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 Pratricula* 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lagrime Mie (<em>un lamento</em>)</th>
<th>My Tears (a lament)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lagrime mie, a che vi trattenete? Perchè non isfogate il fier dolore che mi toglie 'l respiro e opprime il core?</td>
<td>My tears, why do you restrain yourselves? Why don’t you pour out the severe pain that robs my breath and oppresses my heart?</td>
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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.

Lagrima mie

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.