



# CON ARTE E MAESTRIA

Virtuoso violin ornamentation from  
the dawn of the Italian Baroque

**Monteverdi String Band** *In Focus*

**Oliver Webber** violin

**Steven Devine** organ & harpsichord

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About Oliver Webber:

*'Oliver Webber [bows] with rapier-like eloquence'*  
Gramophone

About Steven Devine:

*'[Devine] is authoritative, suave, technically dazzling and delivers immaculately  
manicured ornaments that lend brilliance and expressive introspection when required'*  
BBC Music Magazine

Giovanni Bassano (c.1561–1617) 1. <b>Ricercata prima</b>	[2:29]	Gärtner (dates unknown) 9. <b>Toccata</b>	[2:34]
Cipriano de Rore (c.1515–1565) (ornaments by Riccardo Rognoni, c.1550–c.1620) 2. <b>Anchor che col partire</b>	[3:35]	Biagio Marini 10. <b>Sinfonia 'L'Orlandina'</b>	[2:09]
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525–1594) (ornaments by Oliver Webber b.1969) 3. <b>Deh hor foss'io col vago della luna</b>	[4:07]	Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1555–1612) 11. <b>Toccata del secondo tuono</b>	[2:16]
Ascanio Mayone (c.1565–1627) 4. <b>Canzon francese prima</b>	[2:39]	Tomas Luis de Victoria (c.1548–1611) (ornaments by Giovanni Battista Bovicellim, fl. late 16th century) 12. <b>Dilectus tuus candidus</b>	[6:40]
Biagio Marini (1594–1663) 5. <b>Sinfonia 'La Gardana'</b>	[2:06]	Cipriano de Rore (ornaments by Oliver Webber) 13. <b>Signor mio caro</b>	[3:50]
Oliver Webber (after Giovanni Bassano) 6. <b>Ricercata</b>	[1:59]	Oliver Webber (after Claudio Monteverdi et al.) 14. <b>Ciaccona</b>	[4:23]
Thomas Crecquillon (c.1505–c.1557) (ornaments by Oliver Webber) 7. <b>Par trop souffrir de fortune ennemie</b>	[4:29]	Michelangelo Rossi (c.1601–1656) 15. <b>Toccata nona</b>	[3:48]
Orlando di Lasso (c.1532–1594) (ornaments by Girolamo dalla Casa, d.1601) 8. <b>Susanne ung jour</b>	[4:36]	Dario Castello (1602–1631) 16. <b>Sonata prima</b>	[4:05]
		Carlo G (fl. c.1600–1620) 17. <b>Convertisti planctum</b>	[2:41]

Giovanni Paolo Caprioli (c.1580–c.1627) (ornaments by Oliver Webber)	
18. <b>Vulnerasti cor meum</b>	[2:57]
Antonio Mortaro (fl. 1587–1610) (ornaments by Oliver Webber)	
19. <b>Canzona 'La Malvezza'</b>	[4:27]
Aurelio Virgiliano (fl. c.1600)	
20. <b>[Ricerca] on 'Vestiva i colli'</b>	[1:25]
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ornaments by Oliver Webber)	
21. <b>Così le chiome mie</b>	[3:44]
Andrea Gabrieli (c.1532–1585)	
22. <b>Intonazione quarto toni</b>	[1:24]
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ornaments by Francesco Rognoni, d. c.1626)	
23. <b>Io son ferito</b>	[6:08]
Total playing time	[78:45]

### **Con Arte e Maestria: the culmination of a virtuoso tradition**

Milanese violinist Francesco Rognoni's ornamental showpiece *Io son ferito*, which appears in the second volume of his *Selva di varii passaggi*, 1620, is captioned *Modo di passeggiar con arte e maestria* – 'manner of ornamenting with art and mastery'; *con arte e maestria* is used to this day to denote excellence and consummate craftsmanship in creative fields from music to cookery, jewellery and architecture.

The work features a breathtaking range of ornamental devices: runs and florid passages, trills, vast leaps, dotted rhythms, repeated notes and echoes, all created from a simple original melody in minims and semibreves. It represents the culmination of a fascinating tradition of solo ornamentation, which flourished especially in northern Italy from the early sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.

In this recording we present some of the more remarkable works of its final generation, beginning with Francesco Rognoni's father, Riccardo; in the interests of not only celebrating but also giving new life to this tradition, we also offer something completely new: in addition to published ornamented works by the Rognonis, Girolamo dalla Casa,

Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, and the mysterious Carlo G. we present three madrigals, a chanson, a motet and a canzona, each newly ornamented in the style of one of these great masters.

### **Il vero modo di diminuir: ornamentation in practice**

The basis of most ornamentation during this period was diminution: the creation of measured patterns of faster notes from slower ones; for example, from a minim we can create patterns of four quavers, eight semiquavers, or sixteen demisemiquavers. We are fortunate that a veritable treasure trove of diminution resources from this period survives: as well as complete works, fully ornamented, often in multiple versions, there are treatises which not only explain how diminutions are created and how to apply them, but also give hundreds of examples.

*Il vero modo di diminuir* ('the true manner of diminution') appears in the titles of two of the treatises which have contributed to this recording: Girolamo dalla Casa (1584) and Riccardo Rognoni (1592). That these two 'true' methods differ significantly reveals the variety of approach among individual performers and teachers.



### Five ornamental personalities

The approach of Girolamo dalla Casa is strikingly systematic: for him, the true method consists of the skilful combination of four essential subdivisions of the beat: into four, eight, twelve and sixteen. In order to prepare his readers, he begins with quavers only, then semiquavers only, quavers and semiquavers combined, and so on, ending his first volume with fully mixed examples, before presenting complete works, fully ornamented in the *vero modo*, in the second volume.

In this recording, dalla Casa is represented by one of his versions of *Susanne ung jour* and a newly devised version of a chanson by the Flemish composer Thomas Crecquillon, a particular favourite of dalla Casa.

In comparison with dalla Casa, Riccardo Rognoni's approach diverges more often from stepwise motion: one characteristic figure is a syncopated leap upwards followed by a descending scale. Flourishes of an octave after a cadence also feature prominently.

This style is heard here in his version of the Flemish madrigalist Cipriano de Rore's *Anchor che col partire*, and in *Deh hor foss'io*

*col vago della luna*, the first of three settings in this recording of Roman master Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, whose madrigals were especially popular as vehicles for virtuoso diminutions.

The singer Giovanni Battista Bovicelli offers us something quite different: he distinguishes diminutions, or *passaggi*, from *accenti* – brief, rhythmically fluid patterns, used to connect the notes in a phrase with charm and elegance. The delight in his settings comes from the often surprising transitions and combinations of *passaggi* and *accenti*.

Instrumentalists need feel no guilt at appropriating vocal repertoire: instructions to imitate the voice are almost universal, and Francesco Rognoni specifically recommends the vocal part of his treatise to instrumentalists for this very reason. Bovicelli's version of Spanish composer Tomas Luis de Victoria's [*Qualis est*] *dilectus tuus candidus*, replete with rich, dark textures, is contrasted with a newly created version of de Rore's *Signor mio caro*: here, the high tessitura, short phrases and occasional silences, enhanced by Bovicelli-inspired *accenti* and occasional *passaggi*, contribute to a perfumed, ephemeral atmosphere.

The discovery of the Carlo G manuscript in 2007 (the author's name, obscured by a smudge, has never been definitively confirmed) was a wonderful gift to students of the early seventeenth century: a collection of some 300 pages of elaborately ornamented songs (by Carlo G himself as well as a selection of notable contemporaries) with fully realised continuo accompaniment, it offers a unique window into how a simple melody and bass line might have behaved 'in the wild'. Like Bovicelli's versions, these feature a combination of brief, rhythmically supple *accenti* and full-blown *passaggi*. *Convertisti planctum*, a setting from Psalm 29, is followed by a sensuous Song of Solomon setting by the Bolognese priest Giovanni Paolo Caprioli, ornamented especially for this recording in the same style.

Francesco Rognoni's bold, modern, violinistic style, which extends traditional models in new directions, features in three works: a canzona by the Brescian composer Antonio Montaro, and two Palestrina madrigals – *Così le chiome mie* and *lo son ferito*.

The ornamentation of the canzona is modelled on Francesco's treatment of another Montaro canzona, *La Portia*; its

striking features include a prevalence of dotted rhythms, octave leaps, slurs of various lengths, triplet patterns and an extended, elaborate final cadence.

The virtuosic treatment of *lo son ferito* is the model for the interpretation of *Così le chiome mie* presented here: the fluid *accenti* and occasional bursts of extravagant *passaggi* and energetic dotting seem fitting to the character of the madrigal, which celebrates the burgeoning of love amongst the sights, sounds and fragrances of spring.

#### Other instrumental genres

These explorations of diminution practice are framed by a selection of toccatas, *ricercars* and *intonazioni* which function as preludes, and sonatas and canzonas which shine a light into a different area of instrumental performance.

Giovanni Bassano is one notable composer whose diminutions do not feature in this programme; however, he is represented by two *ricercars*, the second of which was especially composed on Bassano's models.

Ascanio Mayone was a Neapolitan *maestro di capella*, organist and harpist, whose keyboard works were characterised by a playful flamboyance; the introduction to

his 1609 volume pleads the reader's tolerance for occasional rule-breaking in ornamental passages, without which 'it is impossible to make a beautiful effect'.

Biagio Marini has long been known as one of the most important composers for the violin in the early seventeenth century; his *sinfonie* – brief gems of works which play with the listener's expectations – make a perfect foil for the more extended diminutions.

The toccata attributed to one Herr Gärtner of Nuremberg (about whom nothing more is known) is found in a precious manuscript collection from Wrocław which also contains a selection of diminutions by Francesco Rognoni. Marini spent time in Germany, and it is not hard to imagine a German violinist introducing one of his sonatas with a similar prelude of their own devising.

A soulful toccata by the Venetian composer Giovanni Gabrieli, and an intonazione of more celebratory character by his uncle Andrea Gabrieli introduce two of the works featuring the Hauptwerk organ: Bovicelli's *Dilectus tuus* and Francesco Rognoni's *lo son ferito*.

The joyful and exuberant *Ciaccona*, using Claudio Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna* ground

bass, is inspired by figuration from a number of early seventeenth-century ciaccona settings, as well as ornamental patterns of the Rognonis.

Dario Castello's two volumes of ensemble sonatas *in stil moderno* show the emerging sonata style – through-composed with short, contrasting sections – which was to characterise much seventeenth-century instrumental writing; his figuration reflects the ornamental practices of his contemporaries: many of the runs, passages and *accenti* which Rognoni et al. classify as ornamental are written into Castello's music.

Castello's sonata prima is introduced by a toccata by the Roman organist and violinist Michelangelo Rossi; very much in the tradition which extends from Merulo to Bach, Rossi's unique voice can be heard in his idiosyncratic figuration and exploratory harmonic journey.

Aurelio Virgiliano's untitled *ricercar* from his treatise on diminution, *Il Dolcimeolo*, was chosen to introduce *Così le chiome mie* because it is based on the first part of that madrigal, *Vestiva i colli*; his style, with more repeated-note figures, resembles Gärtner's more than Bassano's and is particularly suited to the violin.

### Facile est inventis addere: creating a lasting legacy

'It is easy to add to what has already been invented'; this maxim, especially apt to the creative yet traditionally inspired practice of ornamentation, is cited by two of the musicians featured on this recording: Bovicelli and Francesco Rognoni.

The process of studying, analysing and putting into practice the diverse ornamental styles of these master musicians has been enlightening and immensely rewarding. It is sincerely to be hoped that the materials and methods developed during this exploration can be of benefit to current and future generations of musicians eager to explore this fascinating musical territory.

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### Performing editions

Editions for tracks 1–4, 6–9, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21 and 23 were prepared by Oliver Webber.

Track 5: Ed. Christopher Stembidge, Zanibon Edition 1982

Track 10: Ed. Francisco Valdivia, Werner Icking Music Collection

Track 11: Ed. G S Bedbrook, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1958

Track 12: Ed. Gawain Glenton, Septenary Editions, Frome, 2018

Track 15: Ed. Kenneth Gilbert, Zanibon Edition 1991

Track 16: Ed. Boris Medicky, Toronto 2017

Track 17: Ed. Elam Rotem, Basel 2016

Track 20: Ed. Bernard Thomas, London Pro Musica Edition, London, 1980

Track 22: Pierre Pidoux, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1959

The image displays three staves of musical notation in G major, 3/4 time. The top staff shows a simple melodic line with a long note. The middle staff shows a more complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. The bottom staff shows a pattern with accents and passages, including a sixteenth-note run.

Three styles of diminution. Top: Girolamo dalla Casa (1584), 'mixed' diminutions from Andrea Gabrieli's *Amor mi strugge il cor*; middle: Riccardo Rognoni (1592), characteristic ornamental patterns from *Anchor che col partire*; bottom: Giovanni Battista Bovicelli (1594), 'accenti' and 'passaggi' in *Dilectus tuus candidus*

## Musical sources

- Track 1. Ricercate, passaggi et cadentie, Venice 1585
- Track 2. Primo libro di madrigali a 4 voci di Perrissone Cambio, con alcuni di Cipriano Rore, Venice, 1547. Ornaments by Riccardo Rognoni: Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel Diminuire terminatamente con ogni sorte d'Istromenti, Venice, 1592
- Track 3. Il primo libro de madrigali a 4 voci, Rome, 1555
- Track 4. Secondo Libro di Diversi Capricci per Sonare, Naples, 1609
- Track 5. Affetti Musicali, op.1, Venice, 1617
- Track 6. L'Unziesme Livre [de] Chansons Amoureuses, Antwerp, 1549
- Track 7. Tiers livre des chansons a 4-6 parties, Louvain, 1560
- Track 8. Il Vero Modo di Diminuir, con Tutte le Sorti di Stromenti, Venice, 1584
- Track 9. Breslau Mus.Ms.115, early 17th century
- Track 10. Girolamo Diruta, il Transilvano, Venice, 1597
- Track 11. Motecta, Venice, 1572
- Track 12. Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali et motetti passeggiati, Venice, 1594
- Track 13. Il primo libro de madrigali a cinque voci novamento composti, Ferrara, 1550
- Track 14. Toccate e correnti d'intavolatura d'organo e cembalo, Rome, n.d
- Track 15. Sonate Concertate in Stil Moderno, Libro Secondo, Venice, 1644

- Track 16. Carlo G' manuscript, Italy, early 17th century
- Track 17. Sacrae Cantiones Vna, Duabusque vocibus concinendae, Modena, 1618
- Track 18. Canzoni da sonare a 4 voci, Libro primo, Venice, 1600
- Track 19. Il Dolcimelo, Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, ms. C 33 (c.1600)
- Track 20. Il Desiderio. Secondo Libro de Madrigali a Cinque Voci de diuersi Auttori, Venice, 1566
- Track 21. Intonazioni d'organo, Libro Primo, Venice, 1593
- Track 22. Il terzo libro delle Muse a 5 voci, da diversi Eccellentissimi Musici, Venice, 1561
- Track 23. Selva de Varii Passaggi secondo l'uso moderno, parte seconda, Milan, 1620

## The Monteverdi String Band

The Monteverdi String Band is dedicated to celebrating the sound and style of the early violin consort, in both well-established repertoire and creative new programmes. Our instruments are modelled on originals from the early decades of the seventeenth century; enhanced by pure gut strings in equal tension, they lend the ensemble a rich, grounded and blended tone.

Our programming has been inspired by the rich cultural milieu of Italy c.1600, and has included a staged reimagining of Monteverdi's *Combattimento* in its original context, a collaboration with playwright Clare Norburn on the life, thought and music of Galileo, and a celebration of the madrigal in which we interleave 'modern' (seventeenth century!) and ancient (sixteenth century) madrigals with contemporary readings.

Immersing ourselves in the repertoire, idioms and literature of Monteverdi's time helps us to bring extra insight to well-known repertoire such as the remarkable Vespers and the genre-defining operas; MSB and their director Oliver Webber have enjoyed several collaborative productions with the Brighton Early Music Festival.

Con Arte e Maestria is the first of a series of microprojects under the banner Monteverdi String Band *In Focus*, in which we offer more intimate chamber programmes.

[www.monteverdistringband.com](http://www.monteverdistringband.com)

### Oliver Webber (violin)

An eclectic, international education laid the foundations for Oliver Webber's adventurous approach to historical performance. His scientific studies and passion for historical Italian literature and language have inspired programming for his ensemble, Monteverdi String Band (MSB), whose performances have included poetry, sword-fighting and a specially commissioned play on the life of Galileo.

Outside MSB, Oliver enjoys making chamber music with the London Handel Players, Passacaglia, and the Bach Players, and can often be seen working as principal and guest leader with Gabrieli, the London Handel Orchestra, Early Opera Company, and the English Baroque Soloists.

He makes his own gut strings, and his research on this topic has influenced many ensembles worldwide. Connecting the worlds of scholarship and performance is a particular passion; he was engaged by Gabrieli from 2017–19 to run workshops on historical bow-holds, advise on instruments and stringing, and research ornamentation for their award-winning recordings of Purcell's *King Arthur* and *Fairy Queen* in 2019, of which *BBC Music Magazine* remarked 'rediscovered string techniques

bring out qualities missing from earlier recordings'. He teaches baroque violin and viola at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. His work on historical ornamentation styles has pioneered new methods of teaching, leading to an invitation to Perth, Australia in 2022. He was awarded Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy in November 2020.

Drawing on his studies of Italian language and poetry, he also works with singers on the rhetoric and rhythm of early opera, and has been coaching singers in the Brighton Early Music Festival for several years, working in close collaboration with festival director Deborah Roberts and stage director Thomas Guthrie. These projects, drawing together different strands of expertise towards the same ultimate goal – telling a story and moving the audience – are amongst the most artistically rewarding projects of his career to date.







### Steven Devine (harpichord and organ)

Steven Devine enjoys a busy career as a music director and keyboard player working with some of the finest musicians.

He is the principal keyboard player with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and also the principal keyboard player for The Gonzaga Band, Classical Opera (The Mozartists) and performs regularly with many other groups around Europe. Steven is a regular keyboard player with the Monteverdi String Band and took part in their ground-breaking Monteverdi *Combattimento* project. He has recorded over thirty discs with other artists and ensembles and made six solo recordings. His recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations (Chandos Records) has received critical acclaim – including *Gramophone* magazine describing it as 'among the best'. The complete harpsichord works of Rameau (Resonus) has received five-star reviews from *BBC Music Magazine* and Steven's latest recording of Bach's Italian Concerto has been voted Classic FM's Connoisseur's choice. Steven has recently released both books of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier on Resonus.

He made his London conducting debut in 2002 at the Royal Albert Hall and is now a

regular performer there – including making his Proms directing debut in August 2007 with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. He has conducted the Mozart Festival Orchestra in every major concert hall in the UK and also across Switzerland. Steven is Music Director for New Chamber Opera in Oxford and with them has performed repertoire from Cavalli to Rossini. For the Dartington Festival Opera he has conducted Handel's *Orlando* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. He is currently conductor and Artistic Advisor for the English Haydn Festival in Bridgnorth.

Steven works regularly with the Norwegian Wind Ensemble, Trondheim Barokk, the Victoria Baroque Players (BC, Canada) and Arion Baroque Ensemble (Montreal).

He teaches harpsichord and fortepiano at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London and is Early Keyboard Consultant to the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Royal Welsh Colleges.

Finally, Steven is thrilled to be a member of the ground-breaking Art of Moog: an electronic music group specialising in the performance of Bach.

## Instruments

Performing pitch: a' = 466 Hz;  
Keyboard temperament: ¼ comma mean tone.

### Violin

Oliver Webber plays a violin by George Stoppani (2005) based on an original by Antonio and Girolamo Amati, Cremona, 1595; more information is available at [www.themonteverdiviolins.org](http://www.themonteverdiviolins.org). Gut strings in equal tension were supplied by Toro, Aquila and Real Guts. The bow is a copy of a late sixteenth-century original in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (SAM 107), specially commissioned for this recording from Philip Brown, Newbury: [www.philipbrownviolins.co.uk](http://www.philipbrownviolins.co.uk)

### Harpsichord

Steven Devine plays a single-strung instrument by Colin Booth, 1998, based on a 1533 original by Domenico da Pesaro.

### Organ

Deprived of the possibility of recording on location with a suitable historical organ, we opted for a twenty-first century solution: an electronic sampling of an original Venetian organ. The instrument sampled for this purpose, in the church of St Maria d'Alieto, Izola, Slovenia, was built by the Venetian Pietro Nachini (1694–1769), firmly in the tradition of Venetian organ building stretching back to Vincenzo Colombi in the sixteenth century. Specifications can be found at

[www.sonusparadisi.cz](http://www.sonusparadisi.cz); each pipe of the original organ was sampled on three-channel audio to enable the creation of a 3D aural image, and realised using the Hauptwerk virtual pipe organ software. The wooden midi keyboard was made by Luca Panetti, and the organ case by Jeffery Newton.

## Acknowledgements

This project has been generously supported by funding from the Innovation Department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to:  
The Rev. Christopher Davies and Parish Administrator Sam Alder, St John's Church, Loughton; Jamie Savan for supplying and setting up the Hauptwerk organ; Elam Rotem for invaluable advice interpreting symbols in the Carlo G manuscript; Jerzy Żak for permission to use the Breslau 115 manuscript; Philip Brown for his enthusiasm and expertise in creating the bow; and Helen Roberts of Septenary Editions for creating the Passaggi app: an invaluable practice resource for this repertoire.

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Margaret Webber, in gratitude for a lifetime of love and support.

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