

Lux Beata

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Les Vergers Musicaux

The Musical Orchard



Fredrik Hildebrand
treble viol, tarhu, direction

Miron Andres
tenor viol

Rebecca Lefèvre
bass viol

Anne Bernard
bass viol

Hannelore Devaere
triple harp

Vardan Hovanissian
duduk

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|---|------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Trad. Arménien - Hovern engan Հովերն Հնկան * <i>Les vents sont tombés - The wind has dropped</i> Duduk, tarhu, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole | 7:04 | 10. Giovanni Felice Sances (*1600 †1679), anon. M.S. Chigi, Antonio Bertali (*1605 †1669) - Ciacconas * Giovanni Felice Sances - Cantade a voce sola, Libro 2°, Venezia 1633 Cantata sopra la Ciaccona p. 15 Anonymous, manuscrit Chigi - Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Chig.Q.IV.24 p. 50r Ciaccona Antonio Bertali - Partiturbuch Ludwig N°3 p. 5 Ciaccona Dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole, harpe | 6:56 |
| 2. Giovanni de Macque (*1548/1550 †1614) - Prime stravaganze * GB-Lbl Add. MS 30491 Manuscript "Luigi Rossi" p. 19 Dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole, harpe | 2:10 | 11. Giovanni de Macque - Seconde stravaganze * GB-Lbl Add. MS 30491 "Manuscript Luigi Rossi" p. 33 Dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole, harpe | 2:30 |
| 3. Makar Yekmalian (*1856 †1905) - Amen hayr sourp Ամեն հայր սուրբ* <i>Amen, Saint Père - Amen, Holy Father</i> M. Yekmalian - Antélias 2001 <i>Patarag</i> Les chants de la liturgie arménienne p. 114-116 Duduk, dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de violes | 4:42 | 12. Sayat Nova (*1712 †1795) - Ashkharums akh chim qashi Աշխարհումս ա՛խ չեմ քաշի * <i>Je ne serai pas triste dans ce monde - I will not be sad in this world</i> Duduk, dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de violes | 7:27 |
| 4. Bernardo Storace (<i>floruit</i> 1664), anon. M.S. Chigi - Monica * Storace - Selva di varie compositioni, Venezia 1664 p. 29-31 Anonymous, manuscrit <i>Chigi</i> - Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Chig.Q.IV.29 Dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole, harpe | 7:44 | | |
| 5. Grigor Narekatsi (*950 †1003/1011) - Havik Հավիկ <i>Petit oiseau - Little bird</i> Tarhu, duduk | 2:31 | | * arrangements by Fredrik Hildebrand |
| 6. Giovanni Maria Trabaci (* ca. 1575 †1647) - Durezza e ligature * G.M. Trabaci - Libro Primo, Napoli 1603, p. 115 Dessus de viole, ténor de viole, 2 basses de violes | 2:38 | | |
| 7. Trad. Arménien - Siretsi yares taran Սիրեցի Եարս Տարան * <i>On m'a enlevé ma bien-aimé - They took my love away</i> Duduk, tarhu, ténor de viole, 2 basses de violes | 6:36 | | |
| 8. Trad. Arménien - Vardani mor voghbe վարդանի մոր ողբը * <i>Lamentations de la mère de Vardan - Vardan's mother's lament</i> Tarhu, ténor de viole, 2 basses de viole | 3:37 | Enregistré du 28 au 30 juin 2021, Église Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste, Beaufays (Belgique) Enregistrement, montage et réglages sonores: Frédéric Briant Direction artistique: Philippe Pierlot Photos de l'ensemble: Dymphna Vandenaabeele Image de couverture: Vincent van Gogh - Amandier en fleurs (source: Wikimedia Commons) | |
| 9. Grigor Narekatsi - Havun, havun Հավուն-հավուն <i>L'oiseau - The bird</i> Duduk, dessus de viole, ténor de viole et 2 basses de violes | 3:00 | | |

The Musical Orchard

When given the opportunity in 2016 to construct a programme for a concert hosted by the Boghossian Foundation at the Villa Empain in Brussels, I decided to combine two repertoires that have been a constant inspiration to me and my musicianship. In keeping with the Foundation's mission of promoting an oriental-occidental cultural dialogue, I combined the music of early 17th-century Naples and traditional Armenian melodies, aiming to find a way to let the two styles converse within the same performance. The idea of the Musical Orchard stemmed from the symbology of fruit and gardens in both cultures, with the ever-present *giardino armonico* in the music of 17th-century Italy and the pomegranates and apricot trees of Armenia suffusing the culture on all levels — from the colours of traditional garments, to the food they eat as well as the instruments they play.

Since that first recital we have continued to give concerts with this music, each time having it evolve and grow further. My own

understanding of the Armenian spirit and the music of their nation has deepened, the pieces have changed and the arrangements have been further re-worked and expanded. Where at first there was an equal share of both genres, there is now more Armenian than Italian music in this programme. The instrumentation has also changed from being played only on viols and harp, to include the tarhu and now the duduk.

There has always been an immense joy in coming back to this repertoire again and again, seeing it with renewed inspiration and further adding layers of instrumentation and interpretation with each performance. This recording is now the culmination of five years of musical evolution, where we have taken the programme as far as we can without changing it into something completely new and different.

The music presented here effectively spans 900 years of history, with the late 10th-century *taghs* (a kind of ode, either secular or religious) of Grigor Narekatsi on one end and Makar Yekmalian's *Amen hayr sourp* on the other. The latter is from Yekmalian's *patarag*, the first modern transcription of the the Armenian liturgical mass, first published in 1896. Narekatsi's music comes to us in six fully preserved *taghs*, although there are several more where only the text survives. *Havik* is sometimes contested and might be by a different hand. His theological texts are still some of the most important in the eastern Christian doctrines, and his odes - especially *Havun, havun* - are still performed regularly today.

Where historical records fail is with the traditional pieces, where it is often difficult - if not near impossible - to accurately date and give an origin to these melodies. *Vardani mor voghbe* tells the story of the mother of Saint Vardan Mamikonian and her

lamentations upon learning of his death. Saint Vardan was a 5th-century nobleman and both military and spiritual leader, who died at the Battle of Avarayr while defending his people and religion against the Persian Empire. This does not mean that the melody dates from that time, however; it might very well be a 19th-century tune based on an almost mythologized story of national heroism, but through scarce records and the inherently imprecise nature of oral traditions it's difficult to know. *Hovern engan* is another piece with a very uncertain history: the musicians I spoken with describe it as a love song, but no one seems to know of the actual text or origin of the music, despite the song being one of the most known and played melodies in the classical/traditional Armenian repertoire. *Siretsi yares daran* is also difficult to place historically, but at least we know that the text sung today was written by the great poet Avetik Isahakian - a striking lament about the cruelty of the world and lovers lost to circumstance.

The one secular Armenian piece where we can confidently trace the origin is Sayat Nova's *Ashkharums akh chim qashi*. He probably composed the poem and its melody some time in the mid-18th century, very much in line with classical Ottoman music of the time. Known mainly as a poet and virtuoso kemençe player, Sayat Nova - meaning *King of Songs* - gained a reputation even during his own lifetime of almost mythical status. His hundreds of love songs and poems still preserved today give us a glimpse into the mind of an 18th-century cosmopolitan, artist and diplomat. Fluent in Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani, he would sometimes mix all three languages in the same poem or write in one language using the alphabet of another, creating a truly multicultural expression of art and love.

The one unifying trait in all of these pieces is the inherently melancholic character often found in traditional Armenian music. The modes are never too strange-sounding to be appreciated by western ears, and the simple drones and harmonies traditionally used gives the music a feeling of timelessness and space. In our performance of these pieces, I decided to keep the oldest ones very simple, with *Havik* and *Havun*, *havun* simply being the melody with an accompanying drone on duduk or viols. In *Amen hayr sourp* we followed Yekmalian's choral arrangement more or less as it's written, and in *Ashkharums akh chim qashi* I used a modern arrangement for duduk quintet as a base for this version. *Vardani mor voghbe* I arranged as a solo for tarhu with a haunting accompaniment in the tenor viol, while the two bass viols provide a low drone. With *Hovern engan* and *Siretsi yares daran* I wanted something more theatrical in scope, with introductions in the strings that then lead into extended solos and duets between the tarhu and duduk.

In contrast to these melismatic melodies is the Italian music of the 17th century. Naples and its surroundings at the time were rich with new musical ideas, often going against the rigid systems of the Renaissance by ignoring rules in what was considered correct or elegant voice leading, in order to focus on a more humanistic ideal in composition. Very much on par with contemporary Venetians like Claudio Monteverdi, Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini, the southern school spearheaded by Giovanni de Macque, Carlo Gesualdo and Giovanni Maria Trabaci would seek to find musical expression that corresponded more to the human experience, rather than trying to express some divine perfection through composition. Unprepared dissonances were suddenly used where the contrast of affections required it; for vocal pieces

the text had to be painted into the music even if it went against compositional rules, and the beginning of the exploration of mood and colours became more common. It even went against the very tuning of the instruments of the time, in using chords that would sound incredibly harsh on the organs and harpsichords in use, their strict meantone temperament not allowing for any excesses or extremes in harmony.

Like in the *stravaganze* of de Macque, or Trabaci's *Durezza e Ligature*, the music serves to search for mood rather than express some kind of pre-conceived choreography or event. Built as a kind of *ricercar*, especially the *stravaganze* still retain audible counterpoint and melodic developments. In Trabaci's composition it is taken further still, the whole piece simply being about exploring dissonance (*durezza*) and suspensions (*ligature*), something that in this manner, just a couple of decades before, would not have been accepted by theorists and fellow composers. The two variation pieces - *Monica* and the *Ciacconas* - follow a long tradition of improvisations and compositions based on known melodies and bass lines. *La Monica* (also known as *Madre non mi far monaca*, *l'È tanto tempo hormai*, *Une jeune fillette* or *La nonette*) was a popular tune played throughout Europe in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. We find it used by keyboard players, lutenists, flautists and violists from the south of Italy and Spain, through France and Germany up to traditional singers in Scandinavia. The text speaks of a girl's desire to be married, not cloistered, as she is made to become a nun against her will - a common occurrence in mediaeval and renaissance Europe. This practice of increasingly complex and virtuosic variations date back to medieval practices, especially in keyboard and lute repertoires, and reached a feverish height in Europe during the

17th century. Indeed, in Storace's *Selva di varie compositioni*, out of the twenty-nine pieces twenty-two are variations on different themes. In my arrangement of the *Monica*, his composition is preceded by an anonymous Italian variation on the melody from 1610, and as his variations end in a trio, I decided to finish the piece with the anonymous set found in the *Chigi* collection in the Vatican Library.

For the *Ciacconas* I drew on three different sources that all share the same bass line and tonality: the opening and closing are from Giovanni Felice Sances's *Cantada sopra la Ciaccona*, published in 1633; the middle sections are then comprised of a set of anonymous variations from the *Chigi* manuscripts and some of the variations for solo violin by Antonio Bertali found in the 1662 manuscript known as the *Partiturbuch Ludwig*. In the Sances and Bertali variations I added inner voices and sometimes swapped the theme between the instruments to make it more of a consort piece rather than just solo treble with accompaniment.

With the exception of the *ciacconas* by Sances and Bertali, all the Italian music in this programme is originally for keyboard instruments that I have then arranged for viol consort. This practice dates back to the time of the composers, and I try to hold it as one of the core ideas of my ensemble to create new repertoires for myself by rearranging music that was originally not intended for viols. The same applies to the Armenian repertoire, that has nothing to do with our western instruments and practices, especially historically informed performance. The oral traditions are for us replaced by the reading of printed scores, and oral practice and transmission is replaced by a heavy reliance on the reading and analysis of specific sources. To find a way to incorporate the two in the same performance is sometimes

challenging, but hopefully listeners - both westerners and native Armenians - will find it convincing.

The apparent clash between these inherently European pieces of art music and the traditional Armenian repertoire may seem jarring to some, but I find that they work in some odd symbiosis in this programme. The strangeness of the *stravaganze* and *durezza e ligature* approaches the otherworldliness of the more meditative Armenian pieces and there is an odd, almost spiritual quality even to the strict counterpoint, melodic variations and jarring harmonies of the Italian music presented here.

There are still questions that arise from a programme like this, and I'm not completely sure there is a wholly satisfactory answer to any of them. Is something lost in a melody when it is not learned by heart? Can a performer who bases their entire craft on intuitive timing of memorized phrases be integrated into an ensemble who works from printed scores? Can a musician trained in historically informed practices convincingly approach the music of a fundamentally different culture? I'd like to think that we found ways to work around these concerns, the friction of the different cultures attenuated by the work and dedication of the musicians. Hopefully we can continue to refine our craft in this manner in the future and leave room for further questions to arise, even if there aren't always direct answers to meet them.

Fredrik Hildebrand
Brussels, April 2022

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