When we thought of making a concert program together, we knew from the start that we wanted to focus on music from 17th-century Italy, our repertoire of choice. No further discussion was needed: we had already reached an unspoken consensus. Lovers of 17th-century Italian music share an almost spiritual je ne sais quoi which brings them together—and sets them apart. We have a tacit understanding.
But what explains the allure of this music? Why is it so remarkable, so distinct? The 17th century was a period of exploration, invention and research across disciplines, including in music. Vocal music, which had long dominated the spotlight, began to make way for technically complex instrumental forms that better suited this new paradigm—a music centered around virtuosity and lyricism. Thus came the title of this program, *Basta parlare*, which means "enough said"!

It could have been named "Enough Singing"; perhaps a more suitable title, at least on the surface. However, while this concert does explore the rich instrumental repertoire of the 17th century, we are only omitting the spoken word—not lyricism itself. We simply believe that we can still sing . . . through the violin and the recorder!

**DARIO CASTELLO** [1602?-1631]
Sonate Quarta, Decima, Duodecima

We know very little about Castello's life, and what little information we do have consists mostly of speculation rather than fact. However, it is generally understood that he spent the most formative years (if not the entirety) of his life in Venice. Indeed, his prolific output reflects the influence of his contemporaries—performers and composers alike—who lived in Venice at the dawn of the 17th century. In 1614, Monteverdi was appointed choirmaster of the illustrious Saint Mark's Basilica, where his flair and bold innovations inspired other composers in his circle to emulate him. Castello, who himself held positions at Saint Mark's, including *Musico della Serenissima Signoria di Venetia* and *Capo di Compagnia de musichi d'instrumenti da fiato*, was likely directly influenced by Monteverdi.
Furthermore, we know definitively that he championed this "new" music, the title of the collection from which the sonatas of this album are taken being *Sonata concertate in stil moderno*. Castello intentionally composed in this "modern" style, and proudly stood by it. His compositions employ a vast range of instruments, as demonstrated by three of his sonatas featured on this album: his *Trio Sonata* for two soprano instruments and basso continuo (No. 4), and his *Sonate a tre*, written for a trio configuration with two melody instruments and one leading bass instrument (Nos. 10 and 12). Castello does not specify which melody instruments these pieces are written for; we know that he most likely played many instruments, including the violin and certain wind instruments, but he is much more specific in his writing for bass instruments. He often employs the bassoon, the trombone, or a bowed string instrument, i.e. the viola or violetta.

A master of musical dialogue, Castello allows for much structural freedom in his compositions, often alternating between short passages with contrasting tempos or varying in style or in metre. He also uses a range of virtuoso techniques or the kinds of tremolo and vibrato effects previously observed in the music of Biago Marini, in 1617.
In his duets, Castello creates an interplay between instruments that exchange motifs and one up each other with displays of lyricism and virtuosity. In his *Sonata Quarta*, Castello begins with a walking bass over an ostinato rhythm, recalling the vocal works of his peers, such as Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Grandi.
As Les Barocudas, we view the music of Dario Castello as a stalwart of the 17th century. It possesses intensity, freedom—and overwhelming passion. To play this music is to experience pure joy; condensed within it is the essence of masterful Venetian music from the first half of the 17th century.

**GIOVANNI LEGRENZI** [1626–1690]
La Cornara
In 1655, when his *Sonate a due, e tre*—the collection which contains "La Cornara"—was published, Legrenzi was the resident organist at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo (which was a part of the Republic of Venice at the time). This highly coveted position was previously held by Tarquinio Merula; three of his pieces appear on this
album as well. Later in 1655, Legrenzi resigned from his post as organist in Bergamo to accept a new position as choirmaster of the Accademia dello Spirito Santo, in Ferrara. Legrenzi named his sonatas after places within Italy or prominent Italian families—including the influential Cornaro family in Venice after whom "La Cornara" is named.
A masterful composer who achieved recognition in his own lifetime, Legrenzi wrote and published a remarkable volume of musical works, including 19 operas, oratorios, as well as several collections of instrumental music. Before his death, he held the prestigious choirmaster position at Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice. Though little known in the modern era, his music was widely played during his lifetime and inspired composers such as Bach and Vivaldi.
We chose this sonata after falling in love with its opening theme. The piece, which begins with a sturdy D minor triad, quickly loses its calm with a descending chromatic line in the lead upper voice—giving it an entirely different character, plaintive and disoriented. The theme repeats several times throughout the entire first movement and gives it an offbeat charm which we, Les Barocudas, are all about.

**GIOVANNI BATTISTA GRILLO** [15??–1622]
Canzon Sestadecima

Many sources indicate that Grillo lived a significant portion of his life in Austria before moving to

Venice to become the organist at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in 1612, and then at Saint Mark's Basilica in 1619 where Claudio Monteverdi was choirmaster. The two men shared a mutual respect, with Monteverdi considering Grillo to be a genius organist—or in his words, "principalissimo soggetto nella profession" ("the best in the profession"). Grillo maintained positions as organist at San Rocco and San Marco until his death in 1622. In the *Canzon Sestadecima*, written for four instruments, we wanted to highlight Grillo's talent as an organist by having the two bass lines played on the organ rather than on two separate instruments. This piece is divided into two parts, the first of which opens with a line by the alto, repeated a fifth higher by the canto (soprano) following a form typical of the canzones of that era. With its triple time, the second part is similar to a dance. Grillo's music, more traditional and perhaps less progressive than that of his peers, speaks to a rare talent acknowledged by his contemporaries during his lifetime—and which deserves more recognition in the modern era.

**TARQUINIO MERULA** [1594 or 1595-1665]
La Valcharenga, La Pusterla, La Cavagliera

Tarquinio Merula was a violinist, organist and composer of great talent. Before settling in Italy, he worked in Warsaw from 1621 to 1626 as the *Organista di chiesa et di camera* at the court of King Sigismund III of Poland. Upon his return to Cremona, he took a post as choirmaster at the Laudi della Madonna. He maintained numerous positions until his death despite a series of setbacks—including an accusation of impropriety towards his pupils. His prolific output includes both instrumental and vocal music and speaks to his ingenuity. These three canzones "a tre" are taken from his opus 17—a collection of 35 canzones for one or two violins with continuo, or for a trio. As per the customs of that era, they are named after influential figures, fellow musicians or prominent families. Each
is divided into three parts, one of which is a dance in triple time. "La Cavagliera" is noble and proud; "La Pusterla" is a dance with a final section alternating between ternary and binary rhythm. As for "La Valcharenga", we fell in love with its wild form after our very first listen to it. In this canzone, the instruments sing over top of one another in a
weave of textures. From the start, our ensemble found the overcrowded musical score fascinating. Our first reading revealed the composition's strangeness: it appeared quite simply to have too many notes. The dense and heavily ornamented musical lines pile on top of one another, creating a thick texture that borders on cacophony. We found this exuberance charming; it recalls the atmosphere of a packed bar with patrons shouting past one another, never really listening. Strangely, this effect is quite compelling—indeed, music has a way of revealing beauty in chaos!

**BIAGO MARINI** [before 1597-1663]
Sonata Quarta

Trio Sonata, sopra “La Monica”

A native of Brescia, Marini grew up in a musical family. His father was a theorbo player in the court of Warsaw around 1580, and his uncle was a composer. As for Marini himself, he was employed as a violinist at Saint Mark’s Basilica in 1615 under Monteverdi. A virtuoso violinist, he lived a long life (he was at least 66 years old at the time of his passing), married three times, fathered eight children and went from one job to the next before finally returning to Venice, where he died in poverty.
His music speaks to a deep creativity: Marini avoided predictable formulas and enjoyed pushing the limits of technique while conserving a vivid lyricism, even among compositions that were strictly instrumental. His *Sonata. Quarta* for violin is significant for being one of the first pieces to use double stops. In this sonata, every section— every phrase—brings a whirlwind of emotions. The *Sonata for two violins, sopra “La Monica”* is written as a theme and variations; it invokes popular French folklore of the era, namely “La Monica”. Here, a bass line built entirely on the plucked strings of the harpsichord creates a refined texture from this simple theme, which sticks firmly in your mind.

**FRANCESCO ROGNONI TAEGGIO** (second half of the 16th century-1626?)
Diminutions after *Vestiva i colli* (madrigal by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina)

Roman composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina—known as one of the foremost masters of counterpoint during the Renaissance—wrote numerous sacred vocal works, including more than 105 masses and 250 motets. His madrigals alone are a testament to the composer’s masterful ability to express through music the pictural and pastoral elements popular at the time. This is certainly true of *Vestiva i colli*, a madrigal based on a sonnet
by Ippolito Capilupi which invokes springtime, redolent of the sweetest garland of flora and greenery growing fragrantly upon the hills all across the countryside. This madrigal was reprinted and imitated countless times; it is known as a particular inspiration for composer Francesco Rognoni Taeggio. He was the son of composer, violinist and theoretician Riccardo Rognoni, the latter of whom published *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire terminatamente* in 1592, a work exploring the art of the diminution, whereby melodic variations are embellished by dividing long notes into shorter rhythmic values. In 1620, his son Francesco published a work in the same style, *Selva de varii passaggi*, which features vocal and instrumental ornamentation as well as embellished versions of other well-known pieces. Our version of *Vestiva i colli*, which appears on this album, is drawn from the same collection; a virtuosic, expressive rendition that features the instrumental soloist adapting the soprano voice from the original madrigal. One can imagine Rognoni himself performing one of the most convincing examples of these diminutions, given that the writer Girolamo Borsieri considered him to be an excellent flautist and violinist. With this piece, we come to the realization that, although there has certainly been “enough said,” instrumental music from the

dawn of the baroque era is in fact quite similar to the vocal music of the previous century!

Une jeune fillette (Marie Nadeau-Tremblay, 1991-)

From the very first time that I heard this melody, I felt immensely compelled by its soft, gentle sadness. A girl is pleading to not be sent to the monastery and be made a nun.

*Une jeune fillette de noble cœur,*
*Plaisante et joliette de grand' valeur,*
*Outre son gré on l'a rendue nonnette*
*Cela point ne luy haicte dont vit en grand' douleur.*

[First strophe from the 1576 publication of the song in a version from Jehan Chardavoine.]

This simple folk tune, known in Italy as Sopra la Monica, was popular throughout Christian Europe from the 15th century until the 18th, and was used by many composers, Marini or Böddecker, to name a couple. Here, I offer my own version of the melody and its variations. Following my own intuition, and influenced by my own cultural heritage, one can find moments where the rhythm of a variation is played in triplets, strongly reminiscent of Quebec folkloric fiddling tradition.


Translated by Huei Lin