

Barbara Strozzi

Voices of Longing

Love Songs from 17th-Century Venice



Ceruleo

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

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Emily Owen *soprano* Tracks 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 14 & 15

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Kate Conway *viola da gamba*

Satoko Doi-Luck *harpsichord*

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

1. **Il primo libro de madrigali, Op. 1, No. 1 'Sonetto proemio dell'opera'** [5:44]
2. **Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2, No. 18 'La riamata da chi amava'** [5:04]

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)

3. **Canzona quinta detta la Tromboncina, F 8.06a** [3:31]

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4. **Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2, No. 2 'Begl'occhi, bel seno, bei crini, e bella bocca'** [4:19]
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Tarquinio Merula (1595–1665)

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Alessandro Piccinini (1566–1638)

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Tarquinio Merula

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15. **Cantate, ariette a una, due, e tre voci, Op. 3, No. 9 'Begli occhi'** [4:20]

Total playing time [72:46]



Voices of Longing: Love Songs from 17th Century Venice

Barbara Strozzi was one of the greatest composers of the seventeenth century, publishing eight volumes of music from 1644 to 1664, seven of which survive. Without regular support from a royal court, church establishment or aristocratic patron, her printed output exceeded even the most famous composers of her day. All of her compositions are for voice and basso continuo accompaniment, and while her Opus 1 includes madrigals for four or five voices, her publications are dominated by works for the solo voice, occasionally interspersed with duets.

The Venice that she was born into was a world of intellectual creativity and artistic freedom. Her father, Giulio Strozzi, was a founder and influential member of several *accademie*, groups of creative intellectuals including poets, philosophers and musicians, meaning that Barbara grew up acquainted with the great artistic and musical minds of her age. In 1637, Giulio formed the *Accademia degli Unisoni*, a musical offshoot of the literary *Accademia degli Incogniti*. From the published minutes of the *Unisoni* we know that Barbara not only sang at their meetings but also suggested topics for debate and may have operated as a kind of hostess.

These groups became widely influential not only in artistic circles but as a part of the wider intellectual community of Venice's 'republic of letters,' advocating for religious liberty, scepticism, sexual freedom and new forms of scientific enquiry. As a woman making her life and career as a musician in these circles, she had to contend with vicious slanders and even printed satires detailing her supposed exploits. That her male counterparts also had to have a thick skin is undeniable, but the particular nature of the – often very public – attacks to her reputation were rooted in her gender, and perhaps more depressingly many of these insults have essentially been continued – or at least not sufficiently challenged – in scholarship surrounding her work until relatively recently. I commend the work of Dr CN Lester to anyone with an interest in the life and music of Barbara Strozzi and the way that the reception of her life and work has changed over time.

Strozzi was acquainted personally with the great Claudio Monteverdi, and taught by his student Francesco Cavalli, the central figure of musical life in mid-seventeenth century Venice. By building on their foundations she pushed the style of early baroque vocal music to its very limits, and this is truly vocal music – music from the voice, of the voice, and frequently about the voice. It is tempting to

say this must be linked to Strozzi's status as a famous singer herself – one of the first pieces of information about Strozzi is the dedication to Nicolo Fontei's *Bizzarie Poetiche Volume 2* in 1636, describing her as the 'virtuosissima cantatrice' (most virtuous/virtuosic singer) – but her career as a composer outlasts and eclipses the record of her performing career. Like so many things about her life, the relationship between Strozzi the singer/performer and Strozzi the composer remains unknowable, but any barriers between the two that existed in Venice in the seventeenth century were certainly permeable. Her means of musical expression were even more extreme than those that had gotten Monteverdi into trouble with music theorists such as Giovanni Artusi; in her use of unprepared dissonances and clashes between voice and accompaniment she dared to go beyond not only the work of the previous generation but also those of her contemporaries.

'Voices of Longing' refers to the subject matter of these songs – mainly settings of extravagant love poetry of the style that had recently been spread by Giambattista Marino and his followers. They are typically directed towards a lover who remains either

nameless or is given a generic name with mythic or classical allusions, and whose cruelty is surpassed only by their beauty and allure. This was typical fare for a composer of Strozzi's background, full of style and interest but also stark twists and turns which can be challenging for a modern audience to understand, especially for those of us whose archaic Italian is a little bit rusty!

The titular longing refers to desires for love, both in general and in the specific form of another person, but also to a longing for an answer to life's questions, or for relief from life's burdens. It is a virtue of Strozzi's music that she brings out the meaning of the text in dramatic style – indeed this was the explicit aim of any composer educated in the style of the time – but the particular way that she does this is uniquely arresting, adding an entirely new layer of meaning to the poetry which can elevate an ordinary line to profundity, draw out the meaning of an otherwise esoteric bit of text, or heighten an already penetrating fragment of poetry towards the sublime. As would be expected for a composer of her sophistication, the meaning of the poetry is not only heightened by the musical content but is at times subverted or undermined, to create

an almost Brechtian subtext designed to thrill the intelligentsia that made up her primary audience.

Her **Sonetto proemio dell'opera** is, as its name suggests, the opening of her first collection, and is unusual in that we know who the poet was – none other than Giulio Strozzi. He was a celebrated librettist to the star composers of the day, and here provided his daughter with a grand text to announce the arrival of a bold new compositional voice, featuring the memorable line 'perhaps I will be a new Sappho.' There are opportunities for Strozzi to show off all of her tricks of text setting; by painting the word 'volo' (fly) with vocal scales that dart up before falling back to earth, by contrasting the two voices as 'unisco' (united) or 'disunisca' (disjoined) and by her musical depiction of joyful laughter. The structure is typical in being a through-composed work that alternates between sections which are more volatile in character and get through larger amounts of text, and sections of more regular, dance-like rhythm that reinforce and explore the character that has been arrived at. This mirrors the recitative and aria forms of opera that were still in development, and indeed most of Strozzi's work could almost be taken as heightened

opera scenes – small scale in forces, large scale in expression.

In this duet repertoire, the two voices are frequently required to execute virtuosic passages encompassing a large vocal range, and to do so in perfect synchronisation. Musical culture at the time was focused on monody; single voice compositions which allowed the singer maximum flexibility while still communicating the text clearly, and these duets are in a sense pieces of monody for two voices at the same time, a paradox which seems appropriate given the frequently conflicted nature of the subject matter. Pleasure and pain, desires and deceptions, death as defeat and/or apotheosis; these ideas not only sit alongside each other but frequently overlap or even occur simultaneously.

There are works such as **Che si può fare** (what can one do) which is a profound and substantial expression of doubt and pain, as well as much lighter pieces such as **I baci** (the kisses) or **La sol, fà, mi, rè, dò**, the humorous complaint of a cuckold, full of musical wordplay. There is a whole category of Strozzi's work given over to lovers of different character, on this recording we hear from **L'Amante segreto** (the secret lover) whose refrain of 'I want to die' might seem at odds with

the gentle major key ground bass until it becomes clear that this unrequited lover might just be enjoying their pain, as well as the **Amante ravveduto** (enlightened lover) who knows better than to trust their faithless beloved.

The ground bass, where the *basso continuo* repeats a pattern while the voice(s) explore the melodic and harmonic possibilities above it, was a common compositional device right through the seventeenth century. Even by the standards of the time, Strozzi was a particularly keen and skilled exponent of this technique. **L'Amante segreto** and **Che si può fare** are two of her most famous examples, but many of the other pieces here also contain sections of ground bass or use similar means to explore the unity or dislocation between accompaniment and voice, creating opportunities to push the limits of how much dissonance could be considered acceptable or coherent.

As a group with a fixed membership of two sopranos, viola da gamba, harpsichord and lute, our initial interest in Strozzi came through her vocal duets, so works such as **Begli occhi** and **Mercé di voi** were among the earliest pieces we performed together when Ceruleo

formed in 2014. We have since developed our own relationships with her music as performers, so that when we came to discuss making a new recording – following on from 2021's *Love Restor'd* which celebrated the work of Henry Purcell – focusing on Strozzi was an idea that appealed to us all. She didn't leave us any instrumental music, so as we did previously with Purcell we have paired her work with contemporaneous composers, celebrating the different ways that our instruments were used both alone and in combination. Our reasons for making this recording are simple; the music is of extremely high quality, we feel that there are many pieces deserving of a wider listenership, and we have a collective desire to explore her work in order to learn more about both the music itself, and about ourselves as musicians; the ultimate aim of any project such as ours.

Ceruleo would like to acknowledge with gratitude Cor Donato Editions, whose excellent scores we have used for this project and who have kindly allowed us to use their translations in this booklet.

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Texts & Translations

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

1. Il primo libro de madrigali, Op. 1, No. 1 'Sonetto proemio dell'opera'

Mercé di voi, mia fortunata stella,
Volo di Pindo in fra i beati chori,
E coronata d'immortali allori
Forse detta sarò Saffo novella.

Così l'impresa faticosa e bella
Sia felice del canto e degli amori,
Che s'unisco le voci i nostri cori
Non disunisca mai voglia rubella.

O che vaga e dolcissima armonia
Fanno due alme innamorata e fide,
Che quel che l'una vuol l'altra desia,

Che gioisce al gioir, ch'al rider ride,
Né mai sospiran, che'l sospir non sia
D'una morte che sana e non uccide.

Text by Giulio Strozzi

2. Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2, No. 18 'La riamata da chi amava'

Dormi, ò mio dolore,
Addormentati, ò mia pena,
I sospiri ei pianti affrena,
Posa in stabil core.
Pace datevi, ò speranze,
Acquietatevi, ò desiri,
Dilungatevi, ò martiri,
In eterne lontananze.
Cieco duol mi affliggi à torto,
Ch'alle gioie Amor mi vuole
E mi rende il mio bel Sole,
La mia vita, il mio conforto.

*Sonnet to begin the Volume
Thanks to you, my star of good fortune,
I fly from Mount Pindo among the blessed choirs,
and crowned with laurels of immortality
I will perhaps be considered a new Sappho.*

*Let the difficult and beautiful undertaking
be joyful with song and cupids,
so that our hearts united by voices
may never be disjoined by conflicting desires.*

*Oh what blithe and sweet harmony
two faithful souls in love make,
for what one wants the other desires,*

*They rejoice with each other's joy, laugh with each other's
laughter, and never sigh except for the sigh of death
that heals and doesn't slay.*

*Return to love
Slumber, oh my sorrow,
go to sleep, oh my suffering,
restrain your sighs and tears,
come to rest in a serene heart.
Be at peace, hopes,
quiet yourselves, desires,
distance yourselves, torments,
into infinite remoteness.
Blind suffering, you afflict me wrongly,
since Love wished to delight me
and restore to me my beautiful sun,
my life, my comfort.*



Alma mia, riedi à godere
Che desii con tanto affetto,
Corri, ò core, al cor diletto,
Torna al ben, torna al piacere,
Alma mia, torna al godere.

Barbara Strozzi

4. Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2, No. 2

'Begli'occhi, bel seno, bei crini, e bella bocca'

Voi pur, begli'occhi, sete
Porte d'un paradiso,
Voi trà le scherzo è'l riso
In Ciel m'introducete.
Mà tanto il cor m'ardete,
Che dal mio foco eterno,
Per le porte del ciel corro all'inferno.
Sì, bel seno, che tù sei
Una neve animata,
Sì, che tua giogia grata
Consola gl'ardor miei.
Mà tanto alfin godei,
Che grande à poco à poco,
Frà le falde di giel provo il mio foco.
Voi pur, bei crini, adoro,
Cari dolci legami,
Voi, preziosi stami
Del mio ricco tesoro.
Mà della selva d'oro,
Se non mi fate un dono,
Frà le miniere d'or povero io sono.
Nò, nò, pomi e rubini,
Che voi non pareggiate
Di quelle labbra amate
I coralli divini.
Mà non mai ne' giardini
Di quella bella bocca
Coglier quanti vorrei baci mi tocca.

*My soul, return to enjoy
the one you desire with such passion,
run, my heart, to the beloved heart;
return to contentment, return to delight,
my soul, return to joy.*

Beautiful Eyes, Breast, Hair, and Mouth

*Beautiful eyes, you are indeed
doors to paradise:
with a tease and a laugh
you take me to heaven.
But my heart burns so fiercely
that my everlasting flame causes me to run
from the doors of heaven to hell.
Beautiful breast, you are
living snow.
O how your graceful throat
feeds my passionate fire.
Yet so sublime is my delight,
that as it grows, little by little,
my fire burns amidst the snow.
I adore you, beautiful hair,
dear sweet bindings,
precious threads
of my rich treasure.
But if you won't give me
some of that golden tangle,
I'm impoverished amid these goldmines.
No, no, apples and rubies,
you don't compare with
the divine corals
within those beloved lips.
Yet never, in the garden
of that beautiful mouth, could I
gather enough kisses to satisfy my yearning.*

**5. Cantate, ariete a una, due,
e tre voci, Op. 3 No. 11 'Desideri vani'**

Desideri, che sperate
Di gioir? Voi v'ingannate.
Può ben grand' ale ingigantito il core
Spiegar al ciel d'amore,
Mentre dalla crudel che vi fa guerra
Vostre speranze in terra
Piombano fulminate.
In vano ergete ardimentoso il guardo
Ad un seren bugiardo,
Mentr'al vostro salir fiere procelle
Dalle nemiche stelle
Vengono minacciate.
Desideri, che sperate
Di gioir? Voi v'ingannate.

Barbara Strozzi

7. Arie, Op. 8, No. 6 'Che si può fare'

Che si può fare?
Le stelle rubelle
Non hanno pietà.
Che s'el cielo non dà
Un influxo di pace al mio penare,
Che si può fare?
Che si può dire?
Da gl'astri disastri
Mi piovano ogn'hor;
Che le perfido amor
Un respiro diniega al mio martire,
Che si può dire?
Così va rio destin forte tiranna,
Gl'innocenti condanna:
Così l'oro più fido
Di costanza e di fè, lasso conviene,
Io raffini d'ogn'hor fuoco di pene.
Sì, sì, penar deggio,
Sì, che darei sospiri,
Deggio trarne I respiri.

Vain Desires

*Desires, what do you hope to enjoy?
You're deceiving yourselves.
The heart can well soar
on giant wings in the sky of love,
but the cruel one at war with you
will send your hopes
plummeting in flames to the ground.
In vain you raise your fervent eyes
to a treacherous face,
but your aspirations are threatened
with fierce storms
from the enemy stars.
Desires, what do you hope to enjoy?
You're deceiving yourselves.*

What can you do?

*The stars, intractable,
have no pity.*

*Since the gods don't give
a measure of peace in my suffering,
what can I do?*

What can you say?

*From the heavens disasters
keep raining down on me;
Since that treacherous Cupid
denies respite to my torture,
what can I say?*

*That's how it is with cruel destiny the powerful tyrant,
it condemns the innocent:
thus the purest gold
of constancy and faithfulness, alas,
is continually refined in the fire of pain.
Yes, yes, I have to suffer,
yes, I must sigh,
I must breathe with difficulty.*

In aspri guai per eternarmi
Il ciel niega mia sorte
Al periodo vital
Punto di morte.
Voi spirti dannati
Ne sete beati
S'ogni eumenide ria
Sol' è intenta a crucciar l'anima mia.
Se sono sparite
Le furie di Dite,
Voi ne gl'elisi eterni
I di trahete io coverò gl'inferni.
Così avvien a chi tocca
Calcar l'orme d'un cieco,
Al fin trabocca.

Barbara Strozzi

**9. Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2,
No. 16 'L'Amante segreto'**

l'Amante segreto parole d'incerto
Voglio, voglio morire,
Piuttosto ch'il mio mal venga a scoprire.
O disgrazia fatale,
Quanto più miran gl'occhi il suo bel volto
Più tien la bocca il mio desir sepolto;
Chi rimedio non ha taccia il suo male.
Non resti di mirar chi non ha sorte,
Nè può da sì bel ciel venir la morte.
Là bella donna mia sovente miro,
Ed ella à mè volge pietoso il guardo,
Quasi che voglia dire:
Palesa il tuo martire,
Che ben s'accorge che mi struggo e ardo.
Mà io voglio morire...
L'erbetta, ch'al cader di fredda brina
Languida il capo inchina;
All'apparir del Sole,
Lieta verdeggia più di quel che suole:
Tal io, s'alcun timor mi gela il core,
All'apparir di lei prendo vigore.
Mà io voglio morire...

*In order to eternalize my trials
heaven withholds from me
the final period of death
to my lifespan
You spirits of the damned,
you're blessed,
since all the cruel Eumenides
are intent only on torturing my soul.
Since the furies of Dis
have disappeared,
you spend your days in the Elysian fields
while I molder in hell.
Thus it happens that he who follows
the shadow of a blind god
stumbles in the end.*

The Secret Lover

*I want to die,
rather than have my distress be discovered.
Oh, fatal misfortune,
the more my eyes see her beautiful face,
the more I must keep my desire hidden:
one who has no remedy must remain silent in his distress.
One with no luck can only look,
nor could death come from such a clear sky.
I look at my beautiful lady,
and she looks on me with compassion,
as if to say:
'Reveal your torment,'
for she is well aware that I'm consumed and burn.
But I want to die...
The grasses and herbs, that bow their
languishing heads when comes the cold frost,
when the sun appears
joyfully become more verdant than ever:
thus I, when fear chills my heart,
revive when she appears.
But I want to die...*

Deh, getta l'arco poderoso e l'armi,
Amor, e lascia homai di saettarmi.
Se non per amor mio,
Fallo per honor tuo, superbo Dio,
Perche gloria non è d'un guerrier forte
Uccider un che stà vicino a morte.

Barbara Strozzi

Cantate, ariette, e duetti, Op. 2

11. No. 23, 'I baci'
Oh dolci, oh cari, oh desiati baci!
Unite l'alme vanno
sul labro ad incontrarsi.
Col bacio l'alme fanno
nel cor gran colpi darsi.

Vezzosette si accordano;
vipere se mordano.
Ma sono i lor dolcissimi furori
grand union dei cori.
Oh dolci, oh cari, oh desiati baci!
Bacia, mia bocca, e taci!

12. No. 25, 'La sol, fà, mi, rè, dò'
La mia donna per che canta
Non vuol dir né sì, né nò,
Mà parlar sempre si vanta
Con la sol fà mi rè dò.
S'io le chieggo ch'al mio cor
Voglia dar mercede un di
Pria che spiri nel dolor,
Mi risponde don fà mi.

Mai non canta s'io non conto
Ne la voce trova il tuon,
Ne à sonar lo stile hà pronto
Se non sente d'oro il suon.
Insegnando ognor mi vò
Che s'a due cantar vorrò
Acciò ch'ella venga al fà
Intonar conviemi il dò

*Oh, throw away your mighty bow and
weapons, Cupid, and stop wounding me.
If not for my sake,
then do it for your own honour, proud god,
for it is inglorious for a powerful warrior
to kill one who is near death.*

*The kisses
Oh sweet, enticing, oh adored kisses:
souls unite
to meet upon lips.
With a kiss souls
wound hearts deeply.*

*Wantonly they merge,
like vipers they bite each other,
but in their sweetest fury
is a deep union of hearts.
Oh sweet, enticing, oh adored kisses,
kiss my mouth, and be silent.*

*'La sol fa mi re do
My lady, for whom I sing,
won't say yes or no,
but always boasts
with "la sol fa mi re do," (let me do what I want).
If I ask her if she might
take pity on my heart one day
before I perish from torment,
she answers, give me "a gift" (don fa mi).*

*She never sings unless I pay,
or finds her good voice;
nor is she ready to play her instrument
unless she hears the sound of gold.
She always teaches me
that if I want to sing duets,
before she arrives at doing (al fà)
I have to give her a gift (il dò).*

Di strascini ognora ornato,
Vuol mirarsi il vago pie,
Ed in canto figurato
Sempre intona il mi fà rè.
Per mostrar quant'ella sà
Passegiando fà così,
Suol tenersi con-dò-la
Ed andare in-dò-re-mi.

Io credeva ch'il suo canto
Fosse fatto per mi sol,
Mà suol vendersi all'incanto
A colui che spender vuol,
Tanto che trà noi dirò
Ch'ognun canta quel che sà:
Io de' Gonzi il mi sol-dò
Lei de' Cucchi il Rè mi fà.

Text by Gio. Battista Maiorani

Barbara Strozzi
14. **Ariette a voce sola, Op.6, No. 14**
'Amante ravveduto'

Chiudi l'audace labra,
Taci, perfida, taci,
Ah, non dir ch'io ti baci,
Se non vuoi ch'l mio core avelenato
Mandi a punirti il sen bacio infocato.
Dimmi, come ti fidi
Ad un'alma schernita,
Ad un'alma tradita,
Chieder lasciva un bacio,
Hor che su queste labra
Ben palesar potria
Coi tradimenti tuoi la mia follia?
Ma che follia dich'io?
Folle ben fui
Quando t'amai,
Se per altrui
Me disprezzai.

*Always richly adorned,
she likes to see herself looking good,
and in ornamented song
always intones "do it for me" (mi fa-re).
To show how good she is
she sings passages like this:
she sustains "console me" (con-do-la)
and "cover me with gold" (in-do-re-mi).*

*I thought her singing
was for me alone (mi sol),
but she sells it at auction
to the highest bidder,
so that we can say between ourselves
that everyone sings what they know:
I'm earning the wages of a dupe (mi sol-do),
while she makes me the king of cuckolds (il re mi fa).*

*Enlightened Lover
Hold your brazen tongue,
be silent, false one, be silent,
ah, don't tell me to kiss you,
unless you want my poisoned heart
to punish your heart with an enflamed kiss.
Tell me, how can you
lasciviously demand a kiss
from a scorned soul,
a betrayed soul,
when these lips
might well tell of
your betrayals and my folly?
But what folly?
I was certainly foolish
when I loved you,
since you spurned me
for another.*

Hor che disciolto
Lieto men vò,
Non son più stolto,
No, no, no, no.
T'amai, nol niego, hor avveduto sono:
O presto o tardi il pentimento è buono.
Già mi par d'esser risorto
Da quel peso di catene;
Frà l'oceano delle pene
Vedo pur l'amato porto.
Quel dolore è già finito,
Quell'affanno è terminato;
Meglio è viver da pentito
Che morir da disperato.
Son pur fuor da quel'impaccio
Che m'ordi l'empio tuo inganno;
Ti ringratìo, o desinganno,
Se per te rotto ho il mio laccio.
T'amai, nol niego: or avveduto sono.
O presto o tardi il pentimento è buono.
E a voi, ministri arditì
De' tradimenti solì,
Da cui deriva sol la mia salute,
In premio v'esorto
A fuggir, a schernir sì fiero mostro,
Non per vendetta mia, ma per ben vostro.

15. **Cantate, ariete a una, due,
e tre voci, Op. 3, No. 9 'Begli occhi'**

Mi ferite, oh begli occhi.
Pensate che farebbono quei baci
Si cocenti e mordaci;
Langue l'anima, langue e'l cor vien meno.
Ahi, ch'io vi moro in seno.
Pensate che farebbono gli strali
Si pungenti e mortali;
Langue l'anima, langue, e'l cor vien meno.
Ahi, ch'io vi moro in seno.
Ma forse non morirò senza vendetta,
Ch'al fin chi morte da la morte aspetta.

*Now that I'm free
I go away happy,
I'm no longer duped,
no, no, no.
I loved you, I don't deny it, but now I'm enlightened:
repentance is good early or late.
Already I feel revived,
relieved of the weight of chains;
in the ocean of troubles
I see the desired port.
The suffering is already over,
the grief has ended;
it's better to live as a penitent
than to die in despair.
I'm well out of that predicament
that your wicked treachery brought on me;
I thank you, oh disenchantment,
since thanks to you I've broken my bonds.
I loved you, I don't deny it: now I'm enlightened.
Early or late, repentance is good.
And to you, shameless accomplices
in her treasons,
who set adrift all of my well-being,
in reward I exhort you
to flee, to spurn such a cruel monster,
not for my revenge, but for your own good.*

*Beautiful Eyes
You wound me, oh beautiful eyes.
Think what those kisses could do,
so fiery and biting;
the soul languishes, languishes, and the heart swoons.
Ah, how I'm dying for you in my soul.
Think what those darts could do,
so sharp and deadly;
the soul languishes, languishes, and the heart swoons.
Ah, how I'm dying for you in my soul.
But maybe I won't die without revenge, because
in the end death awaits the one who causes death.*

Translations by Richard Kolb

Ceruleo

Formed in 2014 at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Ceruleo create dramatic programmes using spoken text alongside music for two sopranos and continuo. Every member of the group performs as a soloist, and they use all available combinations of instruments and voices to create innovative and captivating performances. They specialise in the music of Restoration England and Seventeenth Century Italy.

Ceruleo released their first album, 'Love Restor'd – Songs from the English Restoration', in December 2022, and throughout 2023 brought the programme to audiences around the UK, giving concerts in London, at the York Early Music Christmas Festival, and from Exeter in the south up to Helensburgh in Scotland.

Their staged show about Henry Purcell, written by Clare Norburn and directed by Thomas Guthrie, toured UK-wide in 2018–20. *Burying the Dead* was performed at Festivals including the Buxton International Festival, Lake District Summer Music, Brighton Early Music Festival, Ryedale Festival and Baroque at the Edge at LSO St Luke's.

Ceruleo are former participants of the prestigious Brighton Early Music Festival Live scheme, and have given recitals at venues including St John's Smith Square, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Handel & Hendrix in London, the Courtauld Gallery, and for Newbury Spring Festival, the London Handel Festival and the Folkestone Literature Festival, as well as appearing live on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*.

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The Observer

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