



For Immediate Release

SINGING ACROSS CENTURIES
THE WESTERN WIND PRESENTS TWO MADRIGAL COMEDIES
“BARCA DI VENETIA PER PADOVA” (1605)
AND THE NEW YORK PREMIERE OF
“JUKEBOX IN THE TAVERN OF LOVE” (2008)
AT THE FLEA THEATER, MAY 29–JUNE 1

Four centuries divide two equally raucous, but dramatically different madrigal comedies -- “Jukebox in the Tavern of Love” (2008) and “Barca di Venetia per Padova” (1605) -- that will be performed in a double bill by The Western Wind, one of the most adventurous a cappella ensembles working today. The limited engagement by the award-winning group takes place at The Flea Theater, May 29 at 7:00 pm (Gala Opening); May 30 at 7:00 pm; May 31 at 3:00 and 7:00 pm; and June 1 at 5:00 pm.

The composers could not be less alike. Adriano Banchieri, who composed “Barca di Venetia” was a church organist and an Olivetan monk, while “Jukebox” composer Eric Salzman is well-known for his breakthrough work in new music theater; the show’s director and writer Valeria Vasilevski’s avant garde theater roots extend back to Jerzy Grotowski. It should be noted that some of the lyrics for “Barca” are not very Monk-like. Consider: *“Your precious little face/Is worth a bucintoro/Your roguish eye/Drives me to distraction./Your sugar-sweet lips/Set my heart on fire!”* or try: *“What handsome flanks you have/I’ve never seen more handsome ones,/Nor ones so well-built.”*

In the madrigal comedy tradition, “Barca di Venetia,” supposedly the last of its kind to be written, takes place on a boat traveling the canal from Venice to Padua during which time the motley cast of characters -- a student, a merchant, fisherman, lawyer and a soldier, among others -- pass time by swapping life

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stories, telling tall tales and singing songs of their favorite composers. It is all in the witty and bawdy spirit of Boccaccio.

“Jukebox in the Tavern of Love,” a New York premiere, takes place on a dark, stormy New York night during which a group of strangers gather, one by one, seeking shelter in a local bar. When the electricity fails, the bartender reverts to 17th century lighting by placing candles atop empty bottles of Chianti. The barman is the contemporary version of the boatman, serving to evoke the life stories of the characters. Each of the characters -- a nun, an Irish poet, dancer, rabbi and utility worker -- express singular and touching tales about their lives and their ideas about love.

The Flea Theater is located at 41 White Street (between Church Street and Broadway). Tickets for the May 29 Gala are \$100 and \$50; general admission for the May 30-June 1 performances are \$30 and \$25 and can be purchased by calling 212.226.2407 or by visiting www.theflea.org.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS: A remarkably versatile musician, **Adriano Banchieri** (1568-1634) pursued his musical activities as a composer, theorist, and organist throughout his long career as a monk. After taking holy orders in 1590, he served in churches and monasteries in cities such as Lucca, Siena, Bologna, Venice and Verona, frequently combining his religious duties with those of an organist. Banchieri’s writings about musical instruments provide some of the most detailed descriptions of Italian Baroque organs.

In 1605 Banchieri accepted a post as organist at the convent of St. Elena in Venice and undoubtedly traveled there by boat from Padua, the most common route at that time. Contemporary histories and diaries reveal that the ride from Venice to Padua was frequently raucous, flavored by a lively mixture of languages including north-Italian dialects. Thus, Banchieri’s own journey inspired him to compose the witty and imaginative madrigal comedy “Barca di Venetia,” which he published in an a cappella version in 1605. His vast knowledge of dialects -- he actually published books about the Bolognese dialects -- enabled him to capture the full liveliness and humor of his experience. Not surprisingly, he probably wrote not only the music, but also the text of “Barca.” The Western Wind’s version is based on the 1623 edition which includes a “basso continuo” part played in this performance on guitar. (Notes on Banchieri by Lawrence Bennett.)

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Eric Salzman, one of the pioneers of the new music-theater, has been working in the field since the 1960s. "The Last True Words of Dutch Schultz," his previous collaboration with Valeria Vasilevski, was premiered in and toured The Netherlands; it had its U.S. premiere in May 2007 as a staged reading at Symphony Space's Wall-to-Wall Opera. In recent years, Salzman has worked in France, Quebec, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Norway. He is currently Artistic Director of the Center for Contemporary Opera in New York and is completing a book on "The New Music Theater: Seeing the Voice, Hearing the Body" (with Thomas Desi) for Oxford University Press. He is also working with Valeria Vasilevski on a new project entitled "The System of the World."

Valeria Vasilevski's theatrical roots date back to original work with Jerzy Grotowski (1974). She is well-known for her performance art, dance-theater, music theater and "concert theater" work. For twenty years she has collaborated with numerous new music composers, creating new and unusual texts and extending the relationship between text and music. She directed the first "Sondheim Slam" at Joe's Pub. Her trilogy, "Jitters," premiered at The Flea in New York City. Her current projects include touring the chamber opera "She Lost Her Voice That's How We Knew," (text and direction) composed by Frances White for soprano Kristin Norderval; directing a piano jazz project with pianist/composer Kirk Nurock; and her third collaboration with Mr. Salzman, "The System of the World," based on the experiments of Isaac Newton and his French translator Emilie Du Chatelet. Her article, "Concert Theater: Pioneering a New Form or Putting a Dress on a Tree?" appears in the Yale Theater Review, V. 30, #2, 2001.

The Western Wind: Created in 1969 to celebrate a cappella in every genre, The Western Wind embraces a repertory that includes music from Renaissance motets to Fifties rock 'n' roll, from medieval carols to Duke Ellington, from complex works by avant-garde composers to the simplest folk melodies. The group has appeared in major American venues including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, ArtPark, The Ordway Theater, The Metropolitan Museum, The Frick Museum, The Jewish Museum, Folger Shakespeare Library, Library of Congress, and The Cleveland Museum of Art. Its European engagements include Geneva Opera, Rome Opera, and Teatro La Fenice. During its 1987-88 season, The Western Wind won the ASCAP-Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, and in May 2008 it was honored with the Chamber Music Award from the National Endowment for the Arts American Masterpieces. In addition to its live performances The Western Wind has been heard on radio, television, film and CD, including a series of holiday specials created for National Public Radio and National Public Radio International. It has appeared on the NBC's Today Show and is heard on the soundtrack of Philip Glass's "Koyaanisqatsi" on Nonesuch Records. A complete discography is available at www.westernwind.com.

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