AULICUS CLASSICS

ALC 0043

Carlo Farina Mantovano

Capriccio Stravagante
Pavane | Gagliarde | Arie Franzesi | Balletti | Volte

Ensemble Concerto Claudia Combs *violin* | Massimo Percivaldi *viola* | Roberto Gini *tenor cello*
Marco Angilella *violone* | Sara Dieci *harpsichord and organ* | *Direction* Roberto Gini

1. Pavana tertia a 4	5:10
2. Gagliarda prima a 4	1:28
3. Volta prima a 4	1:05
[Primo] Libro delle Pavane Gagliarde […] (Dresden 1626)	
4. Pavana tertia a 4	6:15
[Secondo Libro] Ander Theil Newer Paduanen (Dresden 1627)	
5. Pavana tertia a 4	6:29
6. Pavana quinta a 4	6:18
7. Aria franzesa seconda	1:24
8. Pavana sesta a 4	6:08
Il Terzo Libro […] In Dresda alle spese dell'istesso Autore (1627)	
9. Volta prima a 4	1:37
10. Gagliarda prima a 4	1:10
11. Volta tertia a 4	1:38
Il Quarto Libro delle Pavane, Gagliarde […] In Dresda (1628)	
12. Pavana prima a 4	6:14
13. Gagliarda seconda a 4	1:51
14. Balletto secondo a 4	4:38
Fünffter Theil Newer Pavanen, Gagliarden [...] Gedruckt zu Dreßden (1628)	
15 CAPRICCIO STRAVAGANTE	18:16
[Secondo Libro] Ander Theil… (1627)	

Total Time: 69:41

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Carlo Farina's language makes use of models that had already been tried and tested during the second Renaissance, but it is innovative on an aesthetic level, since within them he displays a very strong lexical and expressive identity. The main features of Farina's work well describe his frequentation of the different schools and musical languages that he had the good fortune to practice, sharing the music stand with the most diverse origins musicians. In total harmony with his German contemporaries, he nevertheless remained of Italian 'mother tongue' and his five collections represent a very successful synthesis. It can be said that, like any great artist, the Mantuan violinist chose to use old means to announce new ideas, publicly displaying his own poetics. First of all, those of a figurative nature are striking, whether they be the affections that pervade the Pavane or the images of environments, animals, and street instruments in the Capriccio Stravagante: an exceptional page that is most often included in the category of so-called 'program music'. However, a closer look reveals that his intentions are not merely descriptive, but rather narrative.

The Pavana adopted by Farina consists of a true journey into the affections, which is accomplished through a succession of loci, the rhetorical figures of sound discourse; their diversified identity in the fixed tripartite model leads into the outer world of a humanised landscape, into the inner world of melancholic contemplation, a malady with which the entire seventeenth century was affected. Another peculiarity of these books lies in the short time span of their publication. Farina was roughly between 25 and 30 years old and it is unlikely that he composed the music much earlier, both because of his young age and because it belongs to a German tradition assimilated and elaborated in particular by Scheidt and Schein. They were probably composed during his stay in Dresden, between 1625 and 1628, and condense his entire oeuvre as a composer, probably concentrated during those two or three years. There is a spiritual growth that could be described as a kind of Gradus ad Parnassum, or simply as a process of research in which he re-invents the form of the Pavana from time to time, but always in greater depth.

In Pavana Terzia (Book 1) the violin's voice in the lower-middle register makes the writing so compact as to blur the distinction of the different parts in a consort sound, while in the more 'explicit' Pavana Terzia (Book 2) the violin breaks away and tackles diminished passages, and the prosodic articulation arranges a sort of multi-layered narrative.

After a liberating Volta rhythm, a brief aside with a suspended cadence shows us “La Chitarra Spagniola”, “sonata levando il Violino dalla spalla, e mettendolo sott’il fianco sonando con le dite, conforme alla Chitarra istessa” (“sonata by taking the Violin from the shoulder, and placing it under the side, playing with the fingers, in conformity with the Guitar itself”).
It is an instrument that plays mostly perfect chords of simple harmonies, but punctuated by dance rhythms produced by the strokes of the hand; here it is portrayed accompanying an aria similar to the Folia. With the guitar silent, the landscape turns to dusk and the Capriccio draws to a close. It is a slow Pavana that leads us to a conclusion that is perceived by a sighing rhythm on a long descending progression (Adagio first and Sempre più Adagio then), in which the repeated notes slow down and suspend themselves on a plagal cadence, used in the Amen, which here does not resolve on its first degree but is lost in a measure of silence, indicated with pauses, lacking the crown that usually marks the last note.
A finale that leaves us in the uncertainty of something far away.
The interpretations of this conclusion are open, but if we conceive of listening to the Capriccio as reading a landscape, then the scene seems to end in the West, where the Sun sets, in the rays of a waning star whose luminosity, however, pervades the whole of the past. The suspended cadence, with the silence evoked by Farina, may therefore represent the presence of something invisible but present, in this waning light “sempre più adagio”, as happens in nature.
We can thus also associate this ending with at least two compositions with a battle theme: the “Lamento per I morti” which closes John Jenkins’ Newark Siege (1646), and the Lamento der Verwundten Musquetier (the Wounded Musketeer) in Biber’s Battalia à 10 (1673). One can therefore assume that this extended landscape in which many things of everyday life are represented (war and death were, until not so long ago, alas frequent) ends with the Lamento, a topos of 17th century instrumental music. After all, isn’t Monteverdi’s Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda also a Battalia that ends with death and weeping?

Roberto Gini e Sara Dieci

The Pavana Quinta (Book 3) is distinguished from the very first moments by its ostinato bass, in which the same intervals of the second are repeated twice (A-B and then G-A): a stylistic feature sometimes associated with the tolling of bells in pieces of funereal inspiration, but which here offers the cue for virtuoso walks along the two extreme lines of the score. In the third part of the Pavana Sesta (Book 3) the solo violin part, with dotted notes and passages on the fundamental chords, is immediately followed by an ascending figure in duet with the viola and a steep descent on the basso spezzato fading towards a great final conciliation. In the Pavana Prima (Book 5) the composition is dominated by the alternating flows of ascending and descending movements in all parts. Pavana Terza (Book 3) never stops, it is restless, wandering. The tactus invites a greater pulsation that extends the composition in a duration proportionate to the others. The end is impressively rendered by the fall of the violone that traces an irregular line of almost two octaves of extension towards the low note on the dominant degree.
The prevalence of dance forms in Farina’s music is mainly motivated by his experience in Mantua: the Gagliarda, which according to various coeval testimonies is a noble, elegant, grave and affectionate dance; the Volta, whirling and with a more pronounced pacing; the Aria Franzesa, a short, more melodious page, where the upper part is a true independent song and whose writing recalls, in terms of style, rhythm and ligatures two by two, Claudio Monteverdi’s Scherzi musicali (1607); Il Balletto, the title used by Monteverdi for the Scherzo Musicale De la Bellezza le dovute lodi, which resembles Farina’s piece in its opening rhythms, is divided into prolapses (changes of tempo to ternary) that determine its sections.

Capriccio Stravagante

The Italian Panlexic under the heading 'Capriccio' reads: "Fantasy, bizarre thought, whimsy, bizarreness, invention: inventum, argutia, [...]. Go at a whim. In Fine Arts: far di capriccio = to work of one's own invention, without example, without reward to the true or natural […]. In Music: Fugato composition, not made according to the strict rules. A kind of free musical fantasy, without regular conduct".

The dictionary already offers a comprehensive explanation of the term and clearly renders the spirit and intention of a musical composition that cannot be ascribed to any 'formed' genre, to which the adjective Stravagante gives the fantastic style to which the piece belongs. It can be seen as a kind of intersection between instrumental music and landscape painting with figures, and to the extemporaneousness of street theatre: Farina does not create a catalogue of simple picturesque effects, but narrates a broad landscape, reminiscent of the Flemish, in which figures and characters are concentrated, representing a pictorial and symbolic narrative.

After an entrance in the form of the Balletto Alemanno which sets a well-defined context, a blind man appears with "La Lira" or hurdy-gurdy, played "Lirsando, come fanno li Orbi overo Ciechi", "Il Pifferino" "suonato conforme il Flautino ma sonando la mità più sotto al scannello & più forte" ("played in accordance with the Flautino but playing the mità lower down the scannello & louder") and "La Lira variata", faster and in an airy dance tempo.

After two refrains in the form of the Corrente-Balletto "Qui si battute con il legno del Archetto sopra le corde", notes "battute [...] come fanno li Tamburini, cioè non bisogna lasciar fermar troppo ma parar via di lungo" ("beats [...] as the Tamburini do, i.e. you must not let them stop too long but parry away at length"), followed by an interlude that on repeated thematic particles (formulas recognisable in much of the history of music) dissolves into a liquefied harmony that concludes ever more slowly.

This is followed by a fast piece in the Volta rhythm and two solemn measures introducing "La Trombetta" and "Il Clarino". These two effects, characteristic of military squillas, are seamlessly joined by "La Gallina" and "Il Gallo", almost as if Farina wanted to mock the horror of the Thirty Years' War that bloodied Europe in which he too found himself, in the free fantasy of his wandering gaze, across the painted canvas.

A Volta rhythm preludes "Il Flautino pian piano" "sonato con leggiadria strascinando cioè che si suona pianino sott al scannello del violino solo un mezzo dito discosto". The following Forte has the character of certain Pavanes in which the violin launches itself into solo passages, continuing in a new ternary movement combined with a Pavana tempo, which here slows down and, passing through harmonic ambiguities, settles down more and more announcing "Il Tremolo". According to the indication "Il Tremolo và sonato solamente facendo tremar il pulso della mano dell'Archetto" ("The Tremolo should be played only by making the pulse of the bow's hand tremble"). It is an effect that in later times would express disturbance or pain (such as Buxtehude's Klag-Lied Muss der Tod); Farina intends it to imitate the tremolo register of the organ, which in turn imitates the tremolar della voce, as the vibrato of singers was called.

The refrains separating the figures often take the form of Volta bipartita, such as the one that, after Il Tremolo, precedes the "Fifferino della Soldatesca" "sonato con strascini", that is, dragging the bow held on the string near the bridge with rapid arches two by two in imitation of the te-re te-re articulation.

A brief ternary episode introduces "Il Gatto" "sonato facendo morir quelle note cioè portar la mano indietro à poco alla volta" ("played making those notes die, that is, bringing the hand back a little at a time"). The title is generic, since there are four cats: one kitten and three big cats, who are increasingly insistent until "le semicrome vengono sonate disgratiatamente alla peggio […] come fanno li Gatti quando scappono via" ("the semiquavers are played disgracefully at their worst [...] as cats do when they run away"). The felines give way to a view of Pavana-Corrente in time, followed by "Il Cane" which "vien sonato all'incontrario del Gatto, portando la mano sempre innanzi furiosamente" ("is played in reverse to the Cat, always furiously bringing his hand forward").

A solitary dog starts the bickering, to which the others respond in an agitated dogfight. Three sections follow: the first, Pavana with drawings that echo the others in the book, followed by a tempo by Corrente. These are joined by a third episode marked by the rhetorical figure of Aposiopesi (Reticentia-Interruptio): interruption of sentences with silences to arouse affections such as tension, doubt, uncertainty or sighs.