

Saturday 22nd September 2018

PRINCELY SPLENDOUR II: Sacred Music in Enlightenment Rome under Pope Pius VI

Tutor: Dr Peter Leech

A workshop for singers.

Venue: The Village Hall, Lydbury North, SY7 8AU. Registration from 9.30. Workshop 10.00 – 4.30

After the hugely successful workshop with tutor Peter Leech in May last year, we are delighted to welcome him back for Part II of Princely Splendour. An international award-winning conductor, Dr Peter Leech is a lecturer at the School of Music, Cardiff University, where he also conducts the CU Chamber Choir. A specialist in European choral music c.1550-1800, he is musical director of Harmonia Sacra and Cappella Fede

The artistic patronage of Pope Pius VI (Giovanni Angelo Braschi, reigned 1775-99) included a vast extension of the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican, the raising of three more Egyptian obelisks and the building of a grand new sacristy in St Peter's Basilica. Many of Pius's cardinals were keen to follow his example, not the least of which was Henry Benedict Stuart, Cardinal York, whose support for the arts, especially music, was unrivalled. Cardinal York's chief composer Sebastiano Bolis produced choral works of great majesty and harmonic perfection for him at the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso in the Palazzo della Cancelleria, Rome, and at Henry's diocesan cathedral in Frascati.

In 1716 Pope Clement XI famously decreed that any musician in Rome who wanted to gain a professional post must enter the Accademia di Santa Cecilia and pass their exam to achieve the post of *maestro di cappella*. Bolis sat for the exam in 1774, passed with distinction and, by 1778, had succeeded Giovanni Battista Costanzi as Cardinal Henry's chief maestro. In that same 'class of 1774' with Bolis sat a female musician, the 15-year-old Maria Rosa Coccia. The highly talented child prodigy Coccia had been prepared for the exam by her teacher Sante Pesci, for whom she extemporised a fugue on a cantus firmus every day for three years!

Coccia became the first female musician in history to gain admittance to the Accademia and was designated *maestra compositora* with a diploma as a professional *maestra di cappella*. Unfortunately for Coccia, discriminatory power-politics worked against her (her qualification alone not being enough for her to gain a permanent post), and she eventually seems to have given up composing by 1790. However, this was not before having written beautiful instrumental sonatas and fine choral works which included motets, a Magnificat and a superb *Dixit Dominus* for double choir.

The workshop will include Coccia's *Dixit Dominus* in F and 'Fugue' motets; Bolis's *Dixit Dominus* in C and *Cinque Assoluzioni*; Pesci's *Christus natus est*, and works by other composers in late-eighteenth-century Rome, much of whose music has been unjustly forgotten and which has yet to be fully appraised by modern scholarship.

Our venue, Lydbury North Village Hall, is an easily accessible modern hall with plenty of parking situated in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a few miles west of the A49 at Craven Arms.