



SFCM

SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

San Francisco Conservatory

Baroque Ensemble

**Corey Jamason, Elisabeth Reed,
Marcie Stapp, *directors***

**Francesca Caccini (1587- c. 1640)
and
Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704)**

Annemarie Schubert, *baroque violin*

Eliana Estrada, *baroque violin*

Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*

Mario To, *theorbo and baroque guitar*

Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

Corey Jamason, *harpsichord*

Sunday, November 6, 2022, 2:00 PM
Sol Joseph Recital Hall

Per la più vaga e bella terrena stella
from *La liberazione di Ruggiero*

Francesca Caccini
(1587-c. 1640)

MonaLisa Pomarleanu, *mezzo-soprano*
Annemarie Schubert & Eliana Estrada, *baroque violin*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

Selections from F. Caccini's *Il primo libro delle musiche* (1618)

Io veggio i campi verdeggiar fecondi

Cambria Metzinger, *mezzo-soprano*
Corey Jamason, *harpsichord*

Lasciatemi qui solo

Chea Kang, *soprano*
Mario To, *theorbo*

La pastorella mia

Jaimie Langner, *mezzo-soprano*
Corey Jamason, *harpsichord*

Dov'io credea le mie speranze vere

Hyesoo Kim, *soprano*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

Ch'Amor sia nudo

Leah Finn, *mezzo-soprano*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*
Mario To, *baroque guitar*

Chi desia di saper che cosa è amore

Taylor See, *soprano*
Eliana Estrada, *baroque violin*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Mario To, *baroque guitar*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

-Intermission-

Nive Puer, Opus 7, No. 1 (1677)

Isabella Leonarda
(1620-1704)

Hyesoo Kim, *soprano*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

Spes mundane infide sirenes, Opus 6, No. 2 (1676)

Leah Finn, *mezzo-soprano*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

O quanti risus, Opus 17, No. 1 (1695)

MonaLisa Pomarleanu, *mezzo-soprano*
Corey Jamason, *harpsichord*

Cara Regina, Opus 20, No. 2 (1700)

Taylor See, *soprano*
Annemarie Schubert, *baroque violin*
Eliaana Estrada, *baroque violin*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

Ad arma, o spiritus rebelles, Opus 13, No. 3 (1687)

Jaimie Langner, *mezzo-soprano*
Ashley Troester, *mezzo-soprano*
Corey Jamason, *harpsichord*

Volo Iesum dilectum, Opus 3 (1670)

Chea Kang, *soprano*
Annemarie Schubert, *baroque violin*
Eliaana Estrada, *baroque violin*
Hasan Abualhaj, *baroque cello*
Yunyi Ji, *harpsichord*

A celebration of Francesca Caccini (1587- c. 1640) and Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704)

Francesca Caccini was a star at the Medici court. One of the most fascinating figures from a world that included Galileo and Artemisia Gentileschi, Francesca was a dominant figure as a composer and a performer and teacher for almost three decades. At a young age, Francesca excelled as a singer and as a lutenist and harpsichordist. She was the daughter of Giulio and Lucia Caccini, both singers, Giulio being one of the founders of a new, highly expressive style of singing and composition that emerged in Florence and elsewhere in Italy at the turn of the seventeenth century. She performed in the wedding celebrations held in 1600 in Florence of Marie de Medici and Henry IV of France at the age of thirteen. Henry and Marie subsequently invited her and her parents and sister Settimia to Paris. Francesca was a smash hit, the court inviting her to stay permanently, an invitation most likely scuttled by her father Giulio, a controlling figure who clearly realized his daughter was surpassing him in fame and influence. The family returned to Florence and Francesca continued to thrive. By the mid-1620s, she was the highest paid musician at the Medici court. Celebrated as a teacher as well as composer and performer, she founded her own school, teaching her students (among them her own daughters) voice, instrumental performance and composition. She was astute politically and enormously successful in navigating the difficult terrain of the Medici court, most notably in her important relationship with the powerful Grand Duchess Christine de Lorraine.

Most of her compositions have tragically been lost, despite her being a prolific composer. Surviving works include her first publication of songs (1618) from which almost all of the pieces on today's program are drawn, and an opera, *La Liberazione di Ruggiero*, from which the first selection in today's program originates. The great majority of the dozen theatrical works she wrote have vanished.

In Caccini's music the emotional content and expressivity of the text is the primary focus. She rarely uses intense or shocking dissonance that sometimes is found in other composers of the era, and much of her music at first hearing might appear almost musically conservative. She employs a very subtle and highly individualistic use of dissonance most strikingly through a unique manner of approaching cadences with unusual harmonies on what would ordinarily be simple chords colored by familiar suspensions. She championed the subtle use of an often rarified and discreet ornamentation guided by the sentiment of the text. Her songs address the most profound and universal emotions that we all experience as human beings: joy, loss, love, desire.

There are few accounts of actual specific information about her performance, although there are many general accounts of her expressivity. One can almost

imagine the sheer beauty of her voice: the refinement of her delivery, the sensitivity to the text in every element of the performance, any improvised or composed ‘ornaments’ serving the text. Nothing would have been offered for virtuosic display, this was a world of refinement and style. A stunning performer of her own remarkable music, she frequently accompanied herself. Anna Beer, citing a contemporary in her terrific chapter on Francesca in *Sounds and Sweet Airs* (2016), best describes the impact her performances had on her listeners. Recalling Caccini’s performances, Cristofano Bronzini wrote: “She worked such stunning effects in the minds of her listeners that she changed them from what they had been.”

Born into a prominent family in Novara, Isabella Leonarda entered the Collegio di S Orsola, an Ursuline convent in Novara, at the age of 16 and lived there for almost 70 years, teaching, composing, and rising to the rank of mother superior. We know almost nothing about her personal life. Her first compositions appear in print in 1642 in a set of pieces published by Gaspar Casati, maestro di cappella at the cathedral in Novara. who may have been her composition teacher. From 1642 to her last publication in 1700, she wrote approximately 200 compositions in almost every genre of sacred music. Solo and multiple voiced motets, masses, psalm settings, choral works, both liturgical and non-liturgical works (with texts which may have been written by Leonarda) all display a great expressivity, range, and a completely unique compositional voice. At the age of 73 she was still exploring new forms, publishing a set of trio sonatas and one solo violin sonata with all sorts of innovations of form, texture, structure and harmony, the publication also notable as being the first instrumental sonatas of their kind published by a female composer. While comparisons may be made between her works and those of her contemporaries, a creative freedom can always be felt in her pieces, it is not hard to imagine that in the context of the convent Isabella felt a freedom to experiment. There were numerous composers writing in the convents during this era, mostly notably Isabella’s contemporary, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani. While many works of Leonarda and Cozzolani have been performed in recent years, most of their music awaits rediscovery.

-Corey Jamason

For further reading:

Suzanne G. Cusick: *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (2009)

Anna Beer: *Sounds and Sweet Airs* (2016)

Thank you to Professor Richard Savino for the use of his edition of Francesca Caccini’s *Il primo libro delle musiche*, edited by Ronald James Alexander and Richard Savino (2004).