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### Program Notes. Baroque Sounds of the Season. Camerata Milwaukee. Saint Joseph Center, Milwaukee, WI. December 2, 2018.

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Program notes for Camerata Milwaukee for Dec 2, 2018

Our Advent-tide program this year includes several solo vocal cantatas, works by two Ursuline nuns, three Italian Christmas concertos, and various other baroque delights.

Giuseppe Torelli is primarily known as a member of the Bolognese school of violinists and composers. He helped shape the genres of concerto and sonata into their mature forms under a variety of names, such as tonight's "sinfonias", which were published in 1692 as part of his Opus 5. Rather than the larger works which later came to be associated with this term, these two pieces are examples of trio sonatas scored for two violinists and basso continuo (a harpsichordist or organist who fills in the chordal structure plus a cellist reinforcing the bass line).

The Italian nun Isabella Leonarda entered the Collegio di Sant'Orsola—an Ursuline convent in her hometown of Novara in northern Italy near Milan— at the age of sixteen. In addition to composing over 200 works, during the course of her career she held several important offices in the convent, including that of mother superior. While it does not appear that she ever ventured beyond her home city, she may have taken lessons from Gasparo Casati. He was the local cathedral's *maestro di cappella*, and it is evident from her publications that the two collaborated. All of her compositions are in sacred genres, with a preponderance of vocal pieces.

Swiss organist, choirmaster, and composer Johann Melchior Gletle was born in Zurich and spent most of his life serving the churches in Augsburg. While not well known, 219 of his composition survive and his vocal works display fine workmanship and an ear for tuneful melody. *Qualis ista tam serena* is scored for solo soprano supported by basso continuo, and, in dialog with a broader string ensemble, marvels at the wondrousness of Christmas night.

Georg Phillip Telemann spent a large proportion of his professional life in Leipzig and Hamburg. The volume of his output is astounding, and includes all the important genres of his time. His musical language was a cosmopolitan one, and brought together Italian, Polish, French, and German influences. In addition to music for professional musicians, Telemann profited from a growing middle-class market that had a high demand for accessible but high-quality compositions that could be played at home with friends, family, and other amateurs. Giuseppe Torelli's "pastorale for the holy nativity" was published posthumously in 1709 by his brother, the painter Felice Torelli. Note how it is a study in contrasts: between instruments, moods, and tempos—both within and between movements.

A contemporary of Corelli and Bach, Giuseppe Valentini helped establish the Italian "concerted" style that embraced a base-line harmonic progression under a top melodic line, and enjoyed using bizarre harmonies for dramatic effect. As was fashionable at the time, Valentini included a Christmas sonata at the end of his collection of 12 sinfonias. It is a charming example of an Italian high-baroque *sonata da chiesa*, or church sonata.

The solo cantata *Venite Pastores* calls for the shepherds and sheep in the hills above Bethlehem to come adore the Christ Child. Written by Italian composer Bonifazio Graziani (sometimes spelled Bonifatio Gratiani), who spent most of his career as a priest and choirmaster in Rome, this piece is one of the large number of solo cantatas that are considered his most characteristic works.

Younger than Leonarda by twenty years, Maria Xaveria Peruchona entered the Collegio di Sant'Orsola convent in 1668, and it is conceivable that she took lessons from the older composer. Born into an aristocratic family, she undoubtedly received a thorough education that included musical training. Considered a fine singer, her only known collection of compositions was published in 1675 by Francesco Vigone in Milan. The collection, *Sacri concerti de amorette a una, due, tre, e quattro voci, parte con violini, e parte senza*, contained 18 works, including the present solo cantata "Ad gaudia, ad iubila".

Arcangelo Corelli received his training in Bologna but spent most of his career in Rome. His influence as a violinist, teacher, conductor, and composer radiated well beyond his lifetime; his publications, limited in number but high in quality, became models for violin sonatas and concertos in places as far away as England. His Christmas Concerto is one of his most famous works. It features sections of high contrasts that evoke different moods related to the sheep and shepherds of the Christmas story.