

Una Stravaganza dei Medici - Intermedi per "La Pellegrina" (1993)

Written by bluesever

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Intermedio I - The Harmony of the Spheres: 01 - Antonio Archilei - *Emilio de' Cavalieri - Dalle piu alte sfere* 02 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Noi, che, cantando* 03 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Sinfonia a 6 I* 04 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Dolcissime Sirene - Non mai tanto splendore* 05 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *A voi, reali Amanti* 06 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Coppia gentil*

Intermedio II - The Singing Contest between the Pierides and the Muses:

07 - Luca Marenzio - *Sinfonia a 5* 08 - Luca Marenzio - *Belle ne fe' Natura* 09 - Luca Marenzio - *Chi dal defino* 10 - Luca Marenzio - *Se nelle voci nostre* 11 - Luca Marenzio - *O figlie di Piero*

[play](#)

Intermedio III - Apollo Slays the Monster at Delphi:

12 - Luca Marenzio - *Qui di carne si sfama* 13 - Luca Marenzio - *O valoroso Dio* 14 - Luca Marenzio - *O mille volte mille*

Intermedio IV - The Golden Age is Foretold:

15 - Giulio Caccini - *Io, che dal Ciel cader* 16 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Sinfonia a 6 II* 17 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Or che le due grand'Alme* 18 - Giovanni de Bardi - *Miseri abitor*

[play](#)

Intermedio V - Arion and the Dolphin:

19 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Io, che l'onde raffreno* 20 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *E noi, con questa bella diva* 21 - Girolamo Fantini - *Fanfara* 22 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Sinfonia a 6 III* 23 - Jacopo Peri - *Dunque fra torbide onde* 24 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Lieti solcando il mare*

Intermedio VI - Jove's Gift to Mortals of Rhythm and Harmony:

25 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *Dal vago e bel sereno* 26 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *O quale, O qual risplende* 27 - Emilio de Cavalieri - *Godi, turba mortal* 28 - Cristofano Malvezzi - *O fortunato giorno* 29 - Emilio de Cavalieri - *O che nuovo miracolo*

Andrew Parrott - Taverner Consort, Choir & Players: Tessa Bonner (soprano), Emma Kirkby (soprano), Emily Van Evera (soprano), Nigel Rogers (tenor); Kate Eckersley, Twig Hall, Evelyn Tubb (sopranos) Mary Nichols, Caroline Trevor (altos); John Mark Ainsley, Simon Berridge, Joseph Cornwell, Rogers Covey-Crump, Philip Daggett, Charles Daniels, John Dudley, Paul Elliott, Philip Fryer, Andrew King, Rufus Müller, Leigh Nixon, Mark Padmore, Angus Smith (tenors); Jeremy Birchall, Stephen Charlesworth, Alan Ewing, Simon Grant, Donald Greig, John Milne, Bruce Russell, Richard Savage, Julian Walker, Richard Wistreich (basses);

Rachel Bevan, Jill Crozet, Sally Dunkley, Carol Hall, Nicola Jenkin, Rachel Platt, Jane Seymour

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(sopranos); Terry Anderson, Catherine Woolf (altos); Philip Cartledge, Christopher Gunnes (tenors); Stephen Jackson, Philip Lawson, Simon Littlewood, Ken Roles, Francis Steele (basses); John Holloway (violin), Judy Tarling (viola), Pavlo Beznosiuk (lira da braccio), Nicholas Hayley (lira da braccio), Erin Headley (lirone), Wendy Gillespie (tenor viol), Mark Caudle (bass viol), Richard Boothby (bass viol), Julia Hodgson (bass viol), William Hunt (great bass viol), Alison Crum (great bass viol), Francis Baines (violone), Lisa Beznosiuk (flute), Bruce Dickey (cornet), Michael Harrison (cornet), Charles Toet (trombone), Richard Cheetham (trombone), Trevor Herbert (trombone), Martin Pope (bass trombone), John Toll (organ, regal), Lucy Carolan (organ), Alan Wilson (organ), Andrew Lawrence-King (psaltery, harp), Imogen Barford (psaltery), Frances Kelly (harp), Nigel North (chitarrone), Jakob Lindberg (chitarrone, bass lute), Paula Chateauneuf (chitarrone), William Badley (tenor lute, cittern), Hugh Cherry (tenor lute), David Miller (tenor lute), Paul O'Dette (tenor lute), Christopher Wilson (tenor lute, guitar), Timothy Crawford (bass lute), Martin Eastwell (bass lute), Tom Finucane (bass lute, guitar), James Tyler (mandora), Robert Howes (tambourine), Michael Laird (trumpet), Michael Harrison (trumpet)

This is an expansive full rendition of the set of musical interludes composed to climax the wedding celebrations of Ferdinando de' Medici and Christine de Lorraine. The extravagant original performance engaged some of the most famous musicians of the era, perhaps headlined by some of the composers who would go on to compose the first oratorios & operas. In this case, it was Cavalieri who had charge of the overall musical conception, leading to some vicious arguments among the different composers. This series of musical scenes, originally designed as "intermedios" or intermissions to a stage drama must be seen as one of most important immediate precursors to opera. The score was published in 1591 by Cristofano Malvezzi, including several notes on instrumentation. ---www.medieval.org

This recording is one of such importance that I honestly believe anyone who likes early music needs to own it. Suffice it to say, that if I were to lose my copy, I would immediately pay what it took to replace it (\$75 according to the Amazon page).

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A little background; in 1589 Ferdinando de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, married Catherine de' Medici, the queen mother of France. As part of the celebrations a play was mounted; *La Pellegrina* by Bargagli. Surrounding the five acts there were inserted six "intermedi" which were musical interludes to contrast with the drama. They were devised on a huge scale both musically and visually. Extravagant costumes and machines were employed to portray various creatures, people and gods. The music consisted of florid arias, instrumental sinfonias and grand madrigals. A huge team of musicians collaborated to pull this off. Marenzio and Malvezzi wrote the bulk of the music, with other contributions by Cavalieri (the musical director/stage manager), Peri, Caccini, and Bardi (director).

What these men created was the most splendid set of intermedi ever seen, and thankfully it was published at the time, which was unusual. The music itself is not particularly stunning, but all very tuneful and pleasant. Some of the solo recitatives (or arias if you like) are interesting in that the shockingly difficult ornaments were published too, so we have a rare example of *ex tempore* vocal technique. Also the number of musicians used was huge, all with the aim of making a grand noise for such a grand occasion.

In the mid 1980s Andrew Parrott had the desire to record these intermedi, but it was a costly, and slightly risky proposal. I have read that EMI made him record a "Best of the Baroque" instrumental disc first to try and offset the expense of recording the large and esoteric "La Stravaganza dei Medici" disc. How ironic that the one EMI hesitated on is the much more important recording.

Parrott assembled what is surely the largest number of musicians that have ever performed as the Taverner Consort, Choir and Players; 90 in all (50 singers and 40 instrumentalists). There are some real stars of the early music scene here, and the end result is glorious in the extreme. Some of the pieces require the whole ensemble to participate, and they make for some spine-tingling moments. As I said earlier, the music is especially profound or clever, but the vastness of the sonority, and the utter commitment and talent the everyone brings makes this a musical experience the is unique, and fantastically exciting. I love every moment, and can find no fault in any part of the whole production.

At the risk of running out of superlatives, this is a recording of spectacular grandeur, showcasing some stunning playing and singing (Emma Kirkby blows my mind on the first track), and a valuable addition to the collection of any music fan, and required listening for lovers of early music. I don't care how, but make sure you know this recording before you die. ---Scott, amazon.com

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