

VOXNOVA ITALIA MADRIGAL COMEDIES

six voices and basso continuo

Adriano Banchieri: *La Pazzia Senile*

Luciano Berio: *A-ronne*

These two madrigal comedies from the renaissance and the past century are perfect partners. Visually, they are joined by a traditional “commedia dell’arte” staging, according to the techniques of Maestro Antonio Fava. His beautiful masks are worn in both pieces. Cristina Berio told me that she and her mother, Cathy Berberian, sang along with a record of *La Pazzia Senile*, so this music was heard in the Berio household. Berio refers to *A-ronne* as a madrigal comedy.

La Pazzia Senile is important in the history of music as a precursor to opera buffa. It predates the tragic operas of Peri and Monteverdi. The hilarious story of Pantalone and Dottor Balanzon and their efforts to separate two young lovers and increase their own wealth is told with a mixture of improvised theater and lively music. Its slapstick humor is sometimes scatological, but never vulgar.

A-ronne is an important work of music theater and a rare example of comedy in 20th century music. Staged as a “Zannata” or comedy of the servants, often named Zanni in Venetian, because they were named Gianni and came from the valleys surrounding Bergamo at a time when there was famine in the renaissance. Those who know Ermanno Olmi’s “*Albero degli Zoccoli*” will be familiar with the culture that existed in this area from the time of Banchieri to the time of Berio.

Our Madrigal Comedy performance is a joyful evening of “commedia dell’arte” spanning almost 500 years of music history.