

I'LL NEVER SEE THE STARS AGAIN

"Last fall the excellent early-music group Artek turned a group of Monteverdi madrigals into an enchanting theater piece." (Margo Jefferson, *The New York Times*, 5/16/03)

"New York early music company ARTEK provides a stark reminder of just how rich and passionate, as well as achingly sad, Monteverdi's songs can be. Martin Platt and Gwendolyn Toth's imaginative reinvention of Monteverdi's music...not only delivers virtuoso playing from its 14 actor-musicians but also marries the music to some evocative images, using the pieces as a soundtrack to the story of a group of Italian refugees' entangled love lives. Sopranos Jessica Tranzillo and Barbara Hollinshead and tenors Philip Anderson and Michael Brown sing up a storm as a pair of married couples whose pillow talk, cleverly staged in a giant, vertical bed, forms the basis of *Non e gentil core* (He is no noble-hearted). But the simple, text free scenarios are never more evocative than when Toth's Ariadne pines after her Theseus, Grant Herreid, who also plays lute." (Chris Bartlett, *The Stage (UK)*, 9/1/2005)

"Love is a complex, confusing but beautiful thing. 'I'll Never See the Stars Again' is an exciting piece of musical theatre entirely sung in Italian, the singers are dynamic and appear effortless whilst they project Monteverdi's beautiful score. The concept is based around a group of Italian refugees who arrive in America to become intertwined in the inescapable cobweb of love, lust and betrayal. There are modern references throughout which makes the piece accessible to those less familiar with the genre...All in all this is a profound show that will certainly touch those with a drip of passion inside their heart." (*Three Weeks, Edinburgh 2005*)

"The Monteverdi in this year's show is beautifully performed, with musicians acting out simple scenes from modern relationships. Shadows and light are used brilliantly as the music soundtracks phone flirtations and infidelities. The bourgeois music-lovers in the audience delighted in the conjunction of Monteverdi and bed-hopping." (Claire Smith, *The Scotsman*, 8/18/2005)

I DON'T WANT TO LOVE

"It is beautiful, sensuous music, vibrantly given here by early music specialists, led by Gwendolyn Toth." (Clive Barnes, *The New York Post*, 4/19/97)

"As always, a chief reward of a Morris program is the music, performed live by an intimate group of gifted musicians. This weekend was no exception. Philip Anderson, Michael Brown, Paul Shipper and Clark were the fine singers of the Monteverdi madrigals in *I Don't Want to Love*, while Gwendolyn Toth accompanied them on harpsichord." (Sarah Kaufman, *Washington Post*, 2/17/02)

"The ARTEK Singers are wonderfully expressive here as elsewhere." (Anna Kisselgoff, *The New York Times*, 4/19/97)

"The music, a courtly setting of 17th-century madrigals by Monteverdi, seemed to float effortlessly around the auditorium. No matter that you didn't understand the Italian words, so beguiling was the live performance from the ARTEK ensemble." (Thom Dibdin, *Edinburgh Evening News*, UK, 10/30/01)

"Dramatic gifts characterize the New York musicians of "Artek," and always add a certain lightness to the seriousness of their music-making...It was delicious how the three men sank into blind action, but then submitted to the "deadly fire" all the more willingly. Philip Anderson is the better of the two tenors, Michael Brown the funnier one, who delivered a wonderful pastoral battle of words with Barbara Hollinshead. Jessica Tranzillo offered us the beguiling lament of a nymph, and together the two ladies, with a coquettish attitude, succumbed to the temptations of pompous declarations of love. Finally, Paul Shipper, a regular at the Tage-Alter-Musik, proved himself in the final *Chiccona* by Tarquinio Merula to be a veritable miracle of the coloratura bass. As always, Gwendolyn Toth at the harpsichord, with her delicate instinct for programmatic detours, kept the bass pattern of Monteverdi's "Zefiro torna," to which her accompaniment joined in so breezily, going along. Justified ovations for this marvellous Sunday morning in St. Oswald's church." (*Mittelbayerische Zeitung*, Germany, 6/11/03)

GRAVEYARD MUSIC

"The pieces sung by mezzo-soprano Barbara Hollinshead and soprano Jessica Tranzillo were truly haunting. The notes seemed to pierce through the air as the two achieved perfect harmony...It is easy to recognize the passion that Artek's eight musicians have for early baroque music....The dark music produced by Artek at Synod Hall was impressive and unusual, summoning the Halloween spirit to take hold of the spectators." (Ross Rader, *Pitt News, Univ. of Pittsburgh*, 10/25/06)

"The program was a multimedia presentation with slides of graveyard scenes and original poetry written by Shipper... Hollinshead was stylish in *Flow My Tears* by John Dowland and properly impassioned in Tarquinio Merula's *Canzonetta Spirituale sopra la Nanna*... [Tranzillo] sang a splendid tour de force in Giacomo Carissimi's *Lamento di Maria Stuarda*...Patton and Herreid blended seamlessly in *Midnight*, an exquisite duet by Dowland." (Eric Haines, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 10/24/06)

"Beautifully presented and a lot of fun." (Kathy Wolfe, presenter, *Early Music in Columbus*, October 2006)

"Period-music presenter Early Music in Columbus found an appropriately spooky show for its second concert of the season last night at Mees Hall Auditorium on the Capital University campus. Happily, the themed program, "Graveyard Music," was short on gimmicks (OK, we did enjoy the evocative slide projections and the costumed funeral procession) and long on quality, offering a large number of mostly 17th-century Italian and English selections that tended toward the higher end of the entertainment scale." (Barbara Zuck, *Columbus Dispatch*, 10/28/06)

THE PERFECTION OF MODERN MUSIC (MONTEVERDI MADRIGALS, BOOK 5)

"And the winner is ... Claudio Monteverdi! He was well-served Saturday night in a Berkeley Festival performance at that city's First Congregational Church. ARTEK (from The Art of the Early Keyboard), a New York-based ensemble of six singers and seven players of plucked and bowed strings, gave magnificent voice to Monteverdi's *Fifth Book of Madrigals*. Harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth, ARTEK's founding director, framed the music with 16th- and 17th-century publications and letters, from which she and the singers read — effective speakers, all ... Monteverdi set the poems as five-part madrigals, and the ARTEK singers sang, in both solo and ensemble passages, with passionate intensity. Listeners did not need translations to hear that these singers were in complete command of the verbal, and the musical grammar and meaning ... The program was beautifully arranged, having been grouped into five segments, with the central portion following the narrative of Guarini's famous epic poem, *Il pastor fido* (The faithful shepherd). The first and fifth groups, except for a couple of anonymous texts, were settings of other poetry by Guarini. Some groups were accompanied by the excellent continuo players, some were a cappella...The six singers in this performance, gifted both vocally and expressively, were sopranos Laura Heimes and Barbara Hollinshead, alto countertenor Ryland Angel, tenors Philip Anderson and Michael Brown, and bass-baritone Peter Becker...The instruments provided colorful continuo support." (Anna Carol Dudley, *Classical Voice*, San Francisco, 6/12/10)