

## Porpora - Or Sì m'Avveggiò, oh Amore (2008)

Wpisany przez bluesever  
Środa, 13 Lipiec 2016 12:26 -

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Or sì m'avveggiò, oh Amore . . . . . [11'43] 1 *Recitative Or sì m'avveggiò, oh Amore* . . . . . [1'17] 2 *Aria Dolce pace, lieta calma* . . . . . [5'28] 3 *Recitative Più che nel ciel tra' Numi* . . . . . [1'18] 4 *Aria S'asconde Amor nel volto* . . . . . [3'31]  
Credimi pur che t'amo . . . . .  
. . . . . [13'58] 5 *Sinfonia Presto* . . . . .  
. . . . . [0'45] 6 *Andante, e spiritoso* . . . . . [1'30] 7  
*Allegro* . . . . . [1'24] 8 *Recitative Credimi pur che t'amo* . . . . .  
. . . . . [0'54] 9 *Aria Sì, sì, t'adoro ma* . . . . . [3'55] 10 *Recitative Sarò pur nell'amarti* . . . . . [0'51] 11 *Aria Amami e non languir* . . . . .  
[4'30] Già la notte  
s'avvicina (La pesca) . . . . . [11'38]  
12 *Aria Già la notte s'avvicina* . . . . . [4'59] 13 *Recitative Lascia una volta, oh Nice* . . . . . [1'48] 14 *Aria Non più fra sassi algosi* . . . . . [4'44]  
Or che d'orrido Verno . . . . . [17'59]  
15 16 *Sinfonia* . . . . . [1'35] [1'02] 17 *Recitative Or che d'orrido Verno* . . . . . [1'32] 18 *Aria Lungi dal ben che s'ama* . . . . . [7'57] 19  
*Recitative Pur fra tanta mia pena* . . . . . [1'06] 20 *Aria Nocchier che mira* . . . . .  
. . . . . [4'43]  
Elena Cecchi Fedi (soprano) Alessandro Palmeri (cello) Carlo Ipata (flute) Auser Musici  
Carlo Ipata (conductor)

'This outstanding disc not only displays unequivocal proof of Porpora's exceptional skill ... but also provides some of the most genuinely enjoyable and captivating performances of eighteenth-century vocal music I have heard on disc for a very long time ... these are brilliantly written recitatives, clearly, but with Fedi's clarity of diction and conviction of delivery, they are transformed into something truly exceptional. Yet to single out the recitatives, when the instrumental colouring of the arias and sinfonias is so magical, is to do a major disservice both to Porpora and to Auser Musici ... here is music-making of such infectious happiness that this disc is destined to be a constant companion for the foreseeable future' (International Record Review)

'Soprano Elena Cecchi Fedi's singing is both beautiful and vocally deft, and the playing of the Italian group Auser Musici is emotionally responsive and dramatically alert to match. The opening cantata, Or sì m'avveggiò, oh Amore, with its rocketing cello obligato, is particularly fine' ---The Irish Times, [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk)

Italian period instrument group Auser Musici was founded in 1997, making the rounds of smaller European labels such as Tactus, Agorà Musica, and Symphonia before finally landing with Hyperion, with whom it is now exclusive. Porpora: Cantatas for Soprano is the group's third Hyperion release and it visits a key area of output in the work of a major figure of the Baroque who remains little celebrated, Neapolitan composer Nicola Porpora. Residing in London from 1733 to 1736, Porpora's run as composer with the Opera of the Nobility was viewed in its time as one of the rare instances when George Frederick Handel had serious competition of some sort. Handel must have been delighted that the rival Opera of the Nobility ran into money problems and went belly up in 1737, sending Porpora back to Naples. Rather than holding court at a given location, like Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig or Georg Philipp Telemann in Hamburg, Porpora moved around a lot, which is one reason why it has proven so difficult for history to catch up to him.

Indeed, the four chamber cantatas featured here come from four different eras from within Porpora's retinue; Credimi pur che t'amo originated in Naples and dates from 1712. Or sì m'avveggiò, oh Amore also comes from Naples, but was more likely written in the 1720s. Già la notte s'avvicina (La pesca) made its bow in a deluxe printed edition in London in 1735, and Or che d'orrido verno could date from the 1720s or even as late as the 1740s, which for Porpora was mostly spent in Venice; stylistically, it does at least sound more Venetian. The last named work is clearly the strongest of these four cantatas, with bold harmonies, driving rhythms, and imaginative interplay between the strings and the two flute parts. It's a real workout for soprano soloist Elena Cecchi Fedi, as well, as she has to contend with passagework that's at least as difficult as what the winds have to play and often mirrors those parts; unlike some of Telemann's secular cantatas, none of these works are meant for amateurs. Fedi has an attractive, wine-dark soprano voice, and sings all of these unfamiliar works well despite some hesitation in approach to an ornament here and there.

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Porpora: Cantatas for Soprano is a little off Hyperion's established standard in some respects; little defects such as a stray squeak on a violin string would have been gone back and done over in Ted Perry's day, whereas here they are left in. Likewise, the disc is rather short at 55:20; it easily could have another cantata, and with Porpora there are at least another 125 to choose from. Nevertheless, there is every reason to want to continue to support Hyperion and some just simply cannot get enough Baroque solo cantatas; Porpora: Cantatas for Soprano easily fills the need. ---Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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