

To love is to never have... Venice's longing emptiness

Cristina Evans, mezzo-soprano

Graduate Recital

Department of Historical Performance

The Longy School of Music of Bard College

O dolce vita mia

from *Canzone villanesche napolitana* (1545)

Lute: Bradley Stone

Adrian Willaert (1490-1562)

“Se la mia morte brami” (2021)

Madrigal arranged upon an ornamented Latin plainchant,

Lumen ad Revelationem, by Hernando Franco (1532-1585)

Soprano: Angie Tyler

Soprano: Kendra Comstock

Mezzo-soprano: Cristina Evans

Tenor: David Mather

Cristina Evans (1995-)

Cruda Amarilli

from *Il quinto libro de madrigali* (1605)

Soprano: Pamela Dellal

Mezzo-soprano: Cristina Evans

Tenor: David Mather

Tenor: Grant Yosenick

Baritone: Carlo Bunyi

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

Chiome d'oro

from *Il settimo libro de madrigali* (1619)

Soprano: Angie Tyler

Mezzo-soprano: Cristina Evans

1st Violin: Thomas Cooper

2nd Violin: Peter Paetkau

Harpsichord: Mo-ah Kim

Claudio Monteverdi

Si dolce e 'l tormento

from *Quattro scherzo delle ariose* (1624)

Lute: Bradley Stone

Claudio Monteverdi

Lasciatemi morire

from *L'Arianna* (1608)

Harpsichord: Mo-ah Kim

Claudio Monteverdi

Vieni, vieni in questo seno
from *La Rosinda* (1651)
Harpsichord: Mo-ah Kim

Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676)

Lagrimie mie
from *Cantate e ariette op.7* (1659)
Harpsichord: Mo-ah Kim

Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)

La Riamata da chi amava
from *Cantate e ariette op.2* (1651)
Soprano: Angie Tyler
Mezzo-soprano: Cristina Evans
1st Violin: Thomas Cooper
2nd Violin: Peter Paetkau
Harpsichord: Mo-ah Kim

Barbara Strozzi

TEXTS AND NOTES

O Dolce vita mia, che t'haggio fatto,
che minacci ogn' hor ogn' hor con tue parole,
come nev' al sole, et io mi struggo.
(Anonymous)

O sweet, o sweet life of mine, what did I do to you,
that you threaten me constantly with your words,
like snow in the sun, and I am consumed.

The program begins with the lamenter complaining about what life has given them. Although they confess that the life is sweet and beautiful, they cannot ignore the self-sabotage which materializes as these threatening words which consumes them. This is a representative piece of what lovers often go through in many Venetian laments, that what they love is beautiful but due to their own fault, they cannot have it.

Se la mia morte brami,
crudel, lieto ne moro.
E dopo morte ancor te solo adoro.
Ma se vuoi che non t'ami,
ahi, che a pensarlo solo
Il duol m'ancide
e l'alma fugge a volo.
(Torquato Tasso)

If you desire my death,
cruel one, I die happily for that reason,
and even after death I adore you only.
But if you wish that I stop loving you,
alas, how just thinking that,
the pain kills me
and my soul flees as if flying away.
(John Glenn Paton)

The lyrics within Tasso's poetry are more directly tied to the lost lover who suffers in their longing. The original Latin text was intended for worship during Epiphany in colonial Guatemala by Neo-Hispanic composer Hernando (sometimes spelled Fernando) Franco. It was a common practice to use church music as a basis for secular music, and so, I as the arranger of the polyphonic texture for this piece, altered the tonality based on the text of Venetian composer's Carlo Gesualdo's famous madrigal setting of "Se la mia morte brami".

Cruda Amarilli, che col nome ancora,
d'amar ahi lasso! amaramente insegni;
Amarilli, del candido ligustro
più candida e più bella,
ma de l'aspido sordo
e più sorda e più fera e più fugace;
poi che col dir t'offendo,
i' mi morrò tacendo.

Cruel Amaryllis, who with your name
to love, alas, bitterly you teach.
Amaryllis, more than the white privet pure,
and more beautiful,
but deafer than the deaf asp,
and fiercer and more elusive.
Since telling I offend you,
I shall die in silence.

Claudio Monteverdi was a prolific composer even before his move to Venice, with his pieces being widely published and distributed. His fifth book of madrigals was known for its telling preface which included details pertaining to the seconda pratticum, in which he stresses that the words of the madrigal attains the utmost importance as opposed to the music itself. The character of Amaryllis is the object of the lonesome lover's affection, who is confused as to why their affections are rebuffed, and so similarly to other lamenting lovers, will die in vain silence.

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

Golden tresses, fairest treasure,
you bind me in a thousand ways,
whether you are coiled or loosened.

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

Choice little white pearls,
when you reveal the roses
that you cover, you wound me.

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

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

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

Lively stars that shine,
so fair and alluring,
when you laugh you slay me.

Precious, seductive
beloved lips of coral,
when you speak you give me bliss.

Oh fair bond that gives me joy!
Oh sweet life's leave-taking!
Oh this welcome wound of mine! (Martin Morell)

This more joyous piece reflects the beauty of falling in love and the effect the object of desire has over the lover. The leaping rhythms supplied by the violins echo the leaping voices of the madrigal, and evoke the light side of love rather than the darkness of loss and meandering.

Sì dolce è'l tormento

Ch'in seno mi sta,
Ch'io vivo contento
Per cruda beltà.
Nel ciel di bellezza
S'accreschi fierezza
Et manchi pietà:
Che sempre qual scoglio
All'onda d'orgoglio
Mia fede sarà.

So sweet is the torment
that lies in my heart,
that I live happily
because of its cruel beauty.
May beauty's fury
grow wide in the sky
without compassion
;for my devotion shall hold
like a rock against
pride's unrelenting wave.

La speme fallace
Rivolgam' il piè.
Diletto ne pace
Non scendano a me.
E l'empia ch'adoro
Mi nieghi ristoro
Di buona mercè:
Tra doglia infinita,
Tra speme tradita
Vivrà la mia fè

False hope,
keep me wandering!
let no peace
nor pleasure befall me!
Evil woman, whom I adore,
deny me the rest
that compassion would give;
amidst infinite pain,
amidst broken hopes
shall survive my devotion.

Per foco e per gelo
riposo non hò.
Nel porto del cielo
riposo avrò.
Se colpo mortale
con rigido strale
Il cor m'impiegò,
cangiando mia sorte
Col dardo di morte
il cor sanerò.

There is no rest for me
in the warmth or the cold.
Only in heaven
shall I find rest.
If the deadly strike
of an arrow injured my heart,
I shall heal still,
and change my destiny,
death's very heart
with the same arrow.

Se fiamma d'amore
Già mai non sentì

If the frigid heart
that stole mine

Quel rigido core
Ch' il cor mi rapì,
Se nega pietate
La cruda beltate
Che l' alma invaghì:
Ben fia che dolente,
Pentita e languente
Sospirimi un dì.

never has felt
love's ardour;
if the cruel beauty
that charmed my soul
denies me compassion,
may she die one day
by me pained,
repenting, languishing.

This piece represents the whole of the program in that “so sweet is the torment” of admiring one’s beloved in vain even though it causes them pain. Towards the end of this piece, the lover accepts that their affections will not be returned and instead spitefully wishes that their languishing causes their beloved’s death.

Lasciatemi morire!

E che volete voi che mi conforte
In così dura sorte,
In così gran martire?
Lasciatemi morire!

Let me die.
And who do you think can comfort me
in thus harsh fate,
in thus great suffering?
Let me die.

O Teseo, O Teseo mio,
Si, che mio ti vo' dir, che mio pur sei,
Benchè t' involi, ahi crudo, a gli occhi miei
Volgiti, Teseo mio,
Volgiti, Teseo, O Dio!
Volgiti indietro a rimirar colei
Che lasciato ha per te la Patria e il Regno,
E in queste arene ancora,
Cibo di fere dispietate é crude,
Lascierà l' ossa ignude.
O Teseo, O Teseo mio,
Se tu sapessi, O Dio!
Se tu sapessi, ohimè, come s' affanna
La povera Arianna, forse pentito
Rivolgeresti ancor la prora al lito:
Ma con l' aure serene
Tu te ne vai felice et io quì piango.
A te prepara Atene
Liete pompe superbe,
Ed io rimango
Cibo di fere in solitarie arene.
Te l' uno e l' altro tuo vecchio parente
Stringeran lieti, ed io
Più non vedrovvi,
O Madre, O Padre mio!

Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,
yes, I still call you mine for mine you are,
although you flee, cruel one, far from my eyes.
Turn back, my Theseus,
turn back, Theseus, o God,
turn back to see again the one,
who for you has left her fatherland and kingdom,
and who, staying on these shores,
a prey to cruel and pitiless beasts,
will leave her bones denuded.
Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,
if you knew, oh God, if you only knew
how much poor Arianna is frightened,
perhaps, overcome with remorse,
you would return your prow shorewards again.
But with the serene winds
you sail on happily, while I remain here weeping.
Athens prepares to greet you
with joyful and superb feasts;
and I remain,
a prey to wild beasts on these solitary shores.
You will be happily embraced by
your old parents and I
will not see you again,
oh mother, oh my father.

Dove, dov' è la fede
Che tanto mi giuravi?
Così ne l' alta fede
Tu mi ripon degl' Avi?
Son queste le corone

Where is the faith you
swore me so much?
Is this how you place me
on your ancestors' throne?
Are these the crowns

Onde m'adorni il crine?
Questi gli scettri sono,
Queste le gemme e gl'ori?
Lasciarmi in abbandono
A fera che mi strazi e mi divori?
Ah Teseo, ah Teseo mio,
Lascierai tu morire
Invan piangendo, invan gridando aita,
La misera Arianna
Ch'a te fidossi e ti diè gloria e vita?

Ahi, che non pur rispondi!
Ahi, che più d'aspe è sordo a' miei lamenti!
O nembri, O turbi, O venti,
Sommergetelo voi dentr'a quell'onde!
Correte, orche e balene,
E delle membra immonde
Empiete le voragini profonde!
Che parlo, ahi, che vaneggio?
Misera, oimè, che chieggio?
O Teseo, O Teseo mio,
Non son, non son quell'io,
Non son quell'io che ì ferì detti sciolse;
Parlò l'affanno mio, parlò il dolore,
Parlò la lingua, sì, ma non già il core.

Misera! Ancor dò loco a la tradita speme?
E non si spegne,
Fra tanto scherno ancor, d'amor
Il foco spegni tu morte, omai, le fiamme
indegne!
O Madre, O Padre,
O dell'antico Regno superbi alberghi,
Ov'ebbi d'or la cuna,
O servi, O fidi amici (ahi fato indegno!)
Mirate ove m'ha scort'empia fortuna,
Mirate di che duol m'ha fatto herede
L'amor mio, la mia fede,
E l'altrui inganno,
Così va chi tropp'ama e troppo crede.
(Ottavio Rinucini)

with which you adorn my hair?
Are these the scepters,
the diamonds and the gold?
To leave me abandoned
for the beast to tear up and devour?
Ah Theseus, ah my Theseus,
would you let me die,
weeping in vain, crying for aid
the wretched Arianna,
who trusted you and gave you glory and life?

Ah, that you do not even reply!
Ah, that you are deaf to my laments!
Oh clouds, oh storms, oh winds,
submerge him in those waves.
Fly, whales and orcas,
and fill up the profound gulfs
with these unworldly limbs!
What am I saying? Ah, what am I raving about?
Wretched that I am, what am I asking?
Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,
that is, that is not I,
that it is not I who hurled these curses,
my anguish spoke, the pain spoke,
it was my tongue but not my heart.

Wretched that I am, still I give place
to a hope betrayed,
and despite so much scorn
the fire of love is not put out.
For that put out now, death, the unworthy flames.
Oh mother, oh father,
oh superb dwellings of the ancient kingdom,
where my golden cradle stood!
Oh servants, oh faithful friends – Ah, unjust fate! –
See where a cruel fortune has led me,
see what pain has been given to me as a heritage
for my love, my faith
and for his betraying me.
That is the fate of one who loves too much
and believes too much.
(J. Whybrow)

The abandonment of Arianna on the island of Naxos is one of the most famous laments in operatic history, arguably the one that popularized the lament. Arianna not only laments her lost love but reflects on all she had sacrificed in order to be with Theseus, including her kingdom and her family. Her status alone as a princess has been compromised by betraying her people. All of this dawns on her as she goes back and forth between cursing Theseus then pleading for his return.

Vieni, vieni in questo seno,

Come, come to my bosom,

che sereno
già t'accolse entro il suo latte.
Le sue, caro,
mamme intatte,
se già manna a te stillaro,
da quei fini
lor rubini,
vo', ch'ambrosia or ti zampillino.
Si tranquillino,
mio placato, e bel Polluce,
le mie sorti alla tua luce.
(Giovanni Faustini)

which has welcomed you before
to its milky whiteness.
Beloved, if once
my untouched breasts
gave you manna
from those fine
rubies of theirs,
I wish they would now well with ambrosia for you.
Calm yourself, relent
my handsome Pollux,
my happiness lies in you.

In this aria from Act III of Cavalli's *La Rosinda*, the sorceress Nerea beckons her lost love to return to her, who had previously been taken over by a love potion. The Passacaglia serving as the ground bass is commonly associated with Dido's Lament from Purcell's opera, however here, although there is a sense of languish of having been betrayed, there is a hypnotic quality with the repetition of the chords. Nerea ultimately succeeds in luring her former lover back to her.

Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?
Perchè non isfogate il fier dolore
che mi toglie 'l respiro e opprime il core?

My tears, why do you hold back?
Why do you not let burst forth the fierce pain
that takes my breath and oppresses my heart?

Lidia che tant'adoro,
perch'un guardo pietoso, ah!, mo donò
il paterno rigor l'imprigionò.
Tra due mura rinchiusa
sta la bella innocente
dove giunger non può raggio di sole;
e quel che più mi duole
ed accresc'al mio mal tormenti e pene,
è che per mia cagione
provi male il mio bene.

Lidia, whom I so much adore,
Because she looked on me with a pitiable glance
is imprisoned by her strict father.
Between two walls
the beautiful innocent one is confined,
where the sun's ray can't reach her;
and what grieves me most,
and adds torment and pain to my agony,
is that my beloved
suffers on my account.

E voi, lumi dolenti, non piangete?
Lagrimie mie, à che vi trattenete?

And you, sorrowful eyes, you don't cry?
My tears, why do you hold back?

Lidia, ahimè, veggo mancarmi
l'idol mio che tanto adoro;
sta colei tra duri marmi,
per cui spiro e pur non moro.

Alas, I yearn for Lidia,
my idol whom I so much adore;
she's captured in hard marble,
she for whom I sigh and yet do not die.

Se la morte m'è gradita,
hor che son privo di speme,
deh, togliete mi la vita,
ve ne prego, aspre mie pene.

Because I welcome death,
now that I'm deprived of hope;
Ah, take away my life,
I pray to you, my bitter pain.

Ma ben m'accorgo
che per tormentar mi maggiormente
la sorte mi nega anco la morte.

But well I realize that to torment me
even more
Fate denies me even death.
Since it's true, oh God,

Se dunque è vero, o Dio,
che sol del pianto mio
il mio destino ha sete;
lagrime mie, à che vi trattenete?
(Pietro Dolfino)

that vicious Destiny
thirsts only for my wailing,
My tears, why do you hold back?
(Jennifer Gliere)

In this piece, the lover does not lament over abandonment, but rather his own fault causing his beloved to be parted from him. After exchanging a glance with each other, Lidia, the beloved, is imprisoned in her house by her “rigged father”. This tortures the lover in that he can neither die for Lidia’s sake nor die from his own pain of being parted from her. He refers to the heavens that even fate prefers to see him suffer rather than die. As his humors are imbalanced, no more water can burst forth from him, as he addresses his tears which will not do so.

La Riamata da chi amava

Dormi, o mio dolore,
addormentati, o mia pena,
i sospiri ei pianti affrena,
posa in stabil core.
Pace datevi, o speranze,
acquietatevi, o desiri,
dilungatevi, o martiri,
in eterne lontananze.
Ciego duol mi affliggi a torto,
ch’alle gioie Amor mi vuole
e mi rende il mio bel Sole,
la mia vita, il mio conforto.
Alma mia, riedi a godere
che desir con tanto affetto,
corri, o core, al cor diletto,
torna al ben, torna al piacere,
alma mia, torna al godere
(Anonymous)

The Return to Love of a Former Lover

Sleep, o my sorrow,
slumber, o my suffering,
hold back sighs and laments,
repose in a quiet heart.
Be at peace, o hopes,
still yourselves, o desires,
exile yourselves, o torments,
into the eternal distance.
Blind regret wrongly vexes me,
since Love wished to delight me
and to give me my beautiful sun,
my life, and my comfort.
My soul, return to enjoy
whom you desire with such affection;
run, o heart, to the cherished bosom,
return to affection, return to pleasure,
my soul, return to delight.
(Candace Magner)

In this duet beautifully crafted by Strozzi, the languishing lover, battered over heartbreak, has long been asleep. Or rather, their flames of passion have been in a deep slumber after all the previous pain and loss. The program concludes however with a ray of hope, that the lover’s soul will one day re-awaken with the same fire of emotion after the restful and solemn sleep.