

## **Ensemble La Favorita**

Aldona Bartnik – Soprano

Giulia Zannin – Chalumeau

Lena Rademann – Violin

Tiziano Teodori – Traverso

Anna Lachegyi – Viola da Gamba

Eva Euwe – Double bass

Anders Muskens – Organ

Punto Bawono – Lute

The ensemble “La Favorita” was founded in 2016 by a number of students and alumni of the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague. La Favorita is a very international ensemble, which includes members from Italy, Poland, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, and Indonesia. As a group, La Favorita has received coaching in the field of historical informed performance and chamber music from early music specialists such as Fabio Bonizzoni and Mike Fentross. The name of the ensemble reflects the spirit behind a great number of compositions written for the Habsburg Court in Vienna in the 18th century. These were often written to celebrate and honour aristocratic women and special occasions related to these women, such as births, weddings, coronations, birthdays. Music served to amplify the glory and decorum of the imperial family, as patrons of the arts.

While shaping our repertoire, we focused our interest on the combination of traverso and soprano chalumeau, an instrument that was extremely in vogue at the Viennese court during the first half of the 18th century. The chalumeau has a tender voice and a mellow sound which combined with a pastoral flavor, made it particularly suitable to enrich the texture of vocal music and to evoke sentiments of love and pain, often set in the music. Unless playing a solo obbligato role in operas, the instrument was usually paired with other soft-voiced instruments such as traverso, recorder, viola da gamba, and viola d'amour. Despite its limited compass of only an octave and a half, the chalumeau seems to have encountered the favour of the audience, captivated by its sonoric features and the virtuosity of its players,

A letter from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach to J.N. Forkel of January 19, 1775 named Johann Joseph Fux, Antonio Caldara, and Jan Dismas Zelenka among contemporary composers whom J.S. Bach most admired. One of Conti's cantata, "Languet anima mea", survives in a manuscript version from 1716 as arranged by J.S. Bach. During the mid-Baroque period, the Viennese court provided a rich source of employment for Italian instrumentalists and composers who either gained permanent positions with the Habsburg court or stayed for extended periods of time at the court. Of course, with Italian composers came Italian music, and thus Vienna emerged as an important

center for the Italian cantata. The activity of Fux, Caldara and Conti in Vienna coincided with the peak decades of the Viennese court orchestra. Their rich and prolific compositions helped to establish Vienna as one of Europe's most important musical center in the eighteenth century.

**Francesco Conti (1681-1732)** was famous in his native Florence as a virtuoso theorbo player. In 1701 he was offered a post as a theorbo player at the Habsburg court in Vienna. Conti was also famous as a composer of vocal music and opera, and he was appointed as a court composer, making him one of the highest paid musicians in all of Vienna. The cantata "Lontananza dell'amato" belongs to a set of eight cantate con instrumenti, which are kept in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. Its unusual scoring calls for the liuto francese (i.e. lute in D minor tuning) which is doubled by muted violin, with at least two kinds of wind instruments, the chalumeau and either oboe or traverso, and the usual basso continuo. The structure of the cantata is relatively conventional; it consists of three arias alternate with recitatives. The subject of the first aria is mourning for the absent lover, but the mood lightens as the cantata progresses. The final aria in triple time is a cheerful rondo with ritornelli.

**Antonio Caldara (1670-1736)** was born in Venice, and it has been suggested that he might have been a pupil of Giovanni Legrenzi. By 1689, he was known as a cellist and as a composer of opera and wide variety of vocal and instrumental music. Caldara was appointed as a vice-Hofkappelmeister of the Habsburg court in Vienna in 1717. Caldara's composition with aria for soprano, chalumeau and continuo were composed while he was in Vienna.

**Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741)** was born in Hirtenfeld, Austria. In 1698 Emperor Leopold I hired him as court composer, then in 1711 as vice-Hofkappelmeister and he ascended to the role of Hofkappelmeister in 1715, making him the highest ranked musician in the whole empire. Fux was also famous throughout Europe due to his monumental treatise on counterpoint, *Gradus ad Parnassum*. The partitas in three parts by Fux show a very high artistic standard. Fux's mastery in this genre was widely acknowledged, even Mattheson who harshly attacked the *Gradus* admitted that "... in that genre (i.e. the three part partitas), the Imperial Hofkappelmeister Fux is unsurpassed." Fux's three part partita in G minor (K.324) is highly interesting because as far as we are aware, this partita has never been previously recorded.