

## MARENZIO

### Luca Marenzio e il suo tempo

Angela Alesci, Domenico Cerasani,  
Massimo Lonardi

Tactus / TC 531302 / Distr.: Sound  
and Music / 2013 / DDD / Libretto:  
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Artistico: ★★★★★A

Tecnico: ★★★★★A

**I**l Premio Internazionale "Città dei Mestieri" vuole valorizzare e sostenere economicamente progetti imprenditoriali innovativi ideati e proposti da giovani di età inferiore ai 32 anni. Nel 2013, il Premio per la sezione "I giovani e i mestieri d'Arte" è stato assegnato al giovane liutista Domenico Cerasani, il cui progetto artistico, basato su un'approfondita ricerca sulla produzione musicale del '500, ha coinvolto il soprano



Angela Alesci e  
un fuoriclasse  
del liuto qual  
è Massimo  
Lonardi:  
insegnante

di Cerasani all'ISSM Franco Vittadini di Pavia, che del successo dell'allievo non può che essere orgoglioso. Da tutto ciò è scaturito questo splendido cd in cui i tre musicisti affrontano un programma composito, costituito da madrigali, villanelle, danze e fantasie di fine '500, incentrato sulla figura di Luca Marenzio. Il musicista di Coccaglio è solo il punto di partenza di un percorso musicale che, guidato dalle dotte note storiche del booklet firmate da Cerasani, ripercorre sentieri musicali che attraversano la penisola italiana per poi aprirsi all'ammirazione europea. Oltre che di Marenzio, si ascoltano musiche di Fabritio Caroso, Giacomo Gorzanis, Lorenzino del liuto, Orlando di Lasso, Vincenzo Galilei e Cesare Negri. Interpretazione di gran classe in cui la mano di Lonardi si fa sentire come non mai, in cui la straordinaria dimestichezza in questo repertorio viene mirabilmente trasformata in ispirato strumento per una stupefatta ma sempre sospesa ammirazione del bello. E la casa discografica Tactus torna a passati splendori. Bene così.

MASSIMO ROLANDO ZEGNA

are worth pondering. The playing is all very good, but I wish the sound were a little more clearly defined. Also, there seems to be an egregious error in the liner notes: in both the German and English, it looks as if the author, Wolfgang Sandner, accidentally wrote “Osip Mandelstam” (the Russian poet) instead of “Tigran Mansurian” twice in the first four paragraphs, then remembered to write “Mansurian” starting in the fifth.

ESTEP

**MARENZIO:** *Madrigals, Villanellas, Dances*

Angela Alesci, s; Domenico Cerasani, Massimo Lonardi, lutes—Tactus 531302—56 minutes

Don't consider this combination of one voice and two lutes as “reduced” forces (as compared, for example, to five voices plus continuo in five-part madrigals) but instead as “different” forces, in keeping with contemporary practice where text expression is paramount and solo renderings of polyphonic madrigals were not uncommon. These are graceful, gentle, and intimate performances by three excellent musicians. Close and repeated listening reveals so many pleasures: a beautiful bloom results from the lute players' varied touch, bringing forth a ringing soft resonance from their instruments; and intricate contrapuntal lines in lute fantasias and madrigals are a fine complement to the simpler of the vocal pieces (villanellas). This may be the first Marenzio program to combine these styles, and it is all the more welcome for that.

12 vocal pieces by Marenzio (4 madrigals, 7 villanellas, and 1 canzonetta) alternate with instrumental pieces by Lasso, Galilei, Lorenzo Del Liuto, and others. The pieces are very well chosen and sequenced. For instance, Negri's ‘Bianco Fiore’, a lilting lute duo, is not only a lovely foil to the preceding madrigal, ‘Tirsi Morir Volea’, but also a perfect prelude to the villanella ‘Con La Fronte Fiorita’ with its text contrasting the garlanded brow, flowers in sun, fluttering birds, and breezes to the lover's sad heart.

Nine pieces are performed on two lutes and four on solo lute. I was not surprised to learn that lutenist Domenico Cerasani won a major award in 2013 for young musicians, and Massimo Lonardi's lute recordings are justifiably praised: Falconieri (Strad 33781, S/O 2008) and Italian Baroque Lute (Agora 32, J/A 1997: 213) are two examples. Soprano Angela Alesci is at ease in the different vocal styles here, expressing sad wistfulness and Mannerist affects in the madrigals, and matching the lutes in more carefree strophic songs.

Notes, bios, Italian texts on label website.

C MOORE

**MARTINU:** *Cello Sonatas (3);*

**MUSTONEN:** *Sonata;*

**SIBELIUS:** *Malinconia*

Steven Isserlis; Olli Mustonen, p

BIS 2042 [SACD] 78 minutes

Isserlis has a reputation as the thinking man's cellist, but this program provoked my heart as much as my brain. Martinu's First Sonata is from May 1939, composed just a short time after the Nazis had conquered his homeland. It's a tense score—striking, weaving, dancing, and screaming—and Isserlis and Mustonen play it like pugilists. The slow movement is not exactly a wrestling match, of course, but the lines are taut the whole way through. III is staccato and stormy, an insistent, almost redundant toccata. It's a pleasure to hear playing this blistering and spiky and in complete service to the music.

Mustonen wrote his sonata in 2006. A high cello line over crunchy piano clusters opens it; sighing phrases follow, then the cello plays a buzzing, trilling line that winds its way around bell-like chords. The textures shift and fade; crazed polkas interrupt the Andantino. The whole piece builds toward a raucous but comprehensible end. It's a potent, impressive piece.

Martinu's Second was dedicated to cellist Frank Rybka, who welcomed Martinu when he moved to New York in 1941. The tone is stern and the writing is rather dense until the soothing last half of the Largo. III welcomes in a few rays of sun, though the playing is still on the ferocious side. The Sibelius seems an unusual bedfellow, though the theme of tragedy complements Martinu 1 and 2; *Malinconia* was written after the death of his daughter Kirsti. Laments and outbursts of arpeggios lead to a weeping melody over austere chords. The piece occasionally seems to find relief in itself, though the grief is still palpable.

Martinu's Third Sonata is sunnier; it was composed in memory of a cellist and conductor friend, Hans Kindler, who wished cheer rather than despair at his funeral. Still, Martinu isn't going to give us a straightforward good time: rigor and involved processes form a confluence with the mellower passages. I'll say one thing—the music will never lull you into complacency. In this piece, the musicians' intensity can be a drawback, especially with Mustonen, whose tone tends to sound harsh. I would like to hear some more temperate performances of all the pieces; Isserlis and Mustonen have a point of view, and dammit, they're going to make sure you know it!

The piano is ever so slightly recessed, but the sound is otherwise fine. Steven Isserlis

John's. He is a national treasure, and he'll be around for a long time, I'm sure. Countertenors have to have some solo repertoire to perform, and it looks as though they are here to stay. But do question it. Do question whether or not falsettists express the emotions of the songs as far as you, the listener are concerned – something that we know the lute song composers expected. Is making a lovely silky sound really enough? This really is a lovely record – but is it 'right'?

Special praise, however, for his lutenist, another rising star, young Thomas Dunford, for some of the best accompaniment, and excellent playing of his solo pieces. He too is one to watch. *David Hill*  
\* See p. 44 for questioning the plausibility of altos in church music of the period as well.

**Luca Marenzio e il suo tempo: Madrigali, villanelle, danze, fantasia di fine '500**  
**Angela Alesci S, Domenico Cerasani & Massimo Lonardi lutes 56' 04"**  
**Tactus TC531302**  
**Music by Caroso, Galilei, Gorzanis, di Lasso, Lorenzino del liuto, Marenzio, Negri + anon**

This is exquisite chamber music from 16th-century Italy. As the excellent notes inform us, arrangements of madrigals and other vocal works for solo voice and lute have a long and distinguished history. This recording presents a selection of Marenzio's madrigals, *canzonette* and *villanelle*, performed thus, interspersed with a dazzling array of lute pieces, ranging from simple dance variations to long and contrapuntally complex *ricercars* and *fantasias*. Soprano Angela Alesci sings sensitively, with fine regard for the wide range of emotions portrayed; listen, for example, to the contrast between the light-hearted "Fuggero tant'amore" (track 14) and the searing "Dolorosi martir." She is ably partnered by Cerasani and Lonardi, who in their turn get to shine, notably in the fine Lasso and Galilei *fantasias*. An interesting disc – one slightly misses Marenzio's matchless counterpoint of voices in a couple of the more serious madrigals, but the *villanelle* and *canzonette* are a delight, and the lute solos ravishing.

*Alastair Harper*

**Ferdinando Richardson Complete Works for Harpsichord** Glen Wilson 69' 10"  
Naxos 8.572997  
+ music by Byrd, Alfonso Ferrabosco I, Harding, Holborne, El. Kiderminster (?Bull) Morley, Paradiso, Strogens & anon

Naxos and Wilson are to be complimented on this attractive recording which explores some of the byways of the English virginal repertory. Richardson was a minor aristocrat, groom of the privy chamber to Elizabeth I and James I, and writer of one of the laudatory poems at the start of

Byrd and Tallis' 1575 *Sacrae Cantiones*. There are just seven surviving works plus his keyboard arrangement of Morley's Pavane and Galliard written for lute. The disc is filled out with five anonymous arrangements of music by Byrd (his *Lullaby, my sweet little baby*) and others, taken from the so-called Weelkes MS, and five other earlier pieces from different sources. These last include the *Praeludium* ascribed in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* to "El. Kiderminster" which Wilson speculates may be by the young John Bull, whose influence on Richardson seems clear. He also suggests that the *Fitzwilliam* book was intended as a wedding present for James I's daughter Elizabeth, and might well have been organised by Richardson. Wilson plays with clarity and is well up to the considerable virtuosity required in the Bull-like figurations. These generally flow well but can occasionally come across in an over-literal fashion. We are not told what instrument he is playing on but it sounds well in this music and is well recorded with a good bass sound.

*Noel O'Regan*

**Schlick The first printed organ music** Kimberly Marshall (1991 Paul Fritts organ, Arizona State University) 55' 38"

**Loft LRCD-1124**

**Schlick** Salve regina, Pete quid vis, Hoe losteleck, Benedictus, Primi Toni, Maria zart, Christe, Da Pacem, Ascendo ad patrem **Kotter** Salve regina; **Hofhaimer** Was ich durch Glück, Zucht, Her und Lob **Isaac** Benedictus **Paumann** Incipit Fundamentum, Sequuntur Redeutes, Redeutes in idem **Kleber** Maria zart **Buchner** Agnus Dei primum, ad festum trium regum, Agnus Dei secundum

The CD was released in 2012 to mark the 500th anniversary of the first ever volume of printed organ music, Schlick's 1512 *Tabulatur etlicher Lobgesang und liddlein*. This volume, and his book *Spiegel der Orgelmacher und Organisten* published a year earlier, marks Schlick as one of the most important pioneers of organ composition and performance. Kimberley Marshall sets his music in context by including works by Schlick's predecessor, Paumann, contemporaries Hofhaimer and Isaac and successors Kotter and Buchner. She plays on her own organ in Arizona, an instrument with some very effective early Germanic sounds – a practical as well as musically sensible decision, as historic organs of this period are rare and all come with interpretation problems, notably in tuning, for which Schlick had very specific requirements. The CD ends with one of the most complex organ pieces ever written – the 10-part *Ascendo ad patrem meum*, with four independent voices played with the feet and six with the hands. This was one of two compositions sent to the Bishop of Trent around 1521 in honour of the election of Charles V as

Holy Roman King (later to be upped to HR Emperor), and there has to be some doubt as to whether it was ever intended to be performed – and, indeed, whether life is too short to even attempt it. But its dense texture comes over well in this interpretation and, for those who like such things, there is a picture of Kimberly Marshall's bright red shoes behind the CD.

*Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Luther's wedding day** Capella de la Torre, Katharina Bäuml 69' 02"  
Challenge Classics CC72598  
Music by Isaac, Josquin, M. Praetorius, Senfl, Sermisy, Walter & anon

This mixed consort of voices and wind instruments presents a pleasing programme of music from the early 16th century on the peg of being music that could have been performed at Luther's wedding on the 13th June 1530. In fact while there is no precise documentary evidence as to what Luther's wedding guests would have heard, the choice of simple settings by Senfl of the Kyrie and Gloria, and a setting of the Creed by Johann Walter, director of the Torgau Stadtkantorei, interspersed with motets and chorales by the same composers and Isaac and Josquin, is probably representative of the choices which would have been made by the religiously relatively moderate and musically sensitive reformer. Things hot up a bit for his wedding feast, with some 16th-century dance standards rubbing shoulders with less familiar material by Isaac. The Capella de la Torre, who take their name from the tower musicians who provided entertainment music for renaissance burghs, play with energy but also refinement – this has to be some of the most tastefully controlled extended playing of shawms and dulcians that I have heard recently. This is an entertaining CD providing a convincing snapshot of provincial German music in the early 16th century.

*D. James Ross*

**Thomas Tallis Missa Puer natus est nobis & other sacred music** The Cardinal's Musick, Andrew Carwood 67' 35"  
Hyperion CDA 58026

I have been waiting for some years now for this performance of Tallis' *Mass Puer natus est*, not because there have not been previous excellent recordings, but because none of them have been at the pitch intended by the composer. The all-pervading influence of Professor David Wulstan, whose theories on def configurations and transpositions in 16th-century music are now fairly comprehensively discredited, still have a widespread effect in the performance of Renaissance choral music, with many specialist choirs

Angela Alesci: LUCA MARENZIO E IL SUO TEMPO on TACTUS

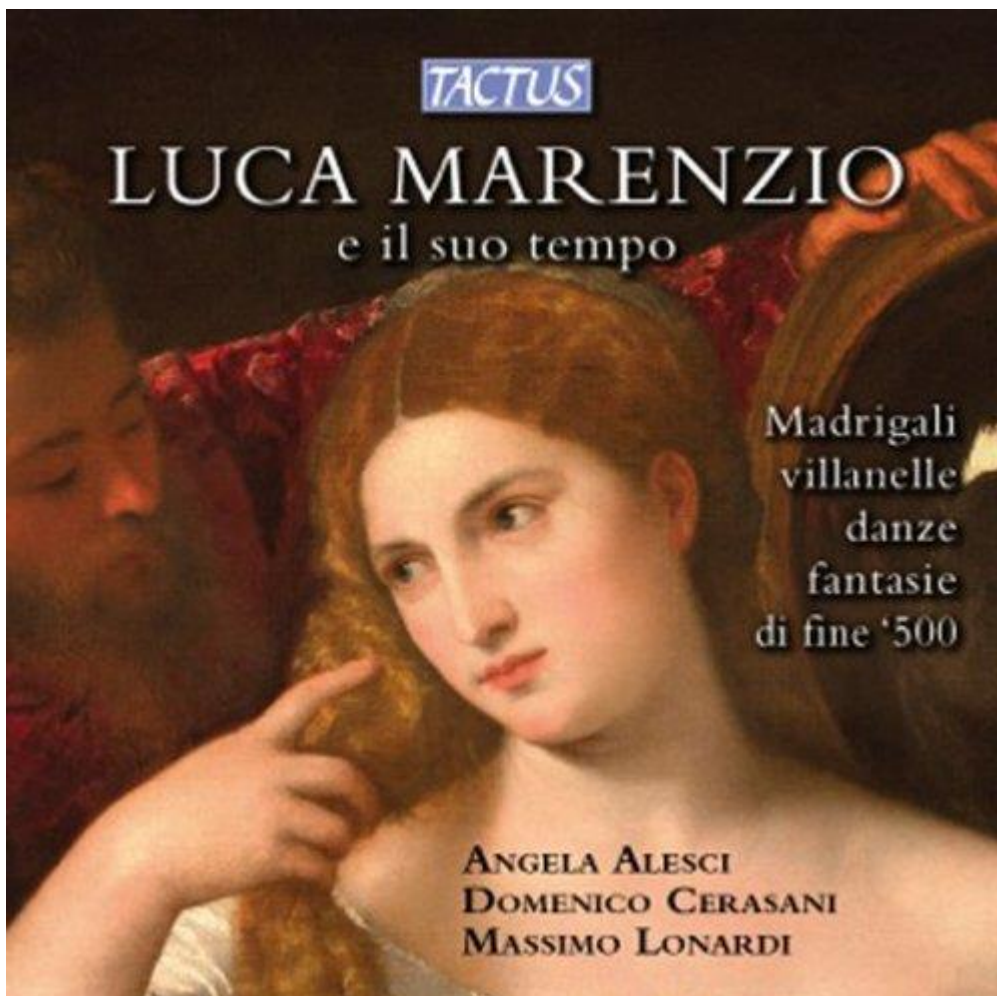


Classical Reviews - Early Music

Monday, 11 August 2014

LUCA MARENZIO E IL SUO TEMPO • Angela Alesci (s); Domenico Cerasani, Massimo Lonardi (It) • TACTUS 531302 (56: 04)

Music of MARENZIO, CAROSO, GORZANIS, LORENZINI, LASSUS, V. GALILEI, NEGRI, ANON



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The subtitle refers to “the end of the 1500s,” the time we know as the transition from Renaissance to Baroque, when madrigals (and similar songs bearing other names) began to assume a prominent place in secular music. Luca Marenzio, as we have seen, published his First Book of Madrigals for Five Voices (not to be confused with later publications of first books for other groups) in 1580. The published books have had a good amount of attention on records ( Fanfare 37:4; 33:2; 18:5), but this program situates 12 of his works among his contemporaries, regularly alternating his vocal

works with 13 instrumental pieces by the others (some solos, mostly duets). The notes make clear that the lutenists fill in the lower parts of the madrigals while Alesci sings the top line, a practice that was commonplace at the time. Philippe Verdelot's madrigals, reduced to the notated top voice with lute intabulation by Adrian Willaert, are well known on records. It appears that most of the other works were composed as instrumental pieces, such as two fantasias of Lassus, while the rest were arranged from vocal works, such as Giacomo Gorzanis's arrangement of a villanella by Filippo Azzaiolo. Four of Marenzio's madrigals are taken from the 1580 publication, but the rest are not identified by source.

The trio won an international prize for young people and the creative arts last year, and the recording quickly followed. Alesci projects the music with confidence and elegant tone, while the pair of lutenists supports her effectively. The five pages of notes by Cerasani are helpful, clarifying the basis for including the contemporaries in the program, but the texts must be found on the label's web site. While the complete sets of published books are a good way of presenting this music on records, this is an alternative program that has its own rationale. Watch this group for more good work, for they have a promising future. J. F. Weber

Last Updated ( Monday, 11 August 2014 )

banas, la cui frenesia da apparizione fantasmatica assume nel quarto, *Sangre cantando*, un carattere più concreto e sfrontato. In questa raccolta Marco si concentra spesso su singoli aspetti tecnico-idiomatici della chitarra, come i suoni armonici (*Muerte de perfil*), il *rasgueado* (*Elipse del grito*), le note ribattute (*Un llanto como un río*).

Sorvoliamo per necessaria concisione sulla fulminea e un po' capricciosa *Imprecación de Tindaya* per chitarra e flauto nonché sul ben più esteso *Tapices y Disparates* per violino e chitarra, caratterizzato da giochi imitativi tra i due strumenti, per concentrarci su quella che va vista forse come la composizione più sostanziosa dell'album, *La Nuit De Bordeaux* per chitarra e quartetto d'archi (1998). Come *Tapices*, si tratta di un'opera di ispirazione goyesca, commissionata dalla città in cui il grande pittore terminò i suoi giorni: presentandone le caratteristiche, Marco afferma di essersi orientato alla «nitidezza di tratto» e all'«ideale di equilibrio» dell'ultimo Goya. Il *Quintetto* presenta la stessa successione di episodi concatenati tra loro comune ad altre opere del compositore madrileno, anche se in questo caso essi non vengono identificati in singoli movimenti: si avvicendano momenti dalla

gestualità decisa e accesa, come l'episodio d'apertura affidato ai soli archi, e altri più lirici e atmosferici, dove la chitarra può dispiegare le sue risorse evocative. Insomma la notte attraversata da questo esteso lavoro comprende entrambi gli aspetti ad essa connotati: la meditazione e il languore accanto all'ansia e forse agli incubi – vedi le brevi cadenze solistiche a perdifiato che precedono la coda neoclassica, nelle quali risalta pienamente la brillantezza virtuosistica di Marcello Fantoni, affiancato del resto lungo tutto l'album da partner sempre all'altezza.

Roberto Bnsotti

CD

**MARENZIO «Luca Marenzio è il suo tempo: Madrigali, villanelle, danze, fantasie di fine Cinquecento»** (musiche di Marenzio, Negri, Gorzanis, Caroso, Di Lasso, Galilei, Trasetti) soprano **Angela Alesci** liuto **Domenico Cerasani**, **Massimo Lonardi**

TACTUS TC 531302

DDD 56:04

★★★★★



Luca Marenzio, il «dolce cigno» d'Italia, ma non solo. Accanto al grande madrigalista lombardo,

protagonista indiscusso di un'epoca, molti contemporanei a cavaliere tra Cinque e Seicento. Un assortito trio, con la voce morbida e lieve del soprano Angela Alesci assecondata al liuto da Domenico Cerasani e Massimo Lonardi, snocciola del Marenzio quattro madrigali originariamente a cinque voci (*Che fa oggi il mio sole*, *Dolorosi martir* su testo di Luigi Tansillo, *Tirsi morir volea* su testo di Battista Guarini, *Questa di verd'erbette* dal Primo Libro pubblicato da Gardano a Venezia nel 1580), sette villanelle originariamente a tre voci (*Al primo vostro sguardo*, *Lasso non è il cor mio*, *Occhi dolci e soavi*, *Io son ferito*, *Fuggirò tant'amore*, *Degli occhi il dolce giro* e *Con la fronte fiorita* per lo più dal Primo Libro del 1584) e una canzonetta («Se 'l raggio de vostr'occhi»). A far da contorno solo strumentale, sapide danze dei maestri coreografi Fabritio Caroso di Sermoneta (un celebre e ritmato Canario e la Spagnoletta nova da *Nobiltà di Dame*) e Cesare Negri (*Bianco fiore* da *Le Gratie d'Amore*), una *Padovana* di Giacomo Gorzanis, un *Ricerare*, un *Duo* e un *Contrappunto* di Galilei padre, caposaldo della trattatistica per liuto col suo *Fronimo*, ma anche pezzi di Orlando di Lasso e Lorenzino del liuto (una *Fantasia* e un *Preambulum*), al secolo Lorenzo Trasetti, al servizio, come Marenzio, del cardinale Luigi d'Este, fratello di Leonora e del duca di Ferrara Alfonso II.

Vi si apprezzano non solo la differenza stilistica tra i vari generi vocali dell'epoca (lo stile elegante ed alto del madrigale contrapposto alla struttura strofica e al carattere leggero e quasi popolare delle villanelle e delle canzonette) e i progressi compiuti ormai dal liuto come strumento polivoco, sia autonomo che di accompagnamento, ma anche la pratica di ridurre le composizioni polifoniche a più voci come i madrigali a una sola melodia vocale con accompagnamento strumentale, pratica documentata già anche nelle intavolature di frottole del primo stampatore musicale Ottaviano Petrucci (a Venezia tra il 1501 ed il 1521).

La soave musica del geniale Marenzio, i delicati «arrangiamenti», il felice sodalizio tra parola e musica, il sapore di un trapasso epocale tra il Rinascimento (lo stile polifonico) e l'incipiente barocco musicale (la monodia accompagnata del nuovo stile recitativo) rendono questa proposta discografica encomiabile, anche per la dimostrata sensibilità in-

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terpretativa degli esecutori, in perfetta sintonia con il gusto dell'epoca. Un crocevia in cui alcune strade sembrano esaurirsi trasformandosi per lasciare spazio ad altre in un clima di perfetta continuità storica.

*Lorenzo Tozzi*