



SOPRANO
BERIT NORBAKKEN

SONGS OF
BARBARA STROZZI

LUTES
SOLMUND NYSTABAKK



**THIS ALBUM DOCUMENTS
SOME OF OUR MEETINGS WITH
BARBARA STROZZI**

In her time, and long after her death, Barbara Strozzi was a legendary performer, something that in her case has been highlighted far more than among her male colleagues. Why? In light of her extensive production and publishing activities, it seems almost absurd that she should not be considered a composer on par with anyone else, and one wonders if this too has to do with gender, if being a singer is so much less controversial for a woman than being a composer, that it has almost functioned as a “mitigating circumstance”?

As an artist, you have more direct connection to the music compared to experiencing it through someone else’s rendition. The fact that Barbara

Strozzi wrote so much of her music with her own performances in mind, means that her pieces become places or spaces where one can immerse oneself in another (her?) way of making music. In these spaces, Barbara’s authority as a performer, and originator, of the music becomes available to us as co-creators today.

The freedom and flexibility that come from accompanying oneself – as Barbara did – has been a model for our work in the duo format. This involves a coherence that gives us the freedom for spontaneous turns and variations along the way in the music, so that each performance becomes different. The continuous practice – singing and playing the music again and again, with openness to both planned and spontaneous variations, becomes more crucial to the audible result than one specific interpretation of each piece as a composition.

**BARBARA STROZZI
LA VIRTUOSISSIMA
CANTATRICE**

Born in 1619 in Venice, Barbara Strozzi was hailed as one of the finest singers and most prolific composers of the time, eventually publishing eight collections of songs before her death in 1677 — more music in print than even the most famous composers of her day. As the daughter of renowned poet Giulio Strozzi and a member of one of the most powerful families in Florence, Barbara spent her life in very liberal circles, mingling with all levels of Italian society.

Her music is daring for a composer of her time and remarkable for many reasons. Perhaps most apparent is the tremendous care that she takes in setting her texts, creating intimate relation-

ships between the words and music, as well as the unusual and often surprising harmony she explores. Her creativity was such a force in fact that she is sometimes credited with the genesis of an entire musical genre — the Cantata.

A shrewd businesswoman and mother of four children, Barbara became one of the first women to publish such a large body of secular music under her own name. All but one Opus — Opus 4 — have been found, collected and are available at Cor Donata Editions.

L'ERACLITO AMOROSO

Udite amanti la cagione, oh Dio,
ch'a. lagrimar mi porta:
nell'adorato e bello idolo mio,
che sì fido credei, la fede è morta.

Vaghezza ho sol di piangere,
mi pasco sol di lagrime,
il duolo è mia delizia
e son miei gioie i gemiti.
Ogni martir aggradami,
ogni dolor diletta mi,
i singulti mi sanano,
i sospir mi consolano.

Ma se la fede negami
quell'incostante e perfido,
almen fede serbatemi
sino alla morte, o lagrime!
Ogni tristezza assalgami,
ogni cordoglio eternisi,
tanto ogni male affliggami
che m'uccida e sotterrarmi.

L'AMANTE BUGIARDO

I miei giorni sereni
Infetti col tuo sguardo,
E col sospir bugiardo,
L'aria tu m'avveleni.
Ah, scherza e non schernire,
Ah, mira e non mentire:
Ma falso e menzogner se parli o taci,
I vezzi hai finti e traditori i baci.

Provo dalle bugie
Un'aria tormentata,
Da tue frodi habitata,
E dalle furie mie.
Ah, giura e non mentire,
Ah, taci e non tradire:
Ma falso e menzogner se parli o taci,
I vezzi hai finti e traditori i baci.

HERACLITUS IN LOVE

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

Listen you lovers, to the cause, oh God,
of my weeping:
in my handsome and adored idol,
whom I believed to be faithful, faith is dead.

I have pleasure only in weeping,
I nourish myself only with tears.
Grief is my delight
and moans are my joys.
Every anguish gives me pleasure,
every pain delights me,
sobs heal me,
sighs console me.

But if that inconstant traitor
denys me constancy,
at least let my devotion serve me
until death, o tears.
Every sadness soothes me,
every sorrow sustains itself,
every ill afflicts me so much
that it slays and buries me.

THE CHEATING LOVER

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

You infest my peaceful days
with your glances,
and with your deceptive sighs
you poison the air.
Oh, dally without pretense,
oh, look without deception: but you're false and
deceitful whether you speak or remain silent;
your charms are feigned, your kisses treacherous.

The lies make me suffer
a tormented condition,
infused with your falseness
and my derangement.
Oh, affirm without lying,
be silent without betrayal:
but you're false and deceitful;
your charms are feigned, your kisses treacherous.

L'AMANTE CONSOLATO

Son tanto ito cercando
che pur alfin trovai
colei che desiai
duramente penando,
Oh questa volta sì ch'io non m'inganno,
s'io non godo mio danno!

Son tali quei contenti
che pur alfin io provo
che tutto mi rinovo
doppo lunghi tormenti.
Ma tutti com'io fo far non sapranno
chi non gode suo danno.

IL ROMEO

Vagò mendico il core
tutto il regno d'amore,
dimandando pietà, chiedendo aita
nell'infelice sua povera vita.
Ne per ben salda fede
poté trovar mercede,
ché di quante egli amò crudeli a torto
ch'il fuggì, ch'il tradì, ch'il volle morto.

Tornò dal suo cammino
il mio cor pellegrino,
ne pietoso favor ha mai trovato
per il mendico suo misero stato.
Femminil cortesia
forz'è che spenta sia,
ch'ogni ricca beltà resa tenace
non l'udì, nol mirò, lo mandò in pace.

THE CONSOLED LOVER

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

I searched for so long
that I finally found
the one that I desired,
after rigorous suffering.
Oh, this time let me not fool myself,
let me not be rejoicing in my own downfall.

The delights that I feel
at last are such
that everything renews me,
after prolonged agony.
But not everyone would be able to do as I do,
not being able to rejoice in their own downfall.

THE WANDERER

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

My heart wanders begging
through the dominions of love,
seeking kindness, asking for help
for its wretched unhappy life.
Not even for steadfast faithfulness
could it find mercy,
for the more it loves wrongfully cruel women,
the more they flee, betray, wish it dead.

My wandering heart returned
from its ramble,
not having found the least compassion
for its miserable deprived condition.
The affection of women
is perhaps so wearied
that all who are rich in beauty remain unfeeling:
not hearing or seeing, they send my heart away.

LA FANCIULETTA SEMPLICE
(Poet: Giacinto Andrea Cicognini)

Spesso per entro al petto
mi passa un non so che,
e non so dir s'egli è
o martire o diletto.
Talor mi sento uccidere
da incognito rigor,
sarebbe pur da ridere
che fosse il mal d'amor.

Qualor mi s'apresenta
di Clori il bel seren,
mi nasce un foco in sen
che piace e in un tormenta.
Mi sento il cor dividere
tra il gelo e tra l'ardor,
sarebbe pur da ridere
che fosse il mal d'amor.

I più solinghi orrori
frequentò volontier,
ma sento un mio pensier
che dice: "E dove è Clori?"
Or chi mi sa decidere
che sia questo furor?
Sarebbe pur da ridere
che fosse il mal d'amor.

THE SIMPLE MAIDEN
(Translated by Richard Kolb)

Sometimes within my heart
something goes on, I don't know what,
and I can't say if it's
torture or delight.
Then I feel that I'm dying
of an unknown affliction.
It would sure be funny
if it turns out to be lovesickness.

Whenever I'm near
fairest Clori,
a fire is lit in my breast
that pleases and torments at the same time.
I feel my heart divided
between ice and flame.
It would sure be funny
if it turns out to be lovesickness.

I'll gladly accept
the direst solitude,
but I hear a thought
that says "So where's Clori?"
Who can help me figure out
what this turmoil is all about?
It would sure be funny
if it turns out to be lovesickness.

PER UN BACIO
(Poet: Francesco Piccoli)

Per un bacio che rubbai
Dalle labra del mio bene,
In prigion di mille guai
Rinserrato Amor mi tiene.
Al Giudice fiero
Ch'udendo ci stà,
La mia sdegnosetta
Dimanda vendetta;
Io chiedo pietà.
Ma sono intese, oh Dio,
Le sue querelle e non il pianto mio.
Ben lo so ch'a suo riguardo
Mi farà morire al fine,
O col foco d'un bel guardo,
O col laccio d'un bel crine.
Ma s'egli lo vole,
Finir anch'io vò
La vita el tormento,
E lieto e contento
A morte n'andrò.
Pur che mi lasci ancora
Render ciò che rubbai prima che mora.

TRA LE SPERANZE E' L TIMOR
(Dialogo à voce sola)

"Timore, e che sarà?
Godremo sì o no?"
"Datemi libertà,
Speranze, e vel dirò
non s'accordano mai
le Speranze e 'l Timor,
ché l'uno sogna guai
e l'altre acceca Amor."
"Timore, di', pur di'!"
"Speranze, io vel dirò,
ma se dirò di no,
voi direte di sì.»

BECAUSE OF A KISS
(Translated by Candace A. Magner)

Because of a kiss which I stole
from the lips of my beloved
Love holds me clenched
in the prison of a thousand woes.
At the fierce Judge
who hears our pleas,
my disdainful lover
asks for vengeance;
I plead for pity
but, oh heavens, what is heard
is his complaints, and not my plea.
I know well at his glance
that I will die at the end,
either by the fire of a beautiful glance
or by the noose of a beautiful lock of hair;
But if that is what Love wishes,
I also would put an end
to my life and my torment,
and, happy and content,
I will go off to my death
so long as he allows me to return
what I stole before I die.

BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR
(dialog for solo voice)
(Translated by Richard Kolb)

- Fear, what shall we do?
Shall we enjoy ourselves, yes or no?
- Give me leave,
Hope, and I'll tell you:
Hope and Fear will
never agree,
for one anticipates trouble
and the other is blinded by love.
- Fear, tell me, oh tell me!
- Hope, I'll tell you,
but if I say no,
you'll say yes.

L'AMANTE SEGRETO

(Poet: "parole d'incerto")

Voglio, voglio morire,
piuttosto ch'il mio mal venga a scoprire.
Oh, disgrazia fatale!
Quanto più miran gl'occhi il suo bel volto
più tien la bocca il mio desir sepolto;
chi rimedio non ha taccia il suo male.
Non resti di mirar chi non ha sorte,
né può da sì bel ciel venir la morte.
La bella donna mia sovente miro
ed ella a me volge pietoso il guardo,
quasi che voglia dire:
"Palesa il tuo martire"
ché ben s'accorge che mi struggo e ardo.
Ma io voglio morire
piuttosto ch'il mio mal venga a scoprire.
L'erbetta, ch'al cader di fredda brina
languida il capo inchina,
all'apparir del sole
lieta verdeggia più di quel che suole:
tal io, s'alcun timor mi gela il core,
all'apparir di lei prendo vigore.
Ma io voglio morire
piuttosto ch'il mio mal venga a scoprire.
Deh, getta l'arco poderoso e l'armi,
Amor, e lascia omai di saettarmi!
Se non per amor mio
fallo per onor tuo, superbo dio,
perché gloria non è d'un guerrier forte
uccider un che sta vicino a morte.

THE SECRET LOVER

(Translated by Candace Magner)

I just want to die,
rather than let my weakness be discovered.
Oh, inevitable misfortune!
The more my eyes gaze on that beautiful face
the more my mouth will hold my desire entombed;
one who has no remedy stays silent about his pains;
one who has no luck can only look,
accepting his death coming from such a heaven.
I often look at my beloved
who returns a pitying look,
as if she would say,
"Disclose your torment,"
for she is well aware that I am consumed
with passion.
But I would rather die
than let my pain be discovered.
The tender grasses which bow their
languishing heads
with the fall of the cold frost,
then when the sun appears
they happily revive from the soil;
just as I, when fear freezes my heart,
become revived when I see her.
But I would rather die
than have my hurt be revealed.
Cupid, throw down your mighty bow
and weapons,
and finally stop shooting at me!
If not for the love of me,
then do it for your own honor, great god,
because there is no glory for a mighty warrior
to kill one who is already so close to death.

LILLA CRUDELE AD ONTA D'AMORE

Lascia sì la benda e l'ali,
cieco fanciul di Venere!
Dell'arco e degli strali
fa' pur, fanne pur cenere,
spegni, spegni la face
mentre accender, Amore,
non puoi di Lilla il core:
troppo l'esser crudel, troppo le piace!

Taci sì, bamboccio dio!
Non trattar più d'uccidere,
che dei tuoi strali anch'io
vo' pur burlarmi e ridere,
frena, frena l'ardire.
Tu ti vanti, insolente,
di stral onnipotente
e una femmina vil, non puoi ferire!

CRUEL LILLA IS LOVE'S DISGRACE

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

Drop the blindfold and wings,
blind child of Venus.
With your bow and arrows
you're only making ashes.
Deflate your ambition,
since you can't inflame
Lilla's heart:
the crueler she can be, the more she likes it.

Be quiet, infant god,
think no more of slaying,
for even I make fun of your arrows
and laugh at them.
Curb your pride,
you braggart, you glory in
your omnipotent arrows,
but you can't even wound a simple country girl.

BEGLI'OCCHI

Voi pur, begl'occhi, sete
porte d'un paradiso,
voi tra le scherzo e 'l riso
in ciel m'introducete
Ma tanto il cor m'ardete
che dal mio foco eterno
per le porte del ciel corro all'inferno.

Sì, bel seno, che tu sei
una neve animata,
sì che tua giogia grata
consola gl'ardor miei.
Ma tanto alfin godei
che grande a poco a poco
fra le falde di gel provo il mio foco.

Voi pur, bei crini, adoro,
cari dolci legami,
voi, preziosi stami
del mio ricco tesoro.
Ma della selva d'oro
se non mi fate un dono,
fra le miniere d'or povero io sono.

No, no, pomi e rubini,
che voi non paregiate
di quelle labbra amate
i coralli divini.
Ma non mai ne' giardini
di quella bella bocca
coglier quanti vorrei baci mi tocca.

BEAUTIFUL EYES, BREAST, HAIR, AND MOUTH

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

Beautiful eyes, you are indeed
doors to paradise:
with a tease and a laugh
you take me to heaven.
But my heart burns so fiercely
that my everlasting flame causes me to run,
from the doors of heaven to hell.

Beautiful breast, you are
living snow.
O how your graceful throat
feeds my passionate fire.
Yet so sublime is my delight,
that as it grows, little by little,
my fire burns amidst the snow.

I adore you, beautiful hair,
dear sweet bindings,
precious threads
of my rich treasure.
But if you won't give me
some of that golden tangle,
I'm impoverished amid these goldmines.

No, no, apples and rubies,
you don't compare with
the divine corals
within those beloved lips.
Yet never, in the garden
of that beautiful mouth, could I
gather enough kisses to satisfy my yearning.

CHIAMATA A NUOVI AMORI

(Poet: Pietro Paolo Bisarri)

E che diavol sarà questo,
sempre amar dunque dovrò?
Or che sciolta appena resto
nove laccio il pie' legò,
Non mi val dire:
«D'amor son libera,
vecchio desire
più non mi lacerà.»
Che se per Lidio non sento ardor,
altra bellezza ritogliemi il cor.

Che malanno ha meco Amore,
che si crede alfin di far?
S'un mi strusse amando il core
a che serve un altro amar?
Ma il cattivello
perch'io non fuggami
vuol ch'un più bello
il sen distruggami.
S'un viso amabile mi fe' languir,
per due begl'occhi mi sento morir.

NON VOLETE CH'IO MI DOLGA?

(Poet: Pietro Dolfino)

Non volete ch'io mi dolga?
Se quei vezzi che mi fate
Sono finti e simulati,
Se quei sguardi che vibrare
Sono dardi avvelenati?
Se con barbaro rigore
Qual Sirena lusinghiera
Alletate perché pera
Questo misero mio core,
S'io sto in pene fra catene,
Ne v'è alcuno che mi sciolga,
Non volete ch'io mi dolga?
Non volete ch'io mi dolga,
Se il destino meco irato
M'ha riddotto a questo passo,
Che qual Sisifo dannato
Io mi crucio con un sasso?
Sasso fu che tocco, oh Dio,
Dall'acciaio di mia fede,
Per indebita mercede
Mand' il foco al seno mio.
S'io mi sento tal tormento
Che non so dove mi volga,
Non volete ch'io mi dolga?

THE CALL OF NEW LOVES

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

So what in the devil is going on,
do I always have to be in love?
Just as soon as I'm released,
a new snare entraps me.
It does me no good to say:
"I'm free of love,
old desires
will afflict me no more."
If I don't feel anything more for Lidio,
another charmer steals my heart all over again.

What does cupid have against me,
what does he think he's doing?
If loving destroys my heart,
what good is another love?
But that vicious little boy,
since I don't run away,
sets someone more handsome
to confuse me.
An agreeable face makes me languish,
and for two beautiful eyes I think I'm dying.

YOU DON'T WANT ME TO COMPLAIN?

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

You don't want me to complain?
Even though the charms with which you allure me
are feigned and insincere,
and those looks that you send me
are poisoned arrows?
Even though you entice me ruthlessly
like a beguiling siren,
to make me lose
this miserable heart of mine,
even though I suffer in chains
and there's no one to set me free,
you don't want me to complain?
You don't want me to complain,
even though vengeful destiny
has reduced me to this state,
like condemned Sisyphus,
tormenting myself with a stone?
A stone it was, oh God,
that struck the steel of my constancy,
sending me an undeserved reward
of fire in my breast.
I feel such torment
that I don't know which way to turn,
yet you don't want me to complain?

LAGRIME MIE, LAMENTO

(Poet: Pietro Dolfino)

Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Perché non isfogate il fier dolore
Che mi toglie'l respiro e opprime il core?
Lidia, che tant'adoro,
Perch'un guardo pietoso, ahi, mi donò,
Il paterno rigor l'imprigionò.
Tra due mura rinchiusa
Sta la bella innocente,
Dove giunger non può raggio di sole;
E quel che più mi duole
Ed' accresc'al mio mal tormenti e pene,
È che per mia cagione
Provi male il mio bene.
E voi, lumi dolenti, non piangete?
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Lidia, ahimè, veggo mancarmi
L'idol mio che tanto adoro;
Sta colei tra duri marmi,
Per cui spiro e pur non moro.
Se la morte m'è gradita,
Hor che son privo di spene,
Dhe [deh], toglietemi la vita,
Ve ne prego, aspre mie pene.
Ma ben m'accorgo che per tormentarmi
Maggiormente la sorte
Mi nega anco la morte.
Se dunque è vero, o Dio,
Che sol del pianto mio
Il rio destino ha sete,
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?

MY TEARS, LAMENT

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

My tears, why do you hold back?
Why do you not let burst forth the fierce pain
that takes my breath and oppresses my heart?
Because she looked on me with a favorable glance,
Lidia, whom I so much adore,
is imprisoned by her stern father.
Between two walls
the beautiful innocent one is enclosed,
where the sun's rays can't reach her;
and what grieves me most
and adds torment and pain to my suffering,
is that my love
suffers on my account.
And you, grieving eyes, you don't weep?
My tears, why do you hold back?
Alas, I miss Lidia,
the idol that I so much adore;
she's enclosed in hard marble,
the one for whom I sigh and yet do not die.
Because I welcome death,
now that I'm deprived of hope,
Ah, take away my life,
I implore you, my harsh pain.
But I well realize that to torment me
all the more
fate denies me even death.
Thus since it's true, oh God,
that wicked destiny
thirsts only for my weeping,
tears, why do you hold back?

AMOR DORMIGLIONE

Amor, non dormir più!
Su, su, svegliati omai,
che mentre dormi tu
dormon le gioie mie, vegliano i guai.
Non esser, non esser, Amor, d'appoco!
Strali, strali, foco,
strali, strali, su, su,
foco, foco, su, su!

O pigro o tardo
tu non hai senso,
Amor melenso
Amor codardo!
Ahi quale io resto
che nel mio ardore
tu dorma Amore:
mancava questo!

SLEEPYHEAD CUPID

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

Cupid, no more sleeping!
Up, up, wake up right now,
for while you sleep
my joys sleep, troubles are wakeful.
Don't be useless, Cupid!
Arrows, arrows, fire,
arrows, arrows, get up, get up,
fire, fire, get up, get up!

Oh you idle laggard,
you've got no sense!
Foolish Cupid,
cowardly Cupid,
ah, what can I do?
In spite of all my ardor
you slumber:
that's all I need!



**BERIT
NORBAKKEN**

Norbakken is one of Scandinavia's leading sopranos. Her versatility and flexibility of voice have allowed her to master a repertoire ranging from Baroque to contemporary, including folk music. She regularly appears in performances of oratorios, passions, and masses, and continues her work with leading ensembles, orchestras, and conductors in major concert halls all over the world.

Her many recordings have garnered high critical acclaim both in Norway and abroad. In particular, her recording of Arriaga's vocal music, together with the BBC Philharmonic under the leading of Juanjo Mena has received glowing reviews internationally.

Norbakken appeared at the Sydney Opera House, the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, at the Cincinnati May Festival as well as in several programs touring throughout Europe.

As a research fellow through The Norwegian Artistic Research Program, she has worked closely with the Swedish composer Karin Rehnqvist.

'Carrying all of this emotional weight was soprano Berit Norbakken Solset, whose rendition of each song was astonishingly gorgeous, making them deeply moving. Nowhere more so than in the third of the songs, 'Perfume of the instant', its enraptured, intimate sensuality practically inducing the sensation of wafts of fragrance in the concert hall. Throughout the work, Solset made the music marvellously tactile, her voice seemingly communicating to each one of us in the audience personally. I can honestly say that if this was the last performance I ever heard, I would have died perfectly happily. Amazing.'

(Simon Cummings (5:4) after listening to Kaija Saariaho's "Quatre Instants" at Nordic Music Days in Bodø, November 2019.)

'...Two vocal works are included: the cantata "Herminie" and "Air de l'Opéra Médée" The 15-minute cantata is, quite simply, a masterwork of vocal writing. It hints at what the operatic world lost with Arriaga's early death, Soprano Berit Norbakken Solset sings with a clear, pure tone that continually delights. Her delivery reinforces the stylistic similarities between Arriaga and Mozart...'

(Charlottesvilleclassical.org/Chandos/Arriaga/BBC Philharmonic/Juanjo Mena, 2018)

«...and so wonderfully performed, and the fabulous soprano, Berit Norbakken, who has exactly the right blend of straightness, so you can hear every note, but when she decides to open up, it's just fabulous, for me, it's got everything...»

(BBC Radio 3, about her recording of Ave Maria/Fartein Valen (Refractions, 2013, BIS Records))



SOLMUND NYSTABAKK

From the rural churches of Northern Norway to the baroque palaces of Venice, from Mold-ejazz to the Wiener Musikverein and the Tampere Biennale, lutenist and guitarist Solmund Nystabakk has performed a repertoire spanning from early music and classical to pop and folk music, contemporary music, and free improvisation.

He has also composed music for numerous theatre productions, participated in numerous recording sessions, and completed his PhD project in 2020 at the Norwegian Academy of Music and at UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, where he researched the performance of 15th and 16th-century lute songs.

Solmund is a member of Ensemble NeoN, which has won the Spellemann Award twice. He also performs in a duo with soprano Berit Norbakken.

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- 10 **BEGH'OCCHI** ____ 03:35
- 11 **CHIAMATA A NUOVI AMORI** ____ 01:56
- 12 **NON VOLETE CH'IO MI DOLGA?** ____ 05:51
- 13 **LAGRIME MIE, LAMENTO** ____ 10:17
- 14 **AMOR DORMIGLIONE** ____ 03:05

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