

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 20 June 2022 7.30pm

#solomonteverdi

**Raffaele Pe** countertenor

**La Lira di Orfeo**

**Anaïs Chen** violin, tenor violin

**Chiara Granata** triple harp

**Gawain Glenton** cornet, flutes

**Simone Vallerotonda** theorbo, Spanish guitar

**André Lislevand** viola da gamba

**Davide Pozzi** harpsichord

**Guisella Massa** violone

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**Claudio Monteverdi** (1567-1643)

Sì dolce è'l tormento SV332 (pub. 1624)

E pur'io torno from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* SV308 (1642-3 rev. 1651)

**Giovanni Paolo Cima** (c.1570-1630)

Sonata for violin and violone (pub. 1610)

**Claudio Monteverdi**

Salve Regina SV327 (1625)

**Dario Castello** (1602-1631)

Sonata Seconda from *Sonate concertate in stil moderno, libro secondo*  
(pub. 1629)

**Claudio Monteverdi**

Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius SV287 (pub. 1641)

From *Orfeo* SV318 (1607)

Rosa del ciel • Vi ricorda, o boschi ombrosi

**Anon**

Gagliarda 'La rocha el fuso'

**Claudio Monteverdi**

Oblivion soave from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* SV308 (1642-3 rev. 1651)

Voglio di vita uscir SV337 (pub. 1624)

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**Claudio Monteverdi** (1567–1643) wrote a report on 9 June 1610 about having just auditioned a male alto singer for potential recruitment to the household musicians of Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. He took him into the cathedral and had him perform a motet from the organ loft, hearing ‘a fine voice, powerful and sustained’, one likely to do well on stage, and with ‘a very good *trillo* and decent ornamentation [*gorgia*]’. Such auditions were part of Monteverdi’s job as the duke’s *maestro della musica*, a position he had held since 1601. But the qualities he was looking for in this alto – what we would today call a countertenor singing falsetto – were quite different from what would have been required just a few decades earlier. Now singers were expected to sing solo; they needed to have agile voices able to perform virtuosic embellishments; and they had to be able to perform in quite different environments, ranging from the church to the theatre.

Performers able to combine all these abilities were highly prized, and could make their fortune for as long as their voices lasted. The fashion for them also forced some drastic changes in musical style around 1600, moving away from Renaissance polyphony (think Palestrina) into a much more flamboyant Baroque mode of writing for solo voice(s) and instrumental accompaniment. Within sacred music of the time, the driving force was the attempt of the Catholic Church to reestablish its position by way of the so-called Counter Reformation: congregations needed to be wooed away from Protestantism not just by preaching but also by seductive musical performances. In secular spheres, the emergence of opera in Florence and Mantua – then heading into the ‘public’ opera houses of Venice in the late 1630s – created a whole new set of artistic and economic opportunities for professional singers, whether male or (and increasingly) female. Monteverdi’s first opera, *Orfeo*, written for Mantua in 1607, made the point, as did his last one for Venice, *L’incoronazione di Poppea* (1643).

The subject of that first opera is revealing: Orpheus was, of course, the greatest singer of Classical Antiquity who, so Shakespeare tells us, ‘with his lute made trees / and the mountain tops that freeze / bow themselves, when he did sing’. The power of his song to move even the gods of the Underworld could now be brought back to life on the Baroque stage. But where, precisely, did this power lie? In *Orfeo*, Monteverdi is ambivalent: he shifts between a lyrical declamatory style (in Orfeo’s Act I address to the sun, ‘Rosa del ciel’), a more elaborate virtuosic one (in his central

plea at the gates of Hades), and strong triple-time melodies, as with Orfeo’s dance-song, ‘Vi ricorda, o boschi ombrosi’, at the beginning of Act II. But there was no real competition: in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* almost all the expressive moments are in triple time, whether for the love-struck Ottone cuckolded by the Emperor Nero (‘E pur io torno’) or Poppea’s nurse, Arnalta, singing a lullaby (‘Oblivion soave’). It is hard to resist such sensuous singing.

Monteverdi also brought this style into the chamber. His ‘Si dolce è il tormento’ (published in 1624) takes a text that had been set at least twice by his competitors in Venice and shows them what to do with it: a deceptively simple melodic line (in effect, a descending scale) that is somehow ineffably beautiful. Here he repeats the same music for each stanza of the text, and glad we are for that. However, in ‘Voglio di vita uscir’ – which survives in two posthumous manuscripts – he turns the stanzas of the text into a through-composed setting over a repeating ground-bass pattern (the so-called *ciaccona*) in a different display of how to ring the vocal changes over a simple chord sequence. That technique worked well enough in sacred music as well: Monteverdi’s ‘Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius’ (published in his *Selva morale e spirituale* of 1641) sustains it through Psalm 150, where the Lord should be praised in various musical ways, until he shifts to a different form of vocal extravagance towards the end. However, in his more supplicatory ‘Salve Regina’ setting published in 1625, he mixed embellished singing instead with a more declamatory style of delivery. Either way, this is what Monteverdi was looking for in that alto he auditioned in 1610.

In principle, the text should matter in this music, although one starts to wonder when we just revel in the sound of the human voice. Instrumental composers took the cue. Giovanni Paolo Cima, an organist in Milan, and Dario Castello, a wind-player in Venice, each sought to forge a new musical rhetoric absent any words, as if it was Orpheus’s lute, rather than his voice, that had made such powerful effects. But the result was the same: music must ravish the ear, and composers and performers in early Baroque Italy could do that perfectly.

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## Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

### Sì dolce è'l tormento

SV332 (pub. 1624)

*Anonymous*

Sì dolce è'l tormento  
Ch'in seno mi sta  
Ch'io vivo contento  
Per cruda beltà.  
Nel ciel di bellezza  
S'accreschi fierezza  
Et manchi pietà,  
Che sempre qual scoglio  
All'onda d'orgoglio  
Mia fede sarà.

La speme fallace  
Rivolgam' il piè,  
Diletto ne pace  
Non scendano a me,  
E l'empia ch'adoro  
Mi nieghi ristoro  
Di buona mercè:  
Tra doglia infinita  
Tra speme tradita  
Vivrà la mia fè.

(Per foco e per gelo  
Riposo non ho  
Nel porto del Cielo  
Riposo haverò...  
Se colpo mortale  
Con rigido strale  
Il cor m'impiegò  
Cangiando mia sorte  
Col dardo di morte  
Il cor sanerò...)

Se fiamma d'amore  
Già mai non senti  
Quel rigido core  
Ch'il cor mi rapì,  
Se nega pietate  
La cruda beltate  
Che l'alma invaghì:  
Ben fia che dolente  
Pentita e languente  
Sospirami un dì.

### So sweet is the pain

So sweet is the pain  
I feel in my heart  
that I am happy to live for  
one who is heartless but lovely.  
In the heaven of beauty  
let cruelty flourish  
and mercy fail,  
for my loyalty will,  
like a rock, withstand  
a torrent of pride.

Let illusory hope  
turn its back on me,  
let me be filled with  
neither joy nor peace.  
And let the pitiless object of my love  
refuse me the solace  
of gentle mercy:  
amid endless sorrow,  
amid hope betrayed,  
my fidelity will live on.

(From fire and ice  
I will find no repose;  
only at the gate of Heaven  
shall I find repose...  
should the deadly strike  
of an arrow  
injure my heart,  
my heart shall heal  
by changing my lot  
with that arrow of death...)

If the flame of love  
has never warmed  
the unfeeling heart  
that has stolen mine from me,  
if the cruel beauty  
who has bewitched my soul  
denies me any pity,  
then let her one day,  
repentant and languishing,  
suffer and yearn for me.

### E pur'io torno from

#### *L'incoronazione di*

#### *Poppea SV308*

(1642-3 rev. 1651)

*Giovanni Francesco Busenello*

E pur'io torno qui, qual linea al  
centro,  
Qual foco a sfera e qual ruscello  
al mare,  
E se ben luce alcuna non m'appare,  
Ah! so ben io, che sta'l mio sol  
qui dentro.

Caro tetto amoroso,  
Albergo di mia vita, e del mio bene,  
Il passo e'l cor ad inchinarti  
viene.

Apri un balcon, Poppea,  
Col bel viso in cui son le sorti  
mie,  
Previene, anima mia, precorri il  
die.

Sorgi, e disgombrà omai,  
Da questo ciel caligini, e tenebre  
Con il beato aprir di tue palpebre.

Sogni, portate a volo,  
Fate sentire in dolce  
fantasia  
Questi sospir alla diletta mia.  
Ma che veggio, infelice?  
Non già fantasmi o pur notturne  
larve,  
Son questi i servi di Nerone; ahi,  
ahi dunque  
Agl' insensati venti  
Io diffondo i lamenti.  
Necessito le pietre a deplorarmi.  
Adoro questi marmi,  
Amoreggio con lagrime un balcone,  
E in grembo di Poppea dorme  
Nerone.

Ha condotti costoro,  
Per custodir se stesso dalle frodi.  
O salvezza de' Principi infelice:  
Dormon profondamente i suoi  
custodi.

Ah', ah', perfida Poppea,  
Son queste le promesse e i  
giuramenti,  
Ch'accessero il cor mio?  
Questa è la fede,  
O dio, dio, dio!  
Io son quell' Ottone,

### And yet I return

And yet I return, like a line to  
the centre,  
like fire to the daystar, and a  
stream to the sea,  
and although no light is visible,  
ah, I know indeed that my sun is  
within.

Dear, beloved home,  
abode of my love and my life,  
my steps and my heart make me  
bow down to you.

Open a window, Poppea,  
with that fair face, which holds  
my destiny,  
come, my soul, rise before the  
morn.

Arise and, opening your lovely eyes,  
dispel at last from the skies  
these mists and shadows.

O dreams, as you fly  
in sweet fancy, carry these my  
sighs  
to my beloved.  
But what do I see? O woe!  
These are no phantoms or  
nocturnal ghosts:  
these are Nero's guards!  
Alas,  
thus to the unfeeling winds  
I express my woes,  
I beg mere stones for pity,  
I worship marble columns,  
and weep for love of a window,  
while Nero sleeps in Poppea's  
arms!

He has ordered his guards  
to protect him from traitors.  
Ah, the unhappy safety of princes!  
His guards are fast  
asleep!

Ah, perfidious Poppea,  
are these the promises and  
vows  
that kindled love in my heart?  
Is this fidelity?  
O gods!  
I am the same Ottone

Che ti seguì,	who followed you,
Che ti bramò,	longed for you,
Che ti servì, quell' Otton	served you, that Ottone
Che t'adorò,	who adored you,
Che per piegarti e intenerirti il core	who, in order to move and change your heart,
Di lagrime imperlò preghi devoti,	shed precious tears of entreaty,
Gli spirti a te sacrificando in voti.	sacrificing to you his reason.
M'assicurasti al fine	You promised me at last
Ch'abbracciate avrei nel tuo bel seno	that in your embrace, upon your fair breast,
Le mie beatitudini amorose;	I would find my amorous bliss:
Io di credula speme il seme sparsi,	I scattered the seeds of credulous hope,
Ma l'aria e'l cielo a' danni miei rivolto...	but the wind and the heavens have turned against me...

## Giovanni Paolo Cima (c.1570-1630)

**Sonata for violin and violone** (pub. 1610)

## Claudio Monteverdi

**Salve Regina SV327**

(1625)

*Liturgical text*

Salve Regina, mater misericordiae:	Hail, O Queen, mother of mercy;
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.	our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail.
Ad te clamamus, o Regina,	To you we cry out, O Queen,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes	to you we sigh, mourning and weeping
In hac lacrimarum valle.	in this valley of tears.
Eia ergo, o advocata nostra, illos tuos	Then, O gracious advocate, turn
Misericordes oculos ad nos converte.	towards us your merciful eyes.
Et lesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,	And show us the blessed fruit of your womb,
Nobis post hoc exilium ostende.	Jesus, after this exile.
O clemens, o pia,	O gentle one, O holy,
O dulcis virgo Maria.	O sweet virgin Mary.

## Dario Castello (1602-1631)

**Sonata Seconda from *Sonate concertate in stil moderno, libro secondo*** (pub. 1629)

## Claudio Monteverdi

**Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius SV287** (pub. 1641)

*Liturgical text*

Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius;	Praise the Lord in his sanctuary;
Laudate eum in firmamento virtutis eius.	praise him in the firmament of his power.
Laudate eum in sono tubae;	Praise him in the sound of the trumpet;
Laudate eum in psalterio et cithara.	praise him upon the psaltery and harp.
Laudate eum in tympano et choro.	Praise him in the timbrels and choir.
Laudate eum in cymbalis bene sonantibus;	Praise him upon the well-tuned cymbals,
Laudate eum in cymbalis iubilationibus.	praise him upon the joyful cymbals.
Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum! Alleluia.	Let every spirit praise the Lord! Alleluia.

**From *Orfeo* SV318** (1607)

*Alessandro Striggio*

**Rosa del ciel**

Rosa del ciel, vita del mondo, e degna  
 Prole di lui che l'universo affrena,  
 Sol, che 'l tutto circonda e 'l tutto miri  
 Dagli stellanti giri:  
 Dimmi, vedesti mai  
 Di me più lieto e fortunato amante?  
 Fu ben felice il giorno,  
 Mio ben, che pria ti vidi,  
 E più felice l'ora  
 Che per te sospirai,  
 Poich'al mio sospirar tu sospirasti;  
 Felicissimo il punto  
 Che la candida mano,  
 Pegno di pura fede, a me porgesti.  
 Se tanti cori avessi  
 Quanti occhi ha 'l ciel eterno, e quante chiome  
 Han questi colli ameni il verde maggio,  
 Tutti colmi sarieno e traboccanti  
 Di quel piacer ch'oggi mi fa contento.

**Praise the Lord in his sanctuary**

**Rose of heaven**

Rose of heaven, light of the world, and worthy offspring of him who holds the universe in thrall,  
 O Sun, who dost encircle and see all  
 from thy celestial orbits,  
 tell me, hast thou ever seen a lover more joyful and fortunate than I?  
 Happy indeed was the day, my dearest, when first I saw you, and happier still the hour when I sighed for you, since you too sighed at my sighing;  
 happiest of all the moment when you gave me your white hand as a pledge of pure faith.  
 Had I as many hearts as eternal heaven has eyes,  
 Or these pleasant hills and verdant May have leaves, all would be full to overflowing with that joy which today delights me.

## Vi ricorda, o boschi ombrosi

Vi ricorda, o boschi ombrosi,  
De' miei lunghi aspri tormenti,  
Quando i sassi a' miei lamenti  
Rispondean fatti pietosi?

Dite, allor non vi sembrai  
Più d'ogni altro sconsolato?  
Or fortuna ha stil  
cangiato  
Ed ha volto in festa i guai.

Vissi già mesto e dolente,  
Or gioisco e quegli affanni  
Che sofferti ho per tant'anni  
Fan più caro il ben  
presente.

Sol per te, bella Euridice,  
Benedico il mio tormento,  
Dopo il duol vie più contento,  
Dopo il mal vie più felice.

## Anon

### Gagliarda 'La rocha el fuso'

## Claudio Monteverdi

### Oblivion soave from

#### *L'incoronazione di*

*Poppea* SV308 (1642-3 rev.  
1651)

*Giovanni Francesco Busenello*

Adagiati, Poppea,  
Acquietati, anima mia:  
Sarai ben custodita.

Oblivion soave  
I dolci sentimenti  
In te, figlia, addormenti.  
Posatevi, occhi ladri;  
Aperti, deh, che fate,  
Se chiusi ancor  
rubate?  
Poppea, rimanti in pace;  
Luci care e gradite,  
Dormite omai, dormite.

## Do you remember, O shady groves

Do you remember, O shady groves,  
my long, harsh torments,  
when the rocks at my laments  
responded in pity?

Say, then did I not seem to you  
more disconsolate than any other?  
Now fortune has changed her  
course  
and has turned woes into joy.

I lived then in sadness and sorrow,  
now I rejoice, and those torments  
that I suffered for so many years  
make my present happiness the  
dearer.

Only through you, fair Eurydice,  
I bless my torment;  
after sorrow one is more content,  
after ill fortune one is happier.

### May sweet oblivion

Lie down, Poppea,  
calm yourself, my dear soul:  
you will be well guarded.

May sweet oblivion  
give rest to your tender thoughts,  
my daughter.  
Rest, thieving eyes;  
why open at all  
when you still beguile us while  
closed?  
Poppea, rest peacefully;  
dear, lovely eyes,  
sleep now, sleep.

## Voglio di vita uscir SV337 (pub. 1624)

*Anonymous*

Voglio di vita uscir, voglio che  
cadano

Quest'ossa in polve e queste  
membra in cenere,

Che i singulti miei tra l'ombre  
vadano.

Già che quel piè ch'ingemma  
l'erbe tenere

Sempre fugge da me, ne lo  
trattengono

I laci, ohimè, del bel fanciul di  
Venere.

Vo che gl'abissi il mio cordoglio  
vedano,

E l'aspro mia martir le furie  
piangano,

E che i dannati al mio tormento  
cedano.

A Dio crudel, gl'orgogli tuoi  
rimangano

A incrudelir con gl'altri. A te  
rinuncio,

Ne vo' più che mie speme in te  
si frangano.

S'apre la tomba, il mio morir  
t'annunzio.

Una lagrima spargi, et alfin  
donami

Di tua tarda pietade un solo  
nuntio,

E s'amando t'offesi, homai  
perdonami.

## I want to leave this life behind

I want to leave this life behind, I  
want these bones

to crumble to dust and these  
limbs to turn to ashes,

I want my sobs to fade into the  
shadows.

For the feet that grace the  
tender grass

always run from me, and alas,  
are not bound

by the shackles of Venus's fair  
son.

I want hell's abyss to see my  
grief,

the Furies to weep over my  
agonies,

and the damned to yield before  
my torment.

Fairwell, cruel one, let your  
pride remain

to persecute others. I renounce  
you,

I no longer want my hopes to be  
shattered by you.

The tomb is open, I give you  
warning of my death.

Shed a tear for me, and give me  
at last

the merest hint that you, too  
late, take pity on me;

and if by loving you I have given  
offence, forgive me.

*Translations of 'Si dolce è'l tormento' and 'Voglio di vita uscir' by Susannah Howe. 'E pur'io torno' by Mary Pardoe. 'Oblivion soave' by James Halliday.*