

PROGRAM NOTES

Composer, trombonist, organist, and teacher Johann Rosenmüller (c.1618-1684) was born and died in Germany but spent much of his life exiled in Italy. He began his education at the *Lateinschule* in Oelsnitz, the city of his birth. He graduated from the University of Leipzig, where he studied music and theology and was later hired as a teacher. Rosenmüller was promoted at Leipzig's *Thomasschule* by 1650 and was appointed organist of the *Nikolaikirche* the following year. He published prolifically during this period, printing more compositions than any other composer in Leipzig. The city council assured Rosenmüller that he would be the next *Thomaskantor*—one of the most prominent posts in Germany later held by J. S. Bach—but before the position became vacant, Rosenmüller's career came to a sudden end in 1655 after his arrest following accusations of sodomy with several schoolboys.

Following his escape from prison, Rosenmüller eventually made his way to Venice. In 1658 he found employment as a trombonist at San Marco. By 1660 he had achieved renown as a composer in Italy, teaching students such as Johann Philipp Krieger (whose Sonata a4 was featured on ACRONYM's *Wunderkammer* recording). From 1678 to 1682, Rosenmüller held the position of composer at the Ospedale della Pietà, the orphanage and school that would employ Antonio Vivaldi several decades later.

The vast majority of Rosenmüller's vocal music is sacred and sets German or Latin texts. He likely composed most of the Latin-texted works while in Venice, since they generally reflect Italian and Catholic liturgical practices and musical styles. Nevertheless, they survive largely in German manuscripts, because Rosenmüller sent many of these compositions to contacts in Germany, likely in attempts to secure employment. He modeled many of these works on the secular cantatas of Italian composers such as Carissimi and Cesti, incorporating Italian operatic and instrumental compositional elements. Rosenmüller begins each cantata included on this program with a brief sonata followed by aria sections alternating with *recitative*, occasionally interspersed with instrumental *ritornelli*. These cantatas are found in Berlin in a manuscript collection (D-B Mus.ms. 18883) that contains thirty-five solo cantatas—most of them unique, unpublished, and unrecorded—copied by many hands and compiled by 1700.

The four cantata texts consist of Latin devotional prose and poetry. Their provenance is unknown, but they reflect the religious context of Rosenmüller's Venetian residence and Leipzig education; although they are influenced by Catholic mysticism prevalent in Italy, their emphasis on Christ reveals a fundamental interest in the Lutheran orthodoxy dominant in much of Germany.

The text of *Aude quid times gens Christo dicata* contains many parallels with Psalm 121. The Lord is the Psalmist's keeper at all hours of the day, protecting him from all evil, much as the author of *Aude quid times* describes Christ's power and strength as protector of His people. The Psalmist lifts his eyes to the hills, declaring that his help comes from the Lord, and so too the speaker of this cantata directs his audience to "look to the hills." Just as in Psalm 121, the perspective of the narrator changes, in this case shifting from imperative instructions for "you" believers to a third-person description of the strength of God. The third and sixth stanzas describe a worldly person who could be mistaken for the savior, yet he is trivial and mortal, whereas Christ triumphs. Although the cantata's focus on Christ and similarity to Psalm 121 reflect a Lutheran reading of the Psalms as expressions of faithful believers, the speaker wishes to leave the earth and serve God in a manner echoing the Catholic desire for mystical unity.

Domine cor meum jam ardet impatiens also frequently alludes to the Psalms. As the Psalmist declares "I think of God, and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints" (NRSV, Psalm 77:3), this speaker sighs, groans, and grows weak with faintness. Hope can be found only in God (as in Psalm 39:7), who hears voices praying (Psalms 66:19 and 28:6). In response to these longing prayers in the cantata, the Lord comes with a "burning flame" that echoes the love of God described in the Song of Songs as "flashes of fire, a raging flame" (8:6). *Domine cor meum*

recalls medieval mysticism in its description of the love of God and desire for spiritual union with God, yet it is written in a manner compatible with Lutheran theology.

Salve mi Jesu, Pater misericordiae is the best example among these four cantatas of the melding of Lutheran and Catholic theologies. This text is taken directly from the Catholic *Salve Regina*, a Marian antiphon, except that here Jesus has largely replaced Mary as the mediator between believers and God—a shift popular in Protestant sources of the 17th century. The antepenultimate and penultimate lines have not been edited from their original source, and so while the “Advocate” refers to Christ, Mary is then called upon to show the fruit of her womb. The final line returns to Jesus.

The text of *Ascendit invictissimus Salvator* also focuses on the strength of Christ as the “most unconquerable Savior.” While an emphasis on Jesus might be seen as more typical of Lutheran orthodoxy than the Catholic tradition, this text is not as clearly denominationally influenced as the three which precede it. For much of the cantata, the narrator speaks in the third person, describing Christ and believers, but in the last lines the speaker shifts to the pronoun “we,” personalizing the devotional sentiment.

Complementing the four sacred cantatas on this program are three selections from Rosenmüller’s 1670 collection of eleven chamber sonatas, published under the name Giovanni Rosenmiller and dedicated to Johann Friedrich, Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Throughout his years in Italy, Rosenmüller made musical connections with members of the German aristocracy vacationing and studying in Venice, which would eventually lead to his return to Germany. These pieces are each suites, with multi-part introductory sinfonias followed by a sequence of *alemanda*, *correnta*, *ballo*, and *sarabanda*.

We also include a single sonata from Rosenmüller’s final collection, published in 1682 and dedicated to Johann Friedrich’s cousin, Anton Ulrich, Duke of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. This dedication likely resulted in Rosenmüller’s appointment as *Kapellmeister* to the Wolfenbüttel court. Yet even in his return from exile, Rosenmüller was unhappy. Joachim Meyer, a musician and writer, met Rosenmüller in Wolfenbüttel and described him as “hot-tempered,” a “morose man who could not be pleased.” Johann Rosenmüller died in 1684, his second year home in Germany.

—Martha Brundage