

GAMBA MUSIC CLUB

CARLO GESUALDO
c1560-1613

Two Madrigals

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Carlo GESUALDO (b. Naples c.1560; d. Naples 8th Sept 1613)

Gesualdo was of noble birth (Prince of Venosa) and a nephew of Alfonso Gesualdo, Archbishop of Naples. His teacher of music was probably Pomponio Nenna of Bari, under whom Gesualdo learnt composition and the playing of various instruments, becoming a skilled lutenist.

In 1586 he married a noble Neapolitan lady, Donna Maria d'Avalos, but her love affair with the Duke of Andria caused great jealousy. Donna Maria and her lover were murdered in 1590 on Gesualdo's orders.

In 1594 Gesualdo travelled to Ferrara to marry Donna Leonora d'Este after negotiations and arrangements by his uncle, the archbishop. The next year they left Ferrara for Venice and then back to Gesualdo's home town. However they moved back to Ferrara as Donna Leonora wished to be near her father, the Duke. Gesualdo left for his home town in 1596, leaving his wife in Ferrara, with their son. When the Duke died in 1597 Donna Leonora rejoined her husband, but his relations with her were not happy. He was unfaithful to her with at least two women. At one stage Donna Leonora's brother planned to liberate her from Gesualdo, but the plans were dropped at the insistence of Donna Leonora who still retained "some affection for that prince". Gesualdo died in 1613.

Gesualdo founded no school and seems to have no followers to carry on in the inspired methods he professed. Historically his position is important as being that of one whose ability was large enough to translate harmonic tendencies of the most advanced of his day into terms of high art.

Gamba Music Club wishes to thank Stephen Pegler for all his work in suggesting and transcribing these pieces.

Translations

'Io Tacero'

I will be silent, but in my silence, tears and sighs will speak of my martyrdom.

But if I die, death will cry out for me again.

In vain, therefore, oh cruel one.

You wish that my sorrow and your harshness should be hidden,
and my cruel fate give voice to silence and death.

'Se per Lieve'

Just as a trifling wound assaults you o lovely hand with such pain,
while it adorns your rare white snows with ruby and purple drops.

So must my breast feel anguish pouring every hour from a thousand drops
and a thousand rivers of blood from the hearts veins?

Ah! who has the greatest pain meets with the greatest pity!