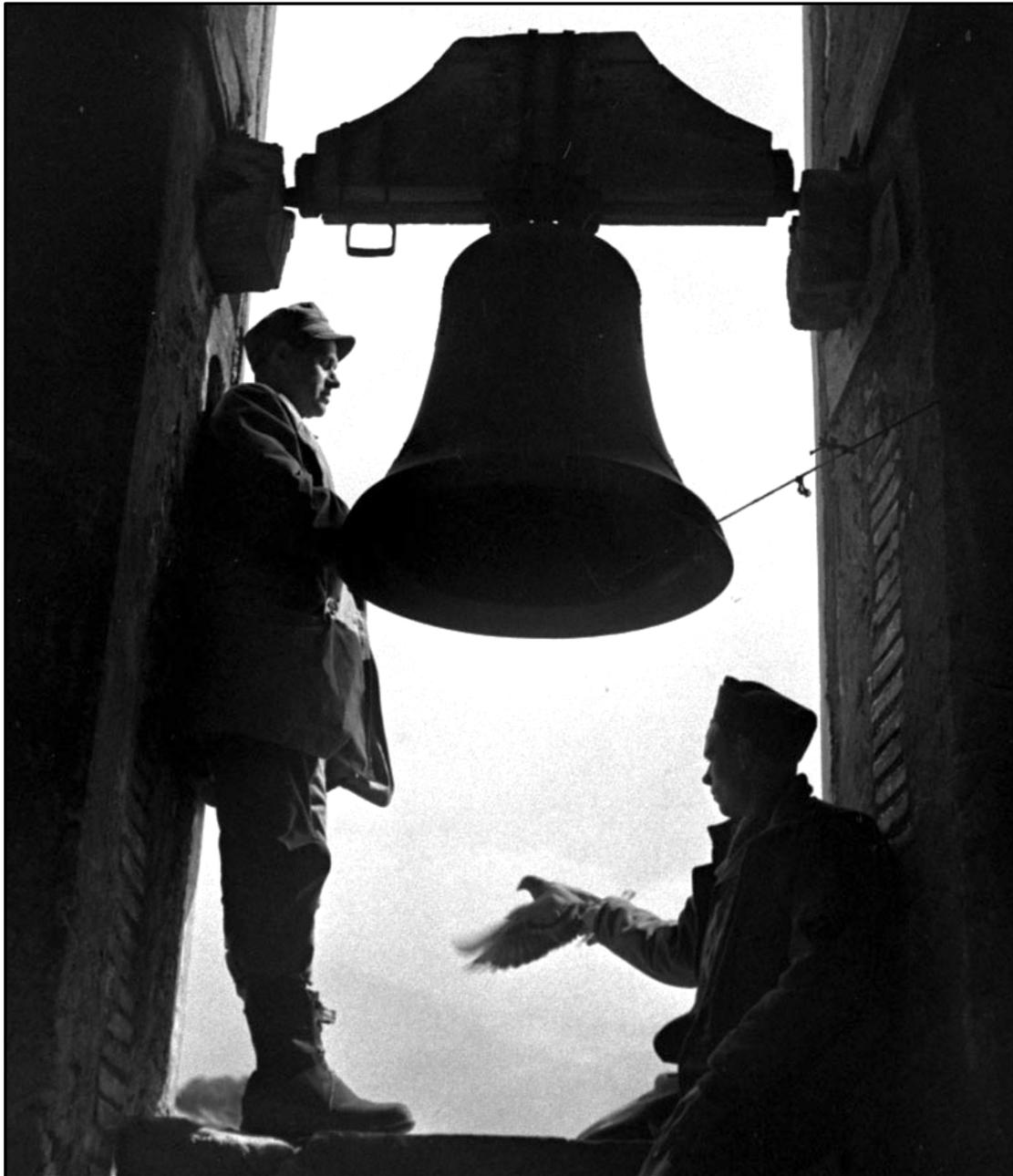


# NAPOLI IGNOTA



Feast, catastrophe and devotion  
in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Naples

**Theatro dei Cervelli | Andrés Locatelli**

# NAPOLI IGNOTA

Feast, Catastrophe and Devotion in 17th-century Naples

The 17th century was a time of crisis and invention. During these decades, the Spanish-ruled city of Naples was repeatedly struck by disastrous events. Earthquakes and storms, plagues, volcanic eruptions, famines and upheavals occurred continuously, and they were often interpreted as metaphysical signs by an increasingly devout population. In bold contrast with the splendour of the city's palaces, churches and chapels, famous worldwide for their outstanding musical life, a climate of restlessness and uncertainty invaded the heart of the city. A peculiar form of sorrowful expression — an early-baroque **voluptas dolendi** — emerged in these years, soon pervading all forms of sacred and secular art. Meanwhile, Italian artists gained more and more relevance over the old tradition of Iberian and Northern European masters, as they became promoters of a new local aesthetic based on the representation of suffering, loaded with melancholy, sensuality and *chiaroscuro*. Caravaggio's sojourn in the city was a key moment for such developments in the visual arts, which can be also perceived in the extreme polyphonic experimentations of prince Gesualdo da Venosa and his successors, among which Giovanni Maria Trabaci (Montepeloso 1575 - Napoli 1647).

The motets for 4 voices and basso continuo that constitute the skeleton of this programme were composed during the 1630s for the liturgy of the Oratorio dei Gerolamini, one of the most important centres of musical production in Naples. They are transmitted in *unicum* inside a rather large manuscript collection that opens with a piece by Trabaci. For this reason, musicologists have tentatively attributed the whole group of unique, anonymous compositions to Trabaci, although they may be most likely ascribed to one of the other composers represented in the manuscript. Mostly known nowadays as a composer of music for harp and keyboard, Trabaci was also an excellent and versatile polyphonist (**O domine salvum me fac** from his first book of masses is a good example), and maintained a close relationship with the Oratorio during his long and brilliant career. Other musicians found in the manuscript are Alfonso Verde, Carlo Pedata (his 3-voice motet **Quasi cedrus exaltata** is premiered here), Alessandro Capece, and the Sabinos (Giovanni Maria, Antonio, Francesco and Antonino). These appear next to other names unknown today: D. Sancti, Sarrelli, Marranzini, and an unidentified member of the Ansalone family (Giacinto, Andrea, or Francesco, all deceased during the 1656 plague).

Traces of the artistic language described above appear everywhere in our motets. A language that expresses the most pathetic passions with outstanding rhetorical vigour (**Humiliavit semetipsum**), as well as images of overflowing sensuality (**O quam suavis est Domine, Ego dilecto meo**), in which the complex and refined harmonic gestures of Southern polyphony (**Quam dilecta tabernacula tua**) merge with the stylistic innovations of accompanied monody and concertato style (**Veni, Creator spiritus**). This contrasts sharply with the rather simplified writing and recourse to bassi ostinati of a popular taste found in more lively pieces such as **Congratulamini mihi, Benedicta et venerabilis**, and **Quasi cedrus exaltata**.

The **laude spirituali** included in this programme emphasise the multi-lingual character of Neapolitan devotional music. As the Oratorian genre par excellence, the lauda had great diffusion in the prints of the time, especially in the Philippine circles of Rome and Naples. In harmony with Philip Neri's conception of music as a "fisher of souls", this repertoire was regarded as a particularly effective device to bring people closer to Christian doctrine. In such troubled times, laudas were often composed as vows or offerings to the saints and the Virgin in the aftermath of a catastrophe. Lastly, the programme is enriched by instrumental music written by G. M. Trabaci and Andrea Falconieri (1585-1656). Falconieri, another prolific Neapolitan composer of European fame, succeeded Trabaci as master of the Royal Chapel after the latter's death during the Masaniello revolution.

## PROGRAMME

Anonymous

**Quam dilecta tabernacula tua**

Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575-1647)

**Partite artificiose**, *Il secondo libro de ricercate*, 1615

Anonymous

**Benedicta et venerabilis**

Giovanni Domenico Montella (1570ca. - 1607)

**Se mai Vergine pia**, *Nuove laudi ariose*, 1600

Andrea Falconieri (1585ca. - 1656)

**La suave melodia**, *Il primo libro di canzone [...]*, 1650

Anonymous

**Congratulamini mihi**

Francisco Guerrero/Francisco Soto

**Alma, dexa la tierra**, *Il terzo libro delle laudi spirituali*, 1588

Francisco Soto

**Il tuo Signor, o Vergin madre è morto**, *Nuove laudi ariose*, 1600

Giovanni Maria Trabaci

**Toccata prima**, *Ricercate, canzone francese, capricci,[...] Libro primo*, 1603

Anonymous

**Humiliavit semetipsum**

Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575 - 1647)

**O Domine salvum me fac**, *Missarum, et Motectorum [...], Liber primus*, 1616

Anonymous

**Introduxit vos Domine**

**O quam suavis est Domine**

**Veni creator spiritus**

Carlo Pedata

**Quasi cedrus exaltata**

Anonymous

**Ego dilecto meo**

Total length: 60 minutes



## Theatro dei Cervelli

Esther Labourdette (soprano)

Jacopo Facchini (alto)

Roberto Rilievi (tenor)

Marco Saccardin (bass, theorbo)

Lina Manrique (violin, viola da gamba)

Diana Fazzini (violone, viola da gamba)

Ryoko Katayama (harpsichord, organ)

Marta Graziolino (harp)

Andrés Locatelli (recorder, conductor)

**Andrés Locatelli** is an Argentine-Italian recorder player, conductor and musicologist. He completed his Master's studies in Musicology in 2016 and his PhD in 2020 at the renowned Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage of Cremona, University of Pavia (Italy), with a dissertation on early-15th-century composer Matteo da Perugia. Parallel to his academic activity, he has participated in choir and orchestral conducting courses and master classes taught by Facundo Agudín (Switzerland), Adrián van der Spoel, Rob Vermeulen (The Netherlands) and Michael Reif (Germany).



As a conductor of 17th and 18th-century music, he has appeared in concerts in Holland, France, Switzerland, Italy and South America. In 2016, he conducted the renowned orchestra Concerto Köln for the modern première of Francesco Cavalli's "Veremonda, l'amazzone di Aragona" (a co-production of Schwetzingen Festspiele and Mainz Staatstheater, directed by Amelie Niermeyer). The production was acclaimed by the international press (Financial Times, Opernglas, OP Online). In 2017 he created the ensemble Theatro dei Cervelli, based in Basel (Switzerland) and devoted to the rediscovery of 17th-century Italian music. He collaborated with theatre director Jeffrey Döring (Goldstaub e.V) in 2019 in the creation of *Wankelmut der Herzen* (Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart), an innovative interdisciplinary project of experimental theatre and vocal music by Claudio Monteverdi. As a musicologist, he has lectured in the USA, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Argentina. He is frequently sought after as a performance practice specialist to teach at conservatories and academies across Europe and South America. In 2019, he was Visiting Student Research Collaborator at the Department of Music of Princeton University.



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