



(LEMS 8017)

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber  
MENSA SENORA

#### LA FOLLIA SALZBURG

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The transition from Renaissance to Baroque around the beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed many far-reaching changes in the forms and techniques of musical composition. Among these was the rise of an instrumental style distinct from vocal models. The main instrumental form cultivated in Italy was the solo or trio sonata, which developed out of the reduction and polarization of voices in the older polyphonic canzona. The canzona was an instrumental fantasy, generally in one movement, with several sections in different tempi. In the sonata, these smaller sections gradually expanded into complete movements. An important feature of these early sonatas, taken over from the canzona, was the emphasis on motivic interplay, where a short melodic idea was passed about among the voices. The texture was more or less polyphonic, with a fast harmonic rhythm and drive towards the cadence.

The stylistic opposite of the Italian sonata was the French instrumental suite. This was a collection of instrumental pieces taken from various sources, but especially from the operas and ballets of J.B. Lully. Consisting of an overture and series of courtly dance movements, the suite soon gained great popularity as music for entertainment at important social gatherings such as banquets, especially in Germany, where it was often known as Tafelmusik.

A fusion of both these styles took place in Austria during the seventeenth century. This was carried out by the leading musicians J.H. Schmelzer and J.J. Fux at the court of Emperor Leopold I in Vienna, and H.I.F. Biber and G. Muffat at the court of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg.

The synthesis was a peaceful one – Muffat remarks in the foreword of his collection of suites *Florilegium primum* (1695): “In mixing the French style with the German and Italian, I have no desire to instigate a war; I wish rather to represent the harmonious peace so desired by those peoples.” The result of this attempt could be called the ‘Austrian’ suite.’ It is characterized by an opening movement in the form of an Italian sonata, sometimes called *sinfonia* or *sonatina*, followed by a series of French-Inspired dance movements, expressive Italian *arioso* movements, and interpolated dances of various origins.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber was one of the most original composers of the second half of the seventeenth century, as well as one of the most famous and celebrated violinists of his time. A native of Bohemia, he was born in Wartenberg, near Reichenberg (now Liberec) in 1644. He received his earliest musical training in Wartenberg, later in Vienna, perhaps with J.H. Schmelzer. In 1668 he took up service with the Archbishop of Olmutz at his residence in Kremsier (now Kromeriz), but absconded in 1670 to the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg, where he remained until his death in 1704. Biber quickly made a name for himself in Salzburg. In 1678 he was made vice-Kapellmeister and in 1684 court Kapellmeister, and thus had the direction of all church and court music in Salzburg. In this function Biber wrote music of all types; nowadays he is best known for his instrumental music, including highly unconventional programmatic works.

Biber dedicated four printed collections of instrumental works to his ecclesiastical employer in Salzburg, among them *Mensa sonora* (The 'musical table') of 1680.

*Mensa sonora* has the subtitle *Die Klingende Taffel oder Instrumentalische Taffel-Music mit Frisch-lautenden Geigenklang*. It is a collection of six suites (Biber names them *pars*) whose variety is typical of the late seventeenth century. Aside from the movements usual in a French suite, such as *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, *gavotte*, and *gigue*, we find dances such as *gagliarda*, *balletto*, *trezza*, *canario*, *amener* and *ciacona*. *Pars V* is similar to J.H. Schmelzer's ballet sites, beginning with an *intrada* and closing with a *retirada*, with a *balletto*, *trezza*, *gavotte* and two *gigues* in between. *Pars II* has the unusual arrangement of *intrada-balletto-sarabanda-balletto-sarabands-balletto*. *Pars III* begins surprisingly with a *gagliarda*. *Pars I* and *Pars IV* most nearly approach the 'classical' arrangements of movements: *sonata-allemanda-courante-sarabanda-gavotte (balletto)-gigue-sonatina*. Biber's sonatas are in two sections- a slow introduction followed by a faster polyphonic section showing the typical motivic interplay of the Italian sonata. The suites, which begin with a sonata, are rounded off with a sonatina. This shorter movement (in *Pars I* the sonatina is only seven bars long) is similar in mood to the sonata and gives a sense of unity to the suite. In *Pars I*, *Pars III*, and *Pars IV* the sonatina is in one slow section. The sonatina concluding *Pars VI*, however, has a quick section as well. Tongue-in-cheek, Biber leaves us at the end of the entire collection of suites 'hanging in mid-air.'

Although Biber left Kremsier under questionable circumstances he remained in contact with the Kapellmeister Pavel Vejvanovsky and sent him copies of all his works until Vejvanovsky's death in 1693. Thus the library in Kremsier has a rich collection of Biber's music, including the only extant copy of *Mensa sonora*. The *Arien a 4* and *Balletti Lamentabili* are found there in manuscript form: the *Arien* in Biber's autograph and the *Balletti* in Vejvanovsky's hand.

The *Arien a 4* were probably composed in 1673/4 in Salzburg. The suite is most effective Tafelmusik, with its opening fanfare-like *Allegro* suddenly concluding in an *Adagio*. A 'normal' *allemande* is followed by a graceful *amoresca* and an unusual *gigue* in *duple* time. Biber ends the suite with a sonatina, where a slurred eighth-note motive is heard in all voices.

*Balletti Lamentabili a 4* is an early work, written while Biber was still at Kremsier. The suite takes its name from the concluding sonatina, entitled 'Lamenti,' but the entire suite is suffused with melancholy, from the one-section opening sonata in the style of an earlier fantasy, with its long pedal point in the bass and imitation in the upper parts, through the *Allemanda*, the *Sarabanda* and its 'sighing' falling seconds, *Gavotte* and *Gigue*, to the dramatic outburst of the final *Lamenti*.

---Notes written by ANN FAHRNI

#### THE TRACKS:

*Arien 4*, suite for violin, 2 violas & continuo in A major, C. 53

1. *Allegro* - 0:44
2. *Allamanda* - 1:42
3. *Amoresca* - 1:54
4. *Gigue* - 1:25
5. *Sonatina* - 0:59

*Mensa Sonora seu Musica Instrumentalis*, suites (6) for violin, 2 violas & continuo, C. 69-74

*Pars I*

6. *Sonata* - 1:16
7. *Allamanda* - 1:48
8. *Courante* - 0:57
9. *Sarabanda* - 1:15
10. *Gavotte* - 1:00
11. *Gigue* - 2:03
12. *Sonatina* - 0:38

Pars II

- 13. Intrada - 0:27
- 14. Balleto - 1:22
- 15. Sarabanda - 0:57
- 16. Balleto - 0:52
- 17. Sarabanda - 0:50
- 18. Balleto - 0:44

Pars III

- 19. Gagliarda - 0:55
- 20. Sarabanda - 1:13
- 21. Aria - 0:54
- 22. Ciacona - 3:49
- 23. Sonatina - 0:45

Pars IV

- 24. Sonate - 1:54
- 25. Allamanda - 1:46
- 26. Courante - 1:01
- 27. Balleto - 0:38
- 28. Sarabanda - 3:18
- 29. Gigue - 1:15
- 30. Sonatina - 1:01

Pars V

- 31. Intrada - 0:46
- 32. Balleto - 0:34
- 33. Trezza - 0:27
- 34. Gigue - 0:53
- 35. Gavotte - 0:54
- 36. Gigue - 1:10
- 37. Retirada - 0:30

Pars VI

- 38. Sonata - 0:59
- 39. Aria - 1:34
- 40. Canario - 0:37
- 41. Amener - 1:14
- 42. Trezza - 0:32
- 43. Ciacona - 2:22
- 44. Sonatina - 0:25

Balletti Lamentabili 4, suite for violin, 2 violas & continuo in E minor, C. 59

- 45. Sonata - 3:00
- 46. Allamanda - 1:43
- 47. Sarabande - 2:28
- 48. Gavotte - 0:32
- 49. Gigue - 1:34
- 50. Lamenti - 1:12

LA FOLLIA SALZBURG

La Follia Salzburg was founded in 1986 by a number of young musicians from Austria and Germany. From their very first appearances, the ensemble was well received by both press and public, and has now established a reputation in Austria and southern Germany. In 1990 La Follia Salzburg was prizewinner in the Musica Antiqua (Bruges) competition, and they have toured in Switzerland, Poland, France, and Holland (including the International Festival of Early Music in Utrecht). The ensemble's repertoire is centered around Baroque chamber music, with special emphasis on works of Austrian seventeenth century composers such as J.H. Schmelzer, Heinrich I. F. Biber, or Romanus Weichlein. They play on period instruments in order to approach the tonal color and performance practice of the time as closely as possible.

CREDITS:

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