

RECORDARE VENEZIA • Ingeborg Christophersen (rec);
Barokkanerne (period instruments) •LAWO 1114 (64:39)

VIVALDI Concerto in D, “Il gardellino”. **Sonata a 2**, RV 86. **Concerto in C**, RV 444. **MARINI** Passacalio a 4 in g, op.

22. **UCCELLINI** *Aria quinta sopra la*

Bergamasca. **CASTELLO** Sonata 9 in G. **LEGRENZI** Sonata seconda a 4, op. 10/2. **GALUPPI** Concerto No. 1 in

G. PALESTRINA/BASSANO *Pulchra es, amica mea*



Recordare Venezia: Recorder Music in Baroque

AUDIO CD; IMPORT

Lawo Classics



Recordings which explore the Venetian Baroque have become commonplace these days. This one presents a pleasing mix of recorder and string music from Palestrina to Vivaldi. Harpsichord, organ, theorbo, and guitar variously supply the continuo. The featured soloist is recorder player Ingeborg Christophersen, the recipient of the Norwegian Society of Musicians “Musician of the Year” award and a performer with numerous early music groups in her native country. I am not normally a fan of the recorder, but Christophersen is a fluent exponent of the instrument. Her pitch is unfailingly true, her phrasing is musical, and she doesn’t indulge in bizarre special effects.

Vivaldi is represented by three works, first of which the popular “Il Gardellino” (The Goldfinch), which sounds even more birdlike on the recorder than it does on the flute. Some passages in the first movement distinctly echo the “Spring” Concerto from *The Four Seasons*. Christophersen chirps and warbles in true avian fashion, although perhaps she overdoes the long appoggiaturas on the trills. I’ve yet to hear a bird who can sing appoggiaturas.

The other well-known Vivaldi work is the C-Major Flautino Concerto—sometimes heard on the modern piccolo—which is just as peppy as the “Gardellino.” The third Vivaldi work, not so well known, is a trio sonata for

recorder, bassoon, and continuo. I enjoy trio sonatas featuring a treble and a bass instrument as soloists, as this format brings out the distinctiveness of the solo lines. This sonata is a real find. The slow movement sounds like a distant cousin of the *Largo* from “Winter,” a heartfelt song for the recorder under which the bassoon weaves Alberti bass figurations.

The ensemble sonatas of Dario Castello (c.1590–c. 1658) are some of the most engaging works of the early Italian Baroque. They are true ensemble pieces which offer all the instruments a chance to shine—including the cello, which is usually given an improvisatory solo. With a mosaic structure of short contrasting sections, Castello’s compositions are varied and substantial.

Marco Uccellini, a contemporary of Castello, is represented by the catchy and ubiquitous *Aria sopra la bergamasca*, based on a popular ground bass theme of the era. Here the two solo lines are taken by recorder and violin. I enjoyed this track less than the others: The performance is too fast for comfort, with the Baroque guitar continuo player whipping the soloists into an unnecessary frenzy.

Biagio Marini, another early Italian Baroque daredevil, is represented by what is perhaps his best-known piece, the eloquent *Passacaglio* in G Minor for four instruments. I also appreciated the opportunity to hear the work of two lesser-known Venetians: Giovanni Legrenzi (1626–1690) and Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785). As one can see, Legrenzi lived entirely within the 17th century, while Galuppi belongs to the *galant* era. Legrenzi’s sonata a 4 is comparable to the best ensemble works by Biber or Buxtehude. Galuppi’s work is also in four parts and mixes old-style counterpoint with the more passionate and jaunty humors of the middle of the 18th century.

I enjoy Baroque programs that give a view of the entire era instead of remaining stuck in one narrow period of time. This one manages to go back as far as the Renaissance. Palestrina’s motet *Pulchra es* is based on a text from the *Song of Songs*. Giovanni Bassano added diminutions to the motet in 1601 and allowed for a performance on instruments. Here it is performed with recorder, cello, and organ. This serene Renaissance work provides a welcome change of pace.

The Oslo-based group Barokkanerne has been around since 1989, but its current lineup of performers is predominantly young. Their performances here are both lively and polished and presented in excellent recorded sound. My favorite parts were the string ensemble pieces, where the group exhibits fine ensemble blend, sustained sound, and varied color and affects. Perhaps most beautiful of all is their hushed, prayerful ending to the Marini. **Michael De Sapio**

**This article originally appeared in Issue 41:1 (Sept/Oct 2017)
of *Fanfare Magazine*.**