

Bellot Ensemble II

Lucine Musaelian soprano, viola da gamba

Edmund Taylor violin

Nathan Giorgetti viola da gamba

Daniel Murphy theorbo, Baroque guitar

Matthew Brown harpsichord, chamber organ

O Come Piacce

Maurizio Cazzati (1616–1678)
Ballo delle Ombre (Dance of the Shadows) 2'

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)
'Voglio di vita uscir' 7'

Carlo Farina (1600–1639)
Sonata detta 'La Farina' a 2 7'

Monteverdi
'Ohimè ch'io cado' 4'

Andrea Falconieri (1585–1656)
La suave melodia (The sweet melody) 4'

Marco Antonio Ferro (d.1662)
Sonata 5 à 3 4'

Monteverdi
'Lamenta della ninfa' 3'

Antonia Bembo (1640–1720)
'Habbi pietà di me' 5'

Tarquinio Merula (1595–1665)
Canzon ottava 'La Cavagliera' 4'

Merula
Canzonetta spirituale sopra alla nanna 'Hor ch'è tempo di dormire (Spiritual song for bedtime) 8'

Falconieri
Folias echa para mi Señora Doña Tarolilla de Carallenos (Folias composed for my lady) 3'

Bellot Ensemble is a Britten Pears Young Artist for 2025/26, here for a two-week residency on the Chamber Music in Residence course.

Bellot Ensemble is a vibrant period-instrument group celebrated for energetic performances and a distinctive approach to 17th-century repertoire. Rooted in historical performance practice, the ensemble blends detailed research with spontaneity, particularly through expressive interpretation of early sources, and often brings together instrumental and vocal forces, with regular collaborations involving consorts, choirs and opera companies.

In October 2025, the ensemble began a two-year term as the New Generation Baroque Ensemble, a joint development scheme from BBC Radio 3, the RCM and the National Centre for Early Music. In 2023/24 they were part of the Brighton Early Music Festival Live Scheme. In 2024 they toured John Frederick Lampe's *The Dragon of Wantley* with New Sussex Opera and were featured artists at the Overstrand Early Music Festival.

Upcoming highlights include performances at the Oxford Festival of the Arts, new appearances through the NGBE scheme, and a residency in 2026 with Les Arts Florissants' Odyssée programme.

The Bellot Ensemble is supported by the Keith Coventry Bursary.

O Come Piace

The title of today's concert comes from Giovanni Legrenzi's marking 'O come piace' ('as it pleases'), a phrase that encapsulates a central principle of 17th-century Italian music-making. Rather than prescribing fixed scorings or rigid forms, composers frequently invited performers to adapt music to the forces available, reshaping texture, balance and emphasis in performance. This flexibility reflects a musical culture in which invention, responsiveness and collaboration were prized, and in which the boundaries between sacred and secular, vocal and instrumental, were deliberately porous.

The programme brings together music from across 17th-century Italy that sits comfortably within this open aesthetic. Songs, sonatas, canzonas and dances appear alongside one another, often drawing on shared compositional ideas despite their differing functions. Much of this repertory was written for private spaces rather than public concert halls, and its expressive power lies not in monumentality but in immediacy: the sense that music unfolds in close conversation between players and listeners.

Several works in the programme reflect the strong presence of song at the heart of Italian musical life. Monteverdi's contributions show how composers approached text with rhetorical sensitivity, shaping musical lines around speech rhythms and poetic structure. These concerns extend beyond the vocal repertory into instrumental writing, where short sections, contrasting ideas, and clear articulation allow music to speak with similar directness. The madrigal tradition, represented here by Monteverdi, coexists with devotional song and lighter secular genres, illustrating the breadth of expressive registers available to Italian composers and performers.

Monteverdi: Voglio di vita uscir

Voglio di vita uscir, voglio che cadano
Quest'ossa in polve e queste membra in cenere,
E che i singulti miei tra l'ombre vadano,
Già che quel piè ch'ingemma l'herbe tenere
Sempre fugge da me, ne lo trattengono
I lacci, ohimè, del bel fanciul di Venere.
[Miei sensi del sepolcro all' orlo vengono,
E dalla vita quasi s' accongedano
Poi ch'un sol pegno di mercè non tengono.

Instrumental music in the programme reflects the rapid development of idiomatic writing during the century. Composers such as Marco Antonio Ferro, Carlo Farina and Maurizio Cazzati contributed to a repertory that was both exploratory and practical, responding to new instrumental possibilities while remaining adaptable in performance. The violin emerges as an increasingly prominent voice, but it does so within an ensemble culture that still values dialogue and balance rather than soloistic display alone. Dance forms and variation structures sit alongside more rhetorically driven sonatas, highlighting the ease with which composers moved between functional categories.

Tarquinio Merula and Andrea Falconieri exemplify a compositional world in which stylistic contrast is embraced rather than resolved. Their music draws on popular idioms, dance rhythms and theatrical gesture, blurring distinctions between learned and vernacular styles. This openness is mirrored in the presence of ground-bass songs and strophic forms, where repetition becomes a framework for expressive variation rather than constraint.

Taken together, the works in this programme offer a portrait of Italian music as a living, adaptable practice shaped by performers as much as by composers. 'O come piace' is not an invitation to be casual, but a recognition that imagination, responsiveness, and informed choice were central to how this music functioned. The programme reflects a culture confident in variety and contrast, where expressive freedom was not opposed to craft, but depended upon it.

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Song texts continue on the following pages.

I want to depart this life

I want to depart this life, I want my bones
to fall into dust, and my limbs into ashes,
and my sobs to disappear among the shadows,
since those feet, which adorn the tender grasses,
are always fleeing from me; nor are they restrained,
alas, by the bonds of the lovely son of Venus.
My senses reel at the brink of the grave,
And almost take their leave of life
Since they possess not a single token of mercy.

Vo che gl'abissi il mio cordoglio vedano,
E l'aspro mio martir le furie piangano,
E che i dannati al mio tormento cedano.
A Dio crudel,[gli orgogli tuoi rimangano
A [crudelir con altri]3. A te rinuncio,
Né vo' più che mie speme in te si frangano.
S'apre la tomba, il mio morir t'annuncio.
Una lagrima spargi, et alfin donami
Di tua tarda pietade un solo nuncio,
E s'amando t'offesi, homai perdonami.

Monteverdi: Ohimè, ch'io cado

Text: Carlo Milanuzzi (c.1590–c.1647)

Ohimé ch'io cado, ohimé
ch'inciampo ancor il piè
Pur come pria,
E la sfiorita mia
Caduta speme
Pur di novo rigar
Con fresco lagrimar
Hor mi conviene.

Lasso, del vecchio ardor
Conosco l'orme ancor
Dentro nel petto;
Ch'ha rotto il vago aspetto
E i guardi amati
Lo smalto adamantin
Ond'armaro il meschin
Pensier gelati.

Folle, credev'io pur
D'aver schermo sicur
Da un nudo arciero;
E pur io sí guerriero
Hor son codardo
Ne voglio sostener
Il colpo lusinghier
D'un solo sguardo.

O Campion immortal
Sdegno; come sí fral
Hor fuggi indietro;
A sott'armi di vetro
Incanto errante
M'hai condotto infedel
Contro spada crudel
D'aspro diamante.

O come sa punir
Tirann'amor l'ardir
D'alma rubella!
Una dolce favella,
Un seren volto
Un vezzoso mirar,
Sogliono rilegar
Un cor disciolto.

I want the depths of hell to see my sorrow,
and the Furies to weep for my harsh agony,
and the damned to acknowledge my torment.
Farewell, cruel one, let your pride remain
to torture others; I renounce you!
I no longer want you to dash my hopes to pieces.
The tomb opens: my death is at hand.
Shed but one tear, and at the last give me
a single sign of your pity (now too late);
and if my love has offended you, forgive me now!

Alas, I am falling, alas

Alas, I am falling, alas,
my foot trips and stumbles,
a once more,
and my crushed
and withered hope
must I now
once more water
with fresh tears.

I am weary, yet still feel
in my heart the scars of
this former passion,
for your beautiful face and
beloved looks have broken
the adamantine defence behind which
cold thoughts had armoured
this wretch.

I foolishly believed
I had a solid shield
against the naked archer,
yet I, once so warlike,
am now a coward
and cannot defend myself
against the flattering blow
of a single glance.

O immortal champion
I scorn his weakness
as he runs away
with weapons of glass
have you led me,
faithless one,
to face a fierce sword
as hard as diamond.

Oh, how tyrannous love
knows to punish
the boldness of a rebellious soul,
a soft word,
a pretty face,
a gentle look
often know how to mend
a broken heart.

Occhi belli, ah se fu
Sempre bella virtù
Giusta pietate!
Deh voi non mi negate
Il guardo e'l riso
Che mi sa la prigion
Per sí bella cagion
Il Paradiso.

Monteverdi: Lamento della ninfa

Text: Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621)

‘Amor’, dicea, il ciel
mirando, il piè fermo,
‘dove, dov’è la fè
ch’el traditor giurò?’

Miserella.

‘Fa’ che ritorni il mio
amor com’ei pur fu,
o tu m’ancidi, ch’io
non mi tormenti più.’

Miserella, ah più no, no,
tanto gel soffrir non può.

‘Non vo’ più ch’ei sospiri
se non lontan da me,
no, no che i martiri
più non darammi affè.’

Perché di lui mi struggo,
tutt’orgoglioso sta,
che sí, che sí se’l fuggo
ancor mi pregherà?

Se ciglio ha più sereno
colei, che’l mio non è,
già non rinchiude in seno,
Amor, sí bella fè.

Ne mai sí dolci baci
da quella bocca havrai,
ne più soavi, ah taci,
taci, che troppo il sai.’

Sí tra sdegnosi pianti
spargea le voci al ciel;
cosí ne’ cori amanti
mesce amor fiamma, e gel.

Eyes, lovely eyes, ah if
fair virtue was always
justly rewarded.
Ah, deny me not
your gaze and smile
as for their sake
let prison
be paradise to me.

O Love - she said

O Love - she said,
Gazing at the sky, as she stood
Where’s the fidelity
That the deceiver promised?

Poor her!

Make my love come back
As he used to be
Or kill me, so that
I will not suffer anymore.

Poor her! She cannot bear
All this coldness!

I don’t want him to sigh any longer
But if he’s far from me.
No! He will not make me suffer
Anymore, I swear!

He’s proud
Because I languish for him.
Perhaps if I fly away from him
He will come to pray to me again.

If her eyes are more serene
Than mine,
O Love, she does not hold in her heart
A fidelity so pure as mine.

And you will not receive from those lips
Kisses as sweet as mine,
Nor softer. Oh, don’t speak!
Don’t speak! you know better than that!

So amidst disdainful tears,
She spread her crying to the sky;
Thus, in the lovers’ hearts
Love mixes fire and ice.

Antonia Bembo: Habbi pietà di me

Habbi pietà di me,
Non mi lasciar morir!
Non merta la mia fé,
Non vole il mio soffrir.

Rio tenor d'ingrata sorte
Mi condanna a mille pene.
Il mio mal vien dal mio bene,
La mia vita mi dà morte,
Senza sperar mercé
Al mio lungo servir.

Tarquinio Merula: Hor ch'è tempo di dormire

Hor ch'è tempo di dormire
Dormi dormi figlio e non vagire,
Perchè, tempo ancor verrà
Che vagir bisognerà.
Deh ben mio deh cor mio Fa,
Fa la ninna ninna na.
Chiudi, quei lumi divini
Come fan gl'altri bambini,
Perchè tosto oscuro velo
Priverà di lume il cielo.
Deh ben mio ...

Over prendi questo latte
Dalle mie mammelle intatte
Perchè ministro crudele
Ti prepara aceto e fiele.
Deh ben mio ...
Amor mio sia questo petto
Hor per te morbido letto
Pria che rendi ad alta voce
L'alma al Padre su la croce.
Deh ben mio ...

Posa hor queste membra belle
Vezzose e tenerelle
Perchè poi ferri e catene
Gli daran acerbe pene.
Deh ben mio ...

Queste mani e questi piedi
Ch'or con gusto e gaudio vedi
Ahimè com'in varij modi
Passeran acuti chiodi.

Questa faccia gratiosa
Rubiconda hor più di rosa
Sputi e schiaffi sporcheranno
Con tormento e grand'a ano.

Have mercy on me

Have mercy on me
Do not leave me to die!
My faith does not deserve such a fate,
Nor does my suffering.

Cruel destiny, ungrateful fate
Condemns me to a thousand pains.
My pain comes from my joy,
My life gives me death,
Without hope of mercy
For my long service.

Now it is time to slumber

Now it is time to slumber.
Sleep, my son, and do not cry,
For a time will come
When you must cry indeed.
Oh my love, oh my heart,
Sing ninna ninna na.
Close those heavenly eyes,
As other children do,
For soon a dark veil
Will rob the sky of light.
Oh my love...

Take this milk instead
From my untouched breast,
For a cruel servant
Prepares vinegar and gall for you.
Oh my love...
Let this breast of mine
Be your soft bed for now,
Before you raise your voice
And yield your soul to the Father on the cross.
Oh my love...

Rest now these lovely limbs,
So charming and so delicate,
For later iron and chains
Will bring them bitter pain.
Oh my love...

These hands and these feet,
Which now we gaze upon
With pleasure and with joy,
Alas, in many ways
Will be pierced with sharp nails.

This gracious face,
Ruddier now than any rose,
Will be defiled by spittle and blows,
With torment and great suffering.

Ah con quanto tuo dolore
Sola speme del mio core
Questo capo e questi crini
Passeran acuti spini.

Ah ch'in questo divin petto
Amor mio dolce diletto
Vi farà piaga mortale
Empia lancia e disleale.

Dormi dunque figliol mio
Dormi pur redentor mio
Perchè poi con lieto viso
Ci vedrem in Paradiso.

Hor che dorme la mia vita
Del mio cor gioia compita
Taccia ognun con puro zelo
Taccian sin la terra e'l Cielo.

E fra tanto io che farò
Il mio ben contemplerò
ne starò col capo chino
Sin che dorme il mio Bambino.

Oh, with what pain,
Only hope of my heart,
Will this head and these locks
Be pierced by cruel thorns.

Oh, that in this divine breast,
My love, my sweetest delight,
A ruthless, faithless lance
Will make a mortal wound.

So sleep, my son,
Sleep on, my Redeemer,
For afterward, with joyful faces,
We shall meet again in Paradise.

Now that my life is sleeping,
Full joy of my heart,
Let all fall silent in devout purity,
Let earth and heaven hush as well.

And meanwhile, what shall I do?
I will watch over my beloved,
And remain with bowed head
While my little Child sleeps.