



CHANNEL CLASSICS

Derek Lee Ragin

countertenor

&

Ensemble Divitia Cologne

G.F.Händel

Cantatas
Sonatas



DIGITAL



Derek Lee Ragin

Derek Lee Ragin was born in West Point, New York in 1958. He studied piano and music education at Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He later studied voice with Dr. James Mc Donald at the University of Maryland and subsequently received an ITT grant to study with Max van Egmond in Amsterdam.

Recipient of many major awards and prizes including the Purcell-Britten Prize at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1983, the first prize in the 1986 Munich International Music Competition and the Prix Lyrique de Monte Carlo in 1988, he has sung extensively in the United States and Europe with the conductors Robert Shaw, John E. Gardiner, Gustav Leonhardt, Thomas Hengelbrock, Trevor Pinnock and René Jacobs.

This season, in 1990, Mr. Ragin tours with Helmut Rilling in Händel's Saul in Israel, he performs the title role of Gluck's Orfeo with John E. Gardiner and The English Baroque Soloists at the Salzburg Festival and the London Proms, and appears in Händel's opera Amadigi with Les Musiciens du l'Ouvre, conductor Marc Minkowsky, in the Festival of Old Music, Utrecht.

Ensemble Divitia Cologne

Leslie Samuels studied harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt and Bob van Asperen. Since 1986 she has been teaching at the Folkwang Hochschule Essen in Duisburg, W. Germany.

Alison Gangler studied oboe with Stephan Hammer and Michel Piquet. She has performed and recorded with Musica Antiqua Köln, Concentus Musicus Wien and René Jacobs.

Susanne Hartig studied cello with Chr. Coin and Jaap ter Linden. As a member of the 'Carrissimi Ensemble' Munich, and 'La Melodia Germanica' Frankfurt, she also performs regularly in other European countries.

The ensemble '**Divitia Cologne**' was founded in 1989, and specializes in the performance of 17th and 18th century vocal and instrumental music.

Italian cantatas and two oboe sonatas by G. F. Händel

'Very long, long arias and almost endless cantatas which have neither the right skill nor the right taste, though their harmony is perfect,' wrote Johann Mattheson about the twenty-year-old Händel in Hamburg in '*Grundlagen einer Ehrenforte*' (1740). According to Mattheson (music master and chapel master in Hamburg), it was only after Händel had gained some experience with opera that his works acquired the necessary refinement. But Mattheson's cutting remark on the cantatas is only one of many to be found in the '*Ehrenforte*' which are not necessarily based on objective fact. It is likely that the often strained relationship between the two had some bearing on Mattheson's judgement. After all, Händel was supposed to write up his own vita for this collection of biographies of great musicians as the other composers included therein had done. Much to Mattheson's annoyance, he refused to do so. This may be the reason for some of Mattheson's caustic remarks, not to mention the legendary duel which took place between Mattheson and Händel in which the latter escaped with his life only because the crucial thrust of the sword was deflected by a coat button. In fact, the Italian cantatas recorded here - probably composed between 1706 and 1709 - ought not to be underestimated; they reveal themselves to be musical gems.

Händel must have been exposed to cantata compositions and to the Italian language as early as the summer of 1704 while he was staying in Hamburg. After all, the collection of Reinhard Keisers cantatas, famous at the time, had been in Hamburg since 1698, and the Hamburg poets Christian Heinrich Postel and Barthold Feind wrote in Italian. From the time Händel started travelling to Italy in 1706, it was only to be expected that he would begin to compose many more Italian cantatas. The ones on this recording date from Händel's early period: '*Lungi da me, pensier tiranno*', which has come down to us in a version for alto as well as soprano, is dated August 31, 1709, according to the bill of a copyist of one of the extant copies. There also exists a copyist's bill of '*Udite il mio consiglio*' dated May 16, 1708. In Italy and its neighbouring countries, continuo cantatas (for voice with only basso continuo accompaniment) had long since established themselves in the public's favour in the period before 1710. Händel also preferred to compose in this genre, though his output of cantatas was less prolific in the years to come. Not many were written during his Hanover and London years. Nevertheless, all the cantatas on this recording probably made their way beyond Italy's borders soon after they were composed. Contemporary London manuscript copies of almost all of them still exist.

All the cantatas dating from this period were probably commissioned by Italian patrons - possibly Crown Prince Ferdinand of Tuscany in Florence, Cardinal Ottoboni or Ruspoli in Rome - though Händel did not have a regular post with any of them. During the counter-reformation period, it would not have been in their interest to hire a Protestant. His situation could be described, according to Werner Braun (1986), rather as that of a freelance composer.

Händel's later cantatas are often more elaborately scored (chamber cantatas) than the long-established prototype of solo cantata for only one voice and basso continuo. On the whole, Händel composed fewer of them after 1710. In fact, he became much more sparing in his use of composi-

ional material. The same theme often appears in different works and even whole movements are used more than once. An example of this is '*Carco sempre di gloria*' in which many parallels to the cantata '*Cecilia, volgi un sguardo*' (first performed in London in 1736) can be found. The text of the introductory recitative of '*Carco*' also appears in '*Cecilia*', though the music is different. Both the music and the text of the aria '*Sei cara, sei bella virtute ognor*' ('*Carco*') and no. 5 of '*Cecilia*' are the same, though all the other arias and recitatives in the much longer '*Cecilia*' cannot be found in '*Carco*'. Whether one of the two cantatas was used as a model for the other is difficult to say. Both pieces were probably based on a third, unknown composition. The fact that Händel worked the same material into several compositions and wrote fewer cantatas after his return from Italy was certainly due in part to his altered circumstances in England, but also to the waning influence after ca. 1720 of the Italian cantata in general. In Alessandro Scarlatti's works they play a central role. In his time it was still considered to be a form in which the composer could display his art and indulge his love of experiment for the benefit of connoisseurs. At first, the cantata also featured prominently in the oeuvres of younger composers such as Händel, B. Marcello, N. Porpora and others. But towards the end of the first two decades of the 18th century, the cantata began its decline as opera took over.

In the 1720's Jeanne Roger published an edition of Händel's 12 solo sonatas '*pour une (e) traversière, un violon ou hautbois con basso continuo*' in Amsterdam. This was followed a few years later by an edition of the same pieces and three additional sonatas published in London by Walsh. The specification of instruments on the title page of the collection known as '*op. 1*' being somewhat vague, it is not surprising that the fifth sonata was known for a long time only as a G major sonata for flute until Terence Best discovered in 1977 that it must originally have been an F major sonata for oboe. The composer's intention was certainly clear; the extant autographs of the other sonatas from '*op. 1*' with their exact indications leave no room for doubt. By including whole groups of instruments on the title pages of the editions the publishers hoped to appeal to as many potential buyers as possible, and the transforming of an oboe sonata into a flute sonata would only have served this purpose. Thanks to the existence of an autograph ms. with unmistakable markings, it has never been doubted that the eighth sonata in c minor was written for oboe. Terence Best concluded from his examination of the autograph that it was probably composed as early as 1712 or a little later. More than any other sonata in '*op. 1*', it can be seen to form a link to Händel's Italian period. Both sonatas contain musical quotations from Händel's earlier works, and some material which first appears in the sonatas is worked out more elaborately in later works. This hardly detracts from their individuality which, in any case, was apparently not Händel's primary aim either in the sonatas or the cantatas. As we can tell from the printing and re-printing of the sonatas, they were especially popular even during his lifetime. In Charles Burney's description of his musical character (1785), he notes that irrespective of the form in which Händel chose to compose - be it cantata, sonata or anything else - the music was always beautifully embellished.

Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!

Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!
Tu mi vorresti rendere infelice
col farmi credere Tirsi un traditore.
Ah! sento ch' il mio core mi dice,
che non puo l' alma si bella esser a me rubella.
Dunque da questo sen fugga l' affanno!
Lungi da me, pensier tiranno!

Pensier crudel, se vuoi ch' io creda
ch' il mio bel Tirsi sia ingannator!
Fia chiil mio amore meco l' unisca,
poi jo bandisca da questo cor.

Ma se amor cio contrasta e' l cor ripugna
la sua virtu met vieta
e la sincerita del suo bel genio
non vogliono ch' io creda che sia Tirsi ingrato.
Lungi, dunque da me, pensier spietato!

Fuggi da questo sen, o barbaro pensier!
Lasciami in pace!

Sebben m' aduli amor,
per te consente il cor perche ti piace.

Non sa il mio cor sincero
creder d' error capace un' alma grande.
Dunque torna , o pensiero,
coi segni a funestar la mente oppressa
e lascia a me la libertade intiera
di cedere Tirsi mio d' alma sincera.

Tirsi amato, adorato mio Nume!
vieni, o caro ritornami in sen
Farfalletta son io, che le piume ardo al lume
del caro mio ben.

Siete rose ruggiadose

Siete rose ruggiadose, belle labbra del mio ben
Sempre care se ridete,
se parlate, se tacete,
accendete questo sen;
siete care se ridete
se parlate, se tacete,
accendete questo sen.

Dolce bocca soave,
in te nasce il bel riso lusinghiero,
che accende amore, in ogni cuor piu fiero.
I dolci tuoi sospiri fanno obliare all' alma,
i suoi martiri; ed io, chi per te peno, cara,
si ti riveggio allor,
che taci, se le tue parolette,
s' un tuo sospir io sento,
mi scordo ogni tormento.

Per involarmi al duolo
mi basta solo, solo un dolce tuo sospir,
bocca vezzosa.
Ne' tuoi soavi accenti,
nei vezzi tuoi ridenti,
perde ogni suo martir l' alma amorosa.

Udite il mio consiglio

Udite il mio consiglio, inesperti d'amor pastori;
se incontraste giammai qui dove suole
guidar l'arrante greggia
dal colle al piano,
o dalla selva al fonte,
picciola pastorella,
di membra agili e pronte,
d'atti languidi e schivi,
che ha nero ciglio in bianco volto,
e freggia della guancia il pallor labbro vermiglio,
fuggite, ah! si fuggite, que' suoi furtivi sguardi,
e quelle sue semplicita mentite.

Innocente rassembra,
e pur niun'altra e al par di lei
cruda, fallace e scaltra.

Non le scherzate intorno,
ch'il cor v'accendera

E in chieder le pieta
del concepito ardore,
dira che nel suo core stilla d'amor non ha.

Al vederla sovente, non curante e negletta
abbassar gli occhi in sua maniera onesta
o pur vergognosetta,
piegar sul collo la leggiadra lesta
e ognor pargo negiar quando favella
ognun diria che semplicetta e quella:
semplice e ben ch'il crede.
Poiche qualor si vede semplice piu,
piu di far preda e vaga,
e per ogni suo vezzo apre una piaga.

Non esce un guardo mai
da quegli arcieri rai che non saetti un cor.

E' cor che vien colpito
si sente gia ferito, che non lo crede ancor.

Volea pur dir, ma tacque il misero Fileno
e quel che trasse doloroso sospir fuori del petto.
Non fu gia per amor, no,
fu per dispetto.

Fuggite, ah! si fuggite
quei suoi furti ci sguardi
e quelle sue semplicita mentite;
innocente rassembra
e per niun'altra e al par di lei
cruda, fallace e scaltra.

Carco sempre di gloria

Carco sempre di gloria fu l'altero Tamigi
ed emulo nella virtù, nel merto, i secoli passati;
e seppe unir, con generoso core
ad armonica cetra un casto amore.

Sei del Ciel dono perfetto
o virtù nel nostro petto
tu scherzando alletti il cor.

Ma se ancora un casto amore si congiunge al bel ardore
e beata l'alma ognor.
Sei cara, sei bella, virtù ognor;
scherzando alletti il cor,
e se ti unisci a un casto amor,
il pregio tuo è maggior.

Un puro ardor, un bel seren,
amor, virtù sol da,
e mille gioje prova il sen
Perche? Ma non si sa.

G.F.Händel
Cantatas
Sonatas

Derek Lee Ragin
&
Ensemble Divitia Cologne

Derek Lee Ragin - countertenor
Alison Gangler - baroque oboe
Susanne Hartig - baroque cello
Leslie Samuels - harpsichord

①	Lungi da me pensier tiranno cantata for alto and basso continuo	9.28
②	Sonata in F major for oboe and basso continuo <i>Adagio, Allegro, Adagio, Bourrée, Menuetto</i>	7.45
③	Siete rose ruggiadose cantata for alto and basso continuo	9.29
④	Udite il mio consiglio cantata for soprano and basso continuo	14.41
⑤	Sonata in c minor for oboe and basso continuo <i>Largo, Allegro, Adagio, Bourrée anglaise</i>	6.18
⑥	Carco sempre di gloria cantata for alto and basso continuo	13.00
	Total time	<hr/> 61.09



COLOPHON

- production: CHANNEL CLASSICS STUDIO
producer: T. A. Diehl
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editing: Bert van der Wolf
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photo cover: Wim Ruigrok
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baroque cello: original 18th century by Guerson
harpichord: T. A. Diehl 1984, after Chr. Zell 1728
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Sonatas

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Derek Lee Ragin
&
Ensemble Divitia Cologne

Derek Lee Ragin - countertenor
Alison Gangler - baroque oboe
Susanne Hartig - baroque cello
Leslie Samuels - harpsichord



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|---|---|--------------|
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