

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 30 May 2025  
7.30pm

## Anima Mia: Madrigali a 5 voci, libro Quarto

### Collegium Vocale Gent

Philippe Herreweghe director

Kristen Witmer soprano

Barbora Kabátková mezzo-soprano

Marine Fribourg mezzo-soprano

Benedict Hymas tenor

David de Winter tenor

Jimmy Holliday bass

Jonas Nordberg lute

Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

Luci serene e chiare (1596)

Tal'hor sano desio

Io tacerò, ma nel silenzio mio

Invan dunque o crudele

Che fai meco, mio cor

Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger (c.1580-1651)

Toccata No. 1 (pub. 1611)

Carlo Gesualdo

Questa crudele e pia

Hor che in gioia

O sempre crudo Amore

Cor mio, deh, non piangete

Dunque non m'offendete

Spargi la morte al mio Signor

Alessandro Piccinini (1566-1638)

Toccata cromatica (pub. 1623)

Carlo Gesualdo

Moro, e mentre sospiro

Quando di lui la sospirata vita

Mentre gira costei

A voi, mentre il mio core

Ecco, morirò dunque

Ahi, già mi discoloro

Alessandro Piccinini

Toccata XIII (1623)

Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger

Canario (1640)

Carlo Gesualdo

Arde il mio cor

Se chiudete nel core

Il sol, qual or più splende

Volgi, mia luci



### UNDER 35S

Supported by the AKO Foundation  
Media partner Classic FM

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## Gesualdo – Anima Mia

‘Anima mia!’ – ‘my soul!’ exclaims the anguished composer of madrigals, burning with love. In Italy, this choral song form was a vehicle for the most passionate expression of desire, the poet declaring ardour in extreme terms often analogous to violent death. In England the madrigal became a pretty ditty with a falala refrain, but in the hot-blooded Mediterranean it was a different musical concept. You will hear those title words sung with powerful, solemn intensity four times at the climax of this concert. Oh. My. Soul.

The composer Carlo Gesualdo murdered his wife and her lover in a *crime passionel* for the sake of family honour in Naples on 16 October 1590. The perpetrator was the 30-year-old cuckolded heir to the aristocratic title Prince of Venosa which he became the following year when his father died. Gesualdo had written very little music before that date but over the following decade he published six volumes of madrigals – of which the fourth containing 21 numbers is performed in its entirety in this programme. Many presume, with good reason, that Gesualdo’s agonised dissonances, stuttering, gossipy fugal entries, stunned silences, aching suspensions and bitter harmonic twists as well as the book’s sombre death-fixated texts derive from his violent blood-soaked past.

The crime was carried out with planning and extreme brutality. Gesualdo, aware of his wife’s adultery, announced that he was going hunting but instead returned to his house with three accomplices armed with swords and guns to surprise the lovers *in flagrante delicto*. Many reports were written, both florid and factual. It seems the accomplices shot the man who had bullet wounds both through his elbow and into his chest and through his temple, splattering his brain against the furniture. Gesualdo himself slit his wife’s throat. Both bodies were subsequently pierced with sword and dagger thrusts.

In the horrified silence that followed the event, Gesualdo turned himself in to the Viceroy of Naples and then returned to Castle Gesualdo, the family seat in the eponymous town 50 miles east of Naples. It is not known how his father reacted or indeed whether he had put him up to it. We do know that Gesualdo senior had introduced his son to music as he employed musicians at the castle, among them singers, lutenists, a harpist and composers, and that this retinue continued in service after Carlo became the Prince. It seems the murderer consoled himself in music, turning to strangely twisted choral harmony his remorse, torture, punishment. It is also understood that he had himself physically whipped by a servant scourging himself not only with chords but also with cords.

Once the outrage had died down, Gesualdo remarried in 1594, this time into the Este family at Ferrara 300 miles north of Naples, scene of a famously glittering artistic court of musicians, painters and poets. The fact that the groom was a murderer was glossed over, it

seems, as a minor blemish, which, once the sordid details had been forgotten, could be excused as an honourable act of just retribution. The marriage was advantageous to both parties: it linked the Duke of Ferrara, head of the Este clan, with an influential cardinal at Rome who happened to be Gesualdo’s uncle, and it enabled the music-obsessed Gesualdo to enter the orbit of some of the greatest composers in Europe.

Gesualdo was not content merely to enjoy music but was compelled by an inner drive to compose it. This was unusual in an aristocrat whose expected relationship with art was as patron. Creativity was for the professional classes, not a prince. Indeed, Gesualdo published his first book of madrigals in 1594 under a pseudonym. Thereafter he issued his works in his own name, but not with the intent of reaping a profit, rather as if entering the confessional, baring his wounds to the world.

Gesualdo remained in Ferrara with his new wife for two years absorbing the atmosphere provided by such as Lassus, Willaert, de Wert, Rore and Frescobaldi. He befriended the poet Torquato Tasso and set his lyrics and became familiar with the art of Titian and Mantegna, the best known of a great studio of artists employed by the Este family. He composed and published at Ferrara the madrigals of his fourth book which showed in musical form the new mannered style in painting, the harsh, dissonant colours, distorted shapes, contorted bodies, elongated necks, limbs and fingers now known as mannerism. These same adjectives apply also to Gesualdo’s music in this concert. He distends chords with chromatic movement in individual parts, shifts abruptly between adjacent major chords of C and E or F and A, delights in harsh dissonance and uses silence with dramatic intensity.

It is in the 15th madrigal that you will hear the fourfold repetition of *Anima Mia*. Prolonged silence separates each pair. Immediately beforehand, Gesualdo sets the word *sospiri* – sigh – with a gasping rest before the third syllable. Recurrent through the madrigals are the words *languire* (languish), *moro* (die), *ardo* (ardour), *crudele* (cruel), *serene* (stillness) and others expressive of consuming romantic love. The mood is not entirely anguished and bursts of delight in playful melismatic settings of the word *gioia* (joy) break through the clouds.

Gesualdo returned to Gesualdo in 1596 alone, his wife joining him almost a year later. Already, it seems the relationship had soured through his gloomy obsession with music, his masochism and his desire for solitude. Although no physical abuse is reported, it is clear from his wife’s letters to her family that she endured psychological torment from her husband. Respite in the concert comes in theorbo solos by composers known to Gesualdo: Kapsberger, who transcribed many of his vocal works, and Piccinini, who made him a gift of two lutes.

© Rick Jones 2025

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*

## Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

### Luci serene e chiare (1596)

*Ridolfo Arlotti*

Luci serene, e chiare,  
Voi m'incendete, voi, ma  
prova il core  
Nell'incendio diletto, non  
dolore.  
Dolci parole care,  
Voi mi ferite, voi, ma prova il  
petto,  
Non dolor nella piaga, ma  
diletto.  
O miracol d'amore!  
Alma, che è tutta foco e tutta  
sangue,  
Si strugg'e non si duol, mor'e  
non langue.

### Serene and limpid eyes

Serene and limpid eyes,  
you inflame me, yet my  
heart  
feels pleasure, not pain,  
amid the flames.  
Dear, sweet words,  
you injure me, yet my  
breast  
feels no pain, only  
pleasure, in its injury.  
O miracle of love!  
A soul filled with flames  
and blood  
its tortured without pain,  
dies without languishing.

### Tal'hor sano desio *Anonymous*

Tal'hor sano desio  
vuol che morendo ancida  
ogni mia doglia,  
ma io di pianger vago, o fiera  
voglia,  
amo la vita solo,  
perché il mio pianto,  
eterni eterno  
duolo.

### At times, an honest desire

At times, an honest desire  
longs for death to dispatch  
my every sorrow,  
but, o fierce desire, I  
yearn to weep,  
and cling to life only  
that my tears may  
immortalise my eternal  
grief.

### Io tacerò, ma nel silenzio mio

*Anonymous*

Io tacerò, ma nel silenzio  
mio  
le lagrime e i sospiri  
diranno i miei martiri.  
Ma se avverrà ch'io mora  
griderà poi per me la morte  
ancora.

### I shall be silent, but in my silence

I shall be silent, but in my  
silence  
my tears and sighing  
will tell of my suffering.  
And, should I die,  
death will still cry out on  
my behalf.

### Invan dunque o cru dele

*Anonymous*

Invan dunque, o  
cru dele,  
vuoi che' mio duol  
e'l tuo rigor si  
cele,  
poi che mia cruda sorte  
dà la voce al silenzio ed a la  
morte.

### In vain, therefore, o cruel one

In vain, therefore, o cruel  
one,  
do you desire that my  
pain and your severity  
be concealed,  
since my cruel fate  
gives voice to silence and  
to death.

### Che fai meco, mio cor *Anonymous*

Che fai meco,  
mio cor misero e  
solo?  
Deh, vanne omai là  
dove  
sue grazie amor da due  
begli occhi piove.  
Apri a la gioia il seno,  
né ti doglia il morir se verrai  
meno,  
poichè non è  
ch'aspire  
mortal di girne al ciel e non  
morire.

### What are you doing to me?

What are you doing to  
me, my wretched,  
lonely heart?  
Ah, go now to the place  
where  
love's graces rain down  
from two beautiful eyes.  
Open up my breast to joy,  
and if your strength  
begins to fail,  
may your death be painless,  
for no mortal could aspire  
to enter heaven without  
dying.

## Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger

(c.1580-1651)

### Toccata No. 1 (pub. 1611)

## Carlo Gesualdo

### Questa crudele e pia *Anonymous*

Questa crudele e pia  
piange al mio pianto e  
duolse al mio dolore,  
ma non arde a  
l'ardore.  
Tu, senza amor  
pietosa  
sia pur a tuo voler anco  
sdegnosa,  
ché amor de l'amor  
mio  
e non pietà del mio dolor  
desio.

### This cruel and pious woman

This cruel and pious woman  
weeps when I weep,  
suffers when I suffer,  
but does not burn with  
my ardent desire.  
You who feel pity but not  
love,  
be scornful too, if you so  
wish,  
since I long for love in  
return for love,  
not pity in return for  
suffering.

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its  
accompaniment have ended.*

### Hor che in gioia

*Anonymous*

Hor che in gioia credea viver  
contento,  
m'apre la gioia il seno.  
Fuggesi l'alma e'l cor, ohimè,  
vien meno

### Just as I thought

Just as I thought myself  
content and full of joy,  
that joy rends my breast,  
my soul flees and my  
heart, alas, grows weak.

### O sempre crudo Amore

*Anonymous*

O sempre crudo amore,  
nella gioia non men che nel  
dolore.  
Tu sempre, o peni il cor o  
pur gioisca,  
fai ch'amando  
languisca.

### O love ever cruel

O love ever cruel,  
in joy no less than in  
sorrow,  
whether the heart grieves  
or rejoices,  
you always cause it with  
love to languish.

### Cor mio, deh, non piangete

*Anonymous*

Cor mio, deh, non  
piangete,  
ch'altra pena non sento,  
altro martire  
che'l veder voi  
languir del mio  
languire.

### Heart of mine, ah, do not weep

Heart of mine, ah, do not  
weep,  
for I feel no other pain, no  
other torment  
than that of seeing you  
languish at my  
languishing.

### Dunque non m'offendete

*Giovanni Battista Guarini*

Dunque non m'offendete  
se sanar mi volete,  
chè quell'affetto che pietà  
chiamate  
se è dispietato a voi non è  
pietate.

### Do not, therefore, injure me

Do not, therefore, injure me  
when you wish to heal me,  
for if that sentiment you  
call mercy  
is merciless toward you,  
then it is not mercy.

### Sparge la morte al mio Signor

*Anonymous*

Sparge la morte al mio  
Signor nel viso  
tra squallidi  
pallori  
pietosissimi orrori.  
Poi lo rimira e ne divien  
pietosa,  
geme, sospira, e più ferir  
non osa.  
Ei, che temerla  
mira,  
inchina il capo, asconde il  
viso, e spira.

### Death floods my Lord

Death floods my Lord's  
face  
with the most pitiful of  
horrors,  
amid a wretched pallor.  
Then it looks on him  
again, and takes pity,  
it groans, sighs and dares  
hurt him no more.  
He, afraid to gaze upon  
death,  
lowers his head, hides his  
face, and dies.

## Alessandro Piccinini (1566-1638)

### Toccata cromatica (pub. 1623)

## Carlo Gesualdo

### Moro, e mentre sospiro

*Anonymous*

Moro, e mentre  
sospiro,  
l'aura d'un mio  
sospiro  
corre volando a  
farsi alma d'un  
core,  
ch'anch'ei sospira e  
more.

### I die, and as I breathe my last

I die, and as I breathe my  
last,  
the breath of one of my  
sighs  
takes speedy flight and  
becomes the spirit of a  
heart  
which then also breathes  
its last, and dies.

### Quando di lui la sospirata vita

*Anonymous*

Quando di lui la sospirata  
vita  
nel mio cor vola e di cor più  
non priva,  
vive e vivendo  
aviva.  
Vita e morte gradita!  
Non sa che sia  
gioire  
chi non sa così vivere e  
morire.

### When the life breathed out

When the life breathed  
out of that heart  
flies into mine, and no  
longer lacks a heart,  
it lives and by living gives  
life.  
Life and welcome death!  
He who knows not how  
thus to live and die,  
knows not what it is to  
rejoice.

## Mentre gira costei

*Anonymous*

Mentre gira costei,  
ora veloci or  
tardi,  
fieri e soavi suoi amorosi  
sguardi,  
sento ch'amor, qual timido  
augelletto,  
vola, fugge e rivola nel mio  
petto.  
Deh, ver me volgi omai  
sempre sereni rai  
che farà nel mio core  
suo dolce nido  
amore.

## As she turns

As she turns  
her loving gaze, both  
fierce and gentle,  
now flashing, now  
lingering,  
I feel love, like a timid  
little bird,  
take flight, escape and  
return to my breast.  
Ah, turn towards me now  
those rays for ever serene,  
and love will make  
its sweet nest within my  
heart.

## A voi, mentre il mio core

*Anonymous*

A voi, mentre il mio  
core  
con i sospiri miei, messaggi  
suoi:  
"Anima mia", vi dice "ardo  
d'amore.  
Anima mia, per voi d'amor io  
ardo".  
Deh, non tacete voi,  
ma rispondete almen col  
vostro sguardo:  
"Ardi e mori, cor mio  
ch'ardo d'amor per te  
anch'io."

## As my heart sends its messages

As my heart sends its  
messages  
to you, through my  
sighs,  
it says, "My soul, I am  
burning with love.  
My soul, I am ablaze with  
love for you."  
Ah, be not silent,  
but with your eyes at  
least reply:  
"Burn and die, my heart,  
for I too am burning with  
love for you."

## Ecco, morirò dunque

*Anonymous*

Ecco, morirò dunque.  
Né fia che pur rimire,  
tu ch'ancidi mirando, il mio  
morire.

## Behold, I shall therefore die

Behold, I shall therefore die.  
May you not look again,  
you who kill with your  
eyes, upon my death.

## Ahi, già mi discoloro

*Anonymous*

Ahi, già mi discoloro. Ohimè  
vien meno  
la luce a gli occhi miei, la  
voce al seno.  
O che morte  
gradita,  
se almen potessi dir: "Moro,  
mia vita".

## Ah, I am growing pale already

Ah, I am growing pale  
already. Alas, the light  
in my eyes is fading, as is  
my voice in my chest.  
Oh, how welcome death  
would be  
were I only able to say:  
"My life, I'm dying."

## Alessandro Piccinini

### Toccata XIII (1623)

## Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger

### Canario (1640)

## Carlo Gesualdo

### Arde il mio cor

*Anonymous*

Arde il mio cor ed è sì dolce  
il foco  
che vive nell'ardore,  
onde lieto si more.  
O mia felice sorte,  
o dolce, o strana morte!

### My heart is ablaze

My heart is ablaze and so  
sweet are the flames  
that it lives within the fire,  
and thus dies contented.  
O fortunate destiny,  
o sweet, o strange death!

### Se chiudete nel core

*Anonymous*

Se chiudete nel core  
il pargoletto amore  
perché serpe crudele in sen  
nudrite?  
Ah, che voi troppo  
ardite!  
Vedete non  
l'ancida,  
se vago di dolcezza ivi  
s'annida.

### If you hold Cupid

If you hold Cupid  
within your heart,  
why harbour a cruel serpent  
within your breast?  
Ah, you burn too  
passionately!  
Take care that the  
serpent kill him not,  
if, longing for sweetness, he  
makes his nest there.

**Il sol, qual or più  
splende**

*Anonymous*

Il sol, qual'hor più  
splende  
non è che scura e languida  
facella,  
onde non puoi veder come  
sei bella.

**The sun, however  
brightly**

The sun, however brightly  
it shines,  
has but a pale and feeble  
beam,  
in which you cannot see  
how beautiful you are.

**Volgi, mia luci**

*Anonymous*

Volgi mia luce entro il mio  
seno  
il bel guardo sereno  
e mira al lume della fiamma  
mia  
come tu bella e come  
ardente io sia.

**Return, my light**

Return, my light, your  
serene  
and lovely gaze to my breast  
and there, in the light of  
my burning passion,  
see how beautiful you are,  
how ardent am I.