

Program Notes

Though they both lived in Venice, the composers Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) and Baldassare Galuppi (1706-1785) were of different generations and their paths rarely crossed. At age twenty, Galuppi was a harpsichordist at the Teatro Sant'Angelo, an opera house where Vivaldi reigned as the principal composer and impresario. With the exception of Vivaldi, audiences in Venice generally preferred operas by Neapolitan composers, so for the next fifteen years, Galuppi's career as an operatic composer languished. Yet with Vivaldi's death in 1741, Galuppi's opera *Berenice* was accepted for production at Sant'Angelo. Soon after, Galuppi was engaged to supervise eleven operatic productions in London, including four of his own works. Success followed success, and Galuppi grew to be the most popular opera composer of his time. Concurrently with his composition of operas, Galuppi produced a large body of works for the church, leading to his appointment in 1748 as a deputy *maestro di cappella* at the basilica of San Marco in Venice. Although it is hard for us to imagine today, by the 1750s Galuppi's reputation exceeded that of Vivaldi. Ironically, that very fact enabled a number of Vivaldi's liturgical works to survive to be discovered in the 21st century.

From 1754 through 1756, eight operas by Galuppi were performed in Dresden (Saxony, now part of Germany) to great acclaim. With the rising popularity of Galuppi's music in Dresden, the Dresden *Hofkapelle* (the court chapel of Catholic Saxony) sent orders to the Venetian copy shop of Giuseppe Baldan for sixty of Galuppi's sacred works, to supply music for the feasts of the liturgical year. Galuppi himself used the services of Baldan's copyists, so the composer often left his autograph manuscripts with Baldan. In filling the order from Dresden, Baldan clearly took more advantage of those scores than Galuppi had anticipated. Nevertheless, Baldan could not come up with as many Galuppi compositions as the Dresden Hofkapelle required. So—ever looking at his bottom line—he sent copies of works not only by Galuppi, but also by seven other composers, including Vivaldi. But on the title pages, Baldan directed his copyists to attribute all the works to Galuppi. Thus, Vivaldi's *Dixit Dominus* was passed off as Galuppi's.

Fast forward to 2003. Having found their way into the Saxon State and University Library, the manuscripts from Baldan's copy shop were the subject of study by the Australian musicologist Janice Stockigt. When she asked Vivaldi specialist Michael Talbot about some curious instrument names in one manuscript, he was quickly able to identify the work—attributed to Galuppi—as a psalm by Vivaldi, the *Nisi Dominus* of 1739. A couple of years later, Stockigt and Talbot discovered two other Vivaldi compositions among the manuscripts, a *Lauda Jerusalem* which matched a known adaptation by Vivaldi to another Latin text, and the until then unknown *Dixit Dominus*. Identifying the latter called for careful stylistic analysis, circumstantially supporting Vivaldi's authorship. But the clincher was the fact that the work's sixth movement ("Dominus a dextris tuis") is nearly identical to the first section of the aria "Alma oppressa da sorte crudele" from Vivaldi's opera *La fida ninfa*, first staged in 1732.

In their article on their discoveries in the journal *Eighteenth Century Music* (2006), Stockigt and Talbot judge the *Lauda Jerusalem* to be of interest mainly for its role in helping to complete the most authoritative Vivaldi catalog (known as the Ryom *Verzeichnis* [RV]). But they continue:

The new *Dixit Dominus* is another matter altogether. Of all Vivaldi's sacred works with choir it maintains its high musical quality most consistently. Whereas RV588, 589 [*Gloria* settings], 594 and 595 [earlier *Dixit Dominus* settings] all have their weaker moments or occasional defects of proportion, the Dresden *Dixit Dominus* goes unerringly from one marvelous movement to another. Everything 'fits': the sense that the several movements are governed firmly by a single overall vision is nowhere stronger within his sacred vocal music. The craftsmanship, too, is of the highest standard: for once, no corners are cut. If musical merit were the only criterion, this work would supplant the *Gloria* RV589 as the public's favorite.

The other criterion is the fact that the *Gloria* is far easier to perform than the later *Dixit Dominus*.

In their stylistic assessment of the newly discovered *Dixit Dominus*, Stockigt and Talbot assert in passing that Galuppi's "earliest sacred vocal works (such as the *Confitebor* of 1733) already look forward to Mozart rather than back to Vivaldi and his Italian contemporaries." As much can be said of the *Nisi Dominus*, one of the authentic Galuppi works among the batch of manuscripts that Giuseppe Baldan sent to the Dresden *Hofkirche*. Indeed, in the urgent C-minor of the opening and the rushing string figures of the soprano aria "Sicut sagittae," one hears a presaging of the Austro-German *Sturm und Drang* style of the 1760s and 1770s. Echoes of the operatic stage can be heard in the vocal ornaments of the other arias and in the long melismas on the word *ventris* in the sopranos' duet "Cum dederit." Yet Galuppi bows to the *stile antico* with the masterful fugue on "et in saecula saeculorum" that closes the psalm.

Like Galuppi, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) had his name put on quite a few works he did not in fact write. Igor Stravinsky nominally composed his ballet *Pulcinella* (1920) "after Giambattista Pergolesi," but by the 1980s it was known that most of the themes Stravinsky borrowed were not by Pergolesi. However, most of the misattributions to Pergolesi were instrumental works; the composer's important (and authentic) contributions were in opera and sacred music.

Born in the small town of Iesi, Pergolesi came to Naples after his tenth birthday to study at the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo with Leonardo Vinci and Francesco Durante. After leaving the conservatory in 1731, he made his first attempts at composing opera. In September 1732, his second opera, the comedy *Lo frate 'nnamorato*, was tremendously successful. Meanwhile, Naples (not far from Pompeii) had been stricken with earthquakes in 1731; more earthquakes wrought havoc in November 1732. In response, the archbishop called for services of atonement and St. Emidius—protector against earthquakes—was designated the patron saint of Naples. The municipality resolved to celebrate St. Emidius's day each year with a solemn mass and double vespers. For the first such celebration on 31 December 1732, at the church of Santa Maria della Stella, Pergolesi composed a mass for double chorus, a motet, and several psalms, including *Confitebor tibi*.

Malcolm Bruno, who edited Pergolesi's vespers music for a 2006 critical edition, has commented on the composer's style.

The genius of Pergolesi is not to be found in compositional complexity.... Pergolesi's musical interest was not in contrapuntal and harmonic technique, as ends in themselves. When he employs such techniques, they are as remnants of the early polyphonic, *stile antico* period. The brilliance of Pergolesi's pen is in its melodic invention, line after line, perfectly crafted in gesture and length. His music is conceived visually, dramatically, where pacing—rhetoric—is everything.

In keeping with these observations, the contrapuntal music which opens and closes *Confitebor tibi*—featuring single and double augmentation of durations in the vocal parts against relentless eighth-note stepwise motion in the strings—is not typical of the five inner movements, which are either tuneful arias with simple accompaniment or homophonic choruses doubled by strings and organ.

Although after 1732 Pergolesi went on to write more operas, his devotion to sacred music was a constant. In 1735, he was forced to abandon opera as he began to succumb to tuberculosis. He put himself into the care of Franciscan monks in a monastery north of Naples. Within weeks of his death he composed two final masterpieces, a *Stabat Mater* and a *Salve Regina*. With an active career of little more than ten years, Pergolesi was nevertheless one of the most successful and respected composers of his generation. His posthumous fame was extraordinary, and his *Stabat Mater*—first published in London in 1749—became the most frequently printed composition in the 18th century.

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