



Eugenia Boix Carlos Mena

Agostino Steffani – Crudo Amor

FORMA ANTIQVA

Aarón Zapico

MUSIC EDITION
WINTER & WINTER



Pablo Zapico · Eugenia Boix · Carlos Mena · Aarón Zapico · Ruth Verona · Daniel Zapico

Eugenia Boix (*soprano*)

Carlos Mena (*countertenor*)

Ruth Verona (*violoncello: Charlotte, Paris, F, 19th century, restored by Rafael Melenchón*)

Daniel Zapico (*theorbo: Jaume Bosser, Barcelona, E, 2013*)

Pablo Zapico (*Baroque guitar: Peter Biffin, Armidale, AU, 2011*)

Aarón Zapico (*harpsichord: Rafael Marijuán Adrián after Ioannes Ruckers, Torrelaguna, E, 2011*)

THE FACES OF LOVE

DR. MARÍA SANHUESA FONSECA

AGOSTINO STEFFANI (born July 25th, 1654 in Castelfranco Veneto, Italy – died February 12th, 1728 in Frankfurt/Main, Germany), better known in the poet's world as Gregorio Piva, hid himself behind many masks. A Baroque personality, if there ever was one, in who a singer – probably a castrato with a beautiful voice that Count Tattenbach had discovered in San Marco in Venice – composer, bishop, apostolic vicar, spy ... and diplomat met, to handle delicate missions at various German courts until he continued his musical career as it were almost only in seclusion. In seclusion or not that much. Steffani's music was widely admired, so much that the young Georg Friedrich Händel owned a copy of the manuscripts of his chamber duets, eager to imitate them in his own duets from the years 1708 to 1712. In many elements of his elegant and tasteful style Steffani recognised the great talent of

the young Händel, who he rightly considered as his operatic successor.

Steffani's elegant chamber duets, composed in the style of Giovanni Clari's duets as cantatas for two voices with continuo, are a milestone in the development of the secular vocal music between Giacomo Carissimi and Händel. With them he reaches his compositional high point; they are an advanced development of the Italian solo cantata during that period, enriched with playfulness of the vocal counterpoint, in the manner of the two solo violins in the trio sonata. They feature flexible melodies, an elegant counterpoint and perfect formal proportions. His style can be compared to the one of Alessandro Stradella, Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti or the young Händel. Most of the duets were written before 1702, the same year when Steffani started to revise them after the failure of one of his diplomatic endeavours,

only two duets were composed after 1702. His reworking continued until 1710. Full of grace and bucolic themes, similar to the Italian chamber cantata at the time, different voice combinations can be found in the duets – soprano and contralto, soprano and tenor, soprano and bass – with continuo as well as a structure of up to six parts between solos and duets. Applied are the closed forms of the 17th century cantata – aria da capo and rondo – as well as a more open form, a multiple section concept bringing them close to the Renaissance madrigal, Steffani's preferred choice in the revised versions, where he in favour of the duos abandons repetitions and explores the possibilities of the counterpoint and fugal passages. Much admired, Steffani's duets exerted great influence. They became models for composers such as Reinhard Keiser, Georg Caspar Schürmann and Georg Philipp Telemann, served the most excellent singers of their time as vocal exercises and were highly praised by Johann Mattheson, Padre Martini, Charles Burney and E.T.A. Hoff-

mann. In England they were utilised in the sacred repertoire by replacing the Italian original lyrics with English religious texts. All this happened with a high degree of respect that Steffani's œuvre as composer and diplomat received during his lifetime and as well later in the enthusiastic imaginary world of the romanticist Hoffmann.

Steffani was an excellent singer and linguist, who managed to skillfully pursue all the different vocations of his life. An extraordinary virtuosity is revealed in his vocal compositions, but also the ability to express a great sensitivity in the text and the special gift to convey emotions and feelings. Passions and emotions in the words, the sounds and the colours of the voices. The bitter side of love and the gentleness of pleurably endured and sought pain. Soprano and alto, continuo and voices, love and dislike.

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English Translator: REGINE VETTER

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1. – 4. Begl'occhi, oh Dio, non piú piangete · AGOSTINO STEFFANI (1654 – 1728)

5. Occhi, perché piangete? · AGOSTINO STEFFANI

6. Toccata Terza · GIOVANNI GIROLAMO KAPSPERGER (c. 1580 – 1651)

7. – 10. Dimmi, dimmi, Cupido · AGOSTINO STEFFANI

11. Passacaglia · JOHANN CASPAR FERDINAND FISCHER (1656 – 1746)

12. – 15. Crudo Amor, morir mi sento · AGOSTINO STEFFANI

16. Placidissime catene · AGOSTINO STEFFANI

17. Passachaglia · FRANCESCO CORBETTA (c. 1615 – 1681)

18. – 21. Sol negl'occhi del mio bene · AGOSTINO STEFFANI

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