
rio,
divien pietosa e ancide il viver mio.
Così, dunque, i sospiri e l'alma mia
sono ver me spietati e Morte pia.

A thousand times a day I die.
And you, wicked sighs,
will you not make me, alas, expire in sighing?

And you, cruel soul, if my grief
afflicts you so, why do you not flee from it in
flight?
Ah, that only Death on my bitter and cruel pain
becomes merciful, and kills my life.
So, therefore, my sighs and soul
are pitiless toward me, but Death is merciful.

Tu piangi, o Filli mia,
e pensi estinguer quell'ardente fiamma
che sì dolce m'infiamma.
Ahi, che sì picciol pianto fa che il core
tanto più avvampi di vivace ardore.

You weep, O my Phyllis,
and think to extinguish that burning flame
that so sweetly inflames me.
Ah, that so small a plaint can make my heart
burn so much more with lively ardour.

Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte
e di morte il dolore
l'affligge sì che in crude pene more.
Ahi, che quello son io,
dolcissimo cor mio,
che da voi parto e per mia crudel sorte
la vita lascio e me ne vado a morte.

He languishes towards his end who is leaving life,
and the suffering of death
afflicts him so much that he dies in cruel pains.
Ah, that person is I,
my sweetest love,
that I am leaving you, and through my cruel fate
I leave life and go to death.

Biographies

EXAUDI

EXAUDI is one of the world's leading vocal ensembles for new music. Founded by James Weeks (director) and Juliet Fraser (soprano) in 2002, EXAUDI is based in London and draws its singers from among the UK's brightest vocal talents.

EXAUDI's special affinity is for the radical edges of contemporary music, at home equally with maximal complexity, microtonality and experimental aesthetics. The newest new music is at the heart of its repertoire, and it has given hundreds of national and world premières. As well as performing the acknowledged greats of contemporary music, EXAUDI is particularly committed to the music of its own generation and is also strongly involved with the emerging generation of young composers, regularly taking part in composer development schemes and residencies at home and abroad.

An enduring feature of EXAUDI's programming has been the mixing of contemporary music with the music of the medieval, Renaissance and baroque periods. In 2012 the EXAUDI Italian Madrigal Book was launched as an open-ended project to create new repertoire to stand alongside the masterpieces of Monteverdi, Gesualdo and others; as well as numerous appearances in the UK, the Book has toured to France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy, creating and recording new repertoire with each new installment.

EXAUDI has appeared at many of the leading European and UK venues and festivals, broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3 and European radio stations, and has released fourteen critically acclaimed recordings on the NMC, ÆON, Métier, Winter&Winter, Mode, Confront and HCR labels.

EXAUDI's most recent disc, ***Gesualdo Madrigali***, was released in September 2019, subsequently receiving a prestigious Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik and being named as one of BBC Radio 3's Discs of the Year. The critics wrote:

'Blazing intensity and total precision' ***** *BBC Music*

'Wonderful...it's the emotional wisdom as well as the beauty of EXAUDI's disc that gives it the edge.' ***** *Telegraph*

'A stunner, a superb new disc. EXAUDI sing with impeccable definition and accuracy, letting each dissonance burn and scorch until the ear longs for release.' *Observer*

www.exaudi.org.uk

Patrick Hegarty is an experimental composer and performer whose output centres on acoustic sound, electronics, intimacy and deep listening.

His work involves intuition, meditation, and the manipulation of pre-existing materials; often developing works through close collaborations with performers. He creates music populated by close, physical sounds, mantric repetitions and fragments of lamenting melodies.

Patrick has made work for/with performers and ensembles including EXAUDI, Orkest de Ereprijs, House of Bedlam, Lori Freedman, Jennifer Langridge, Benjamin Powell, Oliver Coates, members of the LCO, and members of the Aurora Orchestra. Recent performances of his work have taken place in Durham Cathedral, Barbican Centre, Courtauld Gallery, Milton Court, The state51 Factory, SET Dalston, Hallé St Peters and Bristol Beacon.

He was a 2020 Britten Pears Young artist and is currently studying for a masters at the Guildhall school of Music and Drama with Laurence Crane. Recent projects include a site-specific installation for London's Culture Mile, a work for cello and piano for the Psappha ensemble's 'Composing for...' scheme, and a work for Orkest de Ereprijs after winning the 'Ereprijs commission' in the group's annual International Young Composers Meeting.

Patrick performs as a multi-instrumentalist while maintaining a profound interest in live He is a member and co-founder of the experimental music group, red panel, curating and performing in concerts in London and Berlin.