

Music and Poetry in the Italian Baroque Cantata

Special emphasis on works by Barbara
Strozzi

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Cantata

- Generally speaking, a cantata is an extensive solo vocal piece that is secular and amorous in nature.
- Form of the poetry influenced form of the music
- Themes
 - Unrequited love
- Mixture of styles
 - Aria, arioso, and recitative

Poetry

- Giambattista Marino (1569-1625)
 - Marinism
 - Witty
 - Ornamental
 - Strove for ingenuity
 - Marvelous – “capable of provoking wonderment, awe”
 - Conceit (*conceit*) – witty metaphor or witty figure of thought or sound

Poetry

- Italian “*Accademia*”
 - Gatherings of the intellectual men of Italy
 - Included poets, philosophers, musicians, etc.
 - Meetings revolved around rhetorical debates
 - Arguments of the debates were often written into poetry, and later, set to music
 - Winners of the debates usually were those whose argument was presented the most wittily
 - Music was often performed, especially the poetry written by the members

Music

- *Seconda Prattica* Tradition
 - Monteverdi-Artusi conflict
 - Music is subservient to the text
- Style
 - Word painting
 - Mixture of forms (cantata, aria, arioso, recitative, etc.)

Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)

- Illegitimate and adopted daughter of Giulio Strozzi
- Studied composition with the famous composer Francesco Cavalli
- Because she was a singer, Barbara performed her own works and usually accompanied herself on the lute.
- Composed and performed songs written by her father or members of the *Accademia degli Unisoni*
- The most published composer of the time, male or female

Lagrime mie

Lagrime Mie (*un lamento*)

Lagrime mie, a che vi trattenete?
Perchè non isfogate il fier dolore
che mi toglie 'l respiro e opprime il core?

My Tears (a lament)

My tears, why do you restrain yourselves?
Why don't you pour out the severe pain
That robs my breath and oppresses my
heart?

Lagrime mie

Lidia, ahimè, veggo mancarmi
l'idol mio che tanto adoro;
sta colei tra duri marmi,
per cui spiro e pur non moro.

Se la morte m'è gradita,
hor che son privo di speme,
deh, toglietemi la vita,
(ve ne prego), aspre mie pene.

Lydia, alas, I see I am missing
My idol whom I so adore;
She remains within the hard marble,
For which I breathe and so I don't die.

If death is welcome to me,
Now that I am free of hope,
Oh, take from me my life
(I beg you), my bitter pains.