

Alessandro Stradella - Santa Pelagia (2017)

Written by bluesever

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Prima Parte 1 Recitativo: Qui Dove In Faccia Ai Fiori 0:52 2 Aria: Ermi Tronchi, Annose Piante 2:28 3 Recitativo: Pelagia, Bellissima Donzella 0:58 4 Aria: Mentre April T'infiora It Seno 1:17 5 Recitativo: Segui Le Nostre Strade 0:48 6 Aria: Strugge L'alma Un Non So Che 1:18 7 Recitativo: Penso, Ahi Lassa, E Il Pensiero 0:35 8 Aria: Quel Fiore Labile 1:19 9 Recitativo: E Tributario Sol Fassi Dal Cieio 0:44 10 Aria: Per Destare Orrida Guerra 1:00 11 Recitativo: Lo Così Vilipeso 0:28 12 Aria: Vedi In Calma Il Mar Placato 0:40 13 Recitativo: Tali Del Regno Tuo Sono Gli Imperk 0:48 14 Duetto: Empio No, Nol Crederò 1:43 15 Recitativo: Ma Già Vinto Tu Sei 0:15 16 Aria: Ah, Cieli Codardi 0:48 17 Recitativo: Mentre Serve Pelagia A' Cenni Miei 0:04 18 Aria: Ah, Sfere Guerriere 0:39 19 Recitativo: Me, Me Presente, Io Sono 0:14 20 Aria: Saette E Fulmini 0:56 21 Recitativo: Porto In Man Guerra E Pace 0:34 22 Aria: Agli Assalti di Teneri Accenti 2:52 23 Aria: Quanta è Cara, Quanto è Bella 1:46 24 Recitativo: 'Oh Come, Oh Quanto Vago 1:04 25 Aria: Gado Si, di Gemme E D'ori 0:58 26 Recitativo: Quanta Mi Alletta Invero 0:42 27 Aria: Sono I Crini Aurati Stami 1:48 28 Recitativo: Sono I Dolci Mile! Sguardi 0:14 29 Le Pupille Son Faville 1:01

Seconda Parte

30 Recitativo: Qual Ape Studiosa 0:40 31 Aria: Quanto è Dolce Con Due Guardi 1:32 32 Recitativo: Che Saette, Che Strali? 0:39 33 Aria: Quanto Crudo It Nume Ignudo 0:57 34 Recitativo: T'inganni, Se Tu Credi 0:37 35 Aria: Sì, Presumo, O Vaghe Stelle 1:53 36 Recitativo: Pelagia! / Mio Monarca! 0:48 37 Aria Agitata: Abbatto, Combatto 0:32 38 Recitativo: E Il Mio Fulgido Guardo 1:18 39 Aria: Tu Che Abbatti E Combatti Col Guardo 0:57 40 Recitativo: Ah, No, Basta It Pensiero 0:35 41 Aria: Dal Polo Con Volo 0:41 42 Recitativo: Meco Dunque T'adopra 0:14 43 Coro: Festeggiate 0:31 44 Aria: Corran Nettare I Ruscelli 0:41 45 Recitativo: Pelagia! 1:30 46 Aria: Sì Peccai, Ma Questo Fonte 1:05 47 Recitativo: Già Con Sagrato Fonte- 0:44 48 Aria: È Follia Pagnar Con Gli Astri 0:27 49 Recitativo: Parto Ai Boschi Romiti E Mi Dileguo 0:14 50 Aria: Oh, Del Polo Calpestato 0:44 51 Recitativo: Al Tuo Merto Inesausto 0:09 52 Aria: Pace A Voi, Selvagge Rupi 0:58 53 Recitativo: Qui, Solitaria Alfine 1:07 54 Aria: Mio Monarca, Eccoti Il Cor! 1:29

Baritone Vocals [Mondo] – Sergio Foresti Contralto Vocals [Religione] – Raffaele Pe Luthier [Instrument Design] – Andreas von Holst, Enzo Laurenti, Jaume Bosser, Johan Deblieck, Klaus Jacobsen, Sergio Marcello Gregorat, Ugo Casiglia Soprano Vocals [Santa Pelagia] – Roberta Mameli Tenor Vocals [Nonno] – Luca Cervoni Ensemble – Ensemble Mare Nostrum Conductor – Andrea De Carlo

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With this fourth installment of the Stradella Project, Andrea De Carlo and Ensemble Mare Nostrum continue their exploration of the oratorio output, following the recent rediscoveries of San Giovanni Crisostomo and Santa Editta. A pretty dancing-girl at the imperial court of Antioch in Syria, Pelagia, is the object of rivalry between an evil angel, Mondo (the World), urging her to enjoy life to the full before old age destroys her beauty, and Bishop Nonno of Edessa, who with the help of a good angel, Religione, invites her to a life in the service of God. Pelagia succumbs to the flattery offered by Mondo, but just as the latter is celebrating his victory, she retires unexpectedly to a lonely cave in the wilderness where she can dedicate the rest of her life to the loving service of God. Stradella cannot resist revealing his point of view about this sudden change, giving the oratorio a surprise ending. Soprano Roberta Mameli offers us a complex and seductive portrayal of the title role, surrounded by a distinguished cast including Sergio Foresti as Mondo, Raffaele Pe as Religione and Luca Cervoni as Nonno. As in previous installments, the recording was made within the framework of the Alessandro Stradella International Festival in Nepi, the composer's birthplace. ---arkivmusic.com

Alessandro Stradella was one of the most colourful characters in the 17th-century Italian baroque. Though many details about his career as a composer remain sketchy, the circumstances of his death at the age of 42 in Genoa, as the victim of hired assassins, are not disputed. Stradella made enemies easily, perhaps because he was notoriously promiscuous, and his murder was not the first attempt on his life. Around 300 of his works survive, including four operas (two more are lost), more than 170 cantatas and six oratorios; the best known of his compositions date from the last five years of his life, when he was living in Genoa, having fled from Rome.

Exactly when and where Stradella composed his oratorio Santa Pelagia remains uncertain. It's a curious piece, and the choice of a relatively obscure saint as its subject is typically unconventional. Pelagia of Antioch, or Pelagia the Harlot, was a fourth- or fifth-century "actress" in the Turkish city, who is supposed to have enraptured the bishop Nonnus with her charms. After hearing Nonnus preach, however, she prayed for repentance, was baptised and gave away all her worldly goods to become a hermit on the Mount of Olives, where she died a few years later of starvation. Unsurprisingly, Stradella seems far more interested in Pelagia's life of luxury than in her subsequent conversion and martyrdom. His oratorio turns the story into a tussle between worldly pleasures and religious discipline. They are personified by two of the four soloists, while the soprano takes the role of Pelagia and the tenor, Nonnus. The 50-minute work contains 26 solo numbers, all brief and half of them for Pelagia; otherwise, there's just one duet and a single "chorus of the worldly".

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This is the fourth instalment of Andrea De Carlo's Stradella Project with Ensemble Mare Nostrum, which has so far concentrated on the oratorios. Accompanied by just a handful of strings and continuo, there's a lightness of touch to the performance that is genuinely engaging, and the agile voices of the soloists, led by Roberta Mameli as Pelagia, preserve that sense of airiness. None of it is music of great depth, but it is all presented most attractively. ---Andrew Clements, theguardian.com

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