



ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC

# DARIO CASTELLO

SONATE CONCERTATE IN STIL MODERNO, LIBRO PRIMO

RICHARD EGARR · DIRECTOR, HARPSICHORD & ORGAN



CANTO Primo

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# DARIO CASTELLO

## SONATE CONCERTATE IN STIL MODERNO, LIBRO PRIMO

**RICHARD EGARR** · DIRECTOR, HARPSICHORD & ORGAN  
**ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC**

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1. **Sonata prima** for two violins 05'01
2. **Sonata seconda** for two violins 05'38
3. **Sonata terza** for violin I and cornetto 04'47
4. **Sonata quarta** for violin I and violetta 04'18
5. **Sonata quinta** for violin II and trombone 05'22
6. **Sonata sesta** for cornetto and violetta 04'51
7. **Sonata settima** for violin I and dulcian 05'19
8. **Sonata ottava** for violin II and dulcian 05'20
9. **Sonata nona** for cornetto, violin I and dulcian 06'40
10. **Sonata decima** for two violins and dulcian 04'43
11. **Sonata undecima** for two violins and dulcian 07'27
12. **Sonata duodecima** for two violins and trombone 07'44

Timing 68'39

## In Stil Moderno

If asked about the most important cultural event of 1623 we might (after a discreet computer search) mention the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio, but an educated European of the time might well have given a different answer, since in Venice the sonatas of Dario Castello were about to receive their first reprinting. Libro Primo (Book One, first edition 1621) and Libro Secondo (Book Two, 1629) have the omnibus quality of the First Folio: they contain the complete known works of Castello, but they were a lot more successful at the time than Shakespeare. They were printed and reprinted, bought and sold, for the next 40 years, not only in Italy but all over Europe. Copies of Castello's work were kept in libraries and archives from Kraków to Lisbon and were on sale from London to Naples. In the fashion-conscious world of 17th century Italian music this sustained success was almost unprecedented.

Castello is described on the title page of the sonatas as leader (capo) of a company of wind players employed by the Serenissima Signoria di Venitia in San Marco. He proudly calls his music 'In Stil Moderno' (modern style) and he seems to mean these words exactly as we understand them today, with their connotation of something new and uncompromising. It's nice to reflect that their edginess didn't affect sales.

There were complaints about difficulty though, and in one of the first reprints Castello adds a tactful paragraph to the title page acknowledging this:

"To give satisfaction to those who take pleasure in playing these sonatas of mine, it has occurred to me to advise them that although at first sight they may appear difficult, their spirit will not be destroyed

by playing them more than once, and in so doing they will become practised and this will render them very easy, since nothing is difficult when pleasure is derived. I declare that having observed the modern style, I could not have made them any easier.”

In other words; “How do you get to St Mark’s? Practice!”

‘Stil Moderno’ refers not just to the virtuoso wind writing on almost every page but also the mercurial, even schizophrenic alternations of tempo and mood. The very first sonata (which lasts about five minutes) has ten different sections, alternating between Adagio and Presto, and this piece is a gentle introduction to Castello’s style with the later sonatas becoming ever more extreme. In each work we can feel a whole play (or opera) packed into a tiny space and they really do take time and effort to unravel. The fast music is marked either Allegro or Presto but Castello seems to have gloried in

describing the various degrees of slowness. Uniquely for the 17th century we encounter Adagio, Più Adagio, Molto Adagio, and (my favourite) Adagio Adagio. I’m sure I’m not alone in feeling that one can spend as much time preparing five minutes of Castello as an entire programme of 18th century chamber music!

It’s a cliché of early music to compare it to jazz but here the analogy might actually be pertinent. If we think of the sumptuous Venetian music of the late Renaissance (the Gabriellis for example) as the Big Band music of Count Basie, then Castello fits perfectly into the slot occupied by Charlie Parker and Bebop. We can even push this further by equating the two emblematic instruments of the ‘Stil Moderno’, the cornetto and the dulcian with the trumpet and the saxophone. But in truth, it’s equally valid to compare the ‘Stil Moderno’ with any Avant-Garde art, the early Cubists, for example or the Second Viennese School.



Like them, Castello's art is so imbued with the ideals of breaking rules and pushing boundaries that it will always be challenging and new.

Given that Castello was such an innovative and successful composer in his own time, why isn't he better known today? Part of the answer must have something to do with the total absence of any information about him other than the title pages of his two publications. No birth or death records remain, no wedding or divorce decrees, no mentions by contemporary musicians, no posthumous anecdotes, nothing. And there are no pay records from St Mark's or the Serenissima Signoria di Venitia either. If not for the survival of the sonatas across Europe we would have no reason to believe that he ever existed at all, which brings me back to Shakespeare.

Conspiracy-minded readers might like to consider the possibility that these pieces

are by someone else entirely (Monteverdi? who suspiciously left no instrumental works) and that 'Castello' was just a clumsy fiction created to disguise the identity of the true composer.

It's an amusing conceit but an unnecessary one. Anyone familiar with 17th century music will be sadly aware of Time's brutal winnowing of information from four centuries ago, and give thanks that at least here we have the music minus the documentation rather than, as is all too often the case, the reverse.

I wouldn't seriously suggest that these sonatas were composed by Monteverdi but his influence looms large. Almost every sonata in Book One has a passage that could have drifted out of a Monteverdi madrigal and in Book Two there are sections very clearly 'In Stil Concitato' (swiftly repeated chords à la Minimalism) unmistakably patterned on Monteverdi's

*Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* of 1624. And it seems likely to me that this affection and respect was reciprocated. In a letter of 10 February 1623 to the Gonzaga Court in Mantua, Monteverdi (who was often brutal about his colleagues) has something unusually positive to say about the wind playing at St Mark's (although, annoyingly, he doesn't mention Castello by name).

Answering a letter about recruiting musicians to work in Mantua he writes:

"As for the sopranos, believe me Your Lordship there is nobody suitable, nor is there anyone who can play continuo on the theorbo other than moderately well, therefore it would not be worth the expense of getting ordinary players from here. But there are certainly good wind instrumentalists, and if Your Lordship will let me know about these, I would hope to send you someone reasonably good.

Regarding the need for rank-and-file theorbo players, I believe His Highness would find satisfactory ones at Verona, and much less expensive." (*The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, translated by Denis Stevens).

Which brings us to the question of where and how these sonatas were used. In Venice they would have been played in church as well as in private musical gatherings (called Academies). For much of Italy there were strict regulations limiting the sort of music suitable for church (the Bible not mentioning cornetti or theorbos), but pleasure-loving Venice went its own way and a description of Venetian church services by Castello's contemporary Milanuzzi tells us that ensemble sonatas were often enjoyed at the beginning and end of the service as well as after Communion and the reading of the Epistle. Our works would fit perfectly in this context. If we imagine a Mass lasting around two hours during which one might hear

three or at most four of these sonatas at appropriately dramatic points we can get a rough guide as to how to listen to them now. Each sonata, though brief in itself, is so filled to bursting with extreme contrasts (except for the sublime and slow *Sonata seconda* which has only two short Allegros of seven and six bars each) that listening (or playing) too many in a row can be an exhausting experience. So, as with the richest of food and drink, it's safest to consume in moderation. But whether listened to carefully in controlled portions or gluttonously devoured in a single binge, Castello's music is guaranteed to delight and amaze. Enjoy!

© William Carter, 2016

William Carter is a theorbo player with the Academy of Ancient Music and features on this recording.



## Director's Note

Had Dario Castello left us a large-scale composition (an *Orfeo* or a *Vespers*) his genius would absolutely be just as recognised as that of his colleague Claudio Monteverdi. The fact that we have only two books of instrumental music containing just 30 sonatas is a pity, both for those of us who know them to be incredible pieces and for the public at large who seem to need something more 'Hollywood' in scale to pique their curiosity.

However, for the last 34 years I have been playing these amazing works, trying at every turn to bring them to the wider public. The chance to record them with my fabulous partners from the AAM is really a dream come true. I cut my 'baroque' teeth with these sonatas, exploring them with Andrew Manze, Robert Ehrlich and Mark Levy as part of The Cambridge Musick, formed whilst we were all at Cambridge University.

We learned quickly that this music was utterly boundless in its virtuosity, imagination and colour, and would take anything we could throw at it in performance.

Castello's work still remains some of my favourite music to play, so I was determined eventually to find an opportunity to record all of these sonatas. Finally that has come to pass. Also thankfully we had available the best musicians who were concerned to use the most historically accurate tools for the job. We used high Venetian pitch (A'=466), which has great implications for all the instruments involved, both technically and sonically. We opted for a pure 1/4-comma meantone tuning, a system of pitches commonly used in Castello's time. This adds incredible spice and shocking colour to Castello's often pungent melodic and harmonic turns.

Castello's specifications on instrumentation for each of the sonatas were taken seriously: no recorders here - just violins, cornetto, dulcian, trombone and violetta (a curious edgy-toned small cello-gamba hybrid, tuned a fifth higher than the 'normal' cello). The continuo was simply keyboard (organ or harpsichord) and theorbo.

We were lucky to find an acoustic that was perfect, spacious yet clear, allowing us to luxuriate in the sounds that came forth. Whilst adhering to Castello's rather precise notation, we felt free to add ornamentation and let our virtuosic imaginations run riot. May the listener note that the more outrageous 'noodling' that you will hear (particularly that of the dulcian in the later sonatas in the book) is notated by Castello. This written-out ornamentation was hugely time-consuming for the printers, when you consider that each of the demisemiquavers meant the placing of a separate printing block!

This project (and Book Two which will follow) is the happy culmination of a dream from 34 years ago in Cambridge. Massive thanks to all my colleagues and friends at the AAM, both the extraordinary players and those many people behind the scenes, for making this possible. Seatbelts on and enjoy the ride.

© Richard Egarr, 2016

Richard Egarr is the Music Director of the Academy of Ancient Music and directs this recording from the harpsichord and organ.

## Venice in the time of Dario Castello

In relating Dario Castello to the city in which he lived and worked, two main questions arise: how can his identity be so mysterious, and how might the Venetian context have shaped his musical activity? At the start of Dario Castello's life, Venice was one of Europe's largest cities, its population of 150,000 surpassed only by Paris and Naples. By the time of his death in the mid-17th century, it had been overtaken in size by London and Amsterdam, but remained a thriving metropolis. Venice's strategic location at the corner of the Adriatic facilitated its central role in Mediterranean trade during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The beautiful palaces, exquisite churches and ornate civic buildings which adorned its canals were built on the profits of this mercantile activity. Venice's position as a commercial entrepôt involved the movement of people as well as goods. As the English gentleman traveller Fynes Moryson wrote in 1617, "Here is great concourse of all

nations, as well for the pleasure of the City yeeldeth, as for the free conversation; and especially for the commodity of trafficke. That in no place is to be found in one market place such variety of apparel, languages, and manners." This large, cosmopolitan city afforded plenty of scope for anonymity for migrants, merchants and – perhaps – musicians in its taverns and narrow streets.

Musicians were certainly a numerous presence in the city. Hundreds of singers and instrumentalists, and dozens of organists performed in settings which included the Basilica of St Mark, parish, monastic and hospital churches, confraternities (charitable or religious brotherhoods), theatres and domestic residences. In 1637, the first public opera house, Teatro San Cassiano, opened in Venice with an inaugural performance of Francesco Manelli and Benedetto Ferrari's *Andromeda*. Music was a central feature of

civic ritual, with processions and performances on religious feast days, and in celebration of the arrival of important visitors in the city. Prominent buildings, such as the loggia at the bottom of the Campanile bell tower in St Mark's Square, even featured musical imagery. As Francesco Sansovino wrote in 1581 of the bronze statue of Apollo in the niche of this loggia, "it is known that this nation takes natural delight in music, and therefore Apollo is represented to signify music." The accounts of visitors to the city confirm Venice's reputation for musical innovation and for the quality of performances. The wealthy Englishman John Evelyn recorded in his diary in June 1645 that "this night, we went to the Opera, which are Comedies and other plays represented in Recitative Music by the most excellent musicians vocal and instrumental, with variety of scænes painted and contrived with no lesse art of perspective, and machines for flying in the aire, and other wonderfull motions; taken together it is one of the most

magnificent and expansive diversions of the wit of man can invent." Many ambitious musicians travelled to Venice in search of work, or – in the case of prominent appointments like maestro di cappella of St Mark's – were recruited by the Venetian Republic from positions in other cities. An added attraction was Venice's vibrant printing industry. Venice had dominated music printing in the 16th century, and remained the main centre of Italian music printing in the first half of the 17th century, after which time Bologna rose to pre-eminence. Publication offered composers opportunities to promote their work and enhance their prestige.

Despite this profusion of music and musicians it is unlikely that Dario Castello was a little-known figure in either the musical world or the city of Venice itself. Notwithstanding the size of the city and the mobility of the people in it, the inhabitants of Venice were not strangers to each other.

People were rooted in their local parish community, and trial records highlight the familiarity of neighbours with each other, and how conversations in nearby buildings were easily overheard in this densely-built urban environment. Membership of social groups like families, confraternities and guilds defined people's identities and shaped their lives. Further, the Venetian Republic was obsessed with record-keeping and employed an army of professional notaries to document the workings of its many councils and magistracies, and the activities of the city's inhabitants. The great musicologist Eleanor Selfridge-Field combed these records, alongside those produced by religious institutions, and found no trace of Dario Castello. Dario was a very unusual name in Venice at this time, so its absence from official records indicates that it was not the composer's actual name. It is highly likely that the name was a pseudonym, and indeed pseudonyms were commonly used in Venetian printing in this period.

The protofeminist Moderata Pozzo, for instance, substituted the 'well' of her surname for the more appealing Fonte, or 'fountain' on the title page of her book, *The Worth of Women*. Pseudonyms were also used to mask the identity of the authors of political polemics. Renowned for its Carnival, a period of masking, folly, and licence in the run-up to Lent, Venice was no stranger to disguise and the manipulation of identity.

If Dario Castello was in fact Giovanni Battista Castello, as Selfridge-Field suggests, then we still know little about him, but we can place him socially and geographically in the city. Sources refer to Giovanni Battista Castello as 'Pre', or priest, but this title does not necessarily imply that he was ordained. More likely, he had taken minor orders, as was relatively common at this time. Indeed, in the 16th century Venice's government had expressed concern about the number of young patricians who had taken minor orders to place themselves beyond the reach of secular justice.

Castello lived in the parish of San Vidal, on one side of the modern-day Accademia Bridge, in the district of San Marco. He may have had an association with the church of the Augustinian friars, Santo Stefano, which was located in the parish of San Vidal, and in which his near contemporary, Giovanni Gabrieli, was buried. At the physical centre of the city, the parish was ten minutes on foot from the Basilica of St Mark's, where he was employed as a bassoonist in the 1640s. Castello would have passed through the parishes in which the city's printers were concentrated on his way to work. St Mark's had been the hub of Venice's musical life since the 15th century. It housed the body of St Mark, Venice's patron saint, which had been stolen from Alexandria in 828. Technically it was the private chapel of the Doge, the elected head of government. Venice's cathedral, San Pietro di Castello, was located at the eastern periphery of the city, a reflection of the relative power of the Catholic Church and the Venetian Republic.

The power of the Republic, nonetheless, was called into question repeatedly over the course of Castello's life. At its start, around the 1570s, Venice was experiencing what has been characterised as a 'disquieting decade'. Cyprus was relinquished to the Ottoman Turks in 1573, two destructive fires swept through the Doge's Palace in 1574 and 1577, and around one quarter of the city's population died in the plague epidemic of 1575-77. A build-up of tensions between Venice and the papacy culminated in the Interdict crisis of 1606-07 and the excommunication of the Republic. Plague decimated the city's population once again in 1630-31, and compounded a decrease already underway in the size of the ruling patriciate. War with the Ottomans recommenced in 1645, and the financial pressures on the Republic led to the opening of the hereditary nobility to new families upon payment of 100,000 ducats, and a dilution of Venice's famed ruling system. Contemporary commentators started to speak of decay and accused the Venetians of neglecting their maritime affairs.



Yet other sources highlight the continued vitality of the city. The state rooms of the Doge's Palace were redecorated by leading artists like Tintoretto. The city gave thanks for its liberation from plague by constructing prominently positioned votive churches: the Redentore and Santa Maria della Salute, striking examples of Palladian architecture and baroque style respectively. Population levels bounced back quickly from the impact of plague as migrants sought to capitalise on newly-available work opportunities. Venice continued to develop innovative shipbuilding techniques, and working conditions at the Arsenal were enviable. In the late 1630s, not only did shipbuilders receive five litres of wine each day (albeit diluted with water), but it was dispensed from a fountain, from which it "flowed with more than regal munificence." And the city's elite underlined its piety by creating new charitable institutions such as the Mendicanti, a hospital founded in 1594 which cared for orphans and the elderly, by supporting the work of parish-based

poor relief organisations, and by promoting devotion to saints with a connection to the city. Venice continued to combine political stability and cultural diversity, to present itself with confidence to the outside world, and to adapt to exploit changing circumstances. In Venice, innovation was embraced, music was valued, and performance was everywhere. This lively culture doubtless shaped the work of the enigmatic Dario Castello.

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Alexandra Bamji is Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of Leeds, with interests in religion, disease and death in early modern Venice.







## Richard Egarr • Director, Harpsichord & Organ

Richard Egarr brings a joyful sense of adventure and a keen, enquiring mind to all his music-making. He is equally happy conducting, directing from the keyboard, playing concerti (on the organ, harpsichord, fortepiano or modern piano), giving solo recitals, playing chamber music, or indeed talking about music at any available opportunity.

Since 2006 Egarr has been Music Director of the Academy of Ancient Music. In September 2012 the AAM became Associate Ensemble at the Barbican Centre, and in 2013 a three-year Monteverdi opera cycle began with a critically acclaimed performance of *L'Orfeo*. Opera and oratorio lie at the heart of Egarr's repertoire, and early in his tenure he established the Choir of the AAM. Since then, he has conducted Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* in concert at the Barbican and the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. He made his Glyndebourne debut in 2007 conducting a staged version of JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Egarr has long been passionate about inspiring the next generation of musicians, and he maintains regular relationships with the Amsterdam Conservatoire, the Britten-Pears Foundation and the Netherlands Opera Academy, where he has conducted Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, as well as Rossini's *Il Signor Bruschino*. He is a Visiting Artist at the Juilliard School in New York.

In 2013 Egarr was made Principal Guest Conductor of The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra and has since conducted three projects there each season, with a brief to explore 18th and 19th century performance practice. He has a flourishing career as a guest conductor with orchestras ranging from Boston's Handel and Haydn Society where he is an annual guest, to the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw and Philadelphia Orchestras. In 2011 he was appointed Associate Artist of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in recognition of his growing relationship with the ensemble.

Egarr continues to play recitals across the world; he returned to the Wigmore Hall in January 2014 for a solo harpsichord recital, and in January 2013 he played the Bach *English Suites* in London and Cambridge to coincide with his latest Harmonia Mundi release. Egarr's extensive solo discography includes recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Mozart's *Fantasias* and *Rondos*, and the complete keyboard works of Louis Couperin. His duo recordings with Andrew Manze have been particularly celebrated. His growing list of recordings with the AAM includes seven discs of Handel (2007 Gramophone Award, 2009 MIDEM and Edison awards), the complete *Brandenburg Concertos*, and *Birth of the Symphony*: from Handel to Haydn, the first recording released on the AAM's own label in September 2013.



## Academy of Ancient Music

The Academy of Ancient Music is an orchestra and choir that performs music from the baroque and classical era, in the way it was first intended. This means taking inspiration from the composers themselves; through careful research and using first edition scores as often as possible. This historically-informed approach was groundbreaking when the orchestra was founded in 1973 by scholar-conductor Christopher Hogwood and the AAM remains at the forefront of the scene today, under the leadership of Music Director Richard Egarr.

Originally established as a recording orchestra, the AAM has an incredible catalogue of more than 300 CDs which have won numerous accolades, including Brit, Gramophone, Edison and MIDEM awards. *Sonate Concertate In Stil Moderno, Libro Primo* is the fifth release on our own label, AAM Records. Previous recordings include the original 1727 version of JS Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, which was dubbed "a triumph" by Gramophone magazine.

AAMplify, the AAM's education programme, was launched in 2010 to develop the next generation of young artists and audiences. Working with partners around the country, the AAM delivers workshops, master-classes and other innovative projects for young people.

## Players and their instruments

**Pavlo Beznosiuk**

Violin I (Brescia, c. 1600)

**Bojan Čičić**

Violin II (Rowland Ross, 2002, after Antonio Stradivari)

**Josué Meléndez**

Cornetto (Paolo Fanciullacci, 2015)

**Joseph Crouch**

Violetta (Philippe Refig, 1997, after Gasparo da Saló, London)

**Benny Aghassi**

Dulcian K. Bickhardt and B. Junghänel, c. 1985, Germany)

**Susan Addison**

Trombone (Egger Historical, c. 1985, after Sebastian Heinlein, 1632)

**William Carter**

Theorbo (Klaus Jacobsen, 2004, after Italian models)

**Richard Egarr**

Harpsichord (Malcolm Greenhalgh, 2013, after Carlo Grimaldi)

Chamber Organ (Henk Klop, 8' principal, 8' gedact, 4' octave, 2' fifteenth)

**Tuning** A'=466

**Temperament** ¼-comma meantone



## From the players

"The name 'violetta' was confusingly given to instruments of various shapes, sizes and pitches between the 16th and 18th centuries. The violetta referred to by Castello is most likely that of a 'basso violetta da braccio', which is tuned in fifths, one octave below the violin. When I bought this instrument a couple of years ago I did so out of curiosity, not really believing I would be able to use it very often in my professional life, so to record these works with colleagues from the AAM has been a joy and a revelation."

**Joseph Crouch, violetta**

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"The dulcian is a wind instrument that precedes today's modern bassoon. Its name derives from the sweet sound that it makes, and was a prominent virtuosic instrument in 17th century Italy. Castello's music, when I first heard it, blew my mind, so I was extremely happy when Richard told me he was going to record the composer's first book of sonatas. I have never practiced harder for a project in my life! It was a great experience."

**Benny Aghassi, dulcian**

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*Scala del Trombone 23 la mano.*

**NVOVA INTAVOLATVRA DI TROMBONI PER SONARLI IN CONCERTO**

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ORDINE SECONDO

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Ala Settima:-

Vn Tuon piu alto:-

In Tuono:-

Vn Tuon piu basso

Ala Terza:-

This trombone slide position chart –  
*Nuova Intavolatura Di Tromboni Per Sonarli In Concerto*  
 – was illustrated by Aurelio Virgiliano c. 1600, and informed  
 Susan Addison's performance on this recording.

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### Coming Soon

- **Dario Castello**

- *Sonate Concertate In Stil Moderno, Libro Secondo*

Complete your Castello collection in 2017 with the release of the composer's second book of instrumental sonatas, directed by Richard Egarr.

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## **DARIO CASTELLO**

SONATE CONCERTATE IN STIL MODERNO, LIBRO PRIMO

AAM005

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Julia Thomas · editor

Gareth Wild ([www.apropos-site.com](http://www.apropos-site.com)) · design and artwork

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# DARIO CASTELLO

## SONATE CONCERTATE IN STIL MODERNO, LIBRO PRIMO

RICHARD EGARR · DIRECTOR, HARPSICHORD & ORGAN  
ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC

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AAM005 · 68'39

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