

**DUNEDIN  
CONSORT**



---

16 September 2021, 7:30pm | Perth Concert Hall

## Madrigals of Love, Loss & War

Claudio Monteverdi	Altri canti d'amor
Dario Castello	Sonata No. 9 for two violins
Barbara Strozzi	Silenzio nocivo
Claudio Monteverdi	Chiome d'oro
	Ahi, come un vago sol
	Altri canti di Marte
	Piagn'e sospira
Giovanni Girolamo	Toccata No. 1
Kapsberger	
Claudio Monteverdi	Volgendo il ciel
	Anima mia perdona
	Hor che'l ciel



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

---

## Programme notes

Claudio Monteverdi is often portrayed as an iconoclast, as a composer who broke the rules, with little or no regard to preceding musicians. Texts such as Leo Schrade's *Monteverdi: Creator of Modern Music* (New York, 1950) contributed to this image and encouraged the reception of his music in the twentieth century. They helped cement his place as one of the first composers of interest to the early music movement. To begin with, this esteem rested predominantly on only a handful of works, including his famous *Vespers* setting of 1610 and his surviving operas, *L'Orfeo* (1607), *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (1640) and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643). This programme, however, focuses upon his contributions to another genre — the madrigal. Drawing on pieces from Monteverdi's seminal *Eighth Book of Madrigals*, published in Venice in 1638 — as well as some of his earlier works and a few by close contemporaries — we explore adventurous representations of love, as well as its expression through the allegory of war.

In an extensive preface to his *Eighth Book*, Monteverdi describes the genesis of what he called the *stile concitato* ('agitated style'). Quoting Plato and Boethius, who describes that 'Music is related to us, and either ennobles or corrupts our character', Monteverdi relates, 'I have applied myself with no small diligence and toil to rediscover this genus.' According to Monteverdi, contemporary musical styles had developed sufficiently in order to express love and passion, but were unable to convey its opposites: anger, disdain and grief. Divided into two halves — songs of love, and songs of war — the eighth book of madrigals thus set out to explore an unprecedentedly visceral musical style, embodying a strong sense of human physicality in its survey of virtually the entire emotional spectrum.

The first madrigal of the collection, *Altri canti d'amor tenero arciero* ('Let others sing of Love, the tender archer'), opens with a *sombre sinfonia*, introducing a typically amorous theme based on the descending tetrachord — a familiar pattern of four falling notes, later used by composers such as Purcell (most famously in *Dido's Lament*). This is picked up with text by three of the voices, before the low bass announces the first signs of conflict, invoking Mars, the god of war. As the introduction to the collection, this madrigal immediately demonstrates Monteverdi's characteristic juxtaposition of music of extreme tenderness with unrestrained brutality that is to follow.

Dario Castello was a composer and wind player, whose reputation rests for the most part on his two published collections of sonatas for various combinations of instruments. From the title pages of a number of his publications, we know that by 1621 he was the leader of the wind ensemble at San Marco in Venice, where Monteverdi was the *maestro di cappella* from 1613. The ninth sonata, in common with most of the other works in his *Sonate concertate in stil moderno, libro primo* (Venice, 1621), makes use of a three-part imitative texture over a basso continuo, in contrasting fast and slow tempi. This sudden alternation between tempi is a common feature of the concerted *stile moderno* repertoire of the early seventeenth century.

---

Though she was officially considered the adopted daughter of Giulio Strozzi, Barbara Strozzi was most likely his illegitimate daughter, her mother being one of his longtime servants. In any case, she received a first-class education and was evidently capable of holding her own, both intellectually and musically. She was highly regarded as a composer as well as a singer, having studied with Francesco Cavalli. *Silentio nocivo* is taken from her first published collection, *Il primo libro de madrigali* (Venice, 1644), and sets a text by her father. It demonstrates her fluency with the *seconda prattica* style developed by Monteverdi, graphically rendering the imagery of the text, as well as showing the influences of the *stile concitato*, with the line ‘*Sfoga, o mio core, il tuo cocente ardore*’ (‘Express, oh my heart, your burning desire’). Sadly, this is Strozzi’s only surviving publication, though a significant body of her work is extant in manuscript sources — particularly cantatas, of which she completes over 100.

*Chiome d’oro* is a simple but touching canzonetta that appears in Monteverdi’s Seventh Book of Madrigals (1619). Over a walking bass, the pairs of voices and violins form a striking depiction of the subject’s golden hairs. Monteverdi would later adapt the same music for the better-known motet *Beatus vir*, which he published in his *Selva morale e spirituale* (1640).

The first of a cycle of five madrigals at the end of Monteverdi’s Fifth Book based on Guarini’s *Rime*, *Ahi, come un vago sol* describes the first phase of the poet’s infatuation. It describes being drawn in by the woman’s eyes, despite knowing that it is unlikely to end well. Monteverdi divides the text between extended duet passages for the two tenors, with the other voices offering commentary, with the line ‘*Ah! Que piaga d’Amor non sana mai!*’ (‘Ah, love’s wounds never heal!’) becoming a sort of refrain, drawn out to particular effect in the final cadence.

*Altri canti di marte* stands as the opposite bookend to the work heard at the opening of this programme. This time invoking Mars right from the beginning, Monteverdi sets Marino’s text in a series of interlinking episodes. The first builds up a strong G-major pedal, telling of ‘the bold assaults’ and ‘bloody victories’, before a more subdued passage addresses the true subject of the poet — love’s attack on our human senses. This madrigal is particularly remarkable for its extensive homophonic sections — that is to say, passages where the voices share the same rhythmic material in parallel chords. The rhetorical effect of this is a sense of unanimity, in both the first and second person, allowing us to imagine the ensemble as representing a single narrative voice.

However, Monteverdi demonstrates the intensity that the collective group of singers is capable of expressing in the third person in his five-voiced madrigal *Piagn’e sospira*. It was included in the Fourth Book (Venice, 1603), and sets a passage from Tasso’s *La Gerusalemme liberata*, relating Erminia’s love for Tancredi — an episode and text he would return to in a more dramatic setting in the famous *Combattimento* in the Eighth Book. Here, however, Monteverdi focuses on the inner emotions of Erminia. The first part of the madrigal is essentially based on two gestures: the rising chromatic line on *piagn’e* (‘cried’) and the descending leaps at *sospira* (‘sigh’). By combining these in different ways, Monteverdi builds up an intoxicating musical

---

language. However, in the second part, he sets the text in a very different, matter-of-fact way, with all the voices keeping to the same homophonic metre.

Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger was a German-Italian lutenist and composer, who significantly expanded and extended the solo lute repertoire. His toccatas demonstrate his sense of invention, with their mercurial changes and virtuosic passages. This is exemplified in his Toccata No. 1 from his *Libro primo d'intavolatura di lauto* (1611), which unfolds from a quasi-improvisatory opening into a florid contrapuntal work.

Within the Eighth Book are three pieces that Monteverdi describes as being 'in a theatrical manner'. One of these is *Volgendo il ciel*, which was originally intended as a dance piece. It sets a text by the Florentine poet Ottavio Rinuccini originally written in praise of Henry IV, but adapted here to honour Ferdinand III, the print's dedicatee, who became Holy Roman Emperor in 1637. Taking up the lyre, the solo tenor addresses Ferdinand directly, inviting the people to join the nymphs of the Istro (Danube) in their dancing, with the music supplied between each verse by the instrumental ensemble and the chorus as 'Movete al mio bel son'. Monteverdi provides the indication that they should continue to 'any other dance without song', but did not supply the music, suggesting that the piece was most likely part of a larger sequence incorporating other music.

Taking another text by Guarini (this time from *Il pastor fido*), *Anima mia perdona* sets the words of the nymph Amarilli as she internally addresses her beloved, the shepherd Mirtillo. While this might seem like typical madrigalian cliché, Monteverdi articulates the text in a particularly arresting way. One of the main ways he manages this is through alterations of the texture, exploring the widest range of colours possible with five voices, with the bass voice often dropping out. Toward the end of the second part, Monteverdi moves from a homophonic texture toward polyphony, with each voice seeming to become another of the tears Amarilli describes.

*Hor che'l ciel* sets a sonnet by Petrarch in two parts. The first section is based upon the first two quatrains, with the *seconda parte* setting the remaining two tercets. With sections for solo and paired voices within the ensemble, Monteverdi finds an ever-affective means of conveying directly the poet's vivid emotional state. Once again, this is a text founded on sharp contrasts — a typically Petrarchan device. Monteverdi revels in illustrating *guerra* (war) alongside *pace* (peace), as with *dolce* and *amaro* (sweetness and bitterness). Although the madrigal is sometimes regarded as having been an antiquated genre by the beginning of the seventeenth century, this setting shows how Monteverdi was capable of articulating a complex narrative and simultaneously providing commentary via multiple voices. Hearing this, it seems clear that Monteverdi was far from an iconoclast — rather, he was simply a composer whose genius lay in making use of existing forms and in piecing them together in imaginative ways, to best serve his texts.

David Lee

## Texts and Translations

### Altri canti d'Amor

Altri canti d'Amor, tenero arciero,  
i dolci vezzi e i sospirati baci,  
narri gli sdegni e le bramate paci,  
quand'unisce due alme un sol pensiero.  
Di Marte io canto furibundo e fiero,  
i duri incontri e le battaglie audaci.  
Fo nel mio canto bellicoso e fiero  
strider le spade e bombeggjar le faci.  
Tu, cui tessuta han di Cesare  
alloro la corona immortal mentre Bellona,  
gradite il verde ancor novo lavoro,  
che mentre guerre canta e guerre sona,  
o gran Fernando, l'orgoglioso coro  
del tuo sommo valor canta e ragiona.

### Silencio nocivo

Dolcissimi respiri  
De' nostri cori amanti  
Son le parole affettuose e i canti.  
Sfoga, o mio core, il tuo cocente ardore,  
Se tal'hor non ti tocca  
Nodrirti almen di due soavi baci.  
Afflittissima bocca,  
Stolta sei se tu taci:  
Parla, canta, respira, esala il duolo,  
Canta, canta, che solo  
Dolcissimi respiri...

### Chiome d'oro

Chiome d'oro, bel tesoro,  
tu mi legghi in mille modi  
se t'annodi, se ti snodi.

Candidette perle elette,  
se le rose che scoprite  
discoprite, mi ferite.

Vive stelle, che sì belle  
e sì vaghe risplendete,  
se ridete m'ancidete.

Preziose, amorose,  
coralline labbra amate,  
se parlate mi beate.

### Let others sing of Cupid

Let others sing of Cupid, the gentle archer,  
of his sweet charms and sighing kisses,  
let them tell of quarrels and of the longed-for truces  
when two souls are united by a single thought.  
I sing of a proud and raging Mars,  
of his bitter conflicts and valiant battles.  
With my fierce and warlike song  
I make swords clash and torches blaze.  
You for whom an immortal crown  
of imperial laurel has been woven,  
accept Bellona's wreath, still green and fresh,  
for in our songs and music of war,  
O mighty Ferdinand, our proud choir  
celebrates your matchless valour.

### Harmful silence

Sweetest breaths  
are the passionate words and songs  
of our loving hearts.  
Express, oh my heart, your burning desire,  
when at times you cannot  
at least nourish yourself with two sweet kisses.  
Afflicted mouth,  
you're foolish if you remain silent:  
Speak, sing, divulge your suffering,  
sing, sing, for only  
Sweetest breaths...

### Golden tresses

Golden tresses, oh so precious,  
you bind me in a thousand ways  
whether coiled or flowing freely.

Small, white matching pearls,  
when the roses that conceal you  
reveal you, you wound me.

Bright stars that shine  
with such beauty and charm,  
when you laugh you torture me.

Precious, seductive  
coral lips I love,  
when you speak I am blessed.

O bel nodo per cui godo!  
O soave uscir di vita!  
O gradita mia ferita!

### Ah! Come a un vago sol

Ah! Come a un vago sol cortese giro  
de duo belli occhi ond'io sofferarsi  
il primo dolce d'Amore  
pien d'un nuovo desio  
sì pronto a sospirar,  
torna il mio core.  
Ah! Que piaga d'Amor non sana mai!  
Lasso, non val ascondersi,  
ch'omai conosco i segni  
ch'el mio core addita de l'antica ferita.  
Et e gran tempo pur che la saldai.

### Altri canti di Marte

Altri canti di Marte e di sua schiera  
gli arditi assalti e l'onorate imprese,  
le sanguigne vittorie e le contese,  
i trionfi di morte orrida e fera.  
Io canto Amor, da questa tua guerriera,  
quant'ebbi a sostener mortali offese  
com'un guardo mi vinse, un crin mi prese:  
istoria miserabile, ma vera.  
Duo belli occhi fur l'armi, onde trafitta  
giacque, e di sangue in vece amaro pianto  
sparse lunga stagion l'anima afflitta.  
Tu, per lo cui valor la palm'e 'l vanto  
ebbe di me la mia nemica invitta,  
se desti morte al cor, dà vita al canto.

### Piagn'e sospira

Piagn'e sospira, e quand'i caldi raggi  
fuggon le greggi a la dolce ombr'assise,  
ne la scorza de' pini o pur de' faggi  
segnò l'amato nome in mille guise;  
e de la sua fortuna i gravi oltraggi  
e i vari casi in dura scorza incise,  
e in rileggendo poi le proprie note  
spargea di pianto le vermiglie gote.

Oh dear bonds in which I take delight!  
Oh fair mortality!  
Oh welcome wound!

### Alas, as if toward a graceful, lovely sun

Alas, as if toward a graceful, lovely sun  
turns my heart again,  
full of new desire  
and ready to sigh,  
to those two beautiful eyes that caused me  
the pain of the first, sweet Love.  
Ah! Love wounds never heal!  
Wearry, it's pointless hiding,  
for by now I recognize the symptoms  
of the old wound, that my heart reopened.  
And its healing has been a long way coming.

### Let others sing of Mars

Let others sing of Mars and of the daring attacks  
and honourable enterprises undertaken by his troops,  
of their bloody victories and clashes,  
of the triumphs of fierce and cruel death.  
I sing, Cupid, of this warrior maid of yours,  
of the many mortal insults I have had to endure,  
of being conquered by a look, taken prisoner by her  
tresses: a wretched tale, but a true one.  
Two beautiful eyes were the weapons whose blows  
have wounded and felled me, and my stricken heart  
has long shed bitter tears in place of blood.  
You, by whose valour my undefeated enemy won both  
palms and pride from me,  
having given death to my heart, give life to my song.

### She weeps and sighs

She weeps and sighs; and when the sheep abandon  
the warm rays, resting in the gentle shade,  
on the bark of pines or beeches  
she wrote the beloved name in a thousand ways;  
and carved in hard bark the deep offenses  
and the many twists of her fortune;  
and then, reading her own messages again  
she watered his vermilion cheeks with tears.

## Ballo: Volgendo il ciel

Poeta: Volgendo il ciel per l'immortal sentiero  
le ruote de la luce alma e serena  
un secolo di pace il Sol rimena  
sotto il Re novo del Romano Impero.

Su mi si rechi omai del grand'lbero  
profonda tazza inghirlandata e piena,  
che correndomi al cor di vena in vena,  
sgombra da l'alma ogni mortal pensiero.

Venga la nobil cetra, il crin di fiori  
cingimi, o Filli, io ferirò le stelle,  
cantando del mio Re gli eccelsi allori.

E voi, che per beltà, donne e donzelle,  
gite superbe d'immortali honori:  
movete al mio bel suon le piante snelle,  
sparso di rose il crin leggiadro e biondo,  
e lasciato dell'Istro il ricco fondo,  
vengan l'umide ninfe al ballo anch'èlle.

Coro: Movete al mio bel suon le piante snelle,  
sparso di rose il crin leggiadro e biondo,  
e lasciato dell'Istro il ricco fondo,  
vengan l'umide ninfe al ballo anch'èlle.

Fuggano in si bel di nemi e procelle,  
d'aure odorate el mormorar giocondo.  
Fat'eco al mio cantar, rimbombi il mondo,  
l'opre di Ferdinando eccelse e belle.

Ei l'armi cinse, e su destrier allato  
corse le piagge, e su la terra dura  
la testa riposò sul braccio armato.

Le torri eccelse e le superbe mura  
al vento sparse, e fè vermiglio il prato  
lasciando ogni altra gloria al mondo oscura.

Poet: Wheeling upon its eternal course  
throughout the serene, majestic sky,  
Sol ushers in an age of peace  
under the new king of the Roman Empire.

Give me a cup of potent Spanish wine,  
deep, garlanded and full,  
that racing to my heart from vein to vein  
will free my soul from every mortal care.

Bring forth the noble lyre, bind my head  
with flowers, O Filli: I shall stab the stars,  
singing the lofty praises of my king.

And you, who in beauty, ladies and young maids,  
proudly display undying rectitude,  
dance on your slender feet to my sweet music  
with roses scattered on your golden hair,  
and having left the Danube's fecund depths,  
come, you water nymphs, and join the dance.

Chorus: Dance on your slender feet to my sweet  
music with roses scattered on your golden hair,  
and having left the Danube's fecund depths,  
come, you water nymphs, and join the dance.

On such a day let clouds and storms be gone,  
let the playful murmur of fragrant airs  
echo my song, let all the world resound  
with the lofty deeds of Ferdinand.

He donned his armour, mounted a swift horse  
and galloped through the land, and on the ground  
rested his head upon his steel-shod arm.

The lofty towers and proud city walls  
he scattered to the winds and turned the field to  
crimson, consigning all other deeds of glory to the  
shade.

## Anima mia, perdona

(Prima parte)

Anima mia perdona  
a chi t'è cruda sol perdona  
dove pietosa esser non può  
perdona a questa  
nei detti e nel sembiante  
riggida tua nemica  
ma nel cor pietosissima amante.  
E se pur hai desio di vendicarti  
deh qual vendett'haver puoi tu maggiore  
del tuo proprio dolore.

(Seconda parte)

Che se tu se' il cor mio  
come se' pur malgrado  
del ciel, e de la terra  
qual'hor piangi e sospiri  
quelle lagrime tue son il mio sangue  
quei sospir il mio spirto  
e quelle pen'e quel dolor che senti  
son miei non tuoi tormenti.

## Hor che 'l ciel

Hor che 'l ciel et la terra e 'l vento tace  
et le fere e gli augelli il sonno affrena,  
Notte il carro stellato in giro mena  
et nel suo letto il mar senz'onda giace,  
veggio, penso, ardo, piango; et chi mi sface  
sempre m'è inanzi per mia dolce pena:  
guerra è 'l mio stato, d'ira et di duol piena,  
et sol di lei pensando ò qualche pace.

Così sol d'una chiara fonte viva  
move 'l dolce et l'amaro ond'io mi pasco;  
una man sola mi risana et punge;  
e perché 'l mio martir non giunga a riva,  
mille volte il dì moro et mille nasco,  
tanto da la salute mia son lunge.

## My beloved, pardon her

My beloved, pardon  
her who is cruel to you only where  
she cannot be affectionate; pardon her,  
in her deeds and countenance  
your unbending enemy,  
but in her heart your  
most affectionate lover.  
And if you desire to seek your revenge,  
alas! What greater vengeance could you have  
than that of your own suffering?

For, if you are my beloved,  
as indeed you are, in despite  
of heaven and earth,  
then, whenever you lament and sigh,  
those your tears are my blood,  
those sighs my spirit, and the grief  
and pain that you feel  
is my torment, not yours.

## Now that the sky

Now that the sky and the earth and the wind are silent  
and the wild creatures and the birds are reined in sleep,  
Night leads its starry chariot in its round,  
and the sea without a wave lies in its bed,  
I look, think, burn, weep: and she who destroys me  
is always before my eyes to my sweet distress:  
war is my state, filled with grief and anger,  
and only in thinking of her do I find peace.

So from one pure living fountain  
flow the sweet and bitter which I drink:  
one hand alone heals me and pierces me:  
And so that my ordeal may not reach haven,  
I am born and die a thousand times a day,  
I am so far from my salvation.



---

## Dunedin Consort

Julia Doyle soprano

Hilary Cronin soprano

Jessica Gillingwater mezzo-soprano

Christopher Bowen tenor

Matthew Long tenor

Matthew Brook bass

Kati Debretzeni violin I

Huw Daniel violin II

Matthew Nisbet theorbo

Eric Thomas theorbo

Stephen Farr harpsichord

Dunedin Consort is one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, recognised for its vivid and insightful performances and recordings. Formed in 1995 and named after Din Eidyn, the ancient Celtic name for Edinburgh Castle, Dunedin Consort's ambition is to allow listeners to hear early music afresh, and to couple an inquisitive approach to historical performance with a commitment to commissioning and performing new music. Under the direction of John Butt, the ensemble has earned two coveted Gramophone Awards – for the 2007 recording of Handel's Messiah and the 2014 recording of Mozart's Requiem – and a Grammy nomination. Dunedin Consort performs regularly at major festivals and venues across the UK and abroad, and enjoys close associations with the BBC Proms, Wigmore Hall, Perth Concert Hall, Edinburgh International Festival and Lammermuir Festival. Alongside its performance and recording work, Dunedin Consort is committed to a wide-ranging education programme both in schools and in the wider community. In inspiring and encouraging musical participation, developing vocal skills and fostering a love of classical music, historical performance and new music, Dunedin Consort aims to develop and nurture its potential audience and to encourage the performers of the future.

While Dunedin Consort is committed to performing repertoire from the Baroque and early classical periods, and to researching specific historical performance projects, it remains an enthusiastic champion of contemporary music. In 2021, the group premiered Dido's Ghost, a new opera by Errollyn Wallen and Wesley Stace, co-commissioned with the Barbican Centre, Edinburgh International Festival, Buxton International Festival, Mahogany Opera and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale.