



# Giovanni Battista CASALI

SACRED MUSIC FROM EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

Costanzi Consort  
Peter Leech, director

# GIOVANNI BATTISTA CASALI: SACRED MUSIC FROM EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

by Peter Leech

The cataclysmic social and political upheaval wrought by the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century revolutionary period, combined with the inescapable influence of Enlightenment philosophies, had profound effects upon European sacred music, its principal religious institutions, its repertoire and the many composers who lived and worked in hitherto protected environments. Rome was twice occupied, in 1798–99 and 1808–14, by a French army which arrested two popes (Pius VI and VII), compelled many senior clergy to flee the city and carried out acts of cultural spoliation not seen since the brutal sack of 1527 by the mutinous troops of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. The combined effects of these traumas were felt for decades thereafter, although the religious infrastructure of the city came through the Napoleonic era relatively unscathed, at least when compared to other European capitals. Many of the major Roman religious foundations survived, if with drastically altered administrations and reduced financial capabilities – but the golden age of papal artistic patronage and associated micro-courts of prominent cardinals had come to an end. By the mid-1800s Rome, now more of a tourist trap than the long-term home of leading cultural figures, was a shadow of the city it had resembled a century earlier, when it was a magnet for pilgrims, ‘grand tourists’, painters, writers, sculptors, theologians, historians and musicians, all thrown together in an invigorating atmosphere articulately described by Martin Cheke:

Here are triumphal arches. Here are galleries and pediments peopled with Bernini’s gesticulating marble giants. In the distance can be glimpsed the dome of St Peter’s, and green mounds where the genius of Ancient Rome meets us amidst its ruins. It is still the Rome of the Renaissance, hardly bigger than a provincial town, a capital

city with a population of less than two hundred thousand [...] as yet unspoiled by the ‘improvements’ of the nineteenth century. Our décor is the combined production of Piranesi and Orizonte. Our costumes are by Pompeo Batoni and Mengs.<sup>1</sup>

In mid-to-late-eighteenth-century Rome, sacrality and secularity were closely juxtaposed. Citizens thought nothing of attending one of the city’s innumerable religious observances at one moment, or, at another, experiencing the artistry of Corilla Olimpica (the violinist/singer Maria Maddalena Morelli), the works of the painter Angelica Kauffmann, or other figures associated with the Second Arcadian Academy.<sup>2</sup> It was not unusual for grand tourists to drink coffee with a famous *monsignore* at the Piazza di Spagna in the morning, sit for a portrait in Pompeo Batoni’s studio *dopo pranzo* (after lunch), then head out in the evening to get ahead of the queue for an oratorio at the Chiesa Nuova or for a grand polychoral Vespers setting at St Peter’s Basilica on the eve of a major feast. Batoni’s paintings can be seen in galleries throughout the world, and published Arcadian poetry is available to read, but what were the sacred soundscapes behind the Neo-Classical façades of eighteenth-century Roman churches?<sup>3</sup> What might its grand tourists have heard in church from day to day?

In terms of church music, Napoleonic disruption broke links in the multifarious chains of continuity flowing through a thousand years of overlapping accreted layers of ecclesiastical patronage. It also led to many important Roman repositories of sacred music being raided, destroyed or dispersed, though some were partially reassembled in the nineteenth century. These factors partly explain why Roman sacred music after the death of Alessandro Scarlatti (1725) to 1800 is such a little-studied and unknown phenomenon, existing merely as a footnote or passing reference in late-twentieth- and early-21st-century music histories. These accounts often contain regurgitated,

<sup>1</sup> Martin Cheke, *The Cardinal de Bernis*, Cassell, London, 1958, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> More on Kauffmann’s Roman Salon can be found in Rebecca Cypess, *Women and Musical Salons in the Enlightenment* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2022). The first *Accademia degli Arcadi* was an artistic circle founded under the patronage of the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden in 1690 which prospered until around 1730. A revival occurred in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, when Arcadian meetings again included leading poets and musicians.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the most famous Roman façades were completed during the eighteenth century, including San Giovanni in Laterano (Galilei, 1735) and the Fontana di Trevi (Salvi/Panini, 1762).

dismissive generalisations about the music being, for example, ‘pale imitations’ of Palestrina-style *a cappella* polyphony, usually presented as part of the understanding that Rome was a backwater. It is time for a reassessment, especially when thousands of music manuscripts still await further scrutiny. One must also challenge some of the assumptions about the performance of sacred repertoire in Rome and further afield during the eighteenth century, by which time *stylus a cappella* had, as Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741) made clear in *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna, 1725), a two-fold definition: unaccompanied contrapuntal polyphony or the same style of music supported by organ and other instruments. Although we have opted here for the unaccompanied performance of several Casali motets, it should be noted that such works might easily have had instrumental support when performed in other contexts.<sup>4</sup>

The eighteenth-century sacred repertoires of many Roman churches have yet to be systematically scrutinised, and few researchers have investigated ways in which composers, faced with restrictive (but often ignored) papal decrees, as well as limited theatrical opportunities (opera being allowed only during carnival), might – in the case of the *a cappella* style, for example – have developed distinctive, finely nuanced approaches. Furthermore, the strong and enduring presence of the *galant* style in Rome, a city where hundreds of churches, chapels, monasteries, convents and basilicas each had its own performance aesthetics and traditions (constituting a kind of latter-day Oxyrhynchus,<sup>5</sup> though perhaps not to the extent of Naples),<sup>6</sup> has yet to be fully evaluated.<sup>7</sup> Tightly packed into a small geographical area, Roman churches were the

<sup>4</sup> David Wyn Jones has demonstrated (in ‘The *stylus a cappella* Masses of the Viennese classical school: Palestrina honoured and transformed’, *Palestrina e L’Europa*, Fondazione Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Palestrina, 2006, pp. 1066–68) how eighteenth-century Viennese masters, for example, cast the Palestrina style in modernised, Neo-Classical moulds, in terms of both harmonic treatment and performance practice.

<sup>5</sup> Oxyrhynchus was a semi-mythical city of ancient Egypt and reputedly the home of 40,000 monks and nuns. Now known as Al-Bahnasa, it lies in Middle Egypt some 160 kilometres south-south-west of Cairo, a little to the west of the Nile. The name is derived from the Greek version of ‘medjed’, the name of the ‘sharp-nosed’ Elephantfish that was worshipped there.

<sup>6</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, ‘The World of the Baroque Artist’, *Baroque Style in the Age of Magnificence*, V&A Publishing, London, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> An overview of Roman oratorio in the last three decades of the eighteenth century can be found in Joyce L. Johnson’s *Roman Oratorio, 1770–1800: The Repertory at Santa Maria in Vallicella*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1987. This study contains transcriptions of administrative documents from the Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova) archives.



Photograph: Peter Leach

*Main façade of the Chiesa Nuova, by Fausto Rughesi (active c. 1593–1606)*

hubs of an endless, vibrant cycle of liturgical events, as reported in Cracas' weekly *Diario Ordinario*,<sup>8</sup> where collaborative performances by leading musicians were frequent, and where stylistic exchanges were inevitable. Recent surveys of eighteenth-century music in Anglophone musicology scarcely devote more than a few hundred words to the topic of Roman sacred music.<sup>9</sup> *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, for example, assigns just three of its 773 pages, wherein only three important composers born after 1700 – Niccolò Jommelli (1714–74), Giovanni Battista Costanzi (1704–78) and Giovanni Battista Casali (1715–92) – are mentioned.<sup>10</sup> Inevitably, it must be accepted that editors of such huge volumes will be compelled to make selective, unavoidably disproportionate, representations. Bertil van Boer's landmark *Historical Dictionary of Music in the Classical Period*,<sup>11</sup> which includes around 40 eighteenth-century Roman church composers, provides more detail, though fleeting.

It is undoubtedly due to Jommelli's stature as a composer of operas that more is said of him in these books than of his contemporaries Costanzi and Casali. Yet, as Jommelli was *maestro coadiutore* (assistant) to Pietro Paolo Bencini at the Cappella Giulia (the choir of the Vatican Basilica) only from 1750 to 1754, the length of his service was in no way comparable to those of the other two, who spent their entire working lives in the city. Costanzi, having prospered under the patronage of Cardinals Pietro Ottoboni (1667–1740) and Henry Benedict Stuart (1725–1807), was a prolific *maestro* at numerous Roman churches for five decades and, most importantly, at the Cappella Giulia from 1755 to 1778. Casali was a long-serving *maestro* at several important Roman foundations, most notably San Giovanni in Laterano and the Chiesa Nuova (Santa Maria in Vallicella, the principal church of the Oratorians, an order founded by St Philip Neri in 1575, where Costanzi had also worked). Thanks to Giancarlo Rostirolla's

<sup>8</sup> Known as 'Cracas' after the family of typographers who published it, the *Diario* first appeared in 1716 and in 1848 became the *Gazzetta di Roma*.

<sup>9</sup> As far as Italian scholarship is concerned, Bianca Maria Antolini, Giancarlo Rostirolla and others have outlined the huge potential for further investigation, but the repertoire itself still lies mostly unassessed.

<sup>10</sup> *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Simon P. Keefe, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 39–41.

<sup>11</sup> Scarecrow Press, Lanham (Maryland), 2012.

monumental two-volume study *La Cappella Giulia 1513–2013: Cinque secoli di musica sacra in San Pietro*,<sup>12</sup> much more is now known about the activity of Costanzi and his colleagues at the Vatican, but still no comprehensive study of his life and music exists. Likewise, for Casali there is no modern monograph, and his sacred output has also been ‘little studied’.<sup>13</sup>

Casali was born in Rome around 1715, although a birth certificate has not thus far been traced. His earliest musical training is unknown, but Howard Brofsky suggested he may have studied with the Bolognese *maestro* Giovanni Battista Martini (1706–84), based on Casali’s having passed the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna examination in 1740.<sup>14</sup> In view of Casali’s documented status as a *maestro di cappella* in Rome from the mid-1740s, he evidently became a member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia at some stage, since Pope Clement XI’s decree of 1716 stipulated that no musician could work in Rome without that qualification.<sup>15</sup> Some of Casali’s earliest known compositions were theatrical, including *La Zoe* (Alessandria, between Turin, Milan and Genoa, 1738), *Candaspe* (Venice, 1739) and *La costanza vincitrice* (San Giovanni in Persiceto, between Bologna and Modena, 1740), but no scores have yet been traced. The locations of their premieres (assuming that he supervised them) suggests Casali had been active in northern Italy in the late 1730s, prompting inevitable speculation about musicians with whom he might have collaborated in Venice, in particular, given that Hasse, Galuppi and Vivaldi were working there in the same year.<sup>16</sup> Around 1740 Casali gained the

<sup>12</sup> Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> The Italian online encyclopaedia Treccani has by far the most substantive potted biographies of Costanzi (COSTANZI, Giovanni Battista in ‘Dizionario Biografico’ (treccani.it)) and Casali (CASALI, Giovanni Battista in ‘Dizionario Biografico’ (treccani.it)). One of the earliest listings for Casali in F. J. Fétis’ *Biographie universelle*, published in Brussels in 1837–44, remains one of the longest, listing specific small-scale sacred works.

<sup>14</sup> Howard Brofsky, ‘Students of Padre Martini: A Preliminary List’, *Fontes Artis Musicae*, Vol. 13, Nos. 2/3 (1966), pp. 159–60.

<sup>15</sup> Casali’s 1740 fugal exam exercise for Bologna survives. Accademia di Santa Cecilia exam exercises before 1741 are apparently not extant. In 1749 Pope Benedict XIV allowed the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna to award the title *maestro di cappella*.

<sup>16</sup> Vivaldi’s last opera, *Feraspe*, premiered at the same theatre, Sant’ Angelo, only seven weeks ahead of Casali’s *Candaspe* (Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660–1760*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2007, pp. 462–64).

post of *coadiutore* to Girolamo Chiti<sup>17</sup> at San Giovanni in Laterano, subsequently being nominated as Chiti's successor in 1745. For the next decade Casali worked additionally as a peripatetic organist, harpsichordist and musical director at more than twenty Roman churches, including Santa Maria sopra Minerva, San Lorenzo in Damaso, Santa Caterina de' Funari, San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Santa Maria in Campo Marzo (Benedictine nuns), San Bernadino da Siena ai Monti (Franciscan Tertiary nuns) and at the Collegio Capranica.<sup>18</sup> He also composed a handful of operas for Roman carnival seasons during this time, though the scores for many of these are lost. It was primarily in church music that Casali's reputation grew most swiftly, such that by the late 1740s he was well placed to be awarded major appointments.

In 1749 the canons of San Pietro, cognisant of Bencini's<sup>19</sup> advanced age and persistent illnesses, were forced to appoint a *coadiutore*, their choice falling, controversially, to the famous master of opera, Jommelli. Rostirolla illustrates how the canons would have gladly entrusted the post to Casali ('the Lateran *maestro* being better known and placed in the Roman sacred and spiritual musical tradition'<sup>20</sup>) but were overruled by the Cardinals Annibale Albani and Domenico Passionei. Letters from Casali and Chiti to Padre Martini in Bologna make clear their mutual dissatisfaction with the appointment of a composer known primarily for opera to Rome's most prestigious post, an issue which would recur later in the century when cardinalic influence took precedence over the suitability of a candidate. Casali continued as Chiti's assistant, further consolidating his musical reputation as a *guardiano della sezione dei maestri compositori* ('guardian of the composers' section') of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, a role to which he was elected for the years 1752–53, 1760–61, 1771–72 and 1779–91. He also undertook additional duties as one of the academy examiners and occasionally composed oratorios, mainly for the Chiesa Nuova.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Maestro di cappella* at San Giovanni in Laterano from 1726 to 1759.

<sup>18</sup> Reports of Casali composing and directing music in Roman convent churches can be found in the *Diario Ordinario*.

<sup>19</sup> *Maestro di cappella* at the Cappella Giulia from 1743 to 1755.

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 636.

<sup>21</sup> Casali was also briefly in Turin in 1752 for a performance of his opera *Antigona*.

In early June 1754, with Jommelli having given notice to the San Pietro canons of his departure as *coadiutore* at the Cappella Giulia, Casali officially applied for the post (his rivals being Costanzi and Nicola Porpora), but he was again unlucky, being outvoted in favour of Costanzi, even though Cardinal Neri Corsini, archpriest of San Giovanni in Laterano, gave Casali full support. Though deeply disappointed with this second failure to gain a Vatican post, Casali sensed an opportunity at the Chiesa Nuova, knowing that its *maestro*, Costanzi, would have to relinquish the position to take up his new role at the Cappella Giulia. Casali duly applied, aided by a letter of support from none other than Pope Benedict XIV, and so was confirmed as *maestro* at the Chiesa Nuova, remaining in that post until his death.<sup>22</sup> Five years later Girolamo Chiti died, and Casali, his designated successor, took the post as *maestro* at San Giovanni in Laterano. With two prestigious appointments to his name (he later acquired a third, as *maestro* at Sant' Antonio dei Portoghesi from 1778 to 1792, after the death of its incumbent, Costanzi), Casali's reputation as a leading church composer, organist and teacher was secure.<sup>23</sup>

Casali's pedagogical expertise was sought by wealthy British 'grand tourists' keen to improve their musical skills during their time in the Eternal City. James Grant (1738–1811) of Castle Grant, Elgin, hired Casali as a music-master in the winter and spring of 1760. Grant also kept in contact with the composer for several years after his return to Scotland. William Weddell (1736–92) of Newby Hall, Yorkshire, stayed in Rome during the spring of 1765. According to a letter from the prominent Jacobite abbé Peter Grant (a clansman of James Grant), Weddell spent the 'greatest share of the evenings' with harpsichord lessons from James' friend, Casali.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Oratorian Fathers had temporarily appointed the bass singer Francesco Colapaoli to the post, but Casali's status was difficult for them to resist. Rostirolla's *La Cappella Giulia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 626–701, gives more on the musical politics of Roman churches in this period.

<sup>23</sup> Casali's *coadiutore* at Sant' Antonio dei Portoghesi was Sebastiano Bolis, *maestro di cappella* to Cardinal Henry Stuart at San Lorenzo in Damaso from 1778, discussed in Peter Leech, 'Princely Splendour: Cardinal Henry Stuart and Music Patronage in 18th-century Rome', *The Consort*, Vol. 71 (2015), pp. 51–73. Transcriptions of documents from the Portoghesi relating to music can be found in Saverio Franchi and Orietta Sartori, 'Attività musicale nella chiesa nazionale di Sant' Antonio dei Portoghesi e altre musiche di committenza portoghese a Roma nei secoli XVII–XVIII', in *Musica se Extendit ad Omnia*, ed. Rosy Moffa and Sabrina Saccomani, Vol. 1, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca, 2007, pp. 211–79.

<sup>24</sup> National Records of Scotland, *Seafield MSS*, GD 248/99/3 and GD 248/49/3. In a letter to James Grant dated 4 April 1761 (GD 248/177/1), Casali offered to write a song in honour of the Coronation of King George III.

One of Casali's most famous pupils was André Grétry, from whose *Mémoires* an impression of his teacher's pedagogy can be gained. Grétry praised Casali's instruction (regarding him as 'the only master I acknowledge'), which began with rigorous contrapuntal training in two, three and four parts, freedom being condoned once the basics had been perfected. After two years with Casali, Grétry set out on an operatic career, remembering his teacher with affection and gratitude, and for having allowed him to deputise in churches where Casali was *maestro*.<sup>25</sup> In November 1770, four years after Grétry left Rome, Casali famously encountered Charles Burney, who heard Casali's oratorio *Abigaille* at the Chiesa Nuova. A week later, Burney visited San Giovanni in Laterano, hearing a double-choir Mass composed and directed by Casali in the Colonna chapel, accompanied on chamber organ by Matteo Colista, the latter graciously playing the great organ later that day upon Burney's request.<sup>26</sup> During the 1770s and 1780s Casali maintained a busy schedule of performing and teaching, while also supervising occasional revivals of his oratorios. Even as he passed 70 years of age, Casali's energy seems not to have diminished, with the *Diario Ordinario* reporting 'numerous and choice music by the valiant Signor Casali' apparently newly composed for the anniversary funeral of King Pedro III of Portugal at Sant' Antonio dei Portoghesi in May 1787.<sup>27</sup>

Another notable pupil at this time was Pietro Terziani (1763–1831), a future *maestro* at San Giovanni in Laterano, whose godmother, Barbara Monti, was Casali's wife.<sup>28</sup> Little more seems to have been thus far uncovered about Casali's personal life, other than that he had two brothers, Sebastiano Ambrogio and Giuseppe, noted as his heirs in a Chiesa Nuova payment record from 20 June 1792, written just over two weeks before his death on 6 July.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> André Grétry, *Mémoires ou essai sur la musique*, Prault, Paris/Desoer, Liège, 1789, pp. 100–8.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, T. Becket, London, 1771, pp. 363–64 and 373–74.

<sup>27</sup> *Diario Ordinario*, No. 1294, 26 May 1787, pp. 8–9. It was during this time that Casali came into conflict with one of his Roman colleagues, Luigi Sabbatini, two of whose students failed their exams while Casali was on the examination panel of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia (Élodie Oriol, 'Dynamiques de professionnalisation et jeux de protection: pratiques et enjeux de l'examen des maîtres de chapelle à Rome (1784)', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, No. 379, January–March 2015, pp. 47–69).

<sup>28</sup> Noted in Giacomo Sciommeri's edition of Terziani's *Dodici canzonette*, Società Editrice di Musicologia, Rome, 2019, p. VII.

<sup>29</sup> In autograph scores, payment receipts and letters, Casali usually signed his name 'Giambattista Casali'.

Although it is true that the music of some composers becomes extinct immediately after their deaths, there are cases where legacies have been preserved, at least for a few decades, if only to be fully extinguished later. It is in religious foundations, where musical activity necessitates the continual juxtaposition of both old and new repertoire, that such legacies are often sustained for longer periods. One learns from Rostirolla<sup>30</sup> that Casali's music formed part of the Cappella Giulia repertoire under the directorships of Antonio Boroni (1778–92), Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi (1793–1804), Valentino Fioravanti (1816–37) and Francesco Basili (1827–50). Recent investigations in the archives of San Lorenzo in Damaso in central Rome have unearthed eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century copies of performing parts for Casali's sacred works.

During the 1840s and 1850s, while Casali's music still featured intermittently in the repertoire of the Cappella Giulia, it rang out also in the churches of British Catholics who, having achieved full religious toleration in 1829, celebrated new-found freedom with music that provided the flavour of a Rome they might have remembered from a Roman sojourn. Tourists occasionally brought Casali mementos back to Britain. Manuscript copies of Casali's works, some taken from first-generation originals, exist in British Catholic Archives and among Vincent Novello's manuscripts in the British Library, providing some of the source materials for editions published by Novello himself, as well as those of the prominent Catholic publishing houses. Towards the end of the nineteenth century a handful of Casali's sacred works also found their way into the catalogues of central European publishers, and a few of his shorter Masses are still sung in European Catholic cathedrals today.

Scholars have established few precise chronologies of musical outputs for eighteenth-century Roman composers of sacred music. Since performing materials were predominantly circulated in manuscript, vocal and instrumental parts copied from autograph scores or fair-copy scores (materials frequently re-copied from second- or third-generation items over decades), the task of accurately determining sequences of dates, given the vast quantity of extant material, is fraught with difficulty. Although

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 754–56, 842, 851, 868 and 946.

many works in principal Casali sources are undated, enough items, many of which are autographs, carry identifications which certainly would allow for a future outline chronological survey of his development to be undertaken.

The music recorded here, undoubtedly coming from different stages in Casali's career, has been chosen primarily to demonstrate variety and contrast in texture, style, mood and key. Editions have been created from archival sources in Rome and elsewhere, most notably those of San Giovanni in Laterano (I-Rsg), the Chiesa Nuova, San Lorenzo in Damaso, the Santini Bibliothek (Münster) and the British Library. Casali's authorship has been ascertained in *RISM*<sup>31</sup> or from the examination of autograph sources. Several additional manuscript sources, both eighteenth-century and later (which *RISM* does not document), have also been consulted. We have chosen shorter works from Casali's output as better illustrative of his contrasting compositional techniques, as opposed to his Masses, the majority of which have more formulaic designs.

Our album opens with a lively Offertory for Palm Sunday, *Confitebor tibi, Domine* [1]. Its emphatic opening homophonic (block-chord) statement is something of a Casali *topos* in his shorter choral works, many of which pay only peripheral homage to Palestrina-style counterpoint. Here the opening bass motif is dispersed from bottom to top in close formation, followed by a freer design. A strong cadence launches a final dance-like, infectiously vivacious, triple-time 'vivifica me'.

This bright F major plagal ending is followed by the portentous D minor darkness of the Corpus Christi Responsory *Comeditis carnes* [2], where a continuously undulating contrapuntal design is broken only by occasional homophonic cadential points. A notable feature is a gradual contrary-motion chromatic progression (sopranos descending, basses ascending) from C minor to D major. In this work Casali pushes the boundaries of dissonance with diminished seventh chords and chains of suspensions, creating a sound-world akin to the more daring harmonies of Antonio Lotti (1667–1740).

<sup>31</sup> *Répertoire International des Sources Musicales*, one of the most comprehensive online inventories of music manuscripts, printed music editions, writings on music theory and libretti from libraries, archives, churches, schools and private collections throughout the world. The current inventory comprises some 1.4 million records.

Diminished harmonies also characterise the *Adiuva nos, Deus* [3], a Tract for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent, where seasonal seriousness is evoked by militaristic dotted rhythms and the G minor tonality. This *concertato* setting (which in Rome meant accompaniment not only by organ but also supporting cellos and double basses – occasionally augmented by *obbligato* upper strings) is very much in a ‘madrigalian’ style, one to which Casali himself referred in a letter of 12 August 1769 to Padre Martini, where he reports having composed an *Adiuva nos* in that idiom.<sup>32</sup> The *Improperium expectavit* (assigned to Palm Sunday in its I-Rsg source), also in G minor [4], makes use of both homophony and close-knit imitation, as well as piquant dissonant nuances for a text which speaks of mortal weakness and hearts being broken by insults.

The mood is brightened by a shift to G major with a *Tantum ergo* for solo soprano [5]. This is the first of several items in a purely *galant* style, of which Casali was an important exponent, with soaring, mellifluous coloratura passages conjuring up a divinely rapturous atmosphere. It is often assumed that solo settings of this sort were sung predominantly by castrati, but Roman archives contain numerous examples of such works being dedicated to, or used by, both *virtuose* religious women from foundations noted for musical excellence (the most famous being the Benedictine convent of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, on the left bank of the Tiber, south-east of the Vatican), as well as female concert artists.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, the bass line of the opening few bars is typical of a quintessentially *galant*, improvisatory hybrid *romanesca* schema found in eighteenth-century *partimenti* figured-bass improvisatory exercises.<sup>34</sup> The sharply contrasting

<sup>32</sup> Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna, I.21.29. It is possible that this *Adiuva* may be the same piece. This motet, in addition to *Comeditis carnes* and *Justus ut palma*, may be the items listed by Fétis (*op. cit.*) as being amongst Casali’s ‘Motets à quatre’ copied by Fortunato Santini (1777–1861). A *Christum regem* is also included, but only an ATB version by Casali is known. The genre of the madrigal underwent a revival in Rome during the middle of the eighteenth century, exemplified by a collection composed by Giovanni Zamboni around 1755 and dedicated to Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart. Four of Zamboni’s madrigals have been recorded on *The Cardinal King*, Toccata Classics TOCC 0300.

<sup>33</sup> One of the sources consulted for the creation of the performing edition for this *Tantum Ergo* was previously owned by the singer Clementina Sala, former owner of a large collection of sacred and secular music.

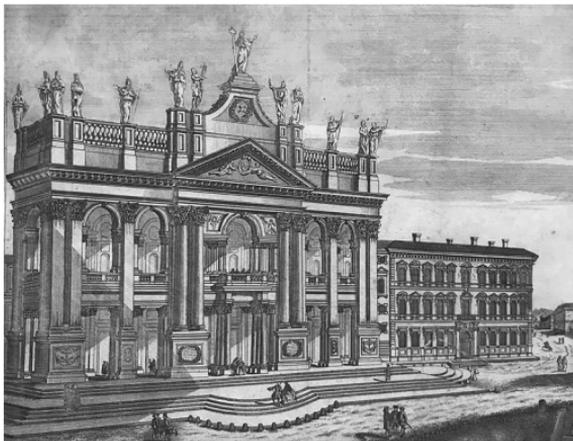
<sup>34</sup> A comprehensive discussion of *galant* compositional schemata can be found in Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007.

Corpus Christi Matins Invitatory *Christum regem adoremus* in C minor for altos, tenors, basses and basso continuo [6] leads to a more introspective world, where sublimely texting harmonies represent the power of transubstantiation.

As a papal basilica, San Giovanni in Laterano was subject to an ancient decree which stipulated that its resident choir be supplanted by the Cappella Sistina if the Pope celebrated Mass. It therefore seems possible that *Ad te levavi* [7], as well as other four-part motets by Casali, became known to this ensemble only when performing outside the Vatican, since there is no evidence of its having entered their *in-situ* repertoire during Casali's lifetime. As far as the work itself is concerned (or indeed any other examples of Casali's output taken, at face-value, to be manifestations of the Palestrina-style), it is worlds away from Renaissance models. Here Casali uses a schema blending Baroque harmonic tension with elements of lighter *galant* simplicity, the latter being prominent towards the end in the form of joyful melismatic undulations at 'non confundentur'.

Acting almost as a call to prayer, a block-chord statement marks the opening of the *Ave Maria a4* [8], a motet characterised by a 'mantra' technique, perhaps as a sonic aid to a repetitive devotional practice, where a short motif is continually reiterated. Casali knew exactly how long to sustain the repetition of an idea which travelled either from highest to lowest parts (at the opening) or lowest to highest ('benedicta tu in mulieribus'), before introducing a contrasting melismatic subject, deployed three times, the last ushering in a final coda-like termination. *Exaltabo te* [9], a four-part offertory for Ash Wednesday and the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, is a game of two halves, where triumphant rhythms in the first section, deployed in C and G major tonalities, give way to chromatic word-painting on the word 'sanasti' (healing) in the second.

Casali's output included a considerable number of items for Christmas liturgies, including the responsories such as *Hodie nobis* [10] and *Quem vidistis pastores* [11]. *Quem vidistis* features a pastoral *siciliano* dance, perhaps reflecting the *piffari* tradition of shepherds descending upon Rome and Naples at Christmas and playing traditional instruments such as the *zampogna* bagpipes. The inclusion of an angelic soprano solo in dialogue with the choir (the latter reprising a 'natum vidimus' which perhaps



*The church of San Giovanni in Laterano in a mid-eighteenth-century engraving (Leech collection)*

faintly alludes to Corelli's 'Christmas' Concerto), reinforces the celebratory seasonal atmosphere.

In Rome the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June) was marked in the papal basilicas with much pomp and opulence. The Offertory *Constitues eos* [12] reflects this tradition, with its strong rhythmic energy, bright A major tonality and subtle interweaving of subject/countersubject patterns, interspersed with exchanges between paired upper and lower voices. As is often the case, even in his short works, Casali deploys a pivotal modulation to a related minor key, in this context at the first utterance of 'et generatione'.

The double-choir *Ave Maria* a8 [13] is the second of two 'choral' settings (surviving in multiple copies of the parts) of the *Ave Maria* by Casali known in I-Rsg, both designated as the Offertory for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, where the text customarily ends at 'ventris tui' before an 'Alleluia'. Some versions of the four-part work have no polyphonic 'Alleluia', but the lively triple-time ending of the eight-part work does include it. Deploying a

double canon in the first half, Casali opts for homophony in the second, in a work which powerfully illustrates the antiphonal polychoral richness still prevailing in eighteenth-century Rome.

The I-Rsg source of the Offertory *Justus ut palma* [14] designates performance as part of the Common of Doctors of the Church (an office equivalent to that of a Confessor or Bishop), whose saintly company was continually expanded by successive Popes. In 1754 Benedict XIV added St Leo the Great, making it plausible that this setting might have been composed to mark festivities associated with his decree. We contrast this piece with the restrained reverence of the noble Offertory *Scapulis suis* [15] for the First Sunday of Lent. The bucolic triple-time ‘scuto circumdabit’ of the second half seems at odds with the aesthetic expected for this day, but it was traditionally characterised by a degree of penitence less severe than the Sundays thereafter. In the four-part D major setting of *Caro mea, vere est cibus* (another component of Corpus Christi liturgy) [16], Casali’s ‘madrigalian’ textures are again in evidence for a work which, like the *Adiuva*, seems very similar to the ‘classical’ church music of his contemporaries working north of the Alps. Another feature in common with the *Adiuva* is the use of colourful diminished harmonies. In the second half, in B minor, Casali uses an emphatic harmonic pedal on the words ‘in me manet’, voiced three times (altos on F sharp, tenors and sopranos on C sharp), around which disjunct melodic lines proliferate.

Easter Sunday typically requires festive outpourings. Casali’s D major setting of the gradual *Haec dies* [17] is yet further evidence of *galant* writing, with an introductory chorus heralding a charming duet versicle ‘Confitemini’ for two sopranos. Were it not for the religious context, this section, with its mellifluously gracious chains of 7-6 harmonic suspensions, could, in secular circumstances, easily pass for the depiction of a lush arcadian pastoral scene. The recording here invokes artistic licence by reprising the chorus (although the source contains no such instruction) for the sake of completeness.

The last two items, *Memoriam fecit* [18] and *Gloria Patri* [19] are excerpts from a large-scale *Confitebor* Vespers psalm for solo soprano and alto, choir and basso continuo, a setting which, in terms of structure, strongly resembles the ‘Neapolitan Mass’ sub-genre (one characterised by multiple movements comprising alternate choruses and operatic-

style arias). The opening of the *Memoriam*, with sustained block chords moving through various keys, prompting listeners to pause for thought and ‘remember’ the Lord’s marvellous works, is followed by a return to contrapuntal interplay at ‘escam dedit’ for the consoling gift of heavenly food. It is in the concluding *Gloria Patri* of this Psalm that, after a dramatic opening largo in F sharp minor, Casali’s vivacious *galant* textures are again persuasively deployed, with choir and soloists engaging in an energetic *tour de force* dialogue.

**Peter Leech** is an award-winning choral conductor (First Prize at the Mariele Ventre International Competition for Choral Conductors, Bologna, 2003), orchestral conductor, researcher, composer, singer and lecturer. A graduate of the Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide, and Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, he also holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Anglia Ruskin University. Currently musical director of the Costanzi Consort, Harmonia Sacra, Cappella Fede and Cardiff University Chamber Choir, he has held guest or permanent musical directorships of numerous ensembles in both Europe and Australasia, notably The Song Company (Sydney), Bristol Bach Choir (UK), Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus, the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, City of Oxford Choir, Coro di Teatro Comunale Bologna, Coro Euridice, Esterházy Chamber Choir and Collegium Singers (Somerset).



A specialist in English court music c. 1650–1800, Russian Orthodox music and music of the British Catholic diaspora at home and abroad, he has published articles and reviews in *Early Music*, *Music & Letters*, *Eighteenth-century Music*, *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* and *The Consort*, as well as a chapter in *Memory, Martyrs, and Mission* (ed. Maurice Whitehead, Gangemi Editore, Rome, 2020) on historical music associated with the Venerable English College, Rome. He has made a special study of the eighteenth-century Roman musical patronage of Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart (1725–1807), bringing

forth recordings such as *The Cardinal King* (Toccat Classics TOCC 0300) to widespread critical acclaim and leading to a deepening specialism in Roman sacred music of the same period.

As a composer, Peter Leech has written for the BBC Singers, Bristol Bach Choir, Cathedral Singers of Christ Church, Oxford, City of Oxford Choir, Harmonia Sacra, Choir of Salford Cathedral, Choir of the Oxford Oratory and St Peter's Cathedral Choir (Adelaide), amongst others, with his *Adam lay ybounden* broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

[www.peterleech.com](http://www.peterleech.com)

The **Costanzi Consort** was established in North Somerset in 2017 with a mission to bring high-quality choral music to South-West England and further afield, with an emphasis on innovative programmes comprising a wide range of repertory. Reflecting its championship of lesser-known composers from the sixteenth to the 21st, the ensemble took as its name from the prolific but undeservedly unfamiliar eighteenth-century Roman composer, violoncellist and *maestro di cappella* Giovanni Battista Costanzi (1704–78). Recent concerts have included the music of Maria Rosa Coccia, Isabella Leonarda, Vicente Lusitano, Marianna Martines and José Mauricio Nunes Garcia, alongside Costanzi, Casali, Libby Croad, James MacMillan, Elizabeth Maconchy, Arvo Pärt and more, with numerous first modern performances. Notable concert highlights include performing at the Danny Boyle/14–18 NOW project 'Pages of the Sea' (2018), the Levon Biss 'Microsculpture' exhibition at Weston Museum (2019) and the Luke Jerram



'In Memoriam' presentation (Weston Arts and Health Week, 2021). Plans for 2024 include a tour to Lisbon, with repertoire exploring historical connections between that city and Rome. This is the group's first recording.

[www.costanziconsort.org.uk](http://www.costanziconsort.org.uk)

*Sopranos*

Polly Beck  
Elaenor Baker-Johnson  
Alice Bingham  
Heidi Couper  
Sue Crimlisk  
Naomi Davies  
Anne Kershaw  
Clare Rangeley  
Rebecca Thurgur  
Piri Uitz

*Altos*

Luisa De Gregorio  
Pauline Kemp  
Adele Reynolds  
Bridget Simpson  
Elizabeth Spiller  
Jill Tolley  
Ilana Wigfield

*Tenors*

Clare Atyeo  
Suzie Leech  
Gui Rego  
Paul Westwood-Gould  
Mark Westwood-Gould

*Basses*

Simon Francis  
Andrew Hornett  
Paul Kefford  
Bob Shapland  
Martin Warren

**Martin Perkins** (chamber organ) began formal music studies as a composer and horn-player before an interest in early music led him to the harpsichord. He has since maintained a freelance career in historical performance of music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with period-instrument groups and modern orchestras across the UK. As a keyboardist he specialises in harpsichord, organ and fortepiano continuo, but has often appeared as soloist in concertos by Bach, Handel, Haydn and Mozart. A member of Art of Moog (a group performing the works of Bach on synthesisers), he is also co-director of the Musical & Amicable Society. As a musical director his repertoire ranges from Gabrieli to Britten, including staged operas by Handel, Mozart and Purcell. For a brief spell until 2007 he was Director of Music at the University of Leicester, conducting the University orchestras and choirs. He is now Head of Historical Performance and Instrument Curator at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where he lectures on early music and teaches harpsichord,



continuo and chamber music. As a musicologist his interests include performance practice and organology. He holds a doctorate from the University of Birmingham in music-making in late eighteenth-century England, and has published books and articles on early music, as well as critical editions of music by Giovanni Battista Vitali and Barnabas Gunn.

**Jennifer Bullock** (cello) studied cello and viol with Lowri Blake, Susan Sheppard and Alison Crum at the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music, having held scholarships at both institutions. She currently enjoys a busy schedule of performing and teaching and has performed in the UK and internationally with ensembles including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the London Handel Orchestra and Chelys Consort of Viols. She has appeared in television programmes for BBC2, BBC4 and Sky Arts, performed live on BBC Radios 3 and 4, and played at Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House during several seasons. She is also a member of Cappella Fede, with whom she recorded *The Cardinal King* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0300).



**Elizabeth Bradley** (double bass) represented Scotland as a finalist in the Shell/LSO scholarship while studying at the Royal Northern College of Music. She enjoys a varied freelance career, regularly appearing with groups such as the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. Her appearances as a chamber musician include performances with the Bach Players, Configure8 (of which she was a founder member) and the Revolutionary Drawing Room. She was awarded a Master of Music in Ethnomusicology from SOAS, University of London, after pursuing her interest in styles of string-playing from around the world. Most recently as a bass player, she has become part of the Music for Life team, based at the Wigmore Hall, working with people suffering from

dementia through improvised music-making. She also teaches bass at Trinity Junior College of Music.

## Texts and Translations

[1] **Confitebor tibi, Domine**, in toto corde meo. Retribue servo tuo, vivam et custodiam sermones tuos. Vivifica me secundum verbum tuum Domine.

*I will praise thee, O Lord with my whole heart. O do well unto thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. Quicken me according to thy word, O Lord.*

[2] **Comedetis carnes** et saturabimini panibus iste est panis quem dedit vobis Dominus ad vescendum.

*You will eat meats and be satiated with breads. This is the bread the Lord has given to you to be eaten.*

[3] **Adiuvans nos, Deus** salutaris noster, et propter gloriam nominis tuis Domine, libera nos: et propitius esto peccatis nostris propter nomen tuum.

*Help us, O God our Saviour, and according to the honour of thy name, deliver us, and be well disposed to our sins according to thy name.*

[4] **Improperium expectavit** cor meum, et miseriam: et sustinui qui simul mecum contristaretur et non fuit: consolantem me quaesivi, et non inveni: et dederunt in escam meam fel, et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto.

*Insult has broken my heart, and I am weak: I looked for sympathy and there was none, for comforters, and none was found. They put gall in my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

[5] **Tantum ergo** sacramentum veneremur cernui: et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui. Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui. Genitori, genitoque laus et jubilatio. Salus, honor, virtus quoque, sit et benedictio: procedenti ab utroque compar sit laudatio. Amen.

*Hence so great a sacrament, let us venerate with bowed heads, and let the old practice give way to the new rite. Let faith provide a supplement for the failure of the senses. To the begetter and the begotten be praise and jubilation. Hail, honour, virtue also, and blessing too: to the one proceeding from both, let there be equal praise. Amen.*

**6** **Christum regem adoremus** dominantem gentibus: qui se manducantibus dat spiritus pinguedinem.

**7** **Ad te levavi** animam meam: Deus meus, in te confide, non erubescam: neque irrideant me inimici mei: etenim qui te expectant, non confundentur.

**8** **13** **Ave Maria**, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui.

**9** **Exaltabo te**, Domine, quoniam suscepisti me, nec delectasti, inimicos meos super me. Domine clamavi ad te et sanasti me.

**10** **Hodie nobis de caelo** pax vera descendit: Hodie per totum mundum melliflui facti sunt coeli. Hodie illuxit nobis dies redemptionis novae, reparationis antiquae, felicitates aeternae.

**11** **Quem vidistis pastores** dicite annuntiate nobis in terris quis apparuit. Natum vidimus et choros angelorum collaudantes Dominum. Dicite quidnam vidistis et annuntiate Christi Nativitatem. Natum vidimus [etc.].

**12** **Constitues eos** principes super omnem terram: memores erunt nominis tui, Domine, in omni progenie et generatione.

*O come let us adore Christ the King, Lord of all the nations. Who doth, to them that feed on him, the bread of life afford.*

*To thee I lift up my soul. My God, I put my trust in thee, let me not be ashamed: neither let my enemies triumph over me: for they that hope in thee will not be confounded.*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

*I praise thee, Lord, for you raised me up and did not let my enemies triumph over me. O Lord my God, I cried out to thee.*

*Today true peace descended for us from heaven. Today throughout the whole world the heavens were made as of honey. Today there shone a new day of redemption, the long-expected return of eternal happiness.*

*Shepherds tell us what did you see? We have seen the new-born child and choirs of angels singing. Tell us, what did you see, and tell us of Christ's nativity. We have seen the new-born child [etc.].*

*Thou shalt make them princes over all the earth: they shall remember thy name, O Lord, throughout all generations.*

**14** **Justus ut palma** florebit, sicut cedrus  
in Libano est multiplicabitur.

**15** **Scapulis suis** obumbrabit tibi Dominus,  
et sub pennis eius sperabis. Scuto circumdabit  
te veritas eius.

**16** **Caro mea** vere est cibus, et sanguis meus  
vere est potus. Qui manducat meam carnem  
et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet,  
et ego in eo.

**17** **Haec dies** quam fecit Dominus: exultemus  
et laetemur in ea. Confitemini Domino  
quoniam bonus, quoniam in saeculum  
misericordia eius. Alleluia. Pascha nostrum  
immolatus est Christus.

**18** **Memoriam fecit** mirabilium suorum:  
misericors et miserator Dominus. Escam dedit  
timentibus se.

**19** **Gloria Patri**, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.  
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,  
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,  
and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Lebanon.*

*He shall cover you with his wings, and you will  
find refuge under his feathers. His truth will  
surround you with a shield.*

*My flesh is truly meat and my blood is truly  
drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks  
my blood abides in me, and I in him.*

*This is the day which the Lord hath made:  
we will rejoice and be glad in it. O give thanks  
unto the Lord for he is gracious for his mercy  
endures for ever. Christ our paschal lamb has  
been sacrificed for us.*

*He is remembered for his marvellous works:  
the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.  
He hath given food unto them that fear him.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and  
to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be from age to age. Amen.*



Recorded on 17–18 and 24–25 September 2022 in All Saints' Church, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

Pitch A=415

Temperament: Vallotti

Producer, engineer and editor: John Taylor

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This project, like others in the choral world, was originally planned for 2020. Postponed twice, it came to fruition largely through preparation via Zoom. I extend my thanks to all the singers for their hard work and dedication in the face of the difficult circumstances in force at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

—*Peter Leech*

Booklet essay: Peter Leech

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Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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# GIOVANNI BATTISTA CASALI Sacred Music

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1	<i>Confitebor tibi, Domine</i>	2:02
2	<i>Comeditis carnes</i>	2:54
3	<i>Aiuvva nos, Deus</i>	2:18
4	<i>Improperium expectavit*</i>	2:34
5	<i>Tantum ergo</i>	3:38
6	<i>Christum regem adoremus</i>	2:37
7	<i>Ad te levavi</i>	2:38
8	<i>Ave Maria a4</i>	3:38
9	<i>Exaltabo te</i>	2:50
10	<i>Hodie nobis de caelo</i>	2:23
11	<i>Quem vidistis pastores</i>	2:36
12	<i>Constitues eos</i>	2:13
13	<i>Ave Maria a8</i>	4:05
14	<i>Justus ut palma</i>	2:45
15	<i>Scapulis suis</i>	3:32
16	<i>Caro mea, vere est cibus</i>	3:18
17	<i>Haec dies</i>	2:39
18	<i>Memoriam fecit (Confitebor in D)</i>	2:22
19	<i>Gloria Patri (Confitebor in D)</i>	3:26

## Costanzi Consort

Naomi Davies, soprano 5 19

Rebecca Thurgur, soprano 10 11

Clare Rangeley, soprano 17

Piri Uitz, soprano 17

Rebecca Thurgur, soprano 19

Martin Warren, bass 10

Jennifer Bullock, cello 3 5 6 10 11 14 16-19

Elizabeth Bradley, double bass 3 6 11 14 16-19

Martin Perkins, chamber organ 3 5 6 11 14 16-19

Peter Leech, director

TT 54:30

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