



Friday 20 October, 7.30pm

St George's Church

## MEDIEVAL ENIGMAS

### La Fonte Musica

Alena Dantcheva *soprano*

Francesca Cassinari *soprano*

Gianluca Ferrarini *tenor*

Efix Puleo *viella da braccio*

Teodoro Baù *viella da gamba*

Michele Pasotti *lute, director*

Antonio Zacara da Teramo c.1360–1416

Je suy navrés/Gnaff'a le guagnele  
Sumite Karissimi

Anonymous 14<sup>th</sup> century, Codex Faenza 117

Senza Titolo (instrumental)

Zacara da Teramo

Movit'a Pietade

Anonymous 14<sup>th</sup> century, Codex Faenza 117

Viver ne puis (instrumental)

Zacara da Teramo

Amor nè Tossa  
Nel cucul io te sconiuro  
Ciaramella

Interval

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Anonymous 14 <sup>th</sup> century, Codex Faenza 117	Ave maris stella (instrumental)
Zacara da Teramo / Anonymous	Nostra Avocata
Zacara da Teramo	Gloria 'Ad ongni vento' Credo III
Anonymous 14 <sup>th</sup> century, Codex Faenza 117	Benedicamus Domino (instrumental)
Zacara da Teramo	Gloria I Credo II

Antonio Zacara da Teramo (c.1360–1416) is, together with Johannes Ciconia and Matteo da Perugia, one of the eminent musicians of the late Italian Ars Nova. His music, characterised by the widest possible variety of styles, registers and forms, had a vast diffusion and was copied even in places very far from its origin (Poland, England).

Zacara's persona and personality are outstanding. Despite being marked by a disability that left him fewer than ten fingers and toes between his hands and feet and by a very small stature (perhaps the reason for the nickname 'Zacara'), in 1390 he is described as 'optimo perito et famoso cantore, scriptore et miniatore' (excellent, expert and famous singer, writer and illuminator). He was *cantor* in the papal chapel and worked at Santo Spirito in Sassia. Still in 1463, fifty years after his death, 'his compositions were regarded as oracles' and in the 18th century he was still known as a 'very successful composer and elegant scribe'.

The influence and innovative character of Zacara's music can be measured above all in his mass movements. His Glorias and Credos are characterised by being larger in scale than those of his contemporaries, using imitation extensively, having large homorhythmic sections, rhythms of a popular flavour and in many cases the parody technique. The frequent use of thirds, also in combination with sixths, and some repetitive forms (as in the *Credo II*) suggest an English contact or influence and in any case they foreshadow a new trend in European music.

The *Credo II*, among the most famous compositions of the master from Teramo, with its drones alternating with passages for two voices alone, and the many repetitions remains in the ears in all its power. Around the 1420s this piece even reached distant Poland, where in fact the best sources are preserved. *Credo III* is also handed down in several sources. One of these, the codex  $\alpha$  5.24 of the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, has the cantus part decorated with beautiful diminutions. It is an extraordinary document of the practice of diminution in early 15<sup>th</sup>-century sacred repertoire. It is not a question of adding a few notes, but of a radical reform of the line of the chant, which acquires variety, grace and vagueness (*vaghezza*) – constant requisites of the art of diminution throughout the centuries – and brings sacred chant closer to the most beautiful, subtle melodies of the secular repertoire.

His ballades corpus is equally important and rich. As for the secular repertoire *Movit'a pietade*, a ballade from the Squarcialupi codex preserved in Florence, illuminates one of the aspects of this master with many faces. It is the classic one of unhappy love, sung by melancholy and sinuous melodies, in a skilful bittersweet blend that Zacara shares with his contemporaries. Instead the luck and the puzzles, the way they are set to music, are typical of the master from Teramo. His entire corpus of ballades has been described by Francesco Zimei as 'Variations on the Theme of Fortune'. In fact, the ways in which Zacara refers to the blindfolded goddess vary: from the direct and violent accusation with references to her biography, to the tears that cannot turn her wheel, to self-deprecatative satire on his inability to seize good fortune.

His ballades are very different in tone and style, but many contain autobiographical references. This is a decidedly eccentric and uncommon trait in his time. However, the biographical events are often encrypted in enigmas, allegories, puns, arcane idioms (from various dialects to Macaronic French, to cultured Latin). Antonio has been described as an 'eccentric personality who loved to play with numbers and words'. Such a portrait could suggest an author dominated by a speculative dimension. On the contrary, a pure taste for play, for music as a game, seems to prevail in Zacara, and not infrequently a certain gaiety dyes his enigmas with almost popular colours. Examples are *Amore né Tossa, Nel Cucul io te sconiuro* and the famous *Ciaramella, me dolçe Ciaramella*, in which Zacara uses riddles to paint a very explicit erotic scene, set into a very vital music.

Riddles that use numbers are also a recurring theme. Far from the rustic flavour of these last pieces is *Sumite Karissimi*, the masterpiece of Zacarian puzzles. This ballade on a Latin text is the culmination of his experimentalism. The text consists of instructions for solving a riddle: "Take, dear fathers, the head of *Remulo* and sing, brother musicians, the head of a *consul*...". It continues with cow bellies, sheep's heads and lion's feet, where of course head, belly and feet stand for the beginning, middle and end of the words. Once all these fragments have been collected, the word *Recomendatione* (homage) is composed and the intent of the piece is revealed: a tribute by Zacara to his brother musicians, probably those of the papal chapel, among the very few able to decipher a musical writing of such complexity. *Sumite* is perhaps the most experimental, audacious, rhythmically complicated piece in the entire Ars Nova repertoire, with polyrhythms that will only return in the avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a hymn to fantasy, subtlety, play, refinement, and making music together in which all the parts, many different from each other, contribute to a common result of astonishing and ever-living beauty.

At the end of this journey Zacara's oracles speak of an interpenetration between the sacred and secular spheres: interpolations, quotations, parodies through which the charm of the melodies of secular ballades dresses the great architectures and the rich meanings of the liturgical texts creating a new and original sacred music, flowing and elegant as a song; high, deep and powerful as a prayer.

**Michele Pasotti**

## **The performers**

**La fonte musica** is an early music ensemble on period instruments, founded and led by Michele Pasotti. The ensemble was founded to interpret the astonishing musical season which goes from the end of the middle ages to the beginning of the humanism, with a particular focus on Italian Trecento. Our repertoire and research stretches until the end of Renaissance. A constant and serious philological research is at the origin of every project together with a careful deciphering of rhetoric and grammar in order to understand and translate the creativity, refinement and beauty of ancient music with an experimental attitude for us today.

The ensemble has performed in the most prestigious early music festivals around Europe, including Oude Muziek (Utrecht), Resonanzen (Vienna), MA Festival Bruges, Ravenna Festival, Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik, Laus Polyphoniae Antwerpen, Regensburg Tage Alte Musik, Wroclaw Cantans (Wroclaw) and Brighton Early Music Festival.

La fonte musica's concerts and recordings have been broadcast by the BBC, Rai Radio Tre (Italy), ORF 1 (Austria), WDR and RBB kulturradio (Germany), Polskie Radio (Poland), NPO Radio 4 (Netherlands) and Antena 2 (Portugal).

The ensemble's CD 'Metamorfosi Trecento' (Alpha) won the DIAPASON d'OR and Disco del Mese (Amadeus). DIAPASON elected 'Metamorfosi Trecento' among 'The 100 records that all music lovers need to know' and the recording was also a finalist for the best early music CD of the year at the International Classical Music Awards. La fonte musica's latest release 'Enigma Fortuna' is a 4-disc boxed set containing the first recording of the complete works by Antonio Zacara da Teramo.

**[lafontemusica.com](http://lafontemusica.com)**

## The texts

### Je suy navrés/Gnaff'a le guagnele

*Cantus:* Je suy navrés tan fort, o dous amy!

*Tenor:* De quoy / *C:* de aitnerolF / *T:* et de le dames

*C:* Haylas chantés! / *T:* or non crier, ciantés,

*C:* Vramant mourray per celles, moy amy.

*C,T:* La nobiltà con tutte le scientie

Et l'arte liberal con le riccheççe,

La libertà, vertu con le prudentie,

Chaliopè poeta e le forteççe.

*C:* Tout le stourment du mondo et gionesse,

*T:* Biau sir / *C:* or que vous plet / *T:* e tout le nimphes,

*C:* Oy vramant, / *T:* orsus après, [ciantés]

*C,T:* Grant Parlement de de sens o vray amy.

*C:* Je suy navvres tant fort o dus amy...

*Contratenor:*

Gnaff'a le guagnele et io anch' to' togli!

Per le sant dio, tu si dous amy.

Humilior Tauro

Homines nobilitant scientie,

Septes artes saccra saccra,

Non seray may ricche.

Non venditur auro

Homines qui exaltant prudentie

Dea loquentie, Hercules le forteççe.

Li Orpheo et Narcisus, [et io] anch' to' togli,

Grant sens et mastrie, dous amy.

Gnaff'a le guagnele et io anch' to' togli!...

*Cantus:* I am so severely vexed, my dear friend

*Tenor:* By what? / *C:* by aitnerolF [Florentia written backwards] / *T:* and by women...

*C:* Come on, Sing! / *T:* Now don't shout, sing!

*C:* I will certainly die because of them, my dear friend!

*C and T:* Noblesse together with all the sciences

and the liberal arts with richness,

Liberty, virtue with prudence,

Calliope the poet and strength,

*C:* Every instrument of the world and youth!

*T:* My beautiful sir / *C:* now that you like it /

*T:* and all the nymphs *C:* Desire you!

*T:* Come on, then [Sing!]

*C and T:* Great parliament of the senses, my true friend.

*C:* I am so severely vexed, my dear friend...

*Contratenor:*

By my faith, I swear on the Gospels, and you too, take it!

For God's sake, you, such a sweet friend!

Humbler than Taurus

men of science ennoble

the seven sacred arts, Zacara

you will never be rich.

You can't buy with gold

the men of prudence who worship

the Goddess of Rhetoric, Hercules the Strong, Orpheus, Narcissus and me too, come on take it!

Great intelligence and mastery, my sweet friend.

By my faith, I swear on the Gospels...

## Sumite Karissimi

Sumite, Karissimi,  
Capud de *remulo*, patres,  
Caniteque, musici,  
Idem de *consule*, fratres,  
Et de iu*mento* ventrem,  
De gurgi*da* pedem,  
De nup*tis* ventrem,  
Capud de *oveque* pedem  
De le*one*. milles  
Cum in omnibus Zacharias salutes.  
[*Reconmendatione*]

Take, dearest fathers,  
The head of a little oar [remulo]  
And sing, o musician brothers,  
The same of a consul [consule],  
The belly of a mare [iumento],  
The foot of a whirlpool [gurgida],  
The belly of a wedding [nuptiis],  
The head of a sheep [oveque] and the foot  
of a lion [leone]: a thousand times  
When in all these things, Zacara, you greet.  
[Homage]

## Movit'a pietade

Movit'a pietade,  
Donna benigna col sereno aspetto:  
Ch'io sento gran diletto  
Quando begli och'a me vegho voltare.

Donna piacente per le tuo belleççe.  
[...]  
Movit'a pietade...

Show mercy,  
gentle woman with a serene look,  
since I feel a great delight  
when I see that you turn your beautiful eyes  
toward me.

Pleasing woman, for your beauty...

Show mercy...

## Amor né tossa

Amor né tossa non se pò celare,  
Nè çoppecar del pé  
E ben se bela sença far "be, be".

La quaglia sempre non farà "qua qua",  
Nè la sampogna "belulu, lu, lu",  
Nè la cornacchia farà sempre "cra",  
Nè cantarà lo chuchul "chu chu chu".  
Ma se non manca el valor de Lassù  
Alla mia ferma fé,  
Non serra sempre prato verde in sé.

Io vidi lo pastor per la campagna  
Gridando dietro al lupo "dagli da!"  
E vidi alcuno racconciar la ragna  
Per pigliar un stornello che se'n va.  
Ma lascia far che puco durirà

One can't hide love or a cough,  
Or walking with a limp,  
And one can bleat well without crying "baa,  
baa".

The quail won't always "whit, whit",  
Or the bagpipe sound "belulu, lu, lu",  
Nor will the crow always cry "cra",  
Or the cuckoo sing "chu, chu, chu".

But if strength from Above  
Isn't lacking from my firm faith,  
One is not always surrounded by a green  
meadow.

I saw the shepherd in the countryside  
Shouting after the wolf: "Beat it!"  
And I saw someone arranging a net  
To catch a little starling which is flying away.  
But let it be, since often calling

Spesso chiamar "te, te!":  
Che ben d'altrui se beffa chi à de que.

[Intendame chi po' che m'intendo io

E tal ne ride chi deriso n'é.  
El tempo che fo già piovoso e rio,  
Lucido e chiaro un giorno devenne.  
El bove già con l'ale et colle penne  
In ciel salìo dov'è  
La vaccha ch'ebbe al mio dolor mercé.]  
Amor né tossa...

### Nel cucul

Nel cucul io te sconiuro  
Per la penna che tieni in culo,  
Per la rama dove se[y],  
Che mi dichi l'anni mey:  
[i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii]  
l' vegio li pasturi per la vigna  
Gridando dietro al lupo:  
"Para, para, para, che se n' va!"  
Multi vegio racconciar la ragna  
Per pigliar un stornello:  
["Para, para, para] che se n' va!"

### Ciaramella

Ciaramella, me dolçe Ciaramella!  
O tu che porti fra' Maçante sotto,  
Polito e bello, con la chiercha rasa,  
Poy che'l martello t'à da' si gran botto,  
Tosto m'abbrazza, strengi e pur me basa,  
Che'n questa terra de me n'é più bella.

Ciaramella, me dolçe Ciaramella!  
O tu che porti a pieghe facte l'ose  
Onte et ornate de molti incinelli  
E le tuo vestimente tutte rose,  
Ove se trova molti foramelli:  
Voltate un poco a me che son citella.  
Ciaramella, me dolçe Ciaramella!

"Come, come!" won't last,  
Because one who can mock the others well  
if he has a good reason.  
[Let the ones who can, understand me, since  
I understand myself,  
And thus laughs he who is mocked.  
The weather, which once was rainy and bad,  
One day became shiny and clear.  
The ox with wings and feathers flew  
To heaven where there is  
The cow which had mercy for my suffering.]  
One can't hide love or a cough...

I beseech you like the cuckoo,  
For the feather you have in your bum,  
For the branch where you are,  
That you tell me how old I am:  
[i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii]  
I see the shepherds in the vineyard,  
Shouting behind the wolf:  
"Catch it! Catch it! Catch it, it's getting away!"  
I see many arranging a net  
To catch a little starling:  
["Catch it! Catch it! Catch it,] it's flying away!"

Ciaramella, my sweet Ciaramella!  
You who bring friar Maçante down there,  
Clean and beautiful, with a shaved tonsure,  
After the hammer hit you with such a big blow,  
Hug me now, hold me tight and kiss me,  
Because no one is prettier than me on this  
earth.

Ciaramella, my sweet Ciaramella!  
You who wear folded dresses,  
Greased and adorned with many hooks  
and your total pink dresses  
Where one finds many little holes:  
Look at me now, since I am single!  
Ciaramella, my sweet Ciaramella!

O tu che dolcemente sette volte  
Quel facto fay a non ussir bachetta,  
Fa' che me vegni con le brache sciolte,  
Che non bisogna dicere "aspecta, aspecta"!  
Per far più tosto nostra giornatella!  
Ciaramella, me dolçe Ciaramella!

You that seven times sweetly  
Did that thing without pulling out a stick,  
Please come to me with loose pants,  
Since there's no need to say "wait, wait"!  
To make our nice little day more quickly!  
Ciaramella, my sweet Ciaramella!

### **Ave maris stella**

Ave maris stella,  
Dei Mater alma  
atque semper virgo  
felix coeli porta.

Hail, star of the sea,  
nurturing Mother of God  
and eternal Virgin,  
happy gate of heaven.

### **Nostra Avocata**

Nostra Avocata se' e sempre fosti,  
Madre di Dio a tte son condotto  
Che mi soccorra che nne vo di sotto  
E'l demonio m'abraçça ch'i m'arrosti.

Al tuo dolce figliuol che ttu portasti,  
Madre, per me ti priego che ritorni.  
Altri pregar per me: non par che basti,

Reina se' de l'angeli adorni.  
Però ti priego che più non soggiorni;  
Ora per me all'alta majestade  
Che de me, pechatore, abbia pietade  
E fa' che con Gesù mi'alm'acchosti.

You are and always were our advocate,  
Mother of God I am led to you,  
So that you help me not to go down  
Where the devil embraces me and I burn  
myself.

Oh mother, I pray you that I will come back  
To your sweet son whom you bore.  
Others prayed for me: it does not seem  
enough,

You are queen of the adorned angels.  
So, I pray you that I don't stay here any longer;  
Pray for me to the High Majesty  
That He should have mercy on me, a sinner,  
And let my soul get close to Jesus.

[Gloria and Credo texts not included here]