

Cantio Polonica



Sunday, May 23 at 6 pm

Digital Program Book

ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

presents

*Cantio Polonica:
Hidden Gems from the Polish Baroque*

Broadcast Program
Friday, May 23, 2021
6 pm

featuring

Maria Lin

violin

Stephanie Noori

violin

Eric Smith

viola da gamba

Arash Noori

theorbo & lute, curator

Matthew Dirst

harpsichord & organ

Video and audio by BEND Productions, LLC.

*Special thanks to St Philip Presbyterian Church
for hosting our Spring 2021 broadcast programs.*

PROGRAM

Canzon seconda a 2	Marcin Mielczewski (c. 1600-1651)
Concerto Terzo – Concerto a 2	Adam Jarzębski (c. 1590- c. 1649)
From the <i>Długoraj Lute Book</i>	
Villanella	Wojciech Długoraj (c.1558-c.1619)
Villanella Polonica	Anonymous
Finale	Wojciech Długoraj
Norimberga	Adam Jarzębski
From <i>Tabulatura</i> (1591)	Anonymous
Polnischer Täntz No. 1	
Polnischer Täntz No. 33	
Polnischer Täntz No. 10	
Polnischer Täntz No. 19	
Polnischer Täntz No. 13	
Tamburetta	Adam Jarzębski
From the <i>Długoraj Lute Book</i>	
Eiusdem Nationis	Anonymous
Chorea Polonica	Anonymous
Chorea Polonica	Wojciech Długoraj
Cantio Polonica	Anonymous
Canzon prima a 2	Marcin Mielczewski

PROGRAM NOTES

In his manuscript treatise on the education of a young nobleman, *De educatione pueri nobilis* (1598), Hieronim Baliński emphasizes the importance of musical training, urging the young gentlemen to acquire basic skills early on so that in the future they can play a “musical instrument of any type of his choice, such as lutes, cytharas, lyres.” Baliński’s attitude towards music education in the formation of young Polish noblemen summarizes the conditions responsible for the music presented in this program. These young men often left Poland to receive their university education, and in doing so began a musical cross-pollination with the rest of Europe as they exported and imported music in their travels. The effects of these *peregrinatio academica* (educational grand tours) became noticeable before long; in many Polish courts, mixed ensembles (mainly Italian-Polish but others as well) were created and in turn, Polish music was distributed in both print and manuscript as far as Italy, England, France, the Low Countries and Scandinavia.

Pieces with Polish connections—usually signaled by an adjective added to the title i.e. 'Polish dance' (*Chorea polonica*, *Polnischer Tantz*, *Carola polonesa* etc.), or 'Polish song' (*Cantio polonica*, *Villanella polonica*, etc.)—began appearing in lute tablatures around 1550, steadily increasing in number and quality until reaching the heyday of *polonica* in lute books in the decades around 1600. The lute pieces presented in this program are selections from two German sources from the turn of the century: the printed collection *Tabulatura*, compiled and published by Mattheus Weissel (c. 1540-1602) in Frankfurt in 1591, and a manuscript source traditionally referred to as the *Długoraj Lute Book*, compiled in the 1610s in Leipzig. There are no surviving Polish lute sources, but we can almost be certain that they did exist, given the evidence from pre-World War II library catalogues. Many *polonica* have come down to us with no indication of authorship. The five *Polnischer Tantz* from Weissel’s *Tabulatura* (1591) presented here are all anonymous, but one is welcome to imagine the pieces being brought to the university town of Frankfurt by Polish students and capturing the attention of Weissel.

It’s hard to imagine anything more pleasing to Baliński than the young Polish gentlemen arriving at university with lutes, their music, and a high degree of performance ability. The great Polish lute virtuoso **Wojciech [Albertus] Długoraj** (c.1558-c.1619) has been credited for compiling the lute book from Leipzig, thus bearing his name among musicologists. Długoraj, whose biography reads like an exciting spy/adventure novel, had settled in Leipzig after fleeing Poland following the death of King Stefan Batory in whose court he had been employed. In the selections presented here, we can only be certain of Długoraj’s authorship in the pieces containing his

initials. It is entirely possible however, that the other pieces were also composed by Długoraj, although we cannot know for certain.

If the lute portion of the program tells the story of Polish export, then the string pieces of Jarzębski and Mielczewski tell the story of Italian import. Rome, Bologna and Padua were popular destinations for wealthy Polish families to send their sons to for their education; the universities in Bologna and Padua were greatly esteemed, and Rome was favored for its rich traditions and Catholic heritage. These gentlemen would return not only with their education, but with an acquired taste for Italian music, accompanied by printed scores and sometimes instruments. Many Polish aristocracy began employing Italian musicians and singers in their courts and before long, native Polish composers had developed a noticeable Italian accent. The music and career of **Adam Jarzębski** (c. 1590-c. 1649) is indicative of this prevalent admiration for Italian music. Jarzębski took a leave of absence from his first job in the court of the elector of Brandenburg in Berlin, a position he had taken in 1612, to visit Italy in order to study and further acquaint himself with the Italian style. He never returned to Berlin from his leave of absence and instead took up a position at the royal chapel in Warsaw in around 1616. The three works presented in this program are from Jarzębski's *Canzoni e concerti* (1627), a remarkably important collection of Polish music from the 17th century, and one responsible for introducing state-of-the-art Italianate trio-sonata textures to Warsaw.

Marcin Mielczewski (c. 1600-1651) was a contemporary of Adam Jarzębski and the two played together in the same ensemble at the royal chapel in Warsaw. He was regarded highly by his Polish contemporaries as well as outside of Poland, with his music appearing in collections in the Czech Republic and Germany. In 1645, he became chapel master at the court of the king's brother, Karol Ferdynand Vasa, bishop of Wroclaw and Plock. The two canzoni presented in this program display Mielczewski's mastery of the Italian style.

–Arash Noori

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Noted as “the compelling” guitarist and “the fine” lutenist by the New York Times, **Arash Noori** performs throughout North America and Europe on lutes and guitars as both recitalist and accompanist. Arash has appeared in performances with Les Arts Florissants, Philharmonia Baroque, Early Music New York, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Piffaro: The Renaissance Band, Ars Lyrica, Opera Lafayette, the Folger Consort, Repast Baroque, the Sebastians, Academy of Sacred Drama, ARTEK, and NOVUS NY of Trinity Wall Street amongst others. Hailed for his “flair and sensitivity” in

accompaniment (Opera News), Arash has accompanied operas at the Wiener Staatsoper, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the Kennedy Center in Washington and Brooklyn Academy of Music and has performed at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York, Philharmonie de Paris, Teatro Real in Madrid, and the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. Arash has been a prize winner at several international competitions including Guitare Montréal, and the Great Lakes Guitar Competition.

Arash is a core and founding member of Cantata Profana, an “intrepid” (New Yorker) ensemble that juxtaposes masterpieces from the medieval era to the 21st century with an aesthetic orientation “devoted not to new or modern or early music — such specialists proliferate — but to most anything, so long as the mixture is put together thoughtfully and put across persuasively.” (New York Times) The group was honored by Chamber Music America with an award for Adventurous Programming in 2016 and has garnered rave reviews from The New York Times, New Yorker, Boston Globe, Opera News, and The Wall Street Journal amongst others. A graduate of Yale and the Juilliard School, Arash currently serves as Adjunct Professor of Early Music at University of North Texas, College of Music.

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Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston presents a diverse array of music in its original context while creating connections to contemporary life. Ars Lyrica's acclaimed programming features neglected gems alongside familiar masterworks, and extracts the dramatic potential, emotional resonance, and expressive power of music. Its local subscription series, according to the Houston Chronicle, "sets the agenda" for early music in Houston. Ars Lyrica appears regularly at international festivals and concert series because of its distinctive focus, and its pioneering efforts in the field of authentic performance have won international acclaim, including a Grammy nomination for Best Opera.

Ars Lyrica Artistic Director **Matthew Dirst**, recently described in the *Washington Post* as an “efficient, extremely precise conductor who has an ear for detail,” is the first American musician to win major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, including the American Guild of Organists National Young Artist Competition and the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition. Widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting, Dirst leads a period-instrument ensemble with several acclaimed recordings, one of which—J. A. Hasse’s *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra*—was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2011 for Best Opera. His degrees include a PhD in musicology from Stanford University and the *prix de virtuosité* in both organ and harpsichord from the Conservatoire National de Reuil-Malmaison, France, where he spent two years as a Fulbright scholar. Equally active as a scholar and as an organist, Dirst is Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, and Organist at St Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston. His publications include *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

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