



Maria Rosa COCCIA

SACRED MUSIC FROM EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME
WITH WORKS BY BOLIS, CASALI AND PESCI

Cardiff University Chamber Choir
Peter Leech, director

FIRST RECORDINGS

MARIA ROSA COCCIA Sacred Music

<i>Magnificat a4 concertato</i>		13:52
1	I Magnificat anima mea	1:49
2	II Quia respexit	2:28
3	III Quia fecit	2:50
4	IV Fecit potentiam	1:12
5	V Esurientes	1:27
6	VI Suscepit Israel	1:42
7	VII Sicut locutus	1:23
8	VIII Gloria Patri	1:01
SANTE PESCI		
c. 1720–86		
9	<i>Ave Maria a4</i>	2:31
COCCIA		
10	<i>Hic vir despiciens mundum</i> (1774)	2:15
GIOVANNI BATTISTA CASALI		
1715–92		
11	<i>Ad te levavi</i>	2:47
COCCIA		
<i>Sonate per Cembalo, Op. 1</i> (c. 1771–72)		
Sonata No. 1		
12	II <i>Andantino</i>	3:24
SEBASTIANO BOLIS		
c. 1750–1804		
13	<i>Assoluzione Quarta</i>	3:12
COCCIA		
14	<i>Veni sponsa Christi</i>	2:07
CASALI		
15	<i>Ave Maria a4</i>	3:55

COCCIA

Sonate per Cembalo, Op. 1

Sonata No. 2

16 II *Andante* 2:50

Veni creator spiritus a4 concertato

17 I Veni creator spiritus 3:47

18 II Tu septiformis munere 1:45

19 III Hostem repellas longius 3:13

20 V Deo Patri sit gloria 3:26

Dixit Dominus a8 pieno 9:50

21 I Dixit Dominus 2:01

22 II Virgam virtutis 0:48

23 III Tecum principium 0:54

24 IV Juravit Dominus 1:07

25 V Dominus a dextris tuis 0:37

26 VI Judicabit in nationibus 1:03

27 VII De torrente in via bibet 0:34

28 VIII Gloria Patri 2:46

TT 58:58

Cardiff University Chamber Choir

Lara Maylor-Wrout, soprano 2 17 18

Helen Baumgartner, soprano 3 18

Chloe Foster, soprano 5

Cecilia Noble, soprano 6

Sioned Beynon, alto 3 7

Matthew Daly, tenor 5

John Rhys Liddington, bass 5 19

Peter Leech, director; chamber organ 12 16

Robert Court, chamber organ 1-8 13 17-28

FIRST RECORDINGS

MARIA ROSA COCCIA: SACRED MUSIC FROM EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

by Peter Leech

In 1716 Pope Clement XI decreed that no musician could work professionally in Rome, or use the title *maestro di cappella*, without being a member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, the most prestigious musical congregation in the city, founded in the sixteenth century and based, from 1685, at the church of Santi Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari. The decree stipulated that potential candidates for membership must pass a musical examination involving the *extempore* composition of a four-part fugue on a given subject (usually a fragment of a plainsong antiphon) in the presence of examiners. On 28 November 1774, 58 years after this decree, Maria Rosa Coccia, aged fifteen, became the first woman to take and pass this exam, overseen and approved by the professors Sante Pesci, Gaetano Carpani, Giovanni Battista Casali and Giovanni Battista Costanzi, achieving the professional title *maestra di cappella* of Rome.¹ Coccia's examination came after several months of intensive study with Sante Pesci (a *maestro* at Santa Maria Maggiore), whom her father Antonio had hired to teach her counterpoint, a compositional technique which, according to Marie Caruso, was not typically taught to women.² Uniquely, Coccia's composition, based on the antiphon *Hic vir despiciens mundum*, was published in 1775. It is not clear exactly who made the decision to publish the exercise, but it was certainly a positive step which brought Coccia's musical skills to much wider public awareness than might otherwise have been the case. On the negative side, though, printed dissemination also provided an opportunity for potential detractors to criticise her work.³ Caruso points out that

¹ More on the Accademia examination process can be found in Marie Caruso, "Ten Fugues Shed Light on an Old Debate," *Il Saggiatore Musicale*, Anno XXI, 2014, No.1, pp. 5–43. Coccia was also admitted as a member of the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna in 1779, the second woman, after Marianna Martinez in 1773, to achieve this honour.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Esperimento estemporaneo fatto della signora M. R. Coccia romana* [...], Giunchi, Rome, 1775. One of these detractors was the

the publication of this fugue, no doubt well-intentioned, was part of a general desire amongst prominent eighteenth-century Italian families to seek prestige and attention 'at a time when female genius had become a commodity'. It was also an attempt to satisfy the curiosity of a contemporary readership fascinated with the manifestation of female knowledge.⁴ Yet despite the exposure brought with the publication of Coccia's fugue, followed by a biography compiled by Michele Mallio (1780), and the support of powerful patrons such as Queen Maria I of Portugal, Queen Maria Carolina of Naples and Duchess Marianna Caetani Sforza Cesarini, Coccia was unable to pursue a successful career in a Catholic church which had no history of hiring women as chapel musical directors, and which would be unlikely to do so for many years to come.⁵

In eighteenth-century Rome and elsewhere, whether in Catholic, Protestant or any other Christian religious environments, the prospects for women seeking successful careers as professional church musicians (outside the very different phenomenon of self-contained female monastic institutions) were bleak. It was a situation which had existed since the beginnings of organised religion, and which would continue until the early twentieth century. Whereas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a handful of women had managed to achieve limited financial security as organists, the possibility of their being hired as directors and composers of music for public chapels, churches or cathedrals (environments where women singers were all but completely excluded until the post-Napoleonic era) was virtually non-existent. Leaving aside the well-documented cases of nun composers from the pre-Napoleonic times, the list of women composers of sacred music active outside monastic environments before the middle of the nineteenth century is very small. Nevertheless, a significant number of church archives, including some in Rome, contain quantities of anonymous sacred

infamous Francesco Capalti, *maestro di cappella* of Narni Cathedral who had failed the Accademia exam in 1756. Capalti's attack was published as *Critica allesame fatto della signora Maria Rosa Coccia romana a di XXVIII novembre MDCCCLXXIV*, Saluzi, Terni, 1781. Caruso, 'Ten Fugues', pp. 17–26, presents a detailed discussion of the Capalti controversy.

⁴ Caruso, 'Ten Fugues' p. 8.

⁵ Michele Mallio, *Elogio storico della signora Maria Rosa Coccia romana maestra pubblica di cappella, accademica filarmonica di Bologna, e tra i Forti di Roma, Trevia, collaggiunta di varie lettere a lei scritte da uomini illustri ed eruditi, e di vari componimenti poetici consecrati al di lei merito*, Cannetti, Rome, 1780.

music which may yet be attributed to hitherto unknown women church musicians. The task of identifying these women is time-consuming, fraught with difficulties (not the least of which are inconsistencies in attributions, misidentifications of scribal hands and restricted archival access), requiring considerable tenacity and perseverance in the detective process.⁶

Only during very recent times have the outputs and reputations of important historical women composers been systematically examined, prompting long-overdue revision of standard music histories. A good deal more is now known about both the careers and the music of specific women composers, but in many cases the full pictures are far from complete. Sometimes there are substantive biographical details for individual figures but a paucity of musical sources, or, conversely, substantive musical sources bereft of biographical details. As far as Maria Rosa Coccia is concerned, new biographical details continue to be revealed in the recent scholarly literature, and new musical sources are still coming to light.⁷ A comprehensive analytical assessment of her surviving output, one which spans several different genres, ranging from solo sonatas and solo motets through to large-scale sacred and theatrical works, has yet to be undertaken. Amongst Coccia's surviving compositions, sacred music features most prominently, and so it seems entirely logical to begin an appraisal of her contribution to the musical life of eighteenth-century Rome with a recording devoted primarily to this genre.

Born on 4 June 1759, Coccia (as Mallio reveals) was the daughter of Antonio Coccia and Maria Angiola Luzi. By the age of eight she knew all the musical keys and was able to improvise upon *solfeggio* exercises, much to the admiration of all observers. Evidently a child prodigy, in her early years she was taught by a prominent, though unnamed,

⁶ I am currently engaged in two research projects here: an investigation into music-making in eighteenth-century Roman convents (some of which were possibly connected with Maria Rosa Coccia), and the detection of hitherto obscure women composers of sacred music in nineteenth-century France.

⁷ In addition to Caruso's 'Ten Fugues', the recent literature on Coccia comprises Reinhard Strohm, "Chi può die che re son io": A Woman Composer Defends Herself, *Pensieri per un maestro: studi in onore di Pierluigi Petrobelli*, ed. Stefano La Via and Roger Parker, EDT, Turin, 2002; Marie Caruso, 'A Gift of Twenty Minuets: Exploring a Recently Discovered Manuscript by Maria Rosa Coccia', *SECM in Austin 2016: Topics in Eighteenth-Century Music II*, ed. Janet K. Page, Steglein, Ann Arbor, 2019; and Candida Felici, *Maria Rosa Coccia, maestra compositora romana*, Fondazione Adkins Chiti, Colombo Editore, Rome, 2004.

‘maestro di musica’ who Mallio suggests had been astonished by her rapid development. By the age of ten Coccia was playing the harpsichord at orchestral concerts in the presence of the most illustrious *maestri* in Rome, around the same time being invited to play a concerto at the palace of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the ‘Young Pretender’ (elder brother of Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart), with Charles accompanying her on the cello.⁸ That Coccia was known to the circle of the exiled Stuarts in Rome is highly significant. By the time she was ten, Charles’ brother Henry, also a musician, had been Vice-Chancellor of the Roman Church for six years and Bishop of Frascati for eight, using the financial resources at his disposal to support the patronage of many Roman church musicians, most notably Giovanni Battista Costanzi (1707–78) and Sebastiano Bolis (c. 1750–1804).⁹ Maria’s connection with Prince Charles was further strengthened by her having dedicated her first known compositions to him, a set of six *Sonate per Cembalo*, Op. 1, composed around 1771–72. These sonatas were followed closely by an oratorio, *Daniello nel Lago de’ Leoni*, performed at the Chiesa Nuova (Santa Maria in Vallicella) on 20 December 1772, the score of which has unfortunately been lost.¹⁰

Coccia’s surviving sacred compositions display a variety of compositional techniques and stylistic influences, giving a good understanding of her prowess and development, as well as a tantalising glimpse of what might have been possible on a broader scale had she secured a church post in late-eighteenth-century Rome, one which would have required regular production of new repertoire suitable for myriad liturgical occasions. All the items by Coccia recorded here (with the exception of *Hic vir despiciens mundum* from the printed source from 1775, and *Veni sponsa Christi*,¹¹ the musical notation of which was transcribed and kindly supplied by Marie Caruso), as well as those by Coccia’s

⁸ Mallio, *Elogio storico*, pp. x–xi.

⁹ Sacred music composed by Bolis for Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart in Rome can be heard on *The Cardinal King*, Toccata Classics TOCC 0300. It is not yet known if Henry’s patronage extended to the commissioning of sacred music from Coccia.

¹⁰ Joyce L. Johnson, *Roman Oratorio, 1770–1800: The Repertory at Santa Maria in Vallicella*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1987, pp. 112–14. *Daniello nel Lago de’ Leoni* was dedicated to Duchess Marianna Caetani Sforza Cesarini. A copy of the libretto (Salomoni, Rome, 1772) is held in the archives of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome.

¹¹ *Veni sponsa Christi* is one of the antiphons designated for the clothing ceremony of a new nun. A two-part setting for two sopranos by Coccia found in the archives of San Giovanni in Laterano (*I-Rsg*, ms.mus. B 1585), which I am currently editing, is almost certainly derived from a Roman convent environment.

contemporaries Pesci, Casali and Bolis, I have transcribed and edited from eighteenth-century manuscript sources in the archives of San Giovanni in Laterano and the library of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the Santini Bibliothek in Münster and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

The album opens with Coccia's only known setting of the *Magnificat a4 concertato* Vespers psalm dating from 1776.¹² The SATB *tutti* writing in the opening section [1] is predominantly homophonic and characterised by several subtle modulations in key, chiefly during the elongated penultimate syllable of 'exultavit'. A comparatively short episode, it is followed by a lively and elaborate 'Quia respexit' for solo soprano [2], where Coccia devotes considerably more time and effort to this quasi-operatic aria, demonstrating a fondness for the *galant* style, typified by its craftily contoured vocal melodic lines replete with numerous ornamental *appoggiature* and semiquaver *coloratura* passages. Operatic tendencies, akin to the flavours of *opera buffa*, continue with the playful duet 'Quia fecit' [3], where the soprano and alto, having made their respective opening statements, engage in a short canon before joining each other in parallel thirds and tenths. The 'Fecit potentiam' [4] is the only one of the three choruses in the work where Coccia makes use of contrapuntal elements, though fleetingly, but it acts as a strong contrast with the 'Esurientes' trio for soprano, tenor and bass which follows [5]. It is in her sacred solo-vocal writing that the main features of Coccia's style tend to blur the lines between accepted notions of sacred and secular, important distinctions in a city where popes frequently issued decrees (usually unsuccessfully) against 'worldly' influences in church music.¹³ Such blurring was, of course, taking place all over Europe, where for decades operatic textures had increasingly been finding their way into sacred music, and Rome was no exception. A second soprano solo is designated for 'Suscepit Israel' [6] before a compact but charming alto solo for 'Sicut locutus' [7]. The final 'Gloria

¹² The term *concertato* on the title pages of Roman sacred works of this period commonly indicates a work for chorus and soloists accompanied by organ, often with additional continuo instruments. Such works frequently carry the indication *coro pieno* (full), meaning multiple voices, for vocal *tutti* sections. If, as in the case of the *Dixit Dominus*, the title has *pieno* it most often means a work for multiple voices on each part throughout.

¹³ Pope Benedict XIV, for example, in his encyclical *Annus Qui Hunc* (1749) complained about music that was 'insufficiently religious' and 'more in harmony with the theatre' than with the church.

Patri' [8] is surprisingly perfunctory, especially when compared with the extended fugal endings of the *Veni Creator* and *Dixit Dominus a8*, with a return to homophony and complete absence of contrapuntal treatment (as might be traditionally expected) in the concluding 'sicut erat in principio'.

There are around 150 sources of multifarious sacred works by Coccia's counterpoint teacher Sante Pesci, and yet very few items from these sources have been transcribed or edited. Most survive in manuscripts held by the archives at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, with approximately one-third (including the *Ave Maria a4* in A minor [9]) extant in the Santini Bibliothek. In this item Pesci's writing is akin to four-part penitential motets by his contemporaries Giovanni Battista Casali and Giovanni Battista Costanzi composed for the Papal Basilicas, wherein strict Palestrinian *stile antico* imitative devices were deployed only momentarily. Preferences for extended melismatic lines, chains of hypnotic harmonic suspensions and chromatic word-painting (as demonstrated in Pesci's example, and exemplified in motets Casali wrote for San Giovanni in Laterano), became a distinctive stylistic feature of eighteenth-century Roman unaccompanied polyphony.

Hic vir despiciens mundum [10], as has been mentioned, was the fugal exercise which gained Coccia her professional qualification in 1774.¹⁴ It was not often the case that contrapuntal examination exercises such as this one were texted, but there are similar examples of four-part items composed by candidates for admission to the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna which do have text, so to make this work (and its companion *Veni sponsa Christi* [14]) performable, I have reconstructed a text underlay for both.¹⁵ With the addition of this text, the two works (both of which have definitive final cadences), become fully fledged, entirely convincing motets in their own right, though it is notable that apart from Coccia's four-part contrapuntal exercises, no other examples of unaccompanied SATB motets (a type required in Rome's papal basilicas during Lent

¹⁴ In that year Sebastiano Bolis also passed the Accademia exam, with a fugue based on the antiphon *Lucia Virgo*.

¹⁵ A manuscript of Giovanni Battista Casali's vocal fugue exercise for the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna from 1740 (possibly autograph), based on the antiphon *Ave Regina caelorum*, survives and is fully texted.

and Advent especially) composed by her have yet been identified.¹⁶ *Hic vir despiciens mundum* is followed by a mellifluous unaccompanied setting of *Ad te levavi* [11] by Giovanni Battista Casali, one of Coccia's examiners and a leading figure in eighteenth-century Roman church music, who was *maestro di cappella* at the Chiesa Nuova and San Giovanni in Laterano for many decades.¹⁷

Although the *Sonate per Cembalo* Coccia composed for Prince Charles Edward Stuart in 1772 were designated for harpsichord, it was not unusual at this time for keyboard repertoire to be interchangeable between harpsichord, organ and fortepiano. The majority of Coccia's sonatas comprise three movements in fast-slow-fast designs. Two of the slow movements have been chosen as interludes between choral works, in this case the *Andantino* from Sonata No. 1 [12] and the *Andante* from Sonata No. 2 [16], both in F major. Their inclusion illustrates Coccia's contribution to a genre other than sacred music, and allows their inherent *galant* textures to be compared with her writing for vocal soloists, where typically florid, highly attractive melodies are underpinned by a steadily moving bass line. When one considers that Coccia was only thirteen when she wrote the *Sonate per Cembalo*, it is impressive to see how much she had absorbed of the modern Classical style of solo-keyboard music emerging throughout Europe at the time. Such sonatas had become an integral part of the domestic chamber repertoire performed by female members of European nobility and royalty during the late eighteenth century, exemplified both by the numerous surviving manuscript sources of solo-keyboard music from this time indicating female ownership, as well as numerous accounts of public and private performances.¹⁸

The keyboard *Andantino* is followed by the *Cinque Assoluzione Quarta* [13] composed by Sebastiano Bolis, *maestro di cappella* to Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart at his Frascati Seminary and at Frascati Cathedral (from around 1772) and at San Lorenzo in Damaso

¹⁶ *Hic vir despiciens mundum* and *Veni sponsa Christi* were performed in Rome by Harmonia Sacra and Peter Leech, in a liturgical context, at High Mass in St Peter's Basilica in September 2019.

¹⁷ More of Casali's sacred music can be heard on *Toccata Classics TOCC 0429*.

¹⁸ Extant keyboard manuscripts derived from, or associated with, the music libraries of Italian noble ladies can be found in numerous public and private archives. Two notable examples which have recently come to light are those of Orsola Inghirami (Volterra) and Luisa Papafava (Padua and Rome), both active c. 1780–1830, now housed in a private collection.

(from around 1778).¹⁹ This dramatic and majestic setting, in keeping with the funereal aesthetic of the four other settings in the set, is interesting when heard in the context of Coccia's work, given that they were colleagues in the Accademia di Santa Cecilia from 1774 onwards. New information has come to light in terms of connections between the two composers after this date. Contrary to the general belief that the performance of functional sacred music by women in Roman liturgical environments was not possible, Mallio's biography confirms that Vespers psalms by Coccia (unfortunately not specified) were performed at Santi Biago e Carlo ai Catinari and were received with copious applause.²⁰ Mallio does not mention the date of this event, but it is almost certain that he is referring to a performance reported in Cracas' *Diario Ordinario*,²¹ dating from 19–20 April 1779, when the Accademia di Santa Cecilia celebrated its patron saint with festive Vespers settings by Maria Rosa Coccia and a Mass by Sebastiano Bolis.²² In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it seems likely, given that the *Dixit Dominus* and *Magnificat* are the musical bookends of a typical Vespers service, that perhaps one or both of Coccia's Vespers psalms recorded here might have featured in the repertoire of 1779. The *Diario Ordinario* also reveals more about Coccia's activity during 1782 when, in March of that year, she composed a cantata entitled *La Gara delle Dee* ('The Competition of the Goddesses'), dedicated to the arrival of the Grand Duke Paul Petrovich of Russia in Rome. Coccia had been officially introduced to Paul by his tutor Prince Nikolai Saltykov, to whom she had presented a score of the cantata.²³

¹⁹ *Cinque Assoluzione Prima, Seconda and Quinta* are recorded on *The Cardinal King*, TOCC 0300.

²⁰ Mallio, *Elogio Storico*, p. xix. It was not unusual for congregations to applaud musicians after grand religious services in eighteenth-century Rome.

²¹ Known as 'Cracas' after the family of typographers who published it, the *Diario* first appeared in 1716 and in 1848 became the *Gazetta di Roma*.

²² *Diario Ordinario*, No. 450, 24 April 1779, pp. 5–6. Additional sacred music was provided by Raimondo Lorenzini (c. 1730–1806).

²³ *Diario Ordinario*, No. 754, 23 March 1782, p. 6. Paul took a grand tour of Europe in 1781–82, travelling incognito with Saltykov included in his retinue. Paul was described in most contemporary accounts of his visits to European courts as the 'Count of the North', although observers of his activities generally knew exactly who he was. The score of *La Gara delle Dee* has not yet been traced. The *Diario* states that Paul, having accepted Coccia's dedication, ordered this score (evidently unperformed in Coccia's day or at any time since) to be placed in his travel trunk, and so perhaps it languishes today in a Russian archive, awaiting rediscovery.

Coccia's exercise setting of *Veni sponsa Christi* [14] is followed by a second motet by Casali, *Ave Maria a4* [15], which is followed in turn by the second of the two solo-keyboard movements [16] as a prelude to excerpts from her large-scale setting of *Veni creator spiritus a4 concertato* for SSAB *tutti* and soloists. The date of this work is unknown, and since no definitive chronological assessment of Coccia's extant output has yet taken place, one can only speculate as to where it might fit. In terms of compositional style and technical proficiency, especially when compared with the *Magnificat* and *Dixit Dominus a8*, it may well have been written during the mid-1770s, but since it survives in a single manuscript source, further evidence is required to substantiate this assumption.²⁴ The opening 'Veni creator' section for solo soprano in G minor [17] certainly demonstrates Coccia's established proficiency in composing for solo voice, as well as her expansion of possibilities with the accompaniment in the form of an *obbligato* organ part. Whereas none of the solos in the *Magnificat* have any introductory or soloistic keyboard element, the soprano entry in the *Veni creator* is preceded by a ten-bar exposition which, as well as introducing the main vocal melody, acts as a *ritornello* device, with the demisemiquaver motif of the opening two bars being reprised in bars 10 and 11 and again at bars 35 and 36 after the soloist's 'Veni' utterances. Furthermore, a second motif in the form of a dotted figure in bars 7–8 returns in various guises throughout the movement. The skilful weaving of thematic elements into the fabric gives an overall sense of unity in design, reflecting a stylistic maturity equal to anything found in the solo writing of Coccia's Roman contemporaries in church music. The superbly bright and joyful chorus 'Tu septiformis munere' [18] expresses the seven-fold grace bestowed by God which inflames the hearts of the faithful with a light that never decays. Here Coccia chooses the related and highly appropriate key of B flat major, with syllabic, rapid-fire homophonic choral utterances delivering a generally exultant atmosphere. In contrast, the bass solo 'Hostem repellas longius' [19] marks a return to quasi-theatrical mode, where the organ part (again with an introductory statement) has the dual role of underpinning the solo line while

²⁴ For example, none of the surviving Coccia-related manuscripts has been forensically examined for paper watermarks which might offer clues to support chronological studies.

reiterating *ritornello* devices. With the final ‘Deo Patri sit gloria’ [20], Coccia returns to G minor with a majestically sublime *Andante con moto* chorus, where choral passages move in declamatory block-chords (apart from a lavish descending harmonic progression on the final utterance of ‘paraclito’) and take the listener on a journey towards a cadence in the dominant major as preparation for an extended fugal ‘Amen.’ Here Coccia makes the most of her rigorous contrapuntal training, with an opening statement strictly imitated across all four choral parts before a shift towards free counterpoint.

The final work recorded here, a *Dixit Dominus a8*, dates from 1775. Rome was a city where the polychoral idiom (used on a regular basis for the celebration of Mass and Vespers on Sundays and feast days) persisted until the end of the eighteenth century.²⁵ After a grand opening statement [21], the composer takes the plainsong Psalm Tone V (beginning F–A–C–D–C), sung by sopranos in both choirs, as the main melodic idea for the next section [22] (a pattern which is reprised for the final ‘Gloria Patri’). Thereafter, the prevailing musical architecture is dominated by dialogues between opposing choral forces; sometimes moving slowly, as in the sublime overlapping entries at ‘Juravit Dominus’ (*Largo*) [24] and ‘Judicabit’ (*Adagio*) [26], or at other times with livelier rhythmic interplay, as demonstrated with the sudden shift to *Allegro* at ‘tu es sacerdos in aeternum.’ This vivacity is apparent also in the ‘Dominus a dextris tuis’ [25], where the exchanges between the two choirs are rapid, dramatic and forceful at ‘confregit irae suae reges’, suitably reflecting kings being wounded in the day of the Lord’s wrath. As a whole, there is nothing in this work to suggest anything other than perfection of double-choir compositional technique, with only a minimum of harmonic doubling (an issue frequently commented upon by contemporary theorists as being one of the main challenges of writing for eight-part choir) as well as subtle deployment of a key trajectory involving F major, A minor, D minor and B flat major, thus achieving a considerable number of harmonic contrasts. There is no doubt that the final contrapuntal ‘Gloria Patri’ [28] of this *Dixit*, a choral fugue equal to anything from the compositional pens

²⁵ Apart from a few attempts to revive polychoral practice in Rome during the nineteenth century, its golden age all but came to an end with the Napoleonic occupation.

of Costanzi, Bolis and their contemporaries, with its heavenly soprano parts rising and falling ethereally in semibreves above the earthly lower voices, is a fitting conclusion to this celebration of the musical talents of an unjustifiably neglected eighteenth-century composer.

All available evidence suggests that despite having worked hard to secure sustained patronage, Coccia failed to advance her career in Rome and had largely given up composition by the mid-1780s. A Christmas motet, *Angelus ad Pastores* for two sopranos and organ, dated 1799 and attributed to her, survives in the archives of San Giovanni in Laterano, but other than this work, no other sources provide any conclusive evidence of activity after 1783.²⁶ After this date the trail of activity goes quiet until the appearance of a plea to the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in 1832 for a monthly pension, in which she states that she had two aged parents and a very ill sister to care for and that, despite having taught music all her life, she was unable to provide for them on account of her own ill health and advanced years.²⁷ One year later, on 21 November 1833, Coccia died, at the age of 74.

²⁶ Caruso, 'Ten Fugues', pp. 28–29. Although it has yet to be definitively proven whether this work (Shelfmark I-Rsg, ms.mus. B 2418) is an autograph score, it is reasonable to believe that the date probably indicates when it was composed. This work, like the opening of the *Veni creator*, has an *obbligato* organ part, as does a setting for solo soprano of *Eruclavit cor meum* (I-Rsg, ms. Mus B 2427) which may also date from the late 1790s.

²⁷ Felici, *Maria Rosa Coccia*, pp. 153–54.

Peter Leech is an award-winning choral conductor (First Prize at the Mariele Ventre International Competition for Choral Conductors, Bologna, 2003), orchestral conductor, researcher, composer, singer and lecturer. A graduate of the Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide, and Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, he also holds a PhD in musicology from Anglia Ruskin University. Currently musical director of the Costanzi Consort, Harmonia Sacra, Cappella Fede and Cardiff University Chamber Choir, he has held guest or permanent musical directorships of numerous ensembles in both Europe and Australasia, notably The Song Company (Sydney), Bristol Bach Choir (UK), Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus, the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, City of Oxford Choir, Coro di Teatro Comunale Bologna, Coro Euridice, Esterhazy Chamber Choir and Collegium Singers (Somerset).



A specialist in English court music c. 1650–1800, Russian Orthodox music and music of the British Catholic diaspora at home and abroad, he has published articles and reviews in *Early Music*, *Music & Letters*, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* and *The Consort* as well as a chapter in *Memory, Martyrs, and Mission* (ed. Maurice Whitehead, Gangemi Editore, Rome, 2020) on historical music associated with the Venerable English College, Rome. He has made a special study of the eighteenth-century Roman musical patronage of Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart (1725–1807), bringing forth recordings such as *The Cardinal King* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0300) and *Giovanni Battista Casali* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0429) to widespread critical approval and leading to a deepening specialisation in Roman sacred music of the same period.

As a composer, Peter Leech has written for the BBC Singers, Bristol Bach Choir, Cathedral Singers of Christ Church, Oxford, City of Oxford Choir, Harmonia Sacra, Choir of Salford Cathedral, Choir of the Oxford Oratory and St Peter's Cathedral Choir (Adelaide), amongst others, with his *Adam lay ybounden* broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

www.peterleech.com



*Peter Leech conducting the first performance of Coccia's Hic vir despiciens mundum
in St Peter's, Rome*

The **Cardiff University Chamber Choir** is a core ensemble at Cardiff University School of Music, with membership drawn from across the university. For many years the choir was conducted by John Hugh Thomas, until his retirement in 2016. Since then it has been conducted by Peter Leech, who has committed the ensemble to the performance of diverse repertoire focusing on neglected composers from music history as well as new contemporary choral music. The choir is very proud to have championed the choral works of Anna Amalia of Prussia, Sulpitia Cesis, Maria Rosa Coccia, Clémence de Grandval, Imogen Holst, Isabella Leonarda, Cecilia McDowall, Marianna Martinez, Morfydd Owen, Olivia Sparkhall, José Mauricio Nunes Garcia and many others, as well as having explored, in depth, all three of the landmark *Multitude of Voyces* anthologies of choral music by women composers. In 2019 the chamber choir toured China, performing in Beijing, Xi'an, Guangzhou and Xiamen, engaging in workshops and collaborative concerts with several leading Chinese university vocal ensembles. In 2023 the choir toured Malaysia, with performances at UCSI University Kuala Lumpur, Sunway University, Xiamen University Malaysia and at Christ Church, Melaka.

2022 Choir

<i>Sopranos</i>	<i>Altos</i>	<i>Tenors</i>	<i>Basses</i>
Megan Allen	Sioned Beynon	Matthew Daly	John Cridland
Helen Baumgartner	Rachel Birtley	Patrick Graham	Caradog Jones
Jemima Brett	Elizabeth Coleman	Peter Leech	Henry Johnston
Sophie Fifield	Hannah Cowley	Joseph Martin	John Rhys Liddington
Georgia Gillespie	Chloe Foster		Lewys Siencyn
Rebecca Jolliffe	Evie Ingles		Daniel Williams
Jenna Martin	Amy Kilminster		
Lara Maylor-Wrout	Megan Shinner		
Cecilia Noble	Georgia Taylor		
Florence Waddington			

Robert Court has pursued a hugely varied and busy career spanning more than 40 years performing across the UK, in Europe and in the USA. He has played with many of the leading British orchestras, with frequent broadcasts on TV and radio. In 2013 he featured as harmonium soloist on the soundtrack to the feature film *Y Sycas*, and in 2015 played on the soundtrack to S4C's film of *Under Milk Wood*. More recently, he acted as music consultant for the Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's installation 'Il Cielo in Una Stanza' which ran for five weeks at the National Museum of Wales, gathering five-star reviews in the national press. In 1978 he co-founded Cardiff Organ Events, which is now responsible for organising more than 30 organ recitals each year in and around Cardiff. He also promotes and advises on the renovation of local historically significant instruments. From 1998 to 2010 he was the director of Cantemus Chamber Choir Wales. Teaching is an important part of his musical life. For many years he was Organ Tutor and an Associate Lecturer at Cardiff University and in 2008 he was appointed as the first holder of the post of Cardiff University Organist. He is organist and choirmaster at St Augustine's Church in Penarth, a holder of the Archbishop of Wales Award for Services to Church Music and is also currently the Organs Advisor for the Diocese of Llandaff.



Texts and Translations

COCCIA

Magnificat a4 concertato

① Magnificat anima mea Dominum: et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.

② Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae: Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

③ Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et sanctum nomen eius. Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.

④ Fecit potentiam in brachio suo: dispersit superbos mente cordis sui. Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.

⑤ Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes.

⑥ Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus misericordiae suae.

⑦ Sicut locutus est ad Patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

⑧ Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

PESCI

⑨ *Ave Maria a4*

CASALI

⑩ *Ave Maria a4*

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui.

My soul doth magnify the Lord: And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour.

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden: Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel.

As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed 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.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

COCCIA

10 Hic vir despiciens mundum et terrena triumphans.

This man, showing contempt for the world and triumphing over earthly things.

CASALI

11 *Ad te levavi*

Ad te levavi animam meam animam meam: Deus meus, in te confido, non erubescam: neque irrideant me inimici mei: etenim qui te expectant, non confundentur.

To thee I lift up my soul. My God, I put my trust in thee, let me not be ashamed: neither let my enemies triumph over me: for they that hope in thee will not be confounded.

BOLIS

13 *Assoluzzione Quarta*

Ne recorderis peccata mea, Domine. Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem. Dirige, Domine Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam. Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Remember not my sins, O Lord. When thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. Direct, O Lord my God, my way in thy sight. Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord: and let light perpetual shine upon them.

COCCIA

14 *Veni sponsa*

Veni sponsa Christi accipe coronam quam tibi Dominus praeparavit in aeternum.

Come, bride of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord has prepared for you for all eternity.

Veni creator spiritus a4 concertato

15 Veni creator spiritus mentes tuorum visita, imple superna gratia, quae tu creasti, pectora. Qui diceris Paraclitus, altissimi donum Dei, fons vivus, ignis, caritas, et spiritalis unctio.

Come, Holy Ghost, creator, from thy bright heavenly throne: come, take possession of our souls and make them thine own. Thou who art called the Paraclete, best gift of God above, living spring, fire and spiritual unction.

17 Tu septiformis munere digitus paternae dexterae, tu rite promissum Patris, sermone ditans guttura. Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus, infirma nostri corporis virtute firmans perpeti.

18 Hostem repellas longius pacemque dones protinus; ductore sic te praevio vitemus omne noxium.

19 Deo Patri sit gloria eiusque soli Filio, cum spiritu Paraclito regnans per omne saeculum. Amen.

Dixit Dominus a8 pieno

20 Dixit Dominus Domino meo: sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.

21 Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion: dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.

22 Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae in splendoribus sanctorum: ex utero, ante luciferum, genui te.

23 Juravit Dominus et non poenitebit eum: tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.

24 Dominus a dextris tuis: confregit in die irae suae reges.

Thou who art sevenfold in thy grace, finger of God's right hand; his promise, teaching little ones to speak and understand. O guide our minds with thine blest light, inflame our hearts with love and with thine endless strength confirm our mortal frame.

Drive our deadly foe from us, and bring us true peace; lead us safely through all peril beneath thy sacred wing.

To the Father be the glory, all praise to the eternal son, with the Holy Paraclete who reigns for all ages. Amen.

The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion: be thou ruler, even in the midst among thine enemies.

With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength: in the brightness of the saints: from the womb, before the star of the morning, I begot thee.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedech.

The Lord upon thy right hand shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.

26 Judicabit in nationibus, implebit ruinas:
conquassabit capita in terra multorum.

*He shall judge among the nations, he shall fill
ruins: and smite heads in sunder over diverse
countries.*

27 De torrente in via bibet: propterea exaltabit
caput.

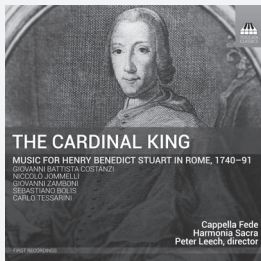
*He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore
shall he lift up his head.*

28 Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et semper, et in saecula
saeculorum. Amen.

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



Other recordings by Peter Leech on Toccata Classics



‘Little-known this music may be but the quality of what is on offer here justifies Toccata’s enterprise in making music which has “languished in obscurity”, to quote the booklet, much better known. These well-recorded performances fit the bill superbly and I hope to hear much more from all concerned. As usual with Toccata releases, not the least of the virtues of this recording is Peter Leech’s excellent set of notes: scholarly and informative.’

—Brian Wilson, MusicWeb International



‘While Classical-period sacred music may not be on everyone’s radar at this moment, these everyday settings are well worth exploring. They are inventive, well-crafted, and show how the styles in Rome had moved with the styles of the time without sacrificing adherence to the *stile antico*. Of course, much of this is due to the excellent performance by the Costanzi Consort [...]. The tempos are all equally designed to bring out the subtleties of the music, and the choral diction is clear. This one makes a good case for further exploration of Casali’s music, which is clearly of high quality. Well recommended.’

—Bertil van Boer, *Fanfare*



Recorded on 21–23 June 2022 and 7 June 2024 at Saint Augustine's Church, Penarth
Producer, engineer and editor: John Taylor

Personal note

Cardiff University Chamber Choir, like many other performing groups worldwide, ceased operations in March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The choir did not meet again formally until October 2021, by which time most of the students who had taken part in the initial preparation for this project (originally planned for the summer of 2020) had moved on. An almost entirely new choir therefore prepared this repertoire anew, and in a very short space of time, so I take this opportunity to thank all the students for their hard work and dedication under difficult circumstances.

—Peter Leech

Booklet essay: Peter Leech

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