



LIVE
FROM
HOME
SERIES

**A note from La Grande Bande's
Music & Artistic Director and Board of Directors**

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we had no idea exactly how, or how much, La Grande Bande would be affected. Obviously, we were profoundly disappointed that we were forced to postpone the two remaining performances of our 2019 – 2020 Concert Season. Thankfully, we were able to complete all of our educational programming before all large gatherings were not allowed.

Nothing can replace or make-up for not being able to perform for all of you in person. As musicians, we thrive on the direct connections we are able make with each of you before, during, and after each of our performances, masterclasses, outreach concerts, open rehearsals, and every single interaction in between. The new **Live From Home** series is designed to continue our programming, albeit in a radically different format: with videos recorded in our homes across the country made with the same passion and excitement we present in our concerts. We hope that the performances we'll be sharing over the next few months will provide you with joy in these historic times.

If you enjoy the program notes, the preview videos, or both, we encourage you to become a Sustaining Contributor. As a Sustainer, you will be able to access (1) all of the **Live From Home** series videos, (2) our Music & Artistic Director's Sustainer-level Director's Blog, and (3) other great perks like special invitations to private rehearsals. You can rest easy knowing that your monthly contribution will ensure La Grande Bande will be able to continue into the future. Want to find out more about becoming a Sustainer? We have the full list of benefits listed on our website at sustainers.lagrandebande.org.

Until we see each other in person again, we send each of you our best wishes.

Sincerely,

La Grande Bande

Live From Home Series

Alyssa Anderson, mezzo-soprano
Michael Thomas Asmus, harpsichord

Friday 10 July 2020

Program

Two Songs

Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

- I. Per un bacio, Op. 7, No. 8 (1659)
- II. L’Eraclito amoroso, Op. 2, No. 14 (1651)

Program Notes

The **Live From Home** series performance this week is a tiny preview of our regular 2020–2021 Concert Season Programming. The two songs by Barbara Strozzi Alyssa and I are performing for you will be on the program for La Grande Bande’s *Concert VI: Splendors of Baroque Italy* in January 2021. That is, as long as we are able to begin in person performances then.

Barbara Strozzi’s songs are wonderful, evocative, and playful examples of the classic early Italian Baroque style. Strozzi was born in Venice, the illegitimate daughter of Giulio Strozzi and his long-time servant Isabella Garzoni. Barbara’s father was a poet and was active in the musical and literary circles of Venice. He even supplied the texts for some of Barbara’s songs.

Barbara often performed at her father’s meetings of the *Accademia degli Unisoni*, founded

in 1638, accompanying herself on the lute or *viola da gamba*. It also seems that she was a welcome part of the academy’s discourse on musical activities.

Strozzi was taught composition by Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676), one of the leading opera composers in Venice at the time. In 1644 Strozzi published her first collection of pieces: a varied set of 25 madrigals for two to five voices, basso continuo, and occasionally two violins. The collection sets her father’s poetry.

In 1651, seven years later, and in financial straits, Strozzi published her second collection of pieces. The second collection, dedicated to Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II (1578–1637), features pieces for solo soprano voice, basso continuo, with a few pieces also including two violins.

Between, 1651 and 1664, Strozzi published

another six collections of music, almost exclusively for one voice and basso continuo. Most of the collections are dedicated to prominent royalty spread throughout German lands and Italy.

Strozzi's seventh collection, from which *Per un bacio* is taken, was dedicated to Nicolò Sagredo, a Procurator of San Marco and was later elected the Doge of Venice. The songs in the collection are again for solo voice and basso continuo.

Scholar Richard Kolb notes that Strozzi's publications were most likely a response to her financial position. Most importantly, it was probably Strozzi's hope that her publications would allow her to attract new patrons for her compositions. Some of the collections, like Op. 2 and Op. 7, contain mixtures of extreme technical complexity for professional or excellent amateur singers and moderately complex for very good amateur singers. To have so many complete collections of her works is quite remarkable, considering how many compositions by her contemporaries have been lost over the centuries.

Per un bacio

We've selected a song from Strozzi's seventh publication which is a strophic piece—using the same music for two verses. The poetry is a quite typical melodramatic setting of forlorn lovers so often found in songs of the mid-1600s across Europe.

Strozzi's music utilizes several tempo changes which reflect the varying degrees of strife which the poet suffers. The slower tempos are very much laments while the quicker tempo is more adamant and enraged. Strozzi, like her teacher Cavalli, is very sensitive to the text and the story

that it is conveying. As you listen, notice how Strozzi uses tempo *and* harmonies to help musically depict the text.

L'Eraclito amoroso

Our selection from Strozzi's second publication is *L'Eraclito amoroso*, or the Amorous Heraclitus. Strozzi's song sets text depicting a playful take on Heraclitus's Flux Principle which basically states that things are constantly changing and never remain the same. The poem Strozzi sets is a highly ironic, tongue-in-cheek hypothetical imaging of Heraclitus's own suffering under his Flux Principle, as Alyssa notes in her introduction before our performance.

What is also notable in Strozzi's setting is her careful attention to the text and her use of harmonies and rhythmic durations to accentuate the text. Strozzi uses text painting on words like torture, sobbing, sighing, assail, and afflict to musically represent the emotions of the poet.

Strozzi's setting blends quasi-recitative, arioso, and arietta styles in this evocative piece. The opening (“Listen, lovers”) and closing portions (“So much sorrow”) of the piece are quasi-recitative. The second section (“My only pleasure”) is in the arioso style. The middle portion of the song, with the repeating bass lines (“Every torture...May every sadness”) are in the arietta style.

Alyssa and I had so much fun putting this together. We are very much looking forward to sharing these wonderful pieces with all of you again in a few months. We so hope you enjoy the latest installment of La Grande Bande's new **Live From Home** series.

Program notes by MTA.

DIPORTI DI EVTERPE OVERO

CANTATE & ARIETTE A VOCE SOLA

DI BARBARA STROZZI

Opera Settima

Confecrata

ALL' ILL^{mo} ET ECC^{mo} SIG^r NICOLO SAGREDO

CAVALIER E PROCVRATOR DI S. MARCO, & Ambasciator

Estraordinario Alla S. Di N. S. ALESSANDRO VII



IN VENETIA M DCLVIII

Apreso Francesco Magai

The title page from Strozzi's Opus 7 collection of cantatas and arias published in 1659. Strozzi dedicated the collection to Nocolò Sagredo, a prominent member of Venitian society and a would-be Doge of Venice.

About La Grande Bande

With performances called “warm and sensitive” by the Minneapolis Star Tribune, La Grande Bande strives to present innovative, unique, and inspiring musical programs played on the instruments that premiere audiences might have heard. LGB is composed of musicians from across the United States and from around the world who are specialists in the field of Early Music—music written between c. 1600-1800—and who play on historical instruments and sing in an historical manner.

We aim to present “masterworks” alongside lesser-known compositions, illustrating the extensive musical production during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Education is crucial to our mission, be it through program notes, through directed-educational events, open rehearsal sessions, or another method. We see incredible value in resurrecting the music written by the great masters of our past; it’s a historical, cultural, and musical lesson rolled into one.

To learn more about our musicians, or about our programming, visit www.lagrandebande.org/about.

About the Musicians

Dr. Alyssa Anderson (mezzo-soprano) is an active performer and arts administrator based in Minneapolis. She received her B.M. in performance from the State University of New York, College at Fredonia, and her M.M. and D.M.A. from the University of Minnesota.

As Artistic Director and vocalist of The Dream Songs Project, a classical voice and guitar duo based in Minneapolis, Alyssa has commissioned twelve major works for the ensemble and premiered numerous pieces by local and national composers in concerts across the US. She is a founding member and current Artistic Director of the experimental chamber group, RenegadeEnsemble, and also performs as The Poem Is Done with saxophonist Dr. Jeffery Kyle Hutchins.



A core member of The Rose Ensemble since 2015, Alyssa has also performed as a soloist with numerous other ensembles and presenting organizations in the Twin Cities, such as Zeitgeist, Miranda Ensemble, LOFTRecital, 113 Composer Collective, Metamorphosis Opera Theater, Consortium Carissimi, Minnesota Bach Ensemble, Oratorio Society of Minnesota, Kenwood Symphony Orchestra, Twin Cities Lyric Theater, and Bloomington Symphony Orchestra. More information can be found at AlyssaAnderson.org.

Harpsichordist & Conductor, **Michael Thomas Asmus**, is currently studying at Stony Brook University for a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Harpsichord Performance with Arthur Haas. As a



conductor, he has been praised as a “conscientious [conductor]” with “a natural talent” and “a bright future” by audiences and ensembles alike. He has been lauded as a “versatile” continuo player (CNVC.org) with “judicious, rhythmically supple harpsichord playing” (Star Tribune). He is consistently lauded by his colleagues as a great musical collaborator.

In 2019 he made his Opera NEO (San Diego) debut as the Assistant Conductor and Vocal Coach for their production of Francesco Cavalli’s *La Calisto*. He was scheduled to return in 2020 as the Assistant Conductor and Vocal Coach for Opera NEO’s production of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Platée*. Opera NEO will resume their 2020 production calendar in 2021.

Since June 2011, Michael has acted as the Music and Artistic Director of La Grande Bande, a non-profit, period instrument orchestra and chorus he founded in the same year. La Grande Bande will produce its first full concert series for the 2019–2020 season.