



Clavis et Chorda

14TH- AND 15TH-CENTURY MUSIC
FOR STRINGED KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

VANIA DAL MASO

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REDEUNTES

Conrad Paumann (Nuremberg, c. 1410 - Munich, 1473)

01 Redeuntes In Re [7]**

00:54

DANCE INSPIRATION

Anonymous

02 Retrové [1]*

06:31

03 Bel fiore dança [2]*

01:35

04 Stüblin etc. [7]**

03:35

05 Mi ut re ut e c d c: Aliud Mi ut re ut E c d c [7]***

06:30

A MOTET, BALLADS AND MADRIGALS

Anonymous

06 Tribum quem (after Philippe de Vitry) [1]**

02:27

07 C[on] l[agreme] (after Johannes Ciconia) [4]*

02:23

Conrad Paumann (Nuremberg, c. 1410 - Munich, 1473)

08 Con laerime M. C. C. (after Johannes Ciconia) [7]**

03:02

Anonymous

09 [Un fior(e) gentil m'apparse] (after Antonio Zacara da Teramo) [2]***

03:56

10 Che pena questa (after Francesco Landini) [2]** 04:43
11 O ciecho mondo (after Jacopo da Bologna) [2]** 02:37
12 La dolce sere (after Bartolino da Padova) [2]*** 03:04
13 Non na el so amante (after Jacopo da Bologna) [2]*** 02:22

MENSURAE, PRAEAMBULA AND TENORES —————

Adam Illeborgh (c. 1448)

14 Mensura trium notarum supra tenorem Frowe al myn hoffen an dyr lyed [3]** 02:17
15 Mensura duorum notarum eiusdem tenoris [3]*** 01:34

Anonymous

16 Preambulum super g [5]* 00:26
17 Incipit bo(nus Tenor) Leohardi [6]* 01:29
18 Praeambulum super fa [4]** 00:29
19 Paumgartner [4]** 01:16
20 Praeambulum super re [4]*** 00:38
21 Mit ganczem Willen wünsch ich dir [4]*** 01:18
22 En avois [4]* 01:00
23 Annabasanna 3^m [7]** 01:56
24 Ellend du hast [4]*** 01:36

CHANSON INTABULATIONS —————

Anonymous

25 [J'ay pris amours] [7]* 01:13
26 Dulongesux (after Gilles Binchois) [7]*** 02:47

Adam Illeborgh (c. 1448)

27 Praeambulum super d a f et g [3]** 00:55

Anonymous

28 Adyen matres belle (after Gilles Binchois) [7]**

03:21

Running Time

66:08

VANIA DAL MASO

Clavichord *

Hammered Clavicymbalum **

Clavicytherium ***

Sources (listed in chronological order):

- [1] GB-Lbl Add. MS 28550 ('Robertsbridge Codex', 14th century)
- [2] I-FZe MS 117 ('Codex Faenza', early 15th century)
- [3] private collection, tablature of Adam Illeborgh (1448)
- [4] D-B MS Mus. 40613 ('Lochamer Liederbuch', c. 1452-60)
- [5] D-Hs ND VI 3225 (15th century; ms. destroyed in World War II)
- [6] PL-WRU I F 687 (organ tablature, 15th century)
- [7] D-Mbs Mus. ms. 3725 (olim Cim. 352b) ('Buxheimer Orgelbuch', 2nd half of the 15th century)

Library sigla after Online Directory of RISM Library Sigla.

The titles of the individual pieces are given according to the spelling adopted in the modern editions by Dragan Plamenac for the Codex Faenza, Bertha Antonia Wallner for the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, and Willi Apel for the remaining sources.

Instruments (all made by Paolo Zerbinatti):

Clavichord, 2010, after drawings and text by Arnaut de Zwolle (c. 1440)

Hammered Clavicymbalum, 2011, after drawings and text by Arnaut de Zwolle (c. 1440)

Clavicytherium, 2010, after anonymous, late 15th century

Clavis et Chorda

The present recording wishes to bring back sounds from distant times, sounds for which we have no hearing evidence. That is a complex operation requiring multiple skills, based on the study and interpretation of the sources (musical, documentary, literary, iconographic) on both the construction of instruments and the interpretation of the music.

The title chosen for this programme refers to the name given to a key (*clavis*) in the Latin treatises of the late Middle Ages, and to the sound production source of the keyboard instruments used in this recording: the string (*chorda*). The term *clavis* derives from the representation of musical sounds through alphabetic letters, also known as keys. These letters were sometimes written on the instruments to assist the performers. Hence the name *clavis* (singular) or *claves* (plural). There is a reference to this origin also in the names of the keyboard instruments that have been used: they all share the root *clavi-* followed by different suffixes (-*chord*, -*cymbalum*, -*cytherium*).

Likely recipients of the music literature featured in this recording, the clavichord, hammered clavicymbalum, and clavicytherium are documented in Arnaut De Zwolle's treatise and in iconographic sources of the day. Their three diverse mechanical actions (tangence, percussion, and plucking) generate profoundly different sounds and tone-colours, creating three well-defined types of sonority. The clavichord has a soft and intimate sound; the hammered clavicymbalum stands out for its expressive nuances; and the clavicytherium for its dazzling brilliance. Metal strings,

the absence of dampeners (except for the low register) and the consequent sound halo that is generated when pressing more keys consecutively relate the hammered clavicymbalum and the clavicytherium to the hammered dulcimer and the psaltery respectively. The combination of such diverse instruments, with the interplay of sounds and colours produced by their alternation, highlights and enhances the charm of every small piece, played at the instrument that best underlines and accentuates its character and emotional mood.

The Music

The sources from which this project drew range from the oldest known manuscript for keyboard instrument – the Robertsbridge Codex (ca. 1320) – to the Buxheimer Orgelbuch (Buxheim Organ Book), created in the second half of the 15th century (around 1470), thus covering a time span of about a century and a half. These manuscripts all share a type of notation, called tablature, that has the various parts arranged as to give a complete vision of the musical text, allowing the performance of the piece by a single instrumentalist. In the Faenza Codex, both hands use staff notation but in the transalpine sources the left-hand bass part is indicated by letters (or *claves*).

The scribes, as well as the authors of these pieces, are mostly anonymous. Except for sporadic cases, the composer is not mentioned, and it is difficult to ascribe any given piece to a specific author.

Text parts contain abbreviations or abnormal

spellings, making titles at times indecipherable and consequently untranslatable. For this reason, track headings are given according to the transliteration adopted in modern editions (Dragan Plamenac for the Faenza Codex, Bertha Antonia Wallner for the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, and Willi Apel for the other sources), with the addition, in brackets, of the name of the author of the vocal model, when known.

The Choice of Pieces

The various tablatures consulted contain both adaptations of pre-existing vocal pieces and short original pieces. The latter consist of *praeambula* (free written improvisations), dances and pieces based on a *tenor*, or free pieces such as those called *mensura* in the Ileborgh Codex. With the intention of offering a wide stylistic panorama, the chosen music ranges from sources of various geographical provenance, alternating forms, genres, and styles.

This musical journey is divided into the following sections: ***Redeuntes; Dance inspiration; A motet, ballads and madrigals; Mensurae, praeambula and tenores; Chanson Intabulations.***

The programme symbolically opens with a ***Redeuntes***. This term, from the Latin *rēdire*, literally means “returning”. It is, indeed, the return, or the re-creation of sounds from the past that gives meaning to this project. *Redeuntes* are pieces based on a single sound that is repeated in the low register, above which the *discantus* moves freely, alternating phases of intensification and rarefaction, showing the im-

promptu nature of this genre. The *Redeuntes* chosen for this recording is taken from Conrad Paumann's *Fundamentum* in the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, which contains many contrapuntal examples of cadenzas, *ascensus* and *descensus* (ascending and descending passages), and much more didactical material.

The ***Dance inspiration*** group of pieces includes an estampie, *Retrové*, characterised by parallel fifths, and other *basses danses* that take their name from the *tenor* on which they are based: *Belfiore*, *Stublin*, *Mi ut re ut*. The last two, in particular, because of the rhythmic variety and complex ornamental figures that characterise them, raise a doubt: were these pieces truly functional to dancing or a demonstration of ornamentation applied to an existing structure? Probably, had they been created to accompany dancing, they would have a constant and stable metre (as in *Retrové* and in *Bel fiore dança*), in the absence of which what remains is the inspiration to the noble and refined step movements of the elegant Basse dance.

The section entitled ***A motet, ballads and madrigals*** consists of intabulations of pieces of vocal origin: a motet by Philippe de Vitry from *Roman de Fauvel*; the ballad *Con lagreme* by Johannes Ciconia in the simple C. I. [*Con lagreme*] version from the Lochamer Liederbuch and in a more elaborate one from the Buxheimer Orgelbuch; followed by the ballads [*Un fior(e) gentil m'apparse*] and *Che pena questa*; and by the madrigals *O ciecho mondo*,

La dolce sere, and *Non na el so amante* from the Faenza Codex. These intabulations for keyboard instrument, those of the Faenza Codex in particular, are characterised by dense and elaborate diminutions in the upper voice.

Mensurae, preeambula and tenores is a group of pieces drawn from various sources. Of considerable interest are the two *mensurae* from the Ileborgh Codex (1448): *Mensura trium notarum* for the presence of repeated notes that are perfect for a sound medium such as the clavicymbalum, and *Mensura duorum notarum* for the iterated use of specific models. The very concise *Preambulum super g* (published by Willi Apel based on photographic records of a manuscript that was destroyed) precedes the *bo[nus tenor] Leohardi*, from the manuscript IF 687 archived in Wroclaw (15th century). Two more *preeambula* alternate with pieces on the *tenor* from the *Lochamer Liederbuch* (1452): *Paumgartner, Mit ganczem willen*, *Anauois*, and *Ellend du hast*. Inserted among them is *Annabasanna 3^m*, from the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, because it uses the same *tenor* as *Anauois (Une fois avant que mourir)*.

This journey ends with the section entitled ***Chanson Intabulations***, consisting of intabulations of French vocal compositions from the Buxheimer Orgelbuch. In them there is a particular attention to the polyphonic texture, and great rhythmic variety. Even without words, this music shows a strong expressive character deriving from the poetic content of the orig-

inal texts. The first piece, without title, is a very simple version of the famous chanson *J'ay pris amours*. The second one, *Dulongesux*, corresponds to Gilles Binchois's ballad *Deuil angoisseus*. The last track offers two versions of the rondeau *Adieu mes tres belles amours*, also by Gilles Binchois, preceded by a *preeambulum* from Adam Ileborgh's tablature, one of the oldest preludes to have come down to us, remarkable for rhythmic freedom and breadth of melodic line.

Stylistic Characteristics

Except for rare cases, compared to the original vocal models, intabulations present dense ornamentation, long series of fast notes, which suggests that the author of the intabulation had in mind a slower tempo than the author of the original piece. The wealth of ornamentation at times almost obscures the upper voice's melodic line. Characteristic ornamental figures are, however, identifiable, and being different for each source they provide a sort of stylistic vocabulary, thanks to which it is possible to distinguish between sources. This vocabulary of diminutions contributes to enhance the music itself and to lay the foundations of the musical discourse, of its grammar, syntax, and expressiveness. Agogic indications are absent. For the choice of tempo – slow, fast, or intermediate – one must refer to the character of the piece: if the mood is joyous, a faster pace is suitable; if it is woeful, a slower one is preferable.

Tuning

Last but not least. The expressive effectiveness of these instruments and of their music also passes through tuning. Our choice went to the Pythagorean tuning and is motivated by the fact that through the contrast between pure intervals (for perfect consonances: fourths, fifths and octaves) and impure ones (for imperfect ones: thirds and sixths), it highlights the harmonic qualities (in the sense of *discordia concors*) of both instruments and music. Pythagorean tuning favours the musical sense because in much music of that period the prevailing sonority is given by the interval of an open fifth, which concludes most of the pieces.

Vania Dal Maso

(Translated by Daniela Pilarz)

Vania Dal Maso is a performer-scholar appreciated for her work in the field of early music, with special experience in the research, interpretation, and dissemination of medieval and renaissance repertoire. She graduated from the Conservatories of Venice and Padua in Piano, Harpsichord, Choral Music and Choral Conducting. Since 1998 she has joined Bologna's Accademia Filarmonica as harpsichordist. As a tenured professor, she taught Music Notation and Renaissance Music Theory at the Conservatory of Verona until 2023. She held lectures in Sweden, Denmark, and Germany as part of the LLP/ERASMUS teaching mobility programme. Her expertise and interests are centred both

on historically informed performance and on the research and study of musical sources of the past. Dal Maso is especially dedicated to the literature for stringed keyboard instruments of the 15th to 18th centuries (clavicymbalum, clavicytherium, clavichord, harpsichord), to the original sources and performing practice of those ages, with concerts, conferences and master classes in Italy and abroad.

She has appeared in Italy, Austria, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, performing a repertoire ranging from medieval to 21st-century music. Regularly she participates in national and international conferences in Italy and Europe, presenting studies and performances on keyboard instruments (Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference: Munich 2023, Basel 2019; International Conference "The Harpsichord in the 16th century" University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna: Wien 2021, Bologna 2023; Società Italiana di Musicologia: Milano 2024, Cremona 2022, Verona 2014; Convegno internazionale Rivista Polifonie: Arezzo 2021; "Il discorso musicale" Athena Musica - Università di Bologna 2021). Thanks to invitations from various music conservatories (Alessandria, Florence, Pesaro, Venice, Vicenza) to hold seminars and master classes on the clavichord, clavicymbalum and clavicytherium, she has considerably contributed to these instruments' revival, attracting the interest of participants.

Dal Maso has moreover held several public lectures: among them "ri-Creazioni" (Associazione Athena Musica - Università di Bologna) at

the International Museum and Music Library of Bologna, where, illustrating works there kept, she explored Renaissance music theory topics. Dal Maso is the author of the book *Teoria e Pratica della Musica Italiana del Rinascimento* (LIM, 2017), favourably received by the critics (Early Music Review, Il Giornale della Musica, Athena Musica); she has published *Il secondo libro degli motetti di Bartolomeo Barbarino* (SPES, 2007), and *Sonate per Clavicembalo di*

Autori veneziani (Armelin Musica, 2005), and has written several articles and essays. She has recorded the CDs *Il clavicembalo a Venezia* and *Johann Adolf Hasse nella Serenissima*, with unpublished music from the 18th century.

www.vaniadalmaso.it

Clavichord

This small instrument, light and easy to carry, mainly intended for domestic performances, was reconstructed on the basis of texts and images found in a 1440 manuscript by Arnaut de Zwolle.

Although it only has 10 courses of strings, it can perform as many as 37 notes, for each course can be struck by three or even four tangents, which are spaced out and placed on the keys' tails; the limited number of strings leaves the soundboard freer to resonate.

Hammered Clavicymbalum

In the same manuscript by Arnaut de Zwolle we find the description of an instrument with the typical wing shape, for which different mechanisms are suggested, three plucked like that of the harpsichord, and a percussion one like the piano's, which is the one that was adopted for this reconstruction.

This type of mechanism is much simpler, though similar in concept, than that of the future fortepiano; the resulting sound is silvery and light, less powerful but capable of good dynamics. It is particularly apt for the performance of repeated notes, which are present in pieces of the period and are not well suited to the organ or the harpsichord.

Clavicytherium

The instrument used for this recording is the partly hypothetical reconstruction of a 15th-century original instrument, now in the collections of the Royal College of London. It is the only extant medieval stringed keyboard instrument, which, however, has come to us greatly tampered with and altered.

The clavicytherium is, in essence, a harpsichord with the soundboard mounted vertically, therefore having a more complex mechanism. Because both its soundboard and back, which is rather thin, are vertical, the sound can propagate better and the instrument can more easily sing, embodying the medieval sound ideal of sweetness and softness.

Paolo Zerbinatti (Translated by Daniela Pilarz)



Clavichord



Hammered Clavicymbalum



Clavicytherium

CDS8079

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