

# Myself when young: Becoming a musician in Renaissance Italy—or Not

Bonnie J. Blackburn

Italian Lecture, British Academy, 27 October 2011

Music examples sung by the Marian Consort (Emma Walshe, Soprano; Rory McCleery, Countertenor; William Balkwill, Tenor; Christopher Borrett, Bass), dir. Rory McCleery, with lutenist Katalin Ertsey

## 1. Marchetto Cara (c.1465–1525), *Se non soccorri, amore*

Se non soccorri, amore,	If you do not come to my aid, Love,
La vita mia d'ogni sustantia priva,	you deprive my life of all substance;
Remedio alcun non gli è ch'io resti viva.	there is no remedy to keep me alive.
E 'l nutrimento mio, dolce e suave,	And my sweet and soft nourishment,
Che da begli occhi cari	born from the beautiful dear eyes
E da le acorte parolette nasce,	and the wise little words,
Troppo me sorge, onde dogliosi e amari	encourages me too much, whence sorrowful and bitter
son' i miei giorni, e grave	are my days, and painful
M'è questa vita ch'altro non la pasce.	is my life since nothing else nourishes it.
E se non che 'l cor stasse	And if my heart did not stay
Ad ogni hor seco, io non sarei più viva	constantly with her, I should no longer be alive,
Tanto dal mio bel sol mi dol star priva.	so much does it grieve me to be deprived of my beautiful sun.

## 2. *Ricercaire ottavo* from the Capirola MS (1517)

## 3. Antonfrancesco Doni (1513–74), *Al partir lagrimoso* (text by Doni)

Al partir lagrimoso,	At (my) tearful parting,
Signor mio dolce et caro,	My kind and dear lord,
di vostra vista ov'ogni mio riposo	from your countenance, where Love
ripose et serva Amore,	rests and preserves my repose,
con acerbo dolore	with grievous sorrow
più che la morte amaro,	more bitter than death,
l'alma propria senti' trarmi del core.	I felt my own soul drawn from my heart.
Et degno fu, per ch'io	And it was fitting, because
sol di mirarvi vivo, signor mio;	I live only from looking upon you, my lord;
così toltomi voi (sorte empia et ria)	thus, when you were taken from me (impious and wicked fate),
viddi tormi con voi la vita mia.	I saw my life taken from me too.

4. Philippe Verdelot (b. c.1480–5; d. 1530–2?), *O dolce nocte* (text by Niccolò Machiavelli)

O dolce nocte, o sancte  
Hore nocturn' et quete,  
Ch'i desiosi amanti accompagnate;  
In voi s'adunan tante  
Letitie, onde voi sete  
Sole cagion di far l'alme beate.  
Voi i giusti premii date  
A l'amorose schiere, a voi amiche,  
Delle lunge fatiche;  
voi fat', o felice hore,  
Ogni gelato pect' arder d'amore.

O sweet night, O blessed  
nocturnal and still hours  
that wait on ardent lovers;  
in you so many  
delights are joined  
that you alone make souls happy.  
You bestow due rewards  
upon the companies of lovers, who hold you dear,  
for their by long trials.  
You, O happy hours, make  
every chilled breast glow with love.

5. Ippolito Macchiavelli (1568–1619), *Vita della mia vita* (text by Bernardo Tasso)

Vita de la mia vita, egli è pur vero  
Ch'io vivo senza voi miser e solo  
Se non quanto con l'ali del pensiero  
Pien d'ardente desio m'inalz'a volo,  
E vengo per dritissimo sentiero  
A sfogar vosch'il mio angoscioso duolo.  
Ma sì brev'è la gioia e sì fugace  
Ch'io non ho co 'l desio tregua né pace.

Life of my life, it is the truth  
that without you I live alone and wretched  
unless, on wings of thought,  
and burning with desire, I lift myself to flight  
and come on straightest path,  
pour out to you my anguish and my pain.  
Yet so brief is joy and fleeting  
I have no truce or peace with my desire.