

Opera Prima

OPERA PRIMA is an ensemble created by **Cristiano Contadin** to give life to concerts and recordings historically informed of the **Renaissance and Baroque periods**.

Get closer to the music with the spirit of how it had just been composed and with the desire that people can listen to and enjoy this experience with the same pleasure and enthusiasm. If we can touch the hearts of the public, then even the language of ancient music will be as easy to understand as the style of music most contemporary to us.

The friends and musicians of extraordinary skill that constitute Opera Prima make this goal increasingly enjoyable and compelling.

The first recording of Opera Prima, "The Complete Telemann Trio Sonatas and Concertos", for the Brilliant Classics label, received critical acclaim at the national and international level, and was proclaimed by Classic Voice Magazine as CD of the month in February 2015, while Musica Magazine confirmed Cristiano Contadin as "*a first-rate artist for the sweetness of the sound, the stylistic relevance and the absolute mastery of the instrument*". The following recording of Corrette's "Les Délices de la Solitude" was praised by Fanfare Magazine as "*lively, elegant and warm*".

Opera Prima has performed concerts at festivals in Italy, Greece, and Estonia, and is currently preparing for a tour in the United States with the American soprano Amanda Forsythe, dedicated to virtuosic repertoire for soprano and viola da gamba.



PROGRAMS:

Torna Vincitor

Metastasio and the Galante viol

Opera Prima · orchestra (8 musicians)

Amanda Forsythe · soprano

Cristiano Contadin · viola da gamba and conductor

MUSIC BY: G. Tartini (1692 – 1770), C. F. Abel (1723 – 1787), J. G. Janitsch (1708 – 1763), J. G. Graun (1702/3 – 1771), J. A. Hasse (1699 – 1783), C. P. E. Bach (1714 – 1788)

A rare occasion to hear and enjoy the marvelous and virtuosistic late repertoire of the viola da gamba, with voice and string orchestra. Gorgeous works by Graun, Hasse, Abel, and Tartini- the poetry of Metastasio combined with the voice of the viola da gamba in the late baroque/galant repertoire. Parts of this program have been recently released for CPO- Opera News called it a critic's choice, and said:

"THIS FINE BAROQUE ISSUE features very enjoyable music by a neglected composer that's well annotated and bracingly performed...

Only after almost concerto-like introductions involving the soloist—here, the very proficient Cristiano Contadin, whose new HIP ensemble Opera Prima matches his informed style and clarity—does the soprano enter. There's a "dueling banjos" aspect to the subsequent interplay of voice and instrument. The vocals fall trippingly from the agile throat of gifted soprano Amanda Forsythe...Forsythe's intonation, commanding breath control and skill at decoration and trills augment her very attractive flowing timbre. A splendid Vivaldesque A minor concerto for viola da gamba separates the two cantatas, its solo part again aced by Contadin".

David Shengold (March 2021)



Lachrimae – The alchemic journey

Clara Galante · *voice*

Opera Prima consort

Miguel Rincon · *lute*

Marco Casonato, Rodney Prada, Noelia Reverte, Rosita Ippolito · *viola da gamba*

Cristiano Contadin · *treble viol and conductor*

This program is based on the complete cycle of John Dowland's 'Lachrimae', an instrumental work published in 1604 and played here by a consort of 5 viols, lute and recorder. The instrumental part alternates with the voice of Clara Galante, who recites the words of different authors around the theme, from Lucretius and Marcus Aurelius to Shakespeare and poets of our time, focusing on the history and stories of man with his victories and defeats, hopes and sorrows, joys and regrets.

Tears... amphibious entities, beings who live between two worlds, beings with double identities that complete their lives through a metamorphosis. These sparks of infinity oscillate between joy and pain, tragedy and grace, the transcendent and the real world, the inner and outer, the intimate and the public, the shadow and the light, the infinite and the finite.

Saint Augustine tells us that nothing brings us closer to happiness than weeping. Tears reveal us more than words can, and the music of Dowland, with its clever counterpoint texture, helps us to discover our emotions and hidden passions. This precious alchemical journey can transform the tears that we normally tie to the "gravity" of a harsh daily life into something that brings us closer to "lightness" and to the true knowledge of beauty. Through the sounds of the consort of viols, lute and recorder, music can express the mute eloquence of crying.

Lastly, we have the spoken voice, that voice able to ferry the soul beyond the yearning, towards new visions, insights and images, inviting us to something higher and more conscious, giving the experience of a new outlook towards life.

LISTEN:

<https://www.brilliantclassics.com/articles/d/dowland-lachrimae>

Futuro Antico - The sleeping Beauty

Opera Prima

Cristiano Contadin · *viola da gamba*

Jolanda Violante · *piano*

MUSIC BY:

J. Kalliwoda (1801 – 1866)

J. Field (1782 -1837)

R. Schumann (1810 – 1856)

H. G. Jaeschke (1818 - ?)

F. Chopin (1810 – 1849)

J. Kalliwoda (1801 – 1866)

F. Schubert (1797 1828)

The long sleep into which the viola da gamba seemed to have fallen, from the end of the 1700s to the early 1900s (a period of time that goes from Abel's death to Arnold Dolmetsch's early music revivalist movement), seems to be questioned in recent years, thanks to fortunate finds in private collections of music that surmount the barriers of Baroque and Rococo, and with amazement settle in the heart of the European musical movement called Romanticism.

The program 'Futuro Antico' follows a short but significant journey into the repertoire of the viola da gamba, from a world defined by the declamated sound of the harpsichord, to one that embraced the dynamic pianoforte of the first half of the 19th Century.

The intimate, resonant, and evocative character of the viola da gamba is found here in new and original contexts, as revealed by the compositions of Jaeschke and Schumann chosen for this program.

The popular musical forms of the late Eighteenth Century, such as the Nocturne, the Abendlied or the Nachtmusik, perceived the evening as a time of listening and hearing, where dreams and beauty could be imagined without boundaries.

Concerto Italiano

Opera Prima

Amanda Forsythe · *soprano*

Federico Guglielmo - GianPiero Zanocco · *violin*

Roberto Loreggian · *harpsichord*

Cristiano Contadin · *viola da gamba and conductor*

MUSIC BY:

Dietrich Buxtehude (Bad Oldesloe 1637-Lübeck 1707)

Georg Philipp Telemann (Magdeburg 1681-Hamburg 1767)

Johann Sebastian Bach (Eisenach 1685-Leipzig 1750)

La Chambre

Musique du Roi

Simone Vallerotonda · *theorbo and guitar*

Cristiano Contadin · *viola da gamba*

MUSIC BY: Jean Baptiste Lully (Firenze 1632 – Parigi 1687), Marin Marais (Parigi 1656 – Parigi 1728), Robert de Visée (1650 – Parigi 1725), Jean Baptist Forqueray (Parigi 1699 – Parigi 1782), Francesco Corbetta (Pavia 1615 – Parigi 1681)

This proposal is dedicated to the musicians that worked at the *Chambre du Roi* of Versailles; especially the viol and tiorba music of Marais, De Viseé, Forqueray, Corbetta e Lully. With Simone Vallerotonda on the Theorbo.

Viaggio in Italia

Opera Prima

Imbi Tarum · *harpsichord /organ*

Miguel Rincon · *chitarrone*

Cristiano Contadin · *viola da gamba and conductor*

MUSIC BY:

Francesco M. Bassani (sec. XVII)

Girolamo Frescobaldi (Ferrara 1583 - Roma 1643)

Orazio Bassani (Cento? - Parma 1615)

Johannes H. Kapsberger (Venezia 1580 - Roma 1651)

G. A. Bertoli (Sec. XVII)

Biagio Marini (Brescia 1587 - Venezia 1665)

Marco Uccellini (Forlino 1603 - 1680)

Andrea Falconieri (Spagna 1585/6 - Napoli 1656)

Giuseppe Tartini (Pirano 1692 - Padova 1770)

Bernardo Pasquini (Massa/Cozzile 1637 - Roma 1710)

Arcangelo Corelli (Fusignano 1653 - 1713 Roma)

The viola da gamba in Italy and in the Italian-style repertoire seems to have had a life of a few decades; in reality, as small cameos, pages dedicated to the viola appear up to the second half of the eighteenth century, such as Tartini's sonata for viola da gamba and basso continuo of recent discovery. Concert in trio, harpsichord, theorbo and viola da gamba.

Cantar Bastardo

Marco Scavazza · *baritone*

Cristiano Contadin · *viola d'arco*

MUSIC BY:

D. Ortiz (Toledo 1525 – dopo 1570?)
C. Festa (? 1490 – Roma 1545)
F. Azzaiolo (Bologna 1530 –1569?)
F. da Milano (Monza 1497 – Milano 1543)
G.G. Gastoldi (Caravaggio 1555 – Milano 1609)
C. De Rore (Ronse 1516 – Parma 1565)
S. Ganassi (Venezia 1492 - ?)
F. de Lurano (?, 1475 - ?, 1519)
B. Tromboncino (Verona 1470 – Venezia 1535)
G. Bassano (?, 1558 – Venezia 1617)
P. Cesena (Verona, sec XV – XVI ?)

A special project that Cristiano Contadin has recorded with Marco Scavazza, baritone, dedicated to the Italian renaissance music: a miscellaneous collection of the most interesting *madrigali*, *villanelle*, and *frottole* played according the lost practice of *Cantar alla viola*. The CD is published for Elucevanlestelle Records. It is the music of Palladio's time.

LISTEN TO “Anchor che col partire”, C. De Rore

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxSeziUKO6s>

Porta d'Oriente

Venezia and Doge's music

Opera Prima

Leonor de Lera & Enrico Parizzi · *violins*

Alberto Guerra · *dulcian*

Lorenzo Feder · *harpsichord*

Cristiano Contadin · *bass viol and conductor*

MUSIC BY:

Andrea Gabrieli (Venezia 1533 - ivi 1585)

Marco Uccellini (Forlimpopoli 1603 - ivi 1680)

Biagio Marini (Brescia 1594 - Venezia 1663)

Girolamo Dalla Casa (? XVI century - ? 1601)

Giovanni B. Fontana (Brescia 1589 - Padova 1630)

Selma y Salaverde (Cuenca 1589 - ? dopo 1638)

Giovanni B. Buonamente (Mantova 1595 - Assisi 1642)

Francesco Cavalli (Crema 1602 - Venezia 1676)

Salomone Rossi (Mantova 1570 - ivi 1630)

Peregrinus Cesena (seconda metà XV sec - prima metà XVI sec)

Tarquinio Merula (Busseto 1595 - Cremona 1665)

Giovanni Picchi (Venezia? 1571/2 - ivi 1643)

Claudio Monteverdi (Cremona 1567 - Venezia 1643)

Dario Castello (Venezia 1602 ? - ivi 1631)

Francesco Todeschini (XVII secolo)

Program conceived and performed in Crete on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the liberation of the island of Candia from Venetian domination. Music by authors living in the Venetian area from the early Sixteenth Century to 1669. Proposal for now instrumental but with the possibility of expansion with the inclusion of a singer.

Passion of Musike

Program for viola da gamba

Cristiano Contadin · *viola da gamba*

MUSIC BY:

Tobias Hume (London, ? - ?, 1645)

Antoine Forqueray (Paris, 1671/72 - Paris, 1745)

Marin Marais (Paris, 1656 - Paris, 1728)

G.P. Telemann (Magdeburg, 1681 - Hamburg, 1767)

J.S. Bach (Eisenach, 1685 - Lipsia, 1750)

Louis de Caix d'Hervelois (Amiens, 1680 ca.- Paris, 1760)

Cristiano Contadin



CRISTIANO CONTADIN is an Italian viola da gamba player and the founder of the Opera Prima Ensemble, a chamber music group of internationally-acclaimed soloists devoted to the baroque repertoire.

As a gamba soloist and continuo player, he collaborates with ensembles in Italy and abroad, including I Barocchisti, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, La Venexiana, Orchestra Sinfonica "G. Verdi" (Milan), Cantar Lontano, Accademia Bizantina, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala (Milan), and Boston Early Music Festival...

Mr. Contadin has recorded for Sony, EMI Classical, Universal (Deutsche Grammophon), Arte, Brilliant, Hyperion, Stradivarius, Winter & Winter, and Naxos, among others. In 2015, he released a recording of *The complete Telemann Trio Sonatas and Concertos* with his Opera Prima Ensemble to widespread acclaim. For this disc, proclaimed by Classic Voice as "CD of the Month", Musica Magazine confirmed him as "a first-rate artist for

the sweetness of the sound, the stylistic relevance and the absolute mastery of the instrument". His 2016 recording of Corrette's *Les délices de la solitude* (Opera Prima) was praised by Fanfare Magazine as "spirited, elegant, and warm". With the early music group "Il Suonar Parlante", his recording *Full of Color* won such prestigious awards as the Diapason d'Or, Choc du Monde de la Musique, and Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik.

With the Quartetto Italiano di Viole da Gamba, "Il Suonar Parlante", and as a soloist, he aims to cultivate a repertoire that embraces ancient as well as modern viol consort music. He has performed works by contemporary composers and jazz artists such as Kenny Wheeler, Uri Caine, Don Byron, Ernst Reijseger, Vanni Moretto, Markus Stockhausen, Francesco Hoch, Henry Bartholomée, and Lucio Garau, and performed in the Italian premiere of George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* with the Orchestra Haydn of Bolzano.

In addition to his activities as a performer, Mr. Contadin wrote the Italian translation of *The Early History of the Viol* by Ian Woodfield, published by EDT - Turin. He is also the coordinator of the viola da gamba catalogue *La Voce Dell'Ambasciatore* for the Italian publishing house Musedita.

Mr. Contadin teaches Viola da Gamba and chamber music at the Conservatory B. Marcello in Venice, and has also held teaching positions at the Academy of Music in Esbjerg, Denmark, the Conservatory "S. Giacomantonio" in Cosenza, and the Vincenzo Bellini Conservatory in Palermo, Sicily. He is the summer director of L'Istituto Laboratorio di Music Antica (ILMA) in San Vito al Tagliamento. Mr. Contadin plays an anonymous Venetian bass viol from the 18th century. On February 2016, Cristiano Contadin was asked to play as a soloist at Umberto Eco's funeral, broadcasted on national and international TV.

The last October 2019 has published also the new recording of OPERA PRIMA Consort the *Lacrymae* of J. Dowland for Brilliant Label and in few months it will be released *Torna Vincitor*, with OPERA PRIMA Orchestra, the two cantatas of J.G. Graun with Amanda Forsythe soprano and a solo concert for viola da gamba and Orchestra, for CPO Label.

Amanda Forsythe



AMANDA FORSYTHE has earned widespread acclaim for her album of *Händel arias* with Apollo's Fire and Gluck's *Orfeo* with Philippe Jaroussky. She performs regularly with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque, Tafelmusik, Händel and Haydn Society, Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, Apollo's Fire, Les Talens Lyriques, and Boston Baroque. With the Boston Early Music Festival, she has performed in operas by Campra, Steffani, Pergolesi, Händel, Charpentier, and Monteverdi, many of which are available on recording. Opera engagements include Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Amour in Gluck's *Orphée*, and Manto in *Niobe* (Royal Opera, Covent Garden), Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (Komische Oper, Rome Opera, Seattle Opera), Semele (Philadelphia), Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell*, Corinna in *Il viaggio a Reims*, and Rosalia in *L'equivoco stravagante* (Pesaro), and

Dalinda in *Ariodante* (Geneva and Munich). This season includes débuts with Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, the Komische Oper, Berlin, and a North American tour with Philippe Jaroussky. Forthcoming engagements include arias and duets with the Chicago Symphony, an all-Händel program with Tafelmusik, a tour with Opera Prima and C. Contadin in the USA and a new production of *Fidelio* (Marzelline) at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden.