

CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 2012-2013

LA RISONANZA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012
8 O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING
COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING

The CAROLYN ROYALL JUST FUND in the Library of Congress, established in 1993 through a bequest of the distinguished attorney and symphony player Carolyn Royall Just, supports the presentation and broadcasting of classical chamber music concerts.

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Coolidge Auditorium

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012 — 8:00 PM

THE CAROLYN ROYALL JUST FUND
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

LA RISONANZA

Yetzabel Arias Fernández, soprano
Fabio Bonizzoni, *Artistic Director, harpsichord*

Marco Brolli, *flute*
Carlo Lazzaroni, Rossella Croce and Claudia Combs, *violin*
Gianni de Rosa, *viola*
Caterina Dell'Agnello, *violoncello*
Vanni Moretto, *contrabass*



PROGRAM

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Dorilla in Tempe: Sinfonia, RV 709 (c.1726)

Concerto for violin and cello in B-flat major, RV 547 (unknown)
Allegro moderato, Andante, Allegro molto

Concerto for violin in G minor, RV 315, op. 8, No. 2, "L'estate" (Summer)
from *The Four Seasons* (early 1720s)
Allegro, Adagio, Presto

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

Notte placida e cheta, HWV 142 (c.1707-8)

INTERMISSION

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Concerto for flute and orchestra in G major, RV 437, op. 10, No. 6 (c.1728)
Allegro, Largo, Allegro

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Dietro l'orme fugaci (Armida abbandonata) for soprano, strings and
continuo, HWV 105 (c.1707)

Rodrigo: Passacaille, HWV 5 (1707)

Haec est regina virginum for soprano, strings and continuo, HWV 235
(c.1707)

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

ANTONIO VIVALDI, *Dorilla in Tempe*: Sinfonia, RV 709
Concerto for violin and cello in B-flat major, RV 547
Concerto for violin in G minor, RV 315, op. 8, No. 2, “L'estate”
(Summer) from *The Four Seasons*

Our program this evening begins with a trio of works by Antonio Vivaldi that provides a sense of the breadth and depth of his instrumental music. Vivaldi's opera *Dorilla in Tempe* (RV 709) is a love story involving the lowly and the holy, pitting pastoral affection against Apollonian, with the mortals ultimately winning the day. Most likely composed in 1726, the opera opens with a three-part sinfonia (or overture). The first section of this fast-slow-fast structure opens in a boisterous C major. In a remarkably brief period of time Vivaldi manages to display humor and hints of conflict; this range is broadened with the gorgeous central slow section at the heart of the sinfonia. The innocence of the simple melody above a descending bass line yields to a depth of expression as the music is varied that only a master could achieve in the space of about two and a half minutes.

The final fast section is an example of composer self-pilfering, which was a common practice in Vivaldi's time (along with old-fashioned stealing from other composers). Here we have an immediately recognizable C-major setting of the opening music of “La Primavera” (Spring), op. 8/1 from *The Four Seasons*. Recycling of material, especially if it is good, has been practiced by many composers historically, and is especially understandable given the timetables to which some composers adhered (for instance, try writing a cantata each week without repeating yourself and see if you do not succumb to the occasional plagiaristic impulse). In this case, however, the music from the sinfonia is appropriately integrated into the opera—the opening chorus is a vocal setting of this segment of the familiar “Spring” music.



Vivaldi's double concerto for violin and cello in B-flat major, RV 547 opens energetically, juxtaposing two ideas that complement each other from a motoric standpoint. The first is a descending arpeggio outlining B-flat major, and the second is a swiftly ascending scale that leads back up to the top of the next arpeggio hill. This music is followed by sequential material that will be familiar in effect, as it is a device frequently employed by Vivaldi in his instrumental music. When the soloists enter, the ideas presented first by the orchestra are now elaborated, primarily in two ways: quasi-canonic imitation (e.g. the cello presents a form of the ascending scale/descending arpeggio, and is followed at the peak of the melodic contour “hill” by the violin executing the same music two octaves higher), and unified passagework usually in displaced thirds or sixths. As the movement progresses, Vivaldi's use of sequences allows the music to blossom harmonically, yielding moments of great beauty. The second movement is a brief interlude in F major, showcasing again an imitative technique in the handling of the soloists. The final movement displays Vivaldi's playful side, with offbeat registral accents and alternating virtuosic displays between the two solo instruments.



When Vivaldi published his op. 8 set of violin concerti in 1725 entitled “The Contest of Harmony and Invention” (*Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’inventione*), the first four contributions had already been circulating in performance to popular acclaim. Vivaldi even apologizes for his inclusion of *The Four Seasons* in the dedication of the opus to Count Wenceslas, Count of Morzin, but justifies the act by citing the inclusion of corresponding sonnet texts—a benefit of the print medium, and one that made clear Vivaldi’s programmatic associations. It is not clear who wrote the sonnets, but Vivaldi’s superimposition of specific images from the texts on passages of the music makes a compelling case for some of his musical choices.

The associations are perhaps most instructive in the two minor-key concerti, “Summer” and “Winter” (the second and fourth in the volume). For such a famed and favored work, “Summer” is perhaps the least immediately “hummable” of the set, relying on largely textural and dramatic means to evoke the imagery. The poetic content of the first movement includes ideas as various as languishing in the heat, references to birds (the cuckoo, turtle dove and goldfinch), and winds both gentle and fierce (and a shepherd’s trepidation at the latter). These ideas are generally heard to be represented in the music, which shifts drastically with each new notion. Yet Vivaldi is clever in maintaining a structural hold on the material, utilizing the initial slow, halting music (succumbing to the heat) as a ritornello that returns between episodes.

Vivaldi’s settings of bird calls are interesting in comparison to those of later composers (such as Beethoven, Saint-Saëns, Mahler or Messiaen); with Vivaldi they feel both isolated and integrated, the latter due to his skilful transitions and use of similar melodic shapes (such as a descending scale), sometimes readily apparent and at other times emerging from the texture. A great example of an emergent melody that is easy to recognize is the cuckoo call that appears right after the first “heat” section—the call is here represented by a descending minor third in the middle register, audibly isolated from the activity above and below.

Once the ominous winds temporarily subside at the end of the first movement, the portent of bad weather is intoned in the second. While the accompaniment may be an attempt at simulating the uneven sounds of flies and wasps, in comparison the interruptive quality of thunder is executed especially well. The melodic line in the first violin is forced into irregular phrase lengths, being interrupted by the loud and low thunder after 2.5, 3.5, 6, and again 2.5 measures. The tempest is violently unleashed in the concluding movement, which contains great writing for both the soloist and the ensemble. If one listens to this familiar work with fresh ears, its unique qualities make Vivaldi’s achievement the more remarkable.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL, *Notte placida e cheta*, HWV 142

The opening half of the program concludes with the first of two of George Frideric Handel’s “Italian” cantatas, *Notte placida e cheta*, HWV 142. The secular cantatas composed by Handel (many for solo voice and basso continuo; those heard tonight for solo voice and instruments plus continuo) during his Italian sojourn (near the beginning of the 18th century) are among his least known works, and have been in the past dismissed as preparatory pieces of dubious worth. Recent scholarship and new recordings are giving the lie to that notion, demonstrating the vivacity of these

early Handel works. Both cantatas heard this evening were commissioned by the Marchese Francesca Maria Ruspoli, and probably composed in 1707 based on the evidence of copyist bills (though the *Notte placida* bill dates from 1708).

The opening recitative¹ of *Notte placida* is musically significant—not filler (indeed none of the recitative passages in these two works are dispensable). It is a helpful reminder that Handel was not always as pictured when older and wearing a huge wig—this is the passionate writing of a composer in his twenties, and one sees how such dramatic recitative writing could later influence Mozart. The first aria (“Zeffiretti, deh! venite”) displays a nascent maturity, and the interplay between voice and instruments is beautifully balanced. The arias in general are in *da capo* form, meaning that there is a return to “the head” of the aria at its end (in cases like “Zeffiretti,” the resultant ternary form (ABA) is modified to include repetitions, sometimes with variations, of the starting music).

The “Momento fortunato” of the eponymous recitative that follows the “Zeffiretti” aria is given more prolonged expression in the aria “Per un istante,” a delightful essay in artful instrumentation. An accompanied recitative (with the ensemble participating in full) follows, transitioning to the heartfelt aria “Luci belle,” which beyond its longing manages to convey a coquettish image of the apple of the lover’s eye. Another accompanied recitative follows, melodically adventurous and intensely dramatic. The concluding aria has a shortened fugal structure, with the voice giving the initial presentation of the subject, which bears a passing resemblance to the *Kyrie* fugue subject from Mozart’s *Requiem* (K. 626), in turn based on a theme from Handel’s *Messiah* (HWV 56, Part II, “And with His stripes we are healed”). This is an experimental form for a cantata aria. As Ellen Harris notes, “...*da capo* form dominates in all the cantatas, and in the cantatas for men, there is only one aria not in this form: *Notte placida* ends with a free fugue for voice and instruments. The women’s cantatas, however, offer more variation.”² Harris identifies *Notte placida* as being intended for a male singer, but the text is ambiguous enough for unisex appeal, given the universality of the topic.

ANTONIO VIVALDI, Concerto for flute and orchestra in G major, RV 437, op. 10, No. 6

Vivaldi’s flute concerto in G major, RV 437, is another example of his adapting an earlier work to serve his present purposes. The concerto is based on an earlier chamber concerto (RV 101) for recorder, oboe, bassoon, violin and continuo. In both works, the opening ritornello is presented with all voices together at the octave, with episodes featuring the recorder (RV 101) and flute (RV 437). The chamber concerto itself contains music from an earlier work; as Michael Talbot put it, the “...opening of the *Allemanda* from the violin sonata RV 3 is the basis of the first solo episode in the chamber concerto RV 101 and its later version for flute and strings RV 437...”³

After the notable unison opening, the writing for the flutist is highly virtuosic, maintaining some similarities to the violin writing in the previously heard concerti, but highly ornamented. Because the flute is working against a homogenous string sound,

¹ It is not known who wrote the text for *Notte placida e cheta*. Texts and translations for the vocal works on tonight’s program can be found below.

² Ellen Harris, *Handel as Orpheus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 54.

³ Michael Talbot, *Vivaldi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88.

the flute's distinct timbre is even more apparent (it is likely that Vivaldi did not intend recorder (vertical) and transverse (horizontal) flute parts to be interchangeable, as he specifically indicates "flauto traverso" in his parts where the latter is called for, as in the op. 10 concerti). An astonishing fact of baroque wind music is how little time the composers tended to give the players to breathe—the flute especially requires a great deal of air to play. The slow movement of the concerto RV 437 is highly expressive, and some of its material is integrated into the final *Allegro*, seamlessly leading to the work's conclusion.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL, *Dietro l'orme fugaci* (*Armida abbandonata*) for soprano, strings and continuo, HWV 105

Rodrigo: Passacaille, HWV 5

Haec est regina virginum for soprano, strings and continuo, HWV 235

The second of Handel's cantatas to be heard this evening is *Dietro l'orme fugaci*, often referred to as *Armida abbandonata* (the character of Armida would be a principal in his subsequent opera, *Rinaldo*). J.S. Bach thought highly enough of this cantata to transcribe it himself (a copy exists in his hand). The opening accompanied recitative is enough in itself to see why it would interest him—the breathless drama of the abandoned woman unable to retain her lover is made more urgent with the restless violin accompaniment. The opening aria ("Ah! crudele") is exquisite, with part of its melodic contour to be found in "Lascia ch'io pianga" from Handel's 1711 opera *Rinaldo* on the same subject—an adaptation of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*.⁴ It is no surprise that this music was in Handel's ear, since "Lascia ch'io pianga" enjoyed an earlier life as "Lascia la spina" in his first oratorio, *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno*, composed in 1707—exactly contemporary with *Dietro l'orme fugaci*.

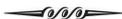
An instrumental introduction starts the next accompanied recitative, perhaps representing the storms of the sea and the monsters therein. Armida wishes for vengeance, then thinks better of it in the aria "Venti, fermate, si." Here the torment of a spurned lover is laid bare, displaying the seething admixture of hatred and unrequited, undying love. In the recitative and final aria, Armida realizes that she must break the bond of love between herself and the unfaithful. She appeals directly to the God of Love for help in "In tanti affanni miei;" the music hauntingly suggests that her entreaties may go unanswered, ending the cantata ambiguously.



As this program evidences, 1707 was a banner year for Handel. His first Italian opera, *Rodrigo*, dates from that year, and though it is not extant in its entirety (it is missing significant portions of the first and third acts, including the ending), its overture consists of a performable suite of orchestral music. The French title of passacaille (instead of the Italian "passacaglia") may be a vestigial leftover from the style and structure of the opening of Handel's opera, which employed the French overture form regularized by Jean-Baptiste Lully (a form that essentially divides the overture into three sections: slow—fast—slow). In the case of *Rodrigo*, the overture proper (with

⁴ *Dietro l'orme fugaci* is based on Canto 16 of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, adaptor unknown.

the requisite tripartite structure) is followed by a suite of dances (more than usual for a Handel opera) that concludes with the passacaille heard tonight. The work is not a passacaglia in the manner of Bach's monumental Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582 (probably written near the time of *Rodrigo's* composition, between 1708 and 1712); Bach's form is perhaps more familiar today, and can be roughly described as a set of variations above a repeating ground bass. Handel's passacaille owes more to the ritornello tradition explored elsewhere in tonight's program; a repeating idea is often varied (though its appearance is occasionally motto-like), and episodes with other material are interspersed throughout.



The program concludes with a lovely antiphon likely dating from 1707, and as the only sacred music represented we hear a different side of Handel. *Haec est regina virginum* may have been part of a Vespers service composed in Rome and served as a Marian antiphon essentially requesting the blessing of the Virgin Mary. The music is more restrained than the dramatic writing present in the secular cantatas, and the main melodic motive presented in the instrumental introduction is utilized in various forms elsewhere in Handel's output. The maturity that crystallizes in *Haec est regina virginum*, and likewise in the other vocal works from the Italian period, shows Handel in control of what are essentially secular and sacred arias, and prefigure his later success as a composer of operas and oratorios.

David Henning Plylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

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Friday, November 30, 2012 – 9:30 p.m.

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Violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved leads an exploration of the Library's Paganini Collection in the riveting lecture/demonstration.

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Texts

Handel: *Notte placida e cheta*

Recitativo

Notte placida e cheta, che col tuo fosco
ammanto porgi grato riposo al mio dolore,
deh! Se potessi almeno col tuo grato sopore
far ch'in sogno vedessi dell'idol mio l'idea
tutta in gioia cangiata ed in sorriso, prove-
rebbe il mio core un paradiso.

Aria

Zeffiretti, deh! venite,
sol da voi porger si ponno
nel mio sen con dolce sonno
mormorando aure gradite.
E allor poi dirò contento,
vagheggiando di mia Fille
non severe le pupille:
pur felice ebbi un momento.

Recitativo

Momento fortunato in cui l'alma s'avviva
quando di vita priva potea restar, da tante
cure e tante, e se in sogno godrò, quel solo
istante, vivrò sempre qual fui, fedele amante.

Aria

Per un istante
se in sogno Amore,
mi fai gjoir,
sempre costante
t'offrisco il core
sino al morir.
A un giust'affetto
questa mercede
non puoi negar,
e un sol diletto
a intatta fede
si può donare.

Accompagnato

Ma già sento che spande l'ali placide e chete
cortese sonno e le pupille aggrava.
Questo misero core tu lo soccorri, Amore; fa
ch'io pur giunga a quel che tanto agogno;
vientene, Amore, i rai già chiudo e sogno.

Aria

Luci belle, vaghe stelle,
pur vi miro placidette,
vezzosette verso me.
Son felice, se mi lice
lo sperare al mio amor
grata mercé.

Recitative

Calm and silent night, who with your dark
mantle bring pleasing repose to my grief;
alas, if you could at least with your welcome
drowsiness make me see in my dreams the
image of my beloved all changed to joy and
smiles, my heart would taste paradise.

Aria

Oh come, gentle zephyrs; by you alone can
comforting breezes be brought into my
breast murmuring with a sweet sound;
and then contented I shall say, as I gaze
lovingly on the kindly eyes of my Fille, I
even had a moment of happiness.

Recitative

Happy moment at which my soul revives,
when it might have remained deprived of its
life by so many, many cares; and if in my
dreams I enjoy that one instant, I will for
ever live as I have been, a faithful lover.

Aria

If, Love, in my dreams, you give me joy for
an instant, I offer you my heart, ever con-
stant until I die.
You cannot deny this reward to a deserving
love, and one single delight can be granted to
pure fidelity.

Accompanied Recitative

But I already feel gracious sleep spreading its
calm and silent wings, and weighing upon
my eyes. Love, assist this wretched heart;
make me now attain what I so long for,
come, Love, I am already closing my eyes
and dreaming.

Aria

Beautiful eyes, lovely stars, now I see you
gentle and charming towards me.
I am happy, if I am allowed to hope for a
kind reward for my love.

Accompagnato

Oh delizie d'amor, sazie mie voglie saranno al fin. Se in mar placido e cheto di gioie e di piacer, ma... chi indiscreto mi rompe il sonno ed ogni ben mi toglie?
Ah, conosca il mortale:

Aria

Che non si dà
qua giù pace gradita,
se non altro che un sogno
è la sua vita.

Accompanied Recitative

O delights of love, my desires will be satisfied in the end. If in a calm and silent sea of joys and pleasure...but...who so indiscreetly interrupts my sleep and robs me of all delight? Ah, let mortal man realise:

Aria

That sweet peace is not granted here on earth, if his life is nothing other than a dream.



Handel: *Dietro l'orme fugaci (Armida abbandonata)*

Accompagnato

Dietro l'orme fugacidel guerrier, che gran tempo in lascivo soggiorno ascoso avea, Armida abbandonata il piè movea; e poi che vide al fine che l'oro del suo crine, i vezzi, i sguardi, i preghi, non han forza che leghi il fuggitivo amante, fermò le stanche piante, e assisa sopra un scoglio, colma di rio cordoglio, a quel leggiero abete, che il suo ben le rapia, le luci affisse, piangendo e sospirando così disse:

Aria

Ah! crudele, e pur ten' vai,
e mi lasci in preda al duolo,
e pur sai che sei tu solo
il diletto del mio cor.
Come, ingrato, e come puoi
involare a questo sen,
il seren de' lumi tuoi
se per te son tutta ardor?

Recitativo

Per te mi struggo, infido, per te languisco,
ingrato; ah! pur lo sai che sol da tuoi bei rai
per te piagato ho il seno, e pur tu m'abbandoni,
infido amante.

Accompanied Recitative

The forsaken Armida followed the fleeing footsteps of the warrior whom she had concealed for so long in lustful retreat; and when at last she realised that the gold of her hair, her charms, her glances, her pleading had no power to hold her runaway lover, she halted her weary feet, and sitting on a rock, overwhelmed by bitter grief, fixed her eyes on that fleet-footed ship which was stealing her beloved from her, and spoke thus, weeping and sighing:

Aria

Ah, cruel man, and so you are going, and leaving me a prey to grief, and yet you know that you alone are my heart's delight. How, ungrateful wretch, how can you rob this heart of the brightness of your eyes, when I burn with passion for you?

Recitative

For you I pine, faithless man, for you I languish, ungrateful one; ah! you well know that because of your lovely eyes alone my heart is love-sick for you, and yet you abandon me, faithless lover.

Accompagnato

O voi, dell'incostante e procelloso mare
orridi mostri, dai più profondi chiostri a
vendicarmi uscite, e contro quel crudel
incrudelitate; sì, sì, sia vostro il vanto e del
vostro rigore, un mostro lacerar di voi
maggiore;
onde, venti che fate, che voi nol sommergete?
Ah! no, fermate.

Aria

Venti, fermate, sì,
nol sommergete, no;
è ver che mi tradi,
ma pur l'adoro.
Onde crudeli, no,
non l'uccidete;
è ver che mi sprezzò,
ma è il mio tesoro.

Recitativo

Ma che parlo, che dico? Ah! ch'io vaneggio;
e come amar potrei un traditore, infelice mio
core? Rispondi, o Dio, rispondi! Ah! che tu
ti confondi, dubbioso e palpitante, vorresti
non amare e vivi amante.
Spezza quel laccio indegno, che tiene avvinto
ancor gl'affetti tuoi. Che fai, misero cor? Ah!
tu non puoi.

Aria

In tanti affanni miei
assistimi almen tu,
Nume d'amore!
E se pietoso sei,
fa ch'io non ami più
quel traditore.

Accompanied Recitative

Oh you dread monsters of the inconstant
and stormy sea, come out from your deepest
lairs to avenge me, and be merciless towards
that cruel man. Yes, yes, let it be a proud
boast for you and for your savagery that you
tear apart a greater monster than yourselves.
Waves, winds, what are you doing, that you
do not engulf him? Ah, no! Stop!

Aria

Oh winds, yes, stop, do not engulf him, no!
It is true that he has betrayed me,
yet I adore him.
Cruel waves, no, do not kill him. It is true
that he has scorned me, but he is my
treasure.

Recitative

But what are these words, what am I saying?
Ah, how am I raving, and how could I love a
traitor, oh my unhappy heart? Answer, oh
God, answer! Ah, for you are troubled;
irresolute and beating fast, you wish not to
love, but you are alive only when loving.
Break that unworthy bond which still en-
slaves your affections. What will you do,
wretched heart? Ah, you cannot.

Aria

In my so great grief, you at least help me,
god of Love!
And if you have pity, make me no longer
love that traitor.

Original texts anonymous

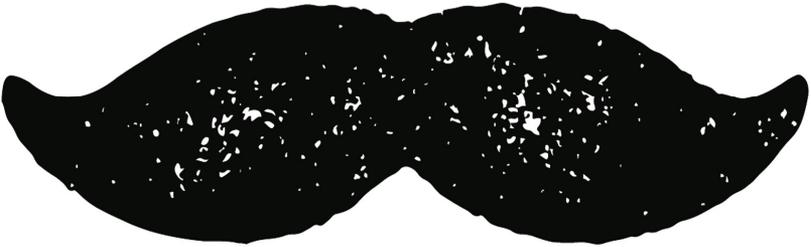
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Handel: *Haec est regina virginum*

Haec est Regina Virginum,
quae genuit Regem velut Rosa decora
Virgo Dei Genitrix per quam reperimus Deus
et homine alma virgo intercede pro nobis.

Behold the Queen of virgins,
Who, like a beautiful rose, gave birth to the King.
Virgin mother of God, through whom we reach both God
And man, please intercede on our behalf.



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PAGANINI



PROJECT



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