

Carlo Gesualdo – Sabato Sancto (1996)

Written by bluesever

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Carlo GESUALDO. *Sabato Sancto, Responsories* 01 - 1. *Sicut ovis ad occisionem* [3:45] 02 - 2. *Jerusalem, surge,* [4:05] [play](#) 03 - 3. *Plange quasi virgo* [6:46] 04 - 4. *Recessit pastor noster* [4:00] 05 - 5. *O vos omnes* [4:10] 06 - 6. *Ecce quomodo moritur* [6:01] 07 - 7. *Astiterunt reges terrae* [2:17] 08 - 8. *Aestimatus sum cum descentibus* [4:20] 09 - 9. *Sepulto Domino* [5:35] Carlo GESUALDO. *Motets* 10 - *Ave dulcissima Maria* [4:30] 11 - *Pecantem me quotidie* [4:26] 12 - *Tribularer si nescirem* [3:08] 13 - *Tribulationem et dolorem* [4:08] Sandro GORLI. *Requiem* 14 - *Morti, moriamo ancora...* [2:10] 15 - *Bambino, quando moriro* [4:41] [play](#) 16 - *Prendimi fra le tue braccia* [2:19] 17 - *Livre, livre, molto livre* [1:57] 18 - *Padre, Padre* [2:49]

Ensemble Vocal Européen de La Chapelle Royale: Sopranos 1 - Gundula Anders, Ellen van Ham, Dominique Verkinderen Sopranos 2 - Susanne Norin, Wilke te Brummelstroete, Willemijn van Gent Altos - Vincent Darras, Ralf Popken (#14-18), Kai Wessel (#1-13), Betty van den Berghe Ténors 1 - Simon Berridge, Dantes Diwiak Ténors 2 - Simon Davies, Hervé Lamy Basses - Adrian Peacock, Peter Kooy, Renaud Machart Philippe Herreweghe - director

The revival of early music in recent years has been due not only to instrumentalists who were interested in the instruments and treatises of the period but also to a number of ensembles of singers of a particular type. Musicians, above all, inquisitive, often highly cultured, they combine a substantial, albeit, in the context of the operatic tradition, still somewhat vaguely defined vocal technique, with a new type of sensibility which has won over a large public and thereby created the economic conditions necessary for serious professional work.

Their investigations have led to the uncovering or the restoration of numerous masterpieces of the Renaissance and Baroque periods; this alone would justify their existence. But in addition, the intensive and thorough contact with material as demanding on the level, for instance, of non-tempered accuracy and rhythmic and melodic definition as the motets of Josquin, de Lassus or Gesualdo, has led to the creation of an instrument of great precision, the keystone of which is that dense and luminous sonority, a thousand leagues away from the magnificently

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different operatic aesthetic.

And yet, even if the latter no longer seems to inspire composers (is the Opera not dead?), it is possible that the same is not true of a vocal aesthetic less concerned with the exaltation of the ego.

Because what counts, in the end, is form, the only source of real emotion, and it seems obvious to us that the "new" vocal typology is constitutionally more suitable to serve it.

It is in this spirit that we have decided to devote a part of the activities of the Ensemble Vocal Européen of the Chapelle Royale to newly composed works, with the conviction that the interaction between early and contemporary works will be stimulating in both a technical and a spiritual sense.

We have commissioned a work from Sandro Gorli suitable to our possibilities and destined to be closely associated with the Gesualdo programme we have under way. After the experience of numerous concerts, it now seems logical to include it in the present recording.

Our projects for the future aim at coupling Philippus de Monte and William Byrd with new works by Philippe Boesmans and George Benjamin, the compatriots of these illustrious ancestors. ---
PHILIPPE HERREWEGHE

I've been searching for a superlative performance of the music of Carlo Gesualdo (1560-1613), and now I've found one, right in my own CD collection, purchased at least 15 years ago but still sealed and therefore never played. This CD is a welcome reissue of the one I have.

Gesualdo has become an almost mythical figure - the mad Italian prince who murdered his wife and her lover, and who wrote music that wouldn't be appreciated until the 20th Century. Like

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most myths, this one is nonsense based on facts. Gesualdo was a prince, with the fiscal resources to live his life as he chose, and he chose to compose. He did murder his adulterous wife in 1590, or hired thugs to do it, and fled to his castle in Venosa, not to flee the law but to escape a possible vendetta. His peers probably thought that the murder was necessary to defend his honor and that the couple got what they deserved. This was in Naples, remember. Just three years later, Gesualdo married again, to a daughter of the elevated D'Este family. For that wedding, he traveled to Ferrara, one of the most active musical cities in Italy, where the composer Luzzasco Luzzaschi was busy composing advanced madrigals for the "Three Ladies", famous virtuoso singers of the Ferrara court.

The other myth, that Gesualdo was ahead of his times, is easy to understand upon first hearing his music, which does feature chords and modulations that have the power to surprise even lovers of extreme modernism. Listen longer, and you will recognize that Gesualdo was schooled in the musical language of the Italian madrigalists, who had had taken the emotional temperature of the older Franco-Flemish polyphony into the red zone. In other words, structurally, Gesualdo is not so much different from Palestrina or Lassus. The Prince of Venosa just had the will and the skill to explore the outermost harmonic reaches of Renaissance musical theory.

So... Listening to this CD, within a few bars of the first vocal entrance, you'll hear intersections of the vocal lines - chords - that you've never heard in early music before. But the bizarre harmonies Gesualdo uses are not for musical novelty; they're part of his inflamed word painting. The texts of these devotional motets for *Sabbato Sancto* (Holy Sabbath) are laments over the Crucifixion, the musical match for the picture of the dead Jesus on the CD cover. Flamboyant emotionalism is what sets Gesualdo apart from his peers, not mere dissonances.

Philippe Herreweghe and his Ensemble Vocal Europeen have done the nearly impossible. With a choir of fifteen voices, they have achieved the tight ensemble and perfection of tuning of the best one-on-a-part consort. The sound engineer for this CD has also performed a miracle; all those voices sound utterly human! Distortion is minimal; presence is intimate. Herreweghe is principally a Baroque specialist, whose ventures into Renaissance territory aren't always graceful, but this Gesualdo is a triumph.

The last five tracks of the CD are devoted to a Requiem by the modern composer Sandro Gorli, born in 1948. This Requiem is also an a capella choral piece, ever so similar to Gesualdo in emotional affect yet radically new in musical structure. Just listen to the two in juxtaposition, and I'm sure you'll realize how thoroughly a 16th C composer Gesualdo was. This Requiem is not included merely for contrast, however. Sandro Gorli can write! His Requiem is succinct, tonally

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beautiful, and quite moving, even after your emotional core has been shaken by Do Carlo.
---Giordano Bruno, amazon.pl

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