The Virtuoso
Handel

Chicago Baroque Ensemble
John Mark Rozendaal, director
with Patrice Michaels, soprano
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

1. Non saria poco from “Atalanta” (6:28)
   transcribed for flute and strings

Cantata: Un’ alma innamorata (17:00)
2. Recitative: Un’ alma innamorata (0:25)
3. Aria: Quel povero core (8:08)
4. Recitative: E pur benche egli veda (0:23)
5. Aria: Io godo, rido e spero (5:37)
6. Recitative: In quanto a me ritrovo (0:19)
7. Aria: Ben impari come se ama (2:05)

8. Sventurato godi, o core abbandonato (7:14)
   from “Floriodante”
   transcribed for harpsichord solo

Cantata: Chi rapì la pace al core? (8:39)
9. Aria: Chi rapì la pace al core? (3:32)
10. Recitative: Figlio d’un fabbro, e amore (0:35)
11. Aria: Pupilla lucente (4:32)

Sonata in C for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord (13:08)
12. Adagio (4:28)
13. Allegro (2:30)
14. Adagio (3:10)
15. Allegro (2:50)

Cantata: La Lucrezia (18:48)
16. Recitative: O Numi eterni! (0:55)
17. Aria: Già superbo del mio affanno (5:16)
18. Recitative: Ma voi forse nel Cielo (0:51)
19. Aria: Il suol che preme (3:46)
20. Recitative: Ah! che ancor nel abisso (1:30)
21. Arioso: Alla salma infedel (4:02)
22. Recitative: A voi, padre, consorte (0:52)
23. Arioso: già nel seno (0:41)
24. Recitative: Sento ch’ il cor si scuote (0:52)

25. Spera si mio Caro from “Admetus” (7:08)
   transcribed for flute and strings

PATRICE MICHAELS, soprano
CHICAGO BAROQUE ENSEMBLE John Mark Rozendaal, director
Both in his own time and after his death, Handel's high reputation as a composer has rested mainly on the grandly stirring gestures of his most public works: the operas and oratorios he composed for the theaters of Georgian London. Yet Handel's œuvre includes a substantial body of chamber music, including some of the most satisfying and beautiful secular music of the period. The works selected for this disc come from a variety of sources; they include works created as vocal chamber music as well as operatic excerpts adapted for small-scale instrumental presentation.

The earliest works on our program are the three cantatas, all dating from Handel's Italian sojourn of 1706–1709. During his stay in Italy, Handel produced at least forty solo cantatas, most of them scored for soprano and continuo — a body of work that represents the zenith of an important genre in Italian music. Between 1650 and the end of the Baroque era, Italian composers wrote dozens of such works to fill an apparently insatiable demand. Alessandro Scarlatti composed over 600.

Marc’ Antonio Cesti satirized the craze in a mock cantata titled “Aspetate, addesso canto!” (“Wait! I’m Singing Now!”):

Everyone is looking for texts, all women want them . . . Ladies, nuns, old maids, wives, widows, female relations, public women, private ones, princesses, damsels; I don’t say which ones; enough only that so, so many want fantastic stuff and don’t know how to sing fa la la la la . . . Some ask for canzonets and some want recitatives, some sacred, some lascivious, and some full of tales; you assure each one that these are verses and not gold pieces; if they wanted so many coins even all Peru could not satisfy!

Singing in Italy must have had a social function similar to the role that athletics plays in our society today: a popular, stimulating pursuit for amateurs, a medium for self-improvement, a high-stakes career track that could take a lucky few out of the ghettos into the most glittering social circles, and a source of wonder and admiration.
for the audiences who relished the awe-inspiring achievements of the pros. The young Handel had the good fortune to enter this intensely vocal culture at the very top of the heap. His entrée into Italian society was through the Medici family; hence his first stop in the peninsula was Florence. It was in Rome, however, that Handel found the most fertile grounds on which to cultivate his musical genius. Handel was housed and patronized there by Marchese Francesco Ruspoli, who introduced him to the Academy of the Arcadians, an influential circle of noblemen and clerics with interests in literary reform and music. At the Academy, Handel’s cantatas were performed by some of the finest musicians in Europe (including Arcangelo Corelli and the soprano Margherita Durastante) and heard by a small audience of highly discerning connoisseurs. These intimate occasions seem to have inspired some of Handel’s most exquisitely refined work. Handel’s cantatas resemble their Italian models in that most of the texts are about love, often with pastoral conceits. A relatively small number of exceptional pieces deal with mythological or historical topics (e.g., La Lucrezia).

In the love cantatas, the texts are often bizarrely abstracted. Personal and situational references are stripped away; the lover and beloved are not named or described. What remains is a narrative in which the characters are hearts, souls, eyes, with all of their Petrarchian significance — subject to the alchemical powers of Love personified as the blind archer god. One can only guess what sorts of sublimations were involved in the production and presentation of such poetry in a circle of persons that included a large number of clergy as well as unmarried men and women.

Livy’s History of Early Rome was one of the most widely read books of the seventeenth century. Its themes of personal heroism in opposing despotism made it a favorite in circles with republican ideals. The book includes the dramatic story of Lucretia, a faithful wife whose rape by Prince Tarquin drove her to suicide and inspired the Romans to depose their monarchy and establish a republic. The tale was a favorite theme of artists, poets, and musicians throughout Europe for centuries, with treatments by St. Augustine, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, Keiser (Handel’s mentor at the Hamburg Opera), Botticelli, and Giambologna, to name only a few. The tale admits innumerable angles for treatment — moral, political, erotic,
psychological. Handel’s cantata is a masterpiece of characterization that involves the audience in a harrowing emotional spiral of grief and rage. The heroine’s initial expression of her sorrow and sense of injustice elicits sympathy that only grows as we follow her progression of appeals to hell for vengeance and fits of self-condemnation, culminating in a hateful suicidal frenzy. The survival of an unusual number of manuscript copies suggests that this cantata was one of Handel’s more famous chamber works during his lifetime.

One of the manuscript sources of Sonata in C Major bears conflicting attributions to Handel and to the Nuremberg organist Johann Michael Leffloth (1705–1731). Both attributions are considered unreliable on stylistic grounds. Regardless of authorship, this charming piece is valued in part for its unusual treatment of the harpsichord in a virtuoso role, something rarely found in chamber music of this period.

The arias “Non saria poco” from Atalanta and “Spera si mio Caro” from Admetus are presented here in transcriptions originally published by the prolific London music printer, John Walsh. Starting in 1739, Walsh became Handel’s exclusive publisher, and produced dozens of prints of the composer’s operas, oratorios, concertos, and chamber music. Some of these publications seem to have had scant supervision by Handel. These offerings were principally designed not for use by professional musicians, but rather for domestic use. As such, they bear testimony to the public’s craving for this music, and the satisfaction listeners had in savoring Handel’s fine airs in the intimacy of a musical household.

The impulse to enjoy the most memorable moments of operas in homemade renditions was not confined to amateurs and “wanna-bes,” however. Handel himself could not resist. The harpsichord transcription of “Sventurato godi, o core abbandonato” from Floriodante comes from an autograph manuscript and represents Handel’s own recasting of the gestures of this moving opera air in his own favored performance medium.
Un’ alma innamorata

2 Recitative
Un’ alma innamorata,
prigoniera d’amore,
vive troppo infelice.
Divien sempre maggiore
il mal, che non intende,
allor nell’ amar schiava si rende.

3 Aria
Quel povero core,
ferito d’amore,
sospira se adira, se vive fedel.
Sia il solo dolore
geloso timore,
le pene e catene martire crudel.

4 Recitative
E pur benche egli veda
morta del suo servir,
la speme istessa
vuole col suo languir
viver con essa.

5 Aria
Io godo, rido e spero,
ed amo piu d’un core,
e so ridir perchè.
Se segue il mio pensiero
un vagabondo amore
cercate voi dov’ è.

6 Recitative
In quanto a me ritrovo
del riso ogni diletto,
se sprezzo dell’ amore
le sue severe leggi, ed il rigore.

A soul in love
is a prisoner of love,
and lives so unhappily,
never realizing
that the misery only worsens
and makes you a slave.

That poor heart,
wounded by love
sighs whether it is angered, or whether it lives faithfully.
Only sorrow, jealous fear,
suffering, constraints
and cruelty await him.

And although he sees
that in his loyalty
Hope herself has perished,
he persists in wanting her
to join him in his suffering.

I enjoy myself, I laugh and I hope,
and love more than one sweetheart,
and I’ll tell you why.
If a wandering love
follows my thoughts,
catch him if you can.

As for me,
I find delight in laughing,
if I disdain the harsh and rigorous
laws of Love.
Aria
Ben impari come se ama
in amor chi vuol goder.
Non ha pari alla mia brama
il rigor del nume arcier.

Learn well the art of loving
if you want to enjoy life:
The rigours of the armed Cupid
are no rival to my desire.

Chi rapì la pace al core?

Aria
Chi rapì la pace al core?
Chi dal sen l’alma rubò?
Ah! lo so, con un guardo fatto dardo,
nume cieco mi piagò.

Who robbed my heart of its peace?
Who ripped my soul from its breast?
Ah, I know that with a single piercing glance
It was the blindfolded god who wounded me.

Recitative
Figlio d’un fabbro, e amore
col ner d’una pupilla
segnò la morte al core,
e perchè suoi trionfi
soffera più superbi e crudeli,
quell’ occhio che fu strale
cangiò Cupido in face funerale.

The son of a blacksmith and of Love,
with the aid of her black eyes
he aimed and mortally wounded my heart,
and to make his triumph
more brazen and more cruel,
Cupid took those eyes that were his arrows
and changed them into a funeral pyre.

Aria
Pupilla lucente,
in stella funesta
amore cangiò.
Così quel splendore,
con empio rigore,
la morte additò.

Those shining eyes,
were changed by Cupid
into my unlucky stars
who, in their splendor,
with cruelest harshness
sentenced me to death.

La Lucrezia

Recitative
O Numi eterni! O stelle!
che fulminate empii tiranni,
impugnate a miei voti
orridi strali voi con fochi tonanti
incenerite il reo Tarquinio e Roma;

Oh eternal Gods! Oh stars
who strike down impious tyrants,
answer my prayers;
fearful lightning with thundering flame,
icinere the guilty Tarquin and Rome.
dalla superba chioma,
omai trabocchi il vacillante alloro,
s'apra il suolo in voragini, si celi,
con memorando esempio,
nelle viscere sue l'indegno — e l'empio.

**17 Aria**

Già superbo del mio affanno,
traditor dell'onor mio
parte l'empio, lo sleal.
Tu punisci il fiero inganno,
del fellon, del mostro rio,
giusto Ciel, parca fatal.

**18 Recitative**

Ma voi forse nel Cielo
per castigar maggior del mio delitto,
state oziosi, o provocati Numi:
se son sorde le stelle,
se non mi odon le sfere,
a voi tremende Deità del abisso mi volgo,
a voi s'aspetta del tradito onor mio
far la vendetta.

**19 Aria**

Il suol che preme,
l'aura che spira
l'empio Romano,
s'apra, s'infetti.
Se il passo move,
se il guardo gira,
incontri larve,
ruine aspetti.

**20 Recitative**

Ah! che ancor nel abisso
dormon le furie, i sdegni e le vendette;
Giove dunque per me non ha saette,
è pietoso l'inferno?
Ah! ch'io già sono in odio al Cielo, ah! dite:

From the proud head
let the waving laurel now be wrest.
Let a chasm open in the earth
as a memorable example,
to swallow the unworthy villain.

Now proud of my sorrow,
the betrayer of my honor
leaves, heartless, disloyal.
Punish the proud liar
the guilty monster, for his felony,
just Heaven, deadly Fate.

But perhaps in Heaven,
to punish my crimes more,
the Gods stand idle;
if the stars are deaf,
if the spheres hear me not,
I turn to you, great God of the abyss,
my betrayed honor awaits
upon your vengeance.

May the earth he treads,
the air he breaths,
the villainous Roman,
open, poison him.

Where he walks,
where he looks,
may demons meet him,
ruin await him.

Ah! Still in the abyss
the furies, rage, and revenge sleep;
Has Jove no thunderbolts for me?
Is hell merciful?
Ah! I am already despised in Heaven, ah! say:
e se la pena non piomba sul mio capo,  
a' miei rimorsi è rimorso il poter  
di castigarmi.

Questi la disperata anima mia puniscan, sì, sì  
Ma il ferro che già intrepido stringo

21 Arioso  
Alla salma infedel porga la pena.

22 Recitativo  
A voi, padre, consorte, a Roma, al mondo  
presento il mio morir;  
mi si perdoni il delitto esecrando  
ond'io macchiai involontaria il nostro onor,  
un'altra più detestabil colpa  
di non m'aver uccisa  
pria del misfatta, mi si perdoni.

23 Arioso  
Già nel seno comincia  
a compir questo ferro  
i duri uffizii;

24 Recitativo  
Sento ch'il cor si scuote  
più dal dolor di questa caduta invendicata,  
che dal furor della vicina morte.

Ma se qui non m'è dato  
castigar il tiranno, opprimer l'empio  
con più barbaro esempio,  
per ch'ei sen cada estinto  
stringerò a danni suoi mortal saetta,  
e furibonda e cruda  
nell'inferno farò la mia vendetta.

Translations by John Mark Rozendaal and Alessandra Visconti
Patrice Michaels has concertized extensively, appearing with noted ensembles including the St. Louis, Atlanta, Milwaukee, San Antonio, Phoenix, and Shanghai Symphonies; the Minnesota Orchestra; Chicago’s Grant Park Orchestra and Music of the Baroque; the Maryland Handel Festival; the Dallas Bach Society; the Chicago Baroque Ensemble; and Boston Baroque. Conductors with whom she has collaborated include Robert Shaw, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Nicolas McGegan, Joseph Silverstein, Andrew Parrott, and Zdenek Macal. Ms. Michaels has sung with opera companies throughout North America including Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Cleveland Opera, Milwaukee’s Florentine Opera, the Tacoma Opera, Colorado’s Central City Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and at the Banff Centre in Canada. A highlight of her 1999–2000 season was a series of concerts in Havana, Cuba where she performed in the International Contemporary Music Festival with Trio Chicago and Friends.

This is Patrice Michaels’ ninth recording for Cedille Records. Her recordings for other labels include Bach’s St. Matthew Passion with Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony for London Records, Mozart’s Requiem on the Amadis Label, and Mozart’s C Minor Mass with Chicago’s Music of the Baroque.
The Chicago Baroque Ensemble was formed in 1993 to perform music of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries on period instruments. To date the Ensemble has produced eight seasons of critically acclaimed, sold-out concerts as well as eight live broadcast concerts on WFMT radio, five commercially released compact discs, educational programs for both musicians and general audiences, and been presented on numerous concert series, including the Boston Early Music Festival and the Howard Mayer Brown Early Music Series at the University of Chicago. Special projects have included collaborations with His Majestie’s Clerkes, The Newberry Consort, recorder virtuoso Aldo Abreu, violinist Rachel Barton, and viola da gambist Mary Springfels. CBE’s programs transport listeners to the cultural centers of early modern Europe and help the audience to share the spirit of the music making. The Chicago Tribune has called the Chicago Baroque Ensemble’s concerts “stylish and caring performances by what has already turned out to be a most accomplished group of period-instrument virtuosi.”

Participating on this recording are Chicago Baroque Ensemble members Anita Miller-Rieder, transverse flute; Jeri-Lou Zike, violin; Susan Rozendaal, viola; John Mark Rozendaal, viola da gamba and cello; and David Schrader, harpsichord.
A VIVALDI CONCERT
Chicago Baroque Ensemble
with Patrice Michaels, soprano
“The Chicago Baroque Ensemble . . . performs on period instruments at a stellar level of artistry and scholarship . . . Soprano Patrice Michaels Bedi . . . lifts the performance to a higher realm. Nothing short of spectacular, she sings virtuoso motets and cantatas with the purity of a child, flies through florid passage-work like a musical acrobat, matches her voice to the pure tone of baroque obbligato instruments and enlivens Italian recitative with the personality of a Mozartean soufflette.” (Cleveland Plain Dealer)

THE WORLD OF LULLY
Chicago Baroque Ensemble
with Patrice Michaels, soprano
“This recording of Lully works and tribute pieces from his students is a treasure . . . Individually and collectively, the Chicago Baroque Ensemble’s passionate playing fills these stately pieces with invigorating spirit. These performances showcase Lully’s well-constructed, elegant, and melodious compositions . . . the operatic pieces [are] enhanced by Patrice Michaels Bedi’s sensuous warm-toned, luxuriant voice. Bedi caresses the French lyrics, adding abundant sparkle to several tracks. All this virtuosity invites repeated listening.” (Early Music America)