

J'ay pris amour





J'ay pris Amour

music by:

Anonimo

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro

Francesco Spinacino

Andrea Damiani

liuto



Le musiche *The music*

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro (c.1420 d.1484)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|--------|
| 11. | Petit Vriens | 1'55'' |
| 12. | Leoncello | 3'05'' |
| 13. | Marchesana | 2'57'' |

Anonimo (MS 1144) (XV-XVI sec.)

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| 14. | Japregamore (J'ay pris amour) | 2'48'' |
| 15. | a recercar (carta 74) | 2'05'' |
| 16. | arecercare (carta 27) | 1'20'' |
| 17. | a recercare (carta 29) | 0'40'' |
| 18. | senza titolo (Fortuna desperata) | 3'58'' |
| 19. | Bassada(n)za (carta 35) | 4'03'' |
| 10. | a recercar (carta 46) | 1'40'' |
| 11. | e Ladre (A ladri, perché robbate le fatiche) | 2'24'' |
| 12. | a recercar (carta 49) | 1'59'' |

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro (c.1420 d.1484)

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|-----|----------------------|--------|
| 13. | Voltati in ça Rosina | 1'20'' |
| 14. | love | 1'38'' |
| 15. | Pizochara | 1'47'' |

Anonimo (MS 1144) (XV-XVI sec.)

16.	De tous bien	2'48''
17.	a recercar (carta 56)	0'40''
18.	recercar (carta 82) 0'46''	
19.	Co(n)te(n)to in foco sto com fe(nice)	1'14''
20.	Terana (Tirana mia)	0'55''
21.	Recercate d(e) Gasp.(aro)	5'22''
22.	a recercar (carta 197)	3'40''
23.	Recerchata de Antonio (carta 101)	0'38''
24.	tanto me desti (carta 103)	0'48''

Francesco Spinacino (XV-XVI sec.)

25.	Ave Maria de Josquin	2'38''
26.	Recercare	1'20''
27.	La Bernardina de Josquin	1'33''
28.	Recercare	3'10''
29.	Recercare	2'05''

Regarding historical classification, established dates are all-important: the lute officially enters the history of music in 1507 with the publication of the first printed entablature for the instrument and the successive publication of a great number of similar works. The state of lute music in the fifteenth century and precisely how it rose to such prominence a century later are subjects which have only recently been considered, especially from the point of view of performance. The music offered here is part of an ongoing project to research and identify a musical tradition which has left few traces of its passing; it seems of some importance, however, to note that the most interesting sources are found to originate in the Marches, notably in the chord-form manuscript which is to be found in the Biblioteca Oliveriana in Pesaro, in the dances of Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, and in the entablatures published by Ottaviano Petrucci of Fossombrone and Francesco Spinacino, who was probably a native of the same city.

The importance which a man such as Federico of Montefeltro attached to music can be taken as emblematic of the consideration which was given to music at that time in the lands which he ruled. The Duke, according to Vespasiano da Bisticci,

Took great pleasure in understanding both singing and playing, keeping a most respectable cappella di musica, which contained the most expert musicians and young singers. There was no instrument that the Duke did not keep within his own house, amusing himself by playing, aswell as keeping the most expert players within his own household... furthermore:

he preferred the sweeter instruments rather than the louder

ones; trumpets were not to his taste, though he enjoyed organs and other sweet-sounding instruments well enough.

This refined taste for chamber instruments is displayed in a remarkable manner in the inlaid woodwork of Federico's studio, which represents the vast world of his personal interests. More to the point, the extraordinary perspective of the inlays reveals important details of the two lutes which are represented there, especially as the illustrations refer to two distinct forms of lute.

The round-bodied form, which also appears in numerous late-Medieval and fifteenth century illustrations, has been described with geometric precision by Arnaut de Zwolle, a doctor and astronomer who lived at the court of Bourgogne in the mid-fifteenth century. The elongated form of lute can also be found in contemporary illustrations, especially Flemish painting, and it would become a principal element in the Bolognese school of Laux Maler and Hans Frei.

Despite the evident differences of shape, there were marked similarities, notably the internal division of the soundboard which determined the position of the strings, rose-hole and bridge. It is interesting to note that the external characteristics of the first lute described above corresponds in exhibiting these traditional features. Arnaut declares: *centrum fenestre stabit in medio inter stephanum [the bridge] et caput instrumenti*. In neither case do we find secondary rose-holes in the sound-board, a common feature of fifteenth century lutes which betrayed their medieval and even oriental origins. This detail clearly suggests that the instruments have been conceived on the most recent lines, tending towards the sixteenth century lute model with its six courses of strings.

Thanks to the interests of Renaissance patrons, the mid-fifteenth century also saw the emergence of a new generation of instrumental 'virtuosi'. The most famous of them all, Pietrobono, who was educated in Naples, spent many years at the Este court in Ferrara, where he was praised by poets and eagerly sought by rival princes both as a soloist and as a singer accompanying himself with his lute. Such qualities were ideally suited to the new humanism which derived from the rediscovery of classical culture.

The lute became a metaphor for more ancient stringed instruments, its tones touching the heart of the listener and elevating his sentiments, as opposed to the flute which recalled baser instincts (the myth of Apollo and Marsia, for example). Accompanied singing, of course, harked back to Greek monody. Pietrobono represents the highest achievement of the 'medieval' manner of playing the lute. Until the middle of the century the instrument was played with a plectrum and a technique that was essentially monodic: single melodic lines could be highly ornamented in the hands of skilled players, or full chords might be employed; combinations of the two methods of playing were possible; execution was based on memorised passages from a well-known or personal repertoire, and ample space was available for improvisation. It should be noted that these elements characterise a tradition which was not reliant on written musical manuscripts. About this time, many Italian courts began to employ notable Flemish musicians who were experts in counterpoint, which was at the opposite end of the musical spectrum, a complex science of architectonic musical construction which necessitated written scores and spread a patrimony of severe liturgical music and refined profane chan-

sons throughout Europe.

It is likely that the two diverse tendencies had points in common, as the compositions of composers such as Agricola and Josquin suggest, being close in style to Italian works. The French chansons which came to be most popular in Italy were arranged for the lute and the voice in the local instrumental style. Radical changes of technique at about the same time led to the substitution of the plectrum in favour of the fingers, and this permitted the elaboration of more than one melodic line. It was not a sudden change, however, and the two techniques existed side by side well into the next century. As we shall see, the new style maintained elements of the old one for a long time to come. The new method of playing was adopted at the start by the German school of lutenists, many of whom were also active in Italy, as Tinctoris affirms. As an example, it is worth remembering the famous lute player, Giovan Maria Alemanno (who was probably the author of the missing Third Book of Petrucci in 1508). He visited the court of the Duke of Urbino in 1510 and was held in such great esteem by Pope Leo X that he was granted the castle of Verucchio and the title of count.

During this transitional phase the lute was also used to accompany courtly dancing. Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, together with Domenico da Piacenza, whom he considered to be his master, are the most important figures in the dance music of the fifteenth century. The former wrote a treatise which has survived in various copies, *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (1463), in which he described the choreography of the various dances (bassadanze and balli), and provided precious information regarding the learning and study of dancing, as well as the method of playing

the music. Furthermore, he included the melody of the dances written out in monodic form. Guglielmo's work falls within the category of the Renaissance treatise: there is a clear intention to obtain recognition for the art and the science of dancing, as well as to exalt the musical forms. The treatise also contains an autobiography which provides basic information about his life, not only as a dancing master, but also as an organiser of feasts and banquets, in particular the memorable banquet offered by Alessandro Sforza to his fellow citizens on the last Tuesday of carnival

in 1471. Guglielmo, whose father, Mosè di Sicilia, was dancing master to the court, was born in Pesaro around 1420. Later, he entered the retinue of Alessandro Sforza, who became the ruler of Pesaro in 1445 after his marriage to Costanza da Varano, remaining in the Duke's service until his death in 1473. He went often to Milan, accompanying Alessandro on visits to the court of his brother, Francesco Sforza, but he also lived in Ferrara and in Naples between 1466 and 1467. However, the link with the Sforza and Montefeltro families was destined to endure. He was present in 1437 Urbino at the wedding ceremony of Federico da Montefeltro, and passed into that nobleman's service on the death of Alessandro Sforza. One fact which still remains unclear is the reason for Guglielmo's conversion to Catholicism; he was baptised Giovanni Ambrosio around the year 1465. He may well have been influenced by the religious fervour of Alessandro, or more simply have wished to assume his investiture as a Cavalier of the Golden Spur. Indeed, he was admitted to the order by the Emperor Frederico III in 1469 during a magnificent state visit to Venice.

One of his last appointments may have been at the Florentine court of Lorenzo the Magnificent. This fact is mentioned in a letter written by Costanzo Sforza recommending his services to Lorenzo. The connection did not last very long, however, as Lorenzo wrote shortly afterwards to Camilla, Costanzo's widow, excusing himself for not being able to offer further charity to Giovanni Ambrosio in view of the fact that there were already too many poor people in the city.

The group of instrumentalists who accompanied dancing in the fifteenth century could vary in size and composition depending on the nature of the room in which the dance was to be held. Without doubt, instruments such as the harp or the lute were used in more intimate surroundings (a miniature in a Parisian edition of *De Practica* depicts three dancers accompanied by a small harp), and the music was probably played in the ancient manner. This is confirmed by the type of musical writing: a rough monodic copy exists of the fifteenth century dances which were used either as the melody or the basis for improvisations. Some of these pieces have been adapted here for solo lute in an attempt to imagine how they might have been played by a lutenist of the "interim" period.

It is interesting to note that Guglielmo invites the dancers to follow with their bodies and with their gestures the spirit of the music, so that if Natural is light and airy, then B flat must be rougher and less sweet, an allusion to the fact that the musicians of the era could not afford to ignore the expressive character of the music. The music for the dances is by Guglielmo (though the *Petit Vriens* and *Rosina* are also found in the treatise of Domenico da Piacenza) and it may well be that they are

elaborations of musical motifs which originate from a shared repertoire. The melody of Rosina is identifiable in numerous vocal and instrumental compositions of the period, while other titles are tied to historical figures: Leoncel, for example, is Leonello d'Este.

The chord-form manuscript from the Biblioteca Oliveriana of Pesaro is a unique and priceless document, not simply on account of its musical contents, but also from a cultural and historical point of view, as it covers a period of almost two hundred years, from the late 1400s to the late 1600s, and is intimately bound up with the geographical region in which it is still to be found. Historical evidence tends to be classified on the basis of the homogeneity of its content, whether it be of a social, musical or documentary nature. The Pesaro manuscript thus constitutes a case apart, as it contains an exceptional quantity of documents of various types, all of which are closely related: a selection of musical pieces for the lute and the lyre, a collection of poems, and in the margins and blank pages, a sort of diary reporting daily events in the life of the family which possessed it. The manuscript also encapsulates a further aspect of the music under consideration: its appearance in the private sphere.

The shape of a heart suggests the idea of a gift, of a motivated choice which we no longer comprehend, which was certainly often in use for over a hundred years, and most probably within the context of a single family. The musical contents, and the instrument for which they were intended, the lute, evokes a particular kind of ambience: whether belonging to a professional musician or a gifted amateur, these were pieces reserved for intimate occasions. They might be played in the chamber, the study, or the closed garden, places in which the dulcet to-

nes of the lute could be enjoyed to the full. The history of the manuscript begins in about 1545 when it came into the possession of Tempesta Blondi, a member of a rich, landowning family in S. Lorenzo in Campo. It is not known whether the document was already in the hands of the family, though it was more than fifty years old and partly written out with entablatures for the lute which had long gone out of fashion. However, in view of the fact that the manuscript remained within the family for many years, and that Tempesta represents the continuation of an artistic tendency already evident within the family circle, it is tempting to believe that the manuscript was a family possession, and that it was received from an older member of her family. Indeed, in the margin notes, the name Antonio is found, and he may well be the uncle of Tempesta, as well as the author of the piece that bears his name. Tempesta seems to have owned the manuscript from about 1550 until 1592, the year in which he died, and he added music for the lyre to the more antiquated lute music. Music for the lyre is exceptionally rare in document form, although it was so important in the sixteenth century, especially dear to poets (Apollo was a lyre player) and it was frequently used to accompany the reading of poetry. It is thus no accident that the greater part of his writing in the manuscript consists of a collection of over four hundred poems which fill the second half of the document.

In addition, there are numerous notes in the margins; some of them are by Tempesta, recording the date of his marriage in 1575, for example, and a list of the names of the women who may have performed in some entertainment or other. After his death, the annotations continue in the hands of other members of his family, registering births, deaths

and other facts (including a cure for headaches), the whole presenting a vivid picture of family life in the period.

Tempesta Blondi's interests in the arts are clearly delineated: poetry and music (in addition to the lyre entablature, there is also a piece which indicates the correct manner to tune a lute), as well as choreography. Many of his musical settings of poetry are found in important collections published in the years 1545-1575 by Rore, Striggio, Ruffo, Gabrieli and Marenzio. Once again, this fact suggests that the manuscript belonged for a long period to the Blondi family, or to persons of similar inclination. Further evidence is supplied by a similar collection, the *Recercate de Gasparo*, belonging to a neighbouring family which also possessed lands nearby and suggests a cultured environment of rich landowning families with musical interests. The acts of a trial involving the two families is in the Archivio Comunale of S. Lorenzo in Campo: Tiburzio Blondi, Tempesta's brother, owned a string instrument which was kept in the workshop of a man named Berto, and when the instrument was damaged by Amator, the son of Francesco Gasparo, the court decided that the father should pay to have a replacement made. Further investigation of the dating of the earliest part of the manuscript will require scientific analysis of the materials, the handwriting and style of the pieces to establish similarities with models from other dateable sources. Without wishing to go into too much detail, it is worth considering these elements with regard to the pieces which are included in the programme presented here.

The most important studies of the manuscript have been undertaken in the last hundred years or so by Saviotti, Viterbo and Paolone,

who were more interested in the literary aspects than the musical ones, as they had little understanding of entablature. More recently, Rubsamen and Fallows have examined the question of the dating of the music and the poetry, while a thesis by Ivanoff proposed new interpretations of the manuscript itself. The binding is original and may well be the work of Ulrich Schreier. He was active in Salzburg in the second half of the fifteenth century, though his visits to Italy have been well-documented. The watermarks in the paper can be favourably compared with examples by paper-makers from Fabriano and Venice of about the same time. The earlier section contains hexagrams, while the later section uses a pattern based on a seven-line figure. The musical content has been added in different and successive periods by various hands. The first section contains music for lute, and uses so-called 'French' entablature (employing letters beginning with a to indicate the position of the notes on the fingerboard) for a six-course lute. The same hand has written in a seven-course *ricercar* at the beginning of a section dedicated to entablature for seven courses. The seven-course lute became popular after mid-century when an extra pair of bass strings were added, though in this case we find a piece which is both archaic in style and written in the oldest hand.

It would seem, therefore, that the manuscript was conceived originally in two sections, the first for six-course lute, the second for seven-course lute, though only one piece actually appeared in the second section. This may well reflect the fact that the seven-course lute was still in an imperfect state of evolution, the tuning of the lowest string less than satisfactory. Despite the fact that its existence is mentioned in the treati-

se of Virdung (1511), the seven-course lute did not come into vogue until the latter part of the sixteenth century when the technical qualities of the lower strings were favourably improved. In the six-course lute section, a second hand has inserted the pieces entitled *Recercate de Gasparo*, while another writer has included three pieces in “Neapolitan” *entablature*, a variant of the standard Italian *entablature*, which was used in Naples and the south of Italy and employed numbers beginning from one rather than from zero. Apart from the research into the binding and the paper used in the manuscript, both of which indicate a date around 1480, other elements are useful regarding the dating of the music. The handwriting employed by the scribe appears archaic in style, and no comparison is possible with other manuscripts of the sixteenth century. The notation used is extremely old-fashioned, long and elaborate single string passages are interspersed with chords which may have been played with a plectrum, though there are also examples of polyphonic writing which required distant strings to be played together using different fingers. There are also polyphonic examples (such as *J’ay pris amour*, which was noted in the inlays of Federico da Montefeltro in nearby Urbino), adaptations of famous chansons which were performed according to tradition as instrumental improvisations conserving the original melody only as a harmonic skeleton around which elaborate variations could be woven. The adaptations of vocal pieces also derive from chansons which are typical of the end of the century, while, surprisingly, there are no contemporary pieces, such as the *frottola*. Additionally, the collection includes examples of early *ricercars*, compositions written specifically for the instrument which do not depend upon earlier models, and which achieved

their greatest success in the century which followed. Once again, the writing displays characteristics which hail back to the unwritten tradition: the entablature is not the work of a professional scribe, though it indicates the position of the left hand fingers on the keyboard, as well as the accents of the right hand (the thumb, strong accent, is to be played with a downward sweep; the index finger, weak accent, with an upward stroke). At the same time, the rhythmic accents are rudimentary and often incongruent. These aspects clearly indicate that the author was unaware of the theory of measure, and that the written score was used as a support to memory, rather than to make the music available to other players. And yet, the necessity of the written score suggests a new tendency which would begin to flower within a very short time. Taken together, these aspects suggest that the entablature was probably written out towards the end of the fifteenth century, and that it is, therefore, the oldest known collection of music for the lute, nothing earlier having survived except in the most fragmentary form. Indeed, it represents proof of the technical and musical transformations which were afoot in those years, evidence of changes which were already under way and the emergence of a new tradition. The Venetian publications of Petrucci (most notably the entablature of Spinacino of 1507) confirm an exciting new element, the diffusion on a wider scale of written music. Simply by reading the introduction to the work, it became possible to understand the fundamental key for interpreting the entablature.

Indeed, it will appear clear that to make these pieces playable, it was necessary to 'restore' the entablature, which lacks the basic neces-

sity of rhythmic indications. To find a possible reading, comparison was made with pieces from other sources which employed notation rather than entablature, and which might act as a guide to the original models. It was then essential to confront the harmonic flow of the lute version (without decorative ornamentation) with the corresponding points in the model and organise the internal rhythm of each bar by reference to the fingering details of the entablature with their indication of the strong and the weak beats.

In this manner, pieces such as *Fortuna desperata*, *J'ay pris amour*, *De tous biens* (which is by Hayne van Ghizeghem of Bourgogne), chansons which were popular throughout Europe, have regained meaning and now live again.

Similar intervention was also possible with the *Bassadanza*, a song based on a *cantus firmus* using notes of equal length, over which a series of ornaments range, of an improvised character in this specific instance. The results are surprising; there is even an unexpected hint of the East to be heard. With regard to the *ricercars*, which are much freer in form, it proved more difficult to establish a fixed rhythmic formula. They have been interpreted by identifying a certain number of recurring motifs (similar to examples found in the *ricercars* of Spinacino and the manuscript entablature of Capirola), and allowing the imagination to range freely...

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Sources

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