Pegasus Early Music and NYS Baroque
present

Sweet Harmony

Laura Heimes, Andréa Walker, sopranos
Boel Gidholm, Jimmy Drancsak, violins
Joëlla Becker-Harrow, cello
Naomi Gregory, harpsichord
Deborah Fox, lutes

Program

Chiome d'oro	Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Tornate, o cari baci	Monteverdi
I baci	Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)
Undecima Sonata, Libro 1	Dario Castello (c.1602-1631)
O come sei gentile	Monteverdi
Ai sospiri, al dolore	Luigi Rossi (1597-1653)
Damigella tutta bella	Monteverdi
Two in One upon a ground	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Sound the trumpet	Purcell
Ground after the Scotch Humour	Nicola Matteis (c.1650-c.1713)
My dearest, my fairest	Purcell
Hark how the songsters	Purcell
Presto *from* String Trio in D minor, Op. 3, No. 2	John Antes (1740-1811)
The Invitation	Supply Belcher (1751 –1836)
Strephon's Farewell	Timothy Swan (1758–1842)
Irish Lamentation/Corsino/The Whimsical Lady	American fiddle tunes (18th c.)
Independence	Swan
Passacaille *from* Op.5 No.4	George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
No di voi non vo' fidarmi	Handel

Sweet Harmony program notes

Our program today is a treasury concert, a mix of music from the 17th and 18th centuries, and from different countries, all compiled to showcase the **art of the duet**. Whether vocal or instrumental, the duet enables harmony through melody, and encourages conversation between the players. The voices can echo each other or contrast with each other. No matter the style or the language, the duet is chamber music that is intimate, expressive, and collaborative.

Claudio Monteverdi's 7th book contains quite a few vocal duets, some of them "concerted", with instrumental interludes and sinfonias with violins, as in our opening piece, *Chiome d'oro*. Monteverdi is a towering figure in early baroque music, having influenced the transition from renaissance polyphony to the new expressive style where the text is the "mistress of the harmony" and determines the emotional content and musical figuration of the music.

Barbara Strozzi, a renowned soprano as well as a composer, included many duets in her eight published editions of songs plus numerous works in manuscripts or other collections. Strozzi was the daughter of a famous Venetian poet and academician, Giulio Strozzi; she grew up in his artistic and intellectual household, sang for his gatherings, and published more vocal music in Venice in her generation than anyone else, including male composers.

We don't know much about **Dario Castello**, but he did work at St. Mark's Cathedral when Monteverdi was the director of music there. He may have been a violinist or a cornettist, or both. His two volumes of published music are entitled "sonatas in the modern style", and the music is delightfully quirky and unpredictable, full of tempo changes and unexpected corners, expanding the limits of current instrumental technique. **Luigi Rossi**, a musician from the southern part of Italy, worked for Cardinal Barberini in Rome, and spent part of his career in France. His music has a different flavor from the northern Italians, but is no less delicious, with its close harmonies and shifting rhythms.

Henry Purcell is considered the greatest English composer until Elgar or Britten, centuries later. He was a singer as well as a composer, and was employed first as a singer at the royal court, later as organist at Westminster Cathedral and the Chapel Royal. He wrote both vocal and instrumental music: operas and other music for the theater; large orchestral and vocal pieces including sacred music; and single songs, trio sonatas, and works for solo organ or harpsichord. This set demonstrates both his ebullient and passionate emotions, with exquisitely sensitive setting of the texts and colorful harmonies over relatively simple bass lines.

Nicola Matteis was an Italian violinist who went to London and gained great fame and favor with his virtuosic performances and extensive teaching of mostly amateur musicians. His brilliance for improvisation was widely known: his written down variations over the Scotch

Humour ground, a repeating progression of chords or harmonies, probably started out as an improvisation, and are a fine example of his improvisatory style.

American music in the 18th century was an assortment of styles, depending on where in the country you were and who was there to create music. **John Antes** was born in Pennsylvania and joined a Moravian community as a child. He was likely the first American instrument maker, and was the first American Moravian missionary to travel and work in Egypt. While there, he was captured and tortured by Ottomans. Surviving that, he moved to Germany and traveled in Europe, especially to London. His string trios seem to have been written during his recovery in Egypt, and there is some speculation that he sent his string quartets to Benjamin Franklin. There are numerous possible connections to Haydn, including a mutual publisher and a mutual friend, the violinist Johann Salomon, although we do not know if Haydn and Antes ever met.

In a completely different style, the next composers are more homegrown**,** and focused more on patriotic and sacred music, often sung *a cappella* (vocal music without instrumental accompaniment). **Supply Belcher** was known as the "Handel of Maine". He fought in the Revolutionary War, kept a tavern, and was active civically and politically. His *Harmony of Maine* was published in 1794, a collection of sacred vocal music, with psalms, hymns, anthems, fuguing tunes, and an introduction to learning music. **Timothy Swan** was a hatmaker and a self-taught composer, known as a Yankee tunesmith, or a part of what was later named the First New England School of composers. He lived in Massachusetts and Connecticut. He composed psalms and hymn settings, as well as, unusually for his time, some secular vocal music which was collected in a volume he published called *The Songster's Assistant*.

The **American fiddle tunes** are dances that come from various 18th century sources, manuscripts or dancing manuals. They are, respectively, an air, a jig, and a reel. It is useful to have the steps notated as they help us determine what the tempos should be, an important point which also applies to European baroque dances (such as the Passacaille, below). Of note, *Corsino* is from the Champlin Manuscript, a collection of dances written down by in 1781 by Peggy Champlin of Newport, RI, recalling which ones were performed at a recent social event attended by George Washington.

George Frideric Handel needs no introduction; he was a brilliant and prolific composer, in many styles and languages. Like most baroque composers (including JS Bach), he often borrowed from himself, using previously composed pieces in different settings. The *Passacaille* from his opus 5 set of trio sonatas is recycled from the ballet of his opera Radamisto (1720). It is in a distinctly French style, strongly channeling the music of Lully and other French baroque dance composers. The chamber duet with which we end our program today, *No di voi non vo' fidarmi*, was composed in 1741, just before he reworked it into *For unto us a child is born* in *Messiah.* We may have done our own adaptation as well, to end the program with everyone!
--Deborah Fox