Addio Amore

Jeanine De Bique · Terry Wey

KAMMERORCHESTER BASEL

Nicola Antonio Porpora (1686-1768)

1	**Meride e Selinunte**, Vanne, sì, che all'or quest'alma*	5. 12
2	**Orfeo**, M'abbandoni amato bene*	8. 24

Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709)

Concerto in A minor, Op. 8 No. 2

3	I. Allegro	2. 09
4	II. Largo	2. 47
5	III. Allegro	1. 57

Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)

6	**L'Eraclea**, Vado a pugnar o bella*	5. 13

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Rinaldo, HWV 7a

7	Venti, turbini, prestate	3. 52
8	Ah, crudel, il pianto mio	6. 01

Giuseppe Torelli

Concerto in F Major, Op. 8 No. 11

9	I. Allegro	2. 58
10	II. Largo, e stacatto – Allegro – Adagio	3. 53
11	III. Allegro	3. 01

Geminiano Giacomelli (1692-1740)

12	**Gianguir**, Placide a miglior vita*	8. 19

Johann Adolph Hasse (1699-1783)

13	**Attalo re di Bitinia**, Corro… volo… e dove, oh Dio*	5. 09

George Frideric Handel

14	**Rodelinda, regina de' Longobardi**, Io t´abbraccio	6. 44

Total playing time: 65. 46

Jeanine De Bique, soprano
Terry Wey, countertenor
Julia Schröder, violin
Antonio Viñuales, violin
Kammerorchester Basel

** World premiere recordings*

I first met Jeanine in February 2020 in Switzerland, where we were rehearsing for both of our scenic debuts as Giulio Cesare and Cleopatra. Apart from getting along wonderfully from the start on a personal level, we also discovered during the final duet that our voices complement each other exceptionally well.

Unfortunately, this opera production was abruptly cut short by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, scattering everyone involved in all directions just before the piano dress; but throughout the rehearsals we had already been floating the idea of recording a duo CD together.

I am therefore especially delighted that, some years later, it has actually materialized with the Kammerorchester Basel. The 'Farewell' programme was also a project especially dear to me, so this recording fulfills what I might call two heartfelt wishes at once.
I hope all listeners will find great joy in these extraordinary duets and arias!

Terry Wey

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It is a rare and beautiful gift to find a singing partner with whom one shares a deep musical connection, and I feel truly fortunate to have found that in Terry. As two young artists making our role debuts in Handel's opera Giulio Cesare, from our first rehearsal, singing together felt wonderfully natural and effortless.

So when Terry invited me to join him on this album, my answer was an immediate and emphatic, yes! Making the experience even more special was the opportunity to collaborate with Kammerorchester Basel, an ensemble I have admired for many years.

I am deeply grateful to Terry for helping bring our little dream of finally performing together to life. It is my sincere hope that these small musical treasures bring joy, warmth, and perhaps even a smile to those listening, accompanying you through the quiet moments and daily rhythms of life.

Jeanine De Bique

In Search of the Pathetic: A Challenge Between Generations of Singers

In 1723, the singer and composer Pier Francesco Tosi (1654–1732) published what is regarded as the first modern treatise on singing. In his *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni*, the author codified the technique of Italian singing, offered recommendations to teachers and students alike, and polemicised against the latest theatrical musical practices.

By the time the work appeared in print, Tosi was nearly seventy years old, long retired from his singing career and deeply distrustful of younger composers, the forerunners of *stile galante*. In his view, their operas gave rise to paradoxical situations, such as that of an "unhappy hero ... who weeps, and dies while singing quickly and cheerfully", where a plaintive aria in a slow tempo and minor key would have been far more appropriate. Tosi argued that music possessing these expressive qualities had become increasingly rare in opera seria, owing in part to the indifference of singers themselves, who were more devoted to florid virtuosity than to pathetic expression. By contrast, he claimed that "the singers of earlier generations were unsurpassed in singing to the heart", since their "dearest occupation" was expressive singing rather than mere displays of bravura.

Despite the sharpness of his polemic, Tosi refrained from openly naming those artists "guilty" of abandoning the old manner of singing in favour of the new fashion. Instead, in his treatise he chose to mention only singers he deeply admired, all of whom had either withdrawn from public life or had already passed away: Luigi Albarelli, Giovanni Buzzoleni, Giovanni Francesco Grossi (known as Siface), Francesco Antonio Pistocchi, Antonio Rivani, Santa Stella, and Francesca Vanini. The author commended only two of the interpreters working in those years, "two angelical creatures" of whom he omitted names, probably on diplomatic grounds: Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, whose exceptional singing abilities and their in-between heated rivalry were known by their contemporaries (Tosi reveals the reference to the two singers in his private epistolary).

Today, Tosi's treatise is no longer valued as a pedagogical manual, but rather as a document of historical and musicological significance. Yet can it truly be regarded as an impartial witness to the musical practices of its age? Not entirely. Modern readers will soon realise that many of Tosi's arguments are contradicted by the surviving musical sources of his own time. If one opens the score of a coeval opera—whether performed in Venice, Naples, or elsewhere in Italy — one immediately notices the considerable presence of slow, expressive numbers in the minor mode. Compared with earlier periods, such pieces undoubtedly became fewer in number, yet not in quality or in their search for new expressive solutions.

Through a selection of arias and duets united by the theme of departure, the present recording offers evidence in support of this view. Separation between two characters is a pivotal moment found in virtually every opera, providing composers with the ideal opportunity to write music of heightened expressive intensity. The composer's approach could vary greatly depending on the interpersonal relationship between the characters facing separation: parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends, lovers, and so forth. Closely linked to the theme of departure are other similar situations, equally painful: abandonment — one need only think of archetypal figures such as Ariadne, deserted by Theseus on a lonely island — or the departure from earthly life itself, namely death, as in the story of Orpheus, who dared to challenge

the gods of the underworld in order to restore his beloved Eurydice to life.

Moreover, what opera does not contain at least one pair of lovers forced to part because of parental opposition, moral constraints, or some other cruel circumstance? And what better moment to bid farewell than in a duet capable of moving the audience and drawing forth applause?

Our journey begins with music written for some of the singers most admired by Tosi. The duet "*Vado a pugnar o bella*", from *Eraclea* (Genova, 1705), was conceived for the contralto Francesca Vanini Boschi and the soprano Francesco de Grandis. The attribution of this opera to Tomaso Albinoni is relatively recent: the printed libretto of the production omits his name, yet the authorship of the music is confirmed by a small group of individual manuscript excerpts preserved in Naples (Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella, Ms. Cantate 2).

Particularly striking is the nature of the accompaniment. Ignoring the martial exhortation contained in the text, Albinoni instead focuses on the lovers' promise of fidelity, setting it to music that expresses tenderness and intimacy. Equally evocative is the instrumental accompaniment: the dialogue between the two voices, accompanied only by violas without basso continuo, is mirrored by a pair of cellos, whose dotted rhythmic figures offer a subtle allusion to the military setting.

The farewell between the two friends in the duet "*Vanne, sì, che all'or quest'alma*" from Nicola Porpora's *Meride e Selinunte* (Venice, 1726) is similarly imbued with gallantry. After the graceful predictability of the opening A section, cast in a dance-like triple metre, the B section unexpectedly shifts into duple time and adopts a fugal texture, perhaps as a tribute to the golden tradition of the chamber duet cultivated by composers such as Giovanni Bononcini, Antonio Lotti, and Agostino Steffani.

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There also exist non-theatrical compositions that address departure not as the fate of a fictional character, but of a real singer in flesh and blood. In 1723, as she prepared to leave Naples after three triumphant seasons, the soprano Faustina Bordoni performed a cantata specially composed for the occasion by Leonardo Vinci: "*Parto ma con qual core*". Also known as *La partenza di Faustina*, the work allowed the singer to bid a sorrowful farewell to the Neapolitan public, while promising to return within three years — a promise she did not keep, as she returned to Naples only in 1732.

In every city, Bordoni was awaited with eager anticipation, as contemporary iconographic sources relating to her performances also attest. During a staging of *Gianguir* (Venice, 1729), the caricaturist Anton Maria Zanetti portrayed Bordoni tenderly extending her hands towards her stage partner, the castrato Francesco Bernardi, known as Senesino. Whereas caricatures generally distort their subjects and render them grotesque, in this instance the lovers' meeting — or farewell — is captured with remarkable tenderness. The drawing most likely depicts the performance of the duet "*Placide a miglior vita*", in which the characters Semira and Cosrovio vow never again to part and serenely prepare to face their imminent execution.

For this deeply harrowing moment, Geminiano Giacomelli composed music of extraordinary dramatic intensity, drawing on devices rarely heard in Italian theatres of the period. He set the scene in F minor — then considered the most funereal of keys — and employed fugal writing, including a canon at the second between the two voices that anticipates Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, composed several years later.
It is striking that a work of such breadth and profoundly pathetic character was sung by Bordoni herself, who, according to Tosi, was thought to avoid this style of singing.

To whom might Giacomelli have looked for inspiration in composing such an original work? One possible antecedent may be found in the operatic repertory of Georg Friedrich Händel, well known to the castrato Senesino, who, between 1720 and 1728, took on all Händel's operatic roles in London as a protagonist. Conceivably, through the singer, Giacomelli may have become acquainted with the duet "*Io t'abbraccio e più morte*" from *Rodelinda, regina de' Longobardi* (1725). Here too, the central couple stands on the brink of execution, much as in Gianguir.

Beyond this hypothetical musical kinship, it should be remembered that Händel's operas circulated only rarely in Italy during the composer's lifetime, nor did they enjoy the widespread dissemination achieved by celebrated contemporaries such as Johann Adolf Hasse, Nicola Porpora, and Leonardo Vinci, whose operas were performed and imitated throughout much of the eighteenth century, from Spain to Russia. After 1709, the very few works by Händel that reached Italian stages were generally introduced through the personal initiative of singers who had collaborated with him in London, such as the castrato Nicola Grimaldi. In numerous collective productions, Grimaldi insisted upon the inclusion of his favourite Handel arias and occasionally even secured revivals of entire operas. *Rinaldo*, his celebrated signature role, had been written for London in 1711 and was revived in Naples in 1718, without Händel's direct involvement.

From this opera comes the aria "*Venti, turbini, prestate*", whose dialogue between voice, violin, and bassoon vividly captures the "volatile" spirit of the piece, while allusively touching upon our central theme of departure, as Rinaldo prepares to search for Almirena, abducted by the sorceress Armida. From the same opera also comes

the pathetic aria "*Ah, crudel, il pianto mio*", in which Armida languishes over the hero Rinaldo's unrequited love, as he longs to escape her enchanted palace yet finds no means of flight.

Remaining within the sphere of departures and deaths, we turn finally to the aria "*Corro… volo… e dove, oh Dio*" from Hasse's *Attalo re di Bitinia* (Naples, 1728), characterised by a strikingly contrasted structure. Such writing would certainly have irritated Tosi, who detested those pieces in which the allegro mingled "from time to time with the pathetic". Yet, it was precisely this variety of expression that made the aria one of the most admired of its day, aided by the exceptional vocal and theatrical gifts of its original interpreter, the contralto Antonia Margherita Merighi. In later years, the aria also became one of the favourites of Anna Girò, Antonio Vivaldi's muse and protégée.

Our journey reaches its conclusion with Nicola Porpora and Francesco Maria Veracini's *Orfeo* (London, 1736), a multi-authored score that also included contributions from Baldassare Galuppi, Geminiano Giacomelli, Johann Adolf Hasse, and others. The title role was conceived specifically for the castrato Carlo Broschi, known as Farinelli, as a kind of artistic manifesto: Orfeo was the last major role — both in vocal demands and symbolic significance — that the singer undertook before retiring from the operatic stage in 1737.

For the occasion, Farinelli drew upon a selection of iconic arias from his earlier repertoire, which Porpora reworked in an original manner. In the deeply poignant aria "*M'abbandoni amato bene*", derived from Francesco Araia's Berenice (Venice, 1734), Porpora enhanced the soloist's role through a series of refinements: he enriched the orchestral accompaniment with new rhythmic figuration — a soft texture of reiterated triplets — and revised the harmonic foundation, while leaving the vocal line intact. This almost surgical process of reworking represents an exceptional creative endeavor, rarely attested in contemporary operatic practice, and codifies the profound artistic understanding between the composer and his former pupil Farinelli.

Perhaps a singer of more conservative taste, such as Tosi, might have frowned upon Farinelli's versatility, who — as in the piece from *Orfeo* included here — mastered both soprano and contralto registers with equal ease. Yet had he ever had the opportunity to hear him, Tosi might well have been moved to tears, just as Orfeo himself implores his audience in the aria:

"*Al grave affanno che in me scorgete, amanti cori, se non piangete, Amor tiranno provar possiate, perché impariate a lagrimar.*"

Giovanni Andrea Sechi

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* Tracks 1, 6, 8, 12, 14
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*** Tracks 3–5, 9–11

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