



Fantassissimus



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CASTELLO CONSORT



ELISE DUPONT violin

Willem van der Sijde (Amsterdam, 1691). On loan from the Nationaal Muziekinstrumenten Fonds.

ANNE-LINDE VISSER viola da gamba & cello

Gamba: Anton Wiegers (Dussen, 1980). Cello: Henry Jay (London, c.1750).

MATTHIJS VAN DER MOOLEN sackbut

Aron Vajna, after anonymous Italian instrument (c.1560) in the Accademia Filarmonica di Verona (Basel, 2021). Played with a copy of the mouthpiece from the same collection, attributed to Schnitzer.

MENNO VAN DELFT organ

Orgelmakerij Reil, after 17th-century North Italian examples (Heerde, 2020).

EMMA HUIJSSER harp

Dario Pontiggia, after Barberini (early 17th century) in the Museo degli Strumenti Musicali di Roma.

GIULIO QUIRICI theorbo

Jaume Bosser Artal, after Matteo Sellas (Barcelona, 2013). Given name: Ludovica.

SAKURA GOTO violin

Anonymous (probably Tyrol, c.1800).

BENNY AGHASSI dulcian

K. Bickhardt & B. Junghänel (Germany, c.1985).

ALON PORTAL viola da gamba

François Bodart, after Nicholas Bertrand, (Belgium, 1990).

*“To us, ‘Stylus Phantasticus’
is a playground that offers
endless opportunities to explore
new sound colours, musical
characters and ways
of improvisation.”*

STYLUS PHANTASTICUS – DIALOGUES AND ECHOES

DOMINY CLEMENTS IN CONVERSATION WITH THE CASTELLO CONSORT AND MARTIJN PADDING

This is the Castello Consort's debut CD. Can you tell us something about how the ensemble came into being, and what you have been doing until now?

The three of us (Elise, Anne-Linde, and Matthijs) met at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. Our first years as a group were quite experimental, and soon we exhausted nearly all of the 17th-century repertoire available to our instrumentation of trombone, violin, cello/gamba, and basso continuo. We also experimented with different continuo instruments, ranging from small chest organs to large, original 17th-century organs in high pitch. This made us very aware of the kind of sound we were looking for as an ensemble, and we started dreaming of having our own organ: a transportable instrument that would resemble a church organ, to suit our 17th-century repertoire. After four years of intensive research and fundraising this dream came true (with many thanks to those who supported us through crowdfunding!).

We love exploring different kinds of sound colours and other ways of expressing ourselves through 17th-century music. In the very beginning we focused mostly on early Italian baroque music for small chamber music settings. More recently, we started broadening both our repertoire and the size of our ensemble. For each programme we look for a sound (and instrumentation) that is most convincing for the music we play. In 'Fantastissimus' we challenged ourselves even more by working together with a contemporary composer, something that we enjoyed very much.

What kind of research is your ensemble involved with when finding and interpreting this kind of music, and which considerations arise when making your selections?

Sometimes we are focusing on a very specific time or place, and a lot of research can go into finding information on instrumentation, temperaments, pitch, ornamentation, and playing techniques. However, we are always trying to stay creative, and we are using our

imagination to translate this music into our concert practice and the present time. For instance, in our programme 'Symphoniæ' we imagined which music could have sounded at the court of Leopold Wilhelm in 17th-century Brussels. And for the 400th anniversary of the death of the Dutch composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck in 2021, we arranged some of his keyboard works for a typical broken consort of his time and place, after asking ourselves the question "What could Sweelinck's chamber music have sounded like?"

We felt that there was a lot of space for creative freedom in the making of the programme for this CD. Martijn Padding was very interested in hearing our favourite repertoire, and we presented many compositions to him that connected with the Stylus Phantasticus in one way or another. Inspired by all of those composers, Martijn composed his own 'Stylus Phantasticus' collection, and we looked for the best early music to combine with Martijn's finished work. While selecting these pieces, we did not want to constrain ourselves too much by focusing on only one short period in history. Our aim was to find music that would naturally weave through Martijn's pieces. We approached the complete programme as a composition in itself, resembling both the Stylus Phantasticus and our ensemble's spirit.

Delving a little further into the 17th-century composers represented here: we have the Italian Giovanni Trabaci, whose music is said to foreshadow that of the keyboard virtuoso Girolamo Frescobaldi; violinists such as Antonio Bertali and Biagio Marini alongside wind player Dario Castello; and the German Johann Rosenmüller, whose success in Italy resulted in a considerable export of Italian musical taste to his home country. Do you find enough individuality in these pieces to gain an impression of the character of each composer?

The 17th century is a very compelling period with regard to instrumental music. Vocal music was still very important however, and after centuries of vocal-oriented writing, composers started to experiment with the specific qualities and possibilities of musical instruments. New musical forms, for example the 'sonata', were a playground for both composers and musicians: to show off their abilities, and to seek the technical limits of their instruments. However, vocal music was still very important, and the human voice was considered the ultimate example for instrumentalists. Tactus and the importance of relations between





different meters slowly became less present, evolving into (the suggestion of) a free, improvised form.

All of the composers presented on this CD convey a great deal of contrasting characters in their music, and all of them were 'playing' with the elements described above. At the same time we find a lot of individuality in the music presented. There is a lot of room for the performer's own interpretation because of the free form of these compositions. We enjoy fantasising about each composer's individual character and approach to music based on their compositions, and we include this in our performance.

For example Dario Castello's sonatas have extremely contrasting sections, alternating between instrumental virtuosity and passages with more vocal qualities. The illusion of improvisation alongside recitative-like solos are very typical for his music. He was obviously well-informed about the instruments for which he was writing, as becomes clear in the trombone solo of his Sonata Duodecima. The key of A minor is the best sounding tonality on this instrument, and Castello covers the trombone's entire range in these bars.

Girolamo Frescobaldi, on the other hand, has a much more polyphonic way of writing. His music is not about individual virtuosity, but more about a collective journey through different affects. These elements of polyphony and virtuosity are skillfully combined by Johann Rosenmüller. We hear 'largo' fugal passages contrasting with faster virtuosic movements, intertwined with quickly changing harmonic intermezzi. Giovanni Valentini travels even further with his unusual use of harmony, creating a language that is completely unique, and never heard elsewhere (Martijn's favourite!).

We have traces from the past – preserved manuscripts, some fragile instruments that can be copied and rebuilt... However, there will always be some uncertainty as to how music of the past really sounded. Do you have a philosophy on this?

The music of this time is very experimental and leaves a lot of space for the performer. This for example contrasts with music from the 20th century, where almost every note has some kind of instruction added by the composer. Additionally, the 'basso continuo' part often indicates little about the harmony, especially when compared to high baroque repertoire. This asks for a lot of creativity and improvisation from the continuo team. At the same time there are things we can be quite certain about. For example, our organ

(and its tuning and pitch) is based on Italian organs which are still in use today, and there are many sources about ornamentation, basso continuo, articulation and instrumentation. It is not our aim to simply 'copy' these sources, to try to reproduce sounds that are lost. In our performances, we aspire to convey to the audience what we think was meant by the composer, while leaving room for spontaneity. Of course, we can not turn off our individual selves living in the present, and this element is certainly part of our performances.

How did you arrive at your collaboration with Martijn Padding? Which creative impulses and artistic ambitions did you have in mind?

We very much wanted to experience working together with a living composer, and all three of us were familiar with the work of Martijn Padding. Matthijs studied his 'Three Pieces' for (modern) trombone solo during his classical trombone studies, and still thinks this is some of the very best repertoire written for that instrument. We all liked how Martijn's music is full of humour and surprises, how he places uncommon instruments in the spotlight, and how he always creates new sound colours by finding unusual but beautiful combinations of instruments.

With this project we also challenged ourselves to see how we, as an early music ensemble working together with a contemporary composer, could translate the Stylus Phantasticus style into the 21st century. We were also curious to find out how playing Martijn's music would influence our way of playing 17th century music.

We really enjoyed the experimental and open character in the sessions we had with Martijn. It was very much a collaboration where the programme developed by trial and error, instead of something that was already fixed beforehand. Martijn asked us to approach his music the same way we would take on our 17th century repertoire, leaving space for ornamentation and improvisation.

Martijn, working together with the Castello Consort has clearly been a very fruitful enterprise. If one looks at every aspect of such a project – becoming immersed in the sonorities and possibilities of early instruments as well as the music of the period, working closely with expert musicians at the same time as looking for a new and personal idiom amidst the echoes of long dead musical ancestors, it can be imagined that any composer





might encounter a kind of creative vertigo. Your pragmatic and practical approach no doubt cuts through too much philosophical meandering. But what has been your approach with Stylus Phantasticus, and how does it feel to hear this music being brought to life?

In many ways, working with the Castello Consort has been a revelation to me. I have previously written works for 'period orchestras' such as Anima Eterna, the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. Long ago, I wrote a grand piano concerto based on sketches from Beethoven's Kafka Sketchbook for fortepiano and authentic wind instruments. But this collaboration with the Castello Consort required a completely different mindset, and a new way of learning to listen.

I heard a lot of early music in my youth, and grew up whilst historical pioneers Brüggem, Bijlsma, and Leonhardt were doing their marvellous work. However, I must confess that the incredibly beautiful qualities in sound and harmonic possibilities of, for example, the meantone temperament in which the Castello Consort play their Stylus Phantasticus compositions, only recently got through to me. It is funny that a lot of attention in contemporary music has been given to microtonality, spectral analysis and tuning systems. It is wonderful to see and hear that those stubborn and individualistic 'Stylus' composers were already working with microtonal dissonances already in the 17th century, and that they were not averse to those nice abrasive beats that arise as the interference between tones of specific intervals. For me, composing is always linked to research into the specific possibilities of the musicians I work with, and is therefore very pragmatic. I try to write the notes as closely as possible to their individual characters. This also applies here, and because the ensemble in my composition consists of a maximum of five musicians (with the exception of *Cascades*), it in fact means that everyone has a solo role. Before I started working with the musicians, I first had to immerse myself in that meantone temperament and to reorient my ears, that normally work with diatonic, chromatic, and microtonal sonorities. This was a complete change from my normal routine. Microtonality is quite interesting in contemporary music, but let's face it, it plays a major role (at least melodically) in just about all traditional music from all continents.

Besides becoming accustomed to harmonic progressions in meantone temperament, and learning to find the beauty in something entirely new, the members of the Castello Consort

play on instruments for which I had never written before. The meantone organ has split black keys to distinguish between a G sharp and an A flat, and between a D sharp and an E flat. Apart from theoretical compositional possibilities, these aspects offer all kinds of physical (im)possibilities. For instance, for the viola da gamba, with its velvety sound, you can write chords that are unplayable on other string instruments. And on the chromatic harp, without pedals, there are many possibilities, but only if you work it out very precisely in advance. My approach was one of trial and error. I made a large number of sketches, and these were extensively rehearsed so that I quickly found out what worked and what didn't, and learned which direction to take. The musicians also made a big contribution to this process, and at the same time I worked closely with them on an individual basis. The various solos from my 'Stylus Phantasticus' are the result of this. Dizzying images of what is possible arise when you first have to deal with composing in an unfamiliar tuning. You can also block these thoughts, which is why practical work and learning while writing is the best method for me. I knew pretty quickly that I wanted to make an album or collection with a lot of unequal pieces: tutti, soli, duets, and more. I also wanted to emphasise diversity in expression. I approached this as imaginatively and unacademically as possible, because that is precisely the characteristic of the 'Stylus' composers of the past: sometimes conceptual, sometimes theatrical, sometimes very close to improvisation, but always avoiding any implication of dullness or politeness. For me this meant working with opposites: very precise notation against parts where the timing is determined by the player, and extremely fast contrasting extremely slow.

From the moment we got in touch, Matthijs showered me with scores and recordings of remarkable music, and this was incredibly inspiring. It was a kind of re-acquaintance with composers I had heard before, but with the wrong ears. That music formed the starting point for writing my work: those ways of playing together, the ordering and relationships between the compositions, the direct expression of the music, the succinctness, and not going on longer than necessary. In some parts I used the same contrapuntal techniques as were common in the 16th and 17th centuries, and that alone made it clear that my point of departure was not to impose a very pronounced 21st-century aesthetic (whatever that may be) on the composition, but to take into account the abstractions and techniques of those Stylus composers, and starting from this as a basis.

The Castello Consort also asked me to write a work with which they could present their new



meantone organ. The piece has certainly not become an organ concerto, but the organ has been given a pivotal function in the piece, and three solos (Intonazioni). The first one of these solos introduces both the meantone tuning and the design of that remarkable keyboard, with its extra keys, by very slowly playing every note, starting at the top and ending in the lowest register, creating a clearly perceptible beating between notes.

There is another dialogue generated when it comes to new music for old instruments, between those 'time-machines' that create sounds that would have been familiar four centuries ago, and the composing of music that is different and new. Of course, you treat these instruments with respect, but with some of your Intonazione music for organ it sounds to modern ears as if the instrument has been re-tuned. Are there particular adaptations and techniques used that we could listen out for? Given the direct relationship of the title Stylus Phantasticus to early baroque music, how has your approach to writing for early instruments and period performing style been different to working with a modern ensemble?

Perhaps the best example of the difference between composing today or (for instance) in 1610 is the organ with its extra keys. My colleagues from earlier times would choose either the A flat or the G sharp key, but use them adjacently as little as possible to avoid undermining their whole ideal of correct tuning. By contrast, in some of my pieces this is precisely the starting point. This is the consequence of three centuries of chromatic (and microtonal) music history. There is a similar approach in the prelude for harp, where the differences between D sharp and E flat or G sharp and A flat are not avoided, but are presented deliberately. Strange things sometimes happen in music because a theatrical conception creates a new musical result. At one of the first rehearsals I was watching the ensemble in the French Church in Voorburg. The doors of the beautiful organ that they had built suddenly caught my eye. In my work, softly pulsating and wah-wah-like colours generally play a prominent role. I asked Matthijs and Elise to open and close the doors of the pipe cabinet while Menno played a static chord, and the sound I had hoped for was the result: a beautiful wah-wah effect that I had never heard before. This is perhaps a nice example of how you can discover new techniques and new sounds by looking at something with an open mind.

I have also projected more specific contemporary developments onto these old instruments, including such techniques as flageolet passages for the viola da gamba. The writing in 'Unisono' also calls for a certain instrumental athleticism that is unusual in the repertoire played by the Castello Consort. The trombone part in particular is of an exceptional level in terms of stamina and intervallic leaps.

The dissonances and harmonic surprises in something like Valentini's Sonata à 6 sound quite modern even today. Lines of descent in both performance and composing traditions are important to all musicians, so can you say something about where you see yourself in that historical perspective? Is it akin to building on deep and well-established foundations, or is it perhaps the rediscovery and rejuvenation of a lost art?

In the work of Merula and Valentini you can see and hear that they are experimenting with harmonic connections. In general, all 'Stylus' repertoire is written from a late modal and diatonic/chromatic harmonic context. There is a lot of counterpoint, but it is all tightly controlled by tonality. What some of the Stylus composers were doing already is to look at those tonal chords as objects. Those objects could also be used in alternative progressions, and were therefore brought out from their logical flow and were re-allocated. In fact, this comes very close to what I have been practicing myself for a long time. I use tonal elements without the music being explicitly tonal, for instance by avoiding cadences and resolutions. Another colleague from the past who was really great at this was Erik Satie. Where this concerns the revival of a 'lost art', as you put it nicely, it mainly concerns the way in which people play together, in those intense relationships and ensembles between instruments. New combinations are made in a high tempo, and of course there is a special enjoyment in those sonorities: really hanging onto a beautiful chord and dragging everything out of it. What I also found very infectious, is the freedom that musicians like those of the Castello Consort take to colour and shape their notes. In some contemporary music, the tendency has been to record everything down to the microsecond in notation or in computers. I like being in a situation where I trust the musicians, and where they can add their own contemporary embellishments much better than any composer. That confidence arose immediately at the first rehearsal when I realised how precisely these musicians listen to

each other, and how they are always aware of their voice within the harmony, and how they constantly correct each other for purity and stylistic sensitivity. This can be summed up in one word: exquisite. What also is very important to this project, is our collaboration with sound engineer Daan van Aalst, who brings the music very close in his recordings, and has in an unparalleled way captured the players very naturally. That week-long recording process was a special moment in which we found a new depth in the possibilities offered by the scores, new and old. Daan's directing was very essential in this.

In mixing the old with the new in 'Stylus Phantasticus', we are invited into a programme of both contrast and confluence. Is there a musical narrative in the sequence of these pieces, or even perhaps a theatrical one – hidden behind the notes?

It soon became clear that I did not want to compose a long, closed work, but rather a loose-leaf collection of pieces. This way it would be able to comment on and accompany the older repertoire in a very flexible way. The process of selection began: how do we make a strong call-and-response structure, in which a beautiful rhythm is created between early and new music, so that it creates one big arc of tension? Of course my album could be played as a series of pieces one after the other, but this is really not the intention. Those pieces really need the early music, and vice versa. This was our starting point, and also immediately a puzzle, because how were we going to combine the two? When making that shape, you have to deal with the same processes that apply when composing notes. In some cases the combinations were clear, for example because I composed an 'Homage to Biber', in which the ensemble goes wild in paying tribute to that old master in his insane fantasy. This piece naturally continues on Biber's own 'Sonata', and in fact, my 'Homage' starts even before Biber has finished! There are further salutes to colleagues: in 'Addio' I doff my hat to Claudio Monteverdi, and in 'Unisono' I wave to my friend and teacher Louis Andriessen.





Fantassissimus

CASTELLO CONSORT

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| 1 | Sinfonia, Sesto Tuono
Per ogni sorte di strumento musicale, Op. 22 (Venice, 1655)
BIAGIO MARINI <i>b.</i> Brescia, 1594; <i>d.</i> Venice 1663 | 1:17 |
| 2 | Intonazione I
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING Amsterdam 1956 | 1:56 |
| 3 | Choral
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 1:09 |
| 4 | Sonata Undecima à 4
Sonate a due, tre, & quattro, Op. 1 (Venice, 1649)
MARCO ANTONIO FERRO <i>d.</i> Vienna, 1662 | 4:50 |
| 5 | Fantasia
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 3:42 |
| 6 | Sonata à 2, Violino è Viola da Gamba
Partiturbuch Ludwig (1662)
ANTONIO BERTALI <i>b.</i> Verona, 1605; <i>d.</i> Vienna, 1669 | 7:38 |
| 7 | Intonazione II
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 1:27 |

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| 8 | Unisono
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 4:01 |
| 9 | Canzona
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:31 |
| 10 | Echo
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 1:11 |
| 11 | Sonata Duodecima à 3
Sonate concertate in stil moderno, libro secondo (Venice, 1629)
DARIO CASTELLO <i>fl.</i> Venice, first half of 17th century | 7:32 |
| 12 | Inventio
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:13 |
| 13 | Canzon Quinta à 4
Canzoni da sonare a una, due, tre et quattro (Venice, 1634)
GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI <i>b.</i> Ferrara, 1583; <i>d.</i> Rome, 1643 | 3:40 |
| 14 | Intonazione III
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:00 |
| 15 | Sonata I: Prelude
Sonatæ, à violino solo (Nuremberg, 1681)
HEINRICH IGNAZ VON BIBER <i>b.</i> Bohemia, 1644; <i>d.</i> Salzburg, 1704 | 3:38 |

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| 16 | Hommage to Biber
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:25 |
| 17 | Presto
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:59 |
| 18 | Prelude
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:17 |
| 19 | Sonata Quarta à 3
Sonatae, à 2,3,4 è 5 stromenti da arco et altri (Nuremberg, 1682)
JOHANN ROSENMÜLLER <i>b.</i> Oelsnitz, c.1619; <i>d.</i> Wolfenbüttel, 1684 | 5:51 |
| 20 | Consonanze Stravaganti
Ricercate, canzone francese, capricci, etc., libro primo (Naples, 1603)
GIOVANNI MARIA TRABACI <i>b.</i> Monte Pelusio, c.1575; <i>d.</i> Naples, 1647 | 2:06 |
| 21 | Sonata à 6 stromenti
Partiturbuch Ludwig (1662)
GIOVANNI VALENTINI <i>b.</i> ? Venice, 1582/3; <i>d.</i> Vienna, 1649 | 5:30 |
| 22 | Addio
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 2:06 |
| 23 | Aeolian Cascades
Stylus Phantasticus (2022)
MARTIJN PADDING | 3:49 |

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Daan van Aalst

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