



STAFFAN LILJAS  
PETER LÖNNERBERG  
JONAS NORDBERG  
MIME BRINKMANN

# BAROQUE **BASS**

ANTHEMS & MOTETS *for* BASS SINGER *and* BASSO CONTINUO



- 1 Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)  
*Ab aeterno ordinata sum* sv262  
(Selva morale e spirituale, 1640)
- 2 Giovanni Picchi (1571–1643)  
*Toccata*  
(The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book)
- 3 Claudio Monteverdi  
*Laudate Dominum* sv197  
(Messa a quattro voci et Salmi, 1651)
- 4 Francesca Caccini (1587–1641?)  
*Laudate Dominum*  
(Primo Libro, 1618)
- 5 Domenico Gabrielli (1651–1690)  
*Ricercar*
- 6 Isabella Leonarda (1620–1704)  
*Salve Regina*  
(Motetti a voce sola e basso continuo, 1684)
- 7 Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)  
*Canzona quinta detta la Tromboncina* F8.06A  
(Il Primo Libro, 1628)
- 8 Henry Purcell (1659–1695)  
*Sing unto God* z52  
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- 9 John Blow (1649–1708)  
*Rise, mighty Monarch*  
(Amphion Anglicus)
- 10 John Blow  
*O Lord thou art my God*  
(The Gostling Manuscript, 1688)
- 11 William Turner (1651–1740)  
*God Reigneth over the Heathen*  
(From *O Sing Praises*, The Gostling Manuscript)
- 12 Henry Purcell  
*The Lord is King* z54  
(The Gostling Manuscript, 1688)

NEW IMPULSES SWEEPED into music in the early 1600s, and they came primarily from Italy. The catalyst was a shift in instrumental configuration towards ‘basso continuo’ – the provision of a musical bass line with implied harmonies by a small, modular group of instrumentalists. Music was reclaimed from the floating polyphony that had prevailed for a century or more. Basso continuo literally freed it up by pinning it down.

Soon enough, Italian music’s most avant-garde form was the solo song with continuo accompaniment. The format used the underlay of a bass line to spring off into greater exploration of emotion and technique, engendering a more personal form of expression that prevails in musical culture today. Church music dominated at the time, but its composers were not averse to exploring the new style in sacred, devotional works even as they conducted the experiments that would soon lead to opera. Before long, the Italian methods found their way to England.

In the late 1990s, the world of the early Italian baroque was revealed to Swedish bass Staffan Liljas in all its magnificence. Sing-

ing Monteverdi’s motet *Ab aeterno ordinata sum*, he ‘fell in love with the rapid changes in mood and expression, the movement from lightning-fast coloratura to long slow passages on a single note, and the rapid scales from the very top of the voice to the lowest notes.’ The same characteristics, he noticed, could be found in whole swathes of English church music from the late 1600s.

During the pandemic of 2020, Liljas began to consider an album exploring the nascent Italian tradition, its manifestation in sacred music and its subsequent blossoming in the English Chapel Royal. The result is this programme of anthems and motets for bass voice using an extended basso continuo group whose members also step out for their own solo spots.

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI was a pivotal figure in the developments mentioned above – a pioneer whose umbilical linking of music to text would unleash the full potential of the basso continuo technique. Church music formed the crucible of Monteverdi’s early experimentation, and in 1613 he was appointed to the job of music director at St Mark’s basilica in Venice.



Monteverdi's setting of the description of creation from the Book of Proverbs, *Ab aeterno ordinata sum*, was published in the composer's 1640 compendium *Selva morale e spirituale*. As for precise dating, the musicologist Peter Holman has posed that the music's style – plunging vocal runs included – indicates contemporaneity with Monteverdi's operatic bass roles of Charon and Pluto, written in the first decade of the 1600s.

GIOVANNI PICCHI, organist at the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice, was a forward-thinking colleague of Monteverdi's. His prowess on keyboard instruments saw his reputation spread to England, where his Toccata was included in the notable Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (most of the collection was reserved for English composers). Picchi's Toccata is a miniature drama in a few chapters, launching with an imposing chord.

Monteverdi's concise but vivid setting of Psalm 117, *Laudate Dominum*, is found in two publications from 1651, one detailing the vocal ornamentation Monteverdi would have expected of his singers and which was ripe for exploration in frolicking vocal lines that joyously implore the people to praise

God. Monteverdi relished the bass line's ability to 'walk' upwards and downwards, as realized in the harmonic sequence that underpins his setting of the doxology 'Gloria patri'.

Womankind's place in society shifted in the early baroque. Linguist, lutenist, singer, poet and pedagogue FRANCESCA CACCINI was the first Italian woman permitted to work as a musician for a substantial stretch of time and by 1607 she had become the best-paid musician in Florence. *Laudate Dominum*, a setting of Psalm 150, was published in her *Primo Libro* of 1618. The music seems possessed of a calmness derived from the repetitive litany of the text, though it does include ornamentation – not least in its resolute final 'Alleluias'.

DOMENICO GABRIELLI was one of its central figures of the renowned Bolognese cello school of the latter 1600s. The composer's set of 7 *Ricercare* – the word suggests a searching work in the manner of a Prelude – are improvisatory in character and appear free from any prescribed form. The sixth *Ricercar* tumbles downward in a stream of semiquavers, but includes a dance-like Allegretto section.

Gabrieli's *Ricercare* were the first solo cello works ever published. ISABELLA LEONARDA has the distinction of being the first woman to have sonatas for violin and basso continuo issued in print. As an abbess, much of her music was sacred even if it carried the same emotive expression as her occasional secular works. Her *Salve Regina* reveals a tendency to respond strongly and with contrast to individual parts of a text while combining declamation and gentility. A particular challenge for the singer is the athletic 'eia ergo' section, with its repetitions of the words 'ad nos'.

GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI met Monteverdi in Venice, and the latter composer would surely have taken an interest in his colleague's 'canzona' style – lively, rhythmic music for instrumental groups, often divided into sections. Frescobaldi was daring in his juxtaposition of keys and in his contrasting of diligent counterpoint with flying passage-work. The lively, eloquent example included here, rendered on cello and organ, is from the composer's *Il Primo Libro*, published in Rome in 1628.

In 1660, England experienced its own cultural revolution in the form of the 'Resto-

ration' of the monarchy. After the puritan regime of Oliver Cromwell, music returned to religious worship and Charles II re-established the Chapel Royal – the monarch's personal choir of men and boys with composers and organists attached. Keen to establish Italian opera in London, Charles also invited composers such as Giovanni Battista Draghi to work in the English capital.

The presence of the Italians was felt in the Chapel Royal, where a golden generation of composers including WILLIAM TURNER, JOHN BLOW and HENRY PURCELL was rising through the choir's ranks. The latter was fast-tracked after his voice broke early, and with Blow would become a major exponent of the Italian-influenced 'verse anthem' in which a solo voice recounts a strophic text in between instrumental ritornellos, often punctuated with bolstering choral statements.

One man's talents induced a flurry of such works. John Gostling was a bass member of the Chapel Royal with an extraordinarily present voice and a huge range. Charles II is supposed to have said of him, 'you may talk as much as you please of your nightingales, but



I have a Gostling who excels them all.' Either way, the singer deposited all the music written for him in private collection known as the Gostling Manuscript. It is the primary source for the English works recorded here.

All those works, therefore, were written to some degree in Gostling's image. In his verse anthem of 1687 *Sing Unto God*, Purcell was sure to explore the full gamut of Gostling's range: its agile upper end, which calls upon all the kingdoms of earth to praise God, down to its depths which could emphatically and onomatopoeically proclaim 'Lo he doth send out his voice'. Purcell's gift for setting words is evident all over the piece, alongside the lilt-ing three-time music of sure Italian influence.

With the Restoration came a tradition for specially written 'odes' set to music by a Westminster composer in celebration of New Year's Day or a royal birthday. As court composer and Westminster Abbey organist, John Blow would come to personify the distinctive style of the late seventeenth-century English school and wrote 25 such odes with elaborate instrumental accompaniment. Once again, *Rise Mighty Monarch* is clearly tailored to Gostling's ability to 'rise and ascend'

but also to 'tumble head long down into the dungeon.' Otherwise, it trades in the sort of straightforward rhythms Charles II is known to have enjoyed.

By the time of Blow's 1688 anthem *O Lord Thou Art my God*, the mood at court had shifted markedly. James II's attempts to return Catholicism to England resulted in the arrest of bishops close to the Chapel Royal who refused to publicly endorse the King's dictates. Gostling, also an ordained vicar, was one of the Chapel Royal singers forced to read out James's *Declaration of Indulgence for Liberty of Conscience* during services.

The musicologist Bryan White has noted timing of Blow's anthem (coming shortly after the arrest of the bishops) and the tone of its text, adjusted from Isaiah, depict 'a people under siege'. Again, the solo part is clearly tailored to Gostling's range. As a court singer and gentlemen of the Chapel Royal, William Turner would have been familiar with the politically difficult situation. Turner was often used as a singer for Blow's odes, but composed too – notably contributing to the so-called 'club anthem' written in collaboration with Blow and Pelham Humfrey. *O Sing*

*Praises* suggests Turner was not immune from the Italian influence either.

Purcell's *The Lord is King*, also thought to have been composed in 1688, pushes Italianate display tailored to Gostling's voice even further. The elaborate, melismatic figures on the word 'glad' alone traverse two octaves. As Robert King has observed, perhaps the most extraordinary testament to Gostling's vocal presence and character is heard in the graphic account of earthly submission before God on the words 'the hills melted like wax.' To end, the soloist even intercepts the choral proclamations of 'Alleluia' with a bolstering display of brilliance.

Andrew Mellor





*Staffan Liljas*

BASS

Staffan Liljas has been active as a soloist in concerts and operas in Sweden as well as abroad since he graduated from the University College of Opera in Stockholm in 2012. In the summer of 2019 he was seen as Polypheme in Handel's *Acis & Galatea* at the rococo theatre Confidencen in Stockholm, a performance which was broadcast on Swedish television that same fall. He has always had a deep interest in early music, and his passion for the early Italian and British masters goes back to his early days as a singer in the 90s. He is presently the chairman of the Swedish Early Music Society. This is his first solo-CD.



*Jonas Nordberg*

THEORBO

Jonas Nordberg is active as a soloist and chamber musician in over 25 countries around the world. He performs in a wide range of settings, including solo recitals, chamber music, contemporary dance and orchestral basso continuo. As a soloist he records for BIS Records. He has a duo with viol player Liam Byrne exploring the French repertoire for viol/theorbo mixed up with contemporary works. With soprano Ruby Hughes and Mime Brinkmann he dives into Italian monody and Elizabethan song. With El Gran Teatro del Mundo he performs chamber music versions of orchestral repertoire. Furthermore he plays with ensembles such as Concerto Köln, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Concerto Copenhagen, Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, the Swedish Radio Symphonic Orchestra amongst others.





*Peter Lönnerberg*  
ORGAN

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Peter Lönnerberg received much of his inspiration for harpsichord and basso continuo playing with Lars Ulrik Mortensen in Copenhagen. He is a regular member of the ReBaroque Ensemble, Stockholm Barock trio, and Tre Kronor Baroque Ensemble. He is in demand with various other Swedish ensembles, and has appeared with several groups in radio and tv. CD recordings include *Telemannia* with ReBaroque (Proprius) and early Italian music for violin and harpsichord together with Laura Vadjon, leader of the Croatian Baroque Ensemble (Aquarius). Peter also has an interest in teaching and has given a number of master classes, as well as being a guest teacher at the Music Academy in Belgrade for several years.



*Mime Brinkmann*  
CELLO

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*“Her phrasing sounds as natural as breathing ...”*  
The Strad.

The cellist Mime Brinkmann has won several prestigious international soloist competitions, among them Musica Antiqua Brugge. She frequently performs in concert houses and festivals in over 40 countries around the world as a soloist and in chamber ensembles. Her CD-productions are frequently reviewed by international magazines such as Gramophone, The Strad and Diapason.

She currently lives in Sweden and teaches the baroque cello at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. In addition, she frequently leads master classes both in Sweden and internationally.





### 1. *Ab æterno ordinata sum*

Ab æterno ordinata sum,  
et ex antiquis antequam terra fieret.  
Nondum erant abyssi et ego iam concepta eram  
necdum fontes aquarum eruperant;  
necdum montes gravimole constiterant:  
ante omnes colles ego parturiebar.  
Ad huc terram non fecerat,  
et flumina et cardines orbis terræ.  
Quando preparabat cælos, aderam;  
quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos.  
Quando æthera firmabat sursum,  
et librabat fontes aquarum;  
quando circumdabat mari terminum suum,  
et legem ponebat aquis ne transirent fines suos;  
quando appendebat fundamenta terræ;  
cum eo eram cuncta componens.  
Et delectabar per singulos dies,  
ludens coram eo omni tempore;  
Ludens in orbe terrarum  
Et delitiæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum.

Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth,  
before he had made the earth with its fields,  
or the first of the dust of the world.  
When he established the heavens, I was there;  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his  
command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside him, like a master workman,  
and I was daily his delight,  
rejoicing before him always,  
rejoicing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the children of man.

Proverbs 8:23

### 3. *Laudate Dominum*

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes,  
laudate eum omnes populi.  
Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius,  
et veritas Domini manet in æternum.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto,  
sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper,  
et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations  
praise him, all ye peoples.  
For his loving kindness has been bestowed upon us,  
and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.

Psalms 117



#### 4. Laudate Dominum

Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius, Laudate eum in firmamento virtutis eius.  
Laudate eum in virtutibus eius. Laudate eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis eius.  
Laudate eum in sono tuba, Laudate eum in psalterio et cytura.  
Laudate eum in tympano et choro. Laudate eum in chordis et organo.  
Laudate eum in cymbalis benesonantibus. Laudate eum in cymbalis jubilationis.  
Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum! Alleluia!

Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.  
Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.  
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.  
Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.  
Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.  
Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!

Psalm 150

#### 6. Salve Regina

Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae,  
vita dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes  
in hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos  
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exsiliu ostende.  
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

#### 8. Sing unto God

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth;  
O sing praises unto the Lord;  
Who sitteth in the heavens over all;  
lo, he doth send out his voice,  
and that a mighty voice.  
Ascribe ye the power to God over Israel,  
his worship and strength is in the clouds.  
O God, wonderful art thou in thy holy places:  
He shall give strength and pow'r unto his people.  
Blessed be God. Amen.

Psalm 68:32

Hail thee, Queen, mother of mercy;  
Our life, sweetness, and hope, hail.  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.  
to you we sigh, mourning and weeping  
in this valley of tears.  
Turn then, our advocate,  
those merciful eyes toward us.  
And Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb,  
after our exile, show us.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

#### 9. Rise, mighty Monarch

Rise mighty Monarch, and ascend the Throne;  
tis yet once more your own;  
for Lucifer and all his Legions are overthrown:  
Son of the morning, firstborn Son of light,  
how art thou tumbled head long down  
into the Dungeon of Eternal night.



10. *O Lord thou art my God*

O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things;

For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

He shall bring down the noise of strangers, the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

He will swallow up death in victory. For the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; for the Lord hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day: Lo! This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isaiah 25:1

11. *God Reigneth over the Heathen*

God Reigneth over the Heathen  
God sitteth upon his holy seat.

Psalms 47:8



12. *The Lord is King*

The Lord is King, the earth may be glad thereof;  
yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.  
Clouds and darkness are round about him:  
righteousness and judgement are the habitation  
of his seat.

There shall go before him a consuming fire,  
and burn up his enemies on every side.

His lightning gave shine unto the world:  
the earth saw it and was afraid.

The hills melted like wax  
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

The heav'ns have declared his righteousness,  
and all the people have seen his glory.

O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing  
which is evil:

the Lord preserveth the souls of his saints,  
and delivereth them from the hand of the ungodly.

There is sprung up a light for the righteous:  
and a joyful gladness for such as are truehearted.  
Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous,  
and give thanks for a remembrance of his holiness.  
Alleluja.

Psalms 97





*Vocal ensemble*

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SOPRANO	TENOR
Lovisa Sydén	Love Tronner
Linnea Bergstam	Love Lyckelin Bergman

ALTO	BASS
Anna Zander	Andreas E Olsson
Mathilda Sidén Silfver	Olof Akre

*Instruments*

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ORGAN by Nils-Olof Berg, Nye, Sweden, 1995. 8' + 4' wooden Gedackt stops

THEORBO by Lars Jönsson, Tullinge, 1998


VIOLONCELLO by Anonymous, Northern Italy, mid-1700s

BOW by Luis Emilio Rodriguez Carrington, The Hague, 2002

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Staffan Liljas  
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