

PROJECT REPORT - THE DESTINED KNOT RECORDING AND ANIMATION 2022

Animators & Illustrators:

Eleanor Meredith

Assisted by Jenny Wright

Singers from Fieri Consort: Lucy Cox, Hannah Ely (sopranos), Sarah Anne Champion, Helen Charlston (mezzo-sopranos), Tom Kelly, Josh Cooter, Chris Fitzgerald-Lombard (tenors), Ben McKee, Ben Rowarth (basses)

Sound produced by Adrian Peacock and engineered by David Hinitt

Recorded at Nevill Holt in Norfolk in their opera theatre during October 2020.

Summary

'The Destined Knot' was developed initially in the first lockdown of 2020 as a way to produce some visual content that was not just us singing to an empty concert hall. We had been planning to record more late madrigals by Luca Marenzio for some time (since the release of our first album *Tears of a Lover* in 2017). This collection of settings of texts from Guarini's play *Il Pastor Fido* made for an enticing project, with its potential for storytelling.

The recording was made at Nevill Holt Opera in Norfolk, whose theatre was unusually empty because of the pandemic. Making this recording on a stage rather than a church felt particularly significant as the music is so theatrical. We look forward to performing this programme on the same stage with a real audience in the future.

As soon as we had the 1st edits we could start the animation process. We had decided to work with Eleanor Meredith - whose work with the Royal Scottish Orchestra on Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (Anno) we had been aware of for some time. We collaborated to develop a way to select and convey a narrative as best as we could using the madrigals as a structure. The madrigals by Marenzio do not cover the whole plot, but instead highlight the most dramatic or romantic passages of text (all monologues). This had its challenges of course. We also decided not to literally illustrate the storyline but instead emphasise the emotional effects of Marenzio's music so that the focus was not drawn away from it. In order to make the animation comprehensible, we decided to include three moments of non-musical illustrations and tell the story with some short passages of text.

During the development of the project, we became aware of the Alt Pitch Digital Arts festival. We submitted 'The Destined Knot' as a work in progress and were delighted to receive a Curator's Choice award, which resulted in a grant towards finishing the final project. This also generated some further publicity and marketing as the project became one of the festival's 2022 Commissions.

Funding

The project was funded through private donations (with gift aid), Angel Early Music, the Alt Pitch Digital Arts festival and a crowdfunding campaign. Other grants were sought but unsuccessful. Funding in kind was received from Nevill Holt Opera who provided their theatre space at a reduced rate.

Challenges

The project timeline was affected by the artist's husband being involved in a car accident. Together with schools closing because of Covid-19, this meant work had to be halted on the animation and so we delayed the release of the album to November 2022.

Outcomes

- [Alt Pitch digital arts festival 2022 - Curator's Choice award](#)
- Videos:
 1. [Full animation](#)
 2. [O Mirtillo](#)
 3. [Deh, Tirsi mio gentil](#)
 4. [Ferir quel petto, Silvio?](#)
- In the press
 - Excerpt featured on [BBC Music Magazine's](#) website
 - Together with our other film project 'A Short Walk', [The Guardian](#) published our article about 'The Destined Knot' as a new way to engage with audiences.
 - Interview with Eleanor Meredith in [The Cusp](#) - an online arts magazine.
 - Blog feature: [Colin's Column](#)
 - Pending reviews (Gramophone)
 - PR ongoing (SharpArts Media)
- Album release - 4th November 2022
 - 300 copies manufactured - physical distribution through Naxos and our online shop.
 - Digital distribution through Record Union on all major streaming and download platforms: Spotify, 7Digital, AppleMusic, Amazon Music, Napster, Deezer, 24/7, Tidal, Shazam, Anghami, Pandora, YouTube Music, Facebook & Instagram, TikTok, NetEase Cloud Music, iMusica, iHeartRadio, Qobuz, Soundcloud, Twitch.

- Online launch event - 20th November 2022
 - 15 tickets were sold for this event for which we charged a suggested donation. Other attendees were crowdfunders - tickets to a launch event was offered as a donation reward.

Future plans

The animation aspect of this project was devised with the main goal of live performance, though the immediate plan was an alternative digital visual aspect to our music as opposed to watching us perform. We have had interest from some venues for a version for young audiences. We are beginning to develop this now - it would probably involve cutting the length down and some more speaking from the singers to fill in the story.

We have found that many promoters are apprehensive about booking a project like this, perhaps because Marenzio is seen as a niche composer, and perhaps because the idea of a multi-media performance is still unusual. Although projection would be relatively easy, and many concert spaces are already set up for it, it seems that in these post-covid times, promoters and audiences want more traditional music-making.

It's possible it is also difficult to sell as music festivals and venues are over-saturated and still coping with the back-log from canceled performances of the previous two years. We are hopeful we can get around this eventually, especially with more promotional material. We plan to make a video of the project 'in performance'.