# “RINALDO” A CINQUE

# BREZZA

**Pablo Gigosos,** traverso
**Marina Cabello del Castillo,** viola da gamba
**Teun Braken,** harpsichord
**Giulio Padoin,** violoncello
**Pablo FitzGerald,** archlute, baroque guitar
**Hiram Santos,** percussions

**Traverso** after Carlo Palanca, Frankfurt, made by Remko van der Vegt, 2013.
**Piccolo** made by Martin Wenner, 2022.
**Viola da gamba:** Michel Colichon, Paris 1691, made by Sergio Gistri, Colle Val d'Elsa, 2008.
**Harpsichord:** Single manual Harpsichord after Christian Vater, Hannoever 1736, made by Titus Crijnen, Bussum, 1995.
**Violoncello:** Italian cello, ca.1710, Venetian school.
14 course **archlute:** after Matteo Sellas made by José Miguel Moreno, Madrid, 2014.
5 course **baroque guitar:** after instruments by the Pages family, Cádiz XVIIIth century made by Julio Castaños, Málaga, 2017.
**Percussions:** Provence Drum and Tambourine

Pablo Gigosos

# “RINALDO” A CINQUE

## Georg Friedrich Händel

---

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | Ouverture | 6:00 |
| **2.** | Combatti da forte | 4:42 |
| **3.** | Preludio traverso | 1:44 |
| **4.** | Nò, no che quest’alma scontenti non dà | 2:53 |
| **5.** | Furie terribili! | 2:16 |
| **6.** | Preludio violoncello | 1:20 |
| **7.** | Cara sposa, amante cara, dove sei? | 10:00 |
| **8.** | Il vostro maggio de’ bei verdi anni | 2:07 |
| **9.** | Preludio arciliuto | 2:49 |
| **10.** | Lascia, ch’io pianga mia cruda sorte | 4:26 |
| **11.** | Preludio cembalo | 1:18 |
| **12.** | Abbrugio, avvampo e fremo | 3:09 |
| **13.** | Ah! crudel! il pianto mio | 5:54 |
| **14.** | Vo’ far guerra, e vincer voglio | 5:47 |
| **15.** | Sinfonia | 3:00 |
| **16.** | Battaglia | 2:05 |

In the 18th century, audiences in the major music centres of Europe showed great interest in incorporating individual numbers from new operas into home music-making. As a result, especially arias for singing and playing at home were arranged, often with the vocal part entrusted to an instrument, most commonly the flute.

Georg Friedrich Handel's operas were particularly popular at the time. An arrangement by Handel, which is now preserved in the Koninklijk Huisarchief in The Hague and in a copy at the Nederlands Muziek Instituut in The Hague (Ms. 3621), has caught BREZZA's attention because it is written for the core ensemble: flute, viola da gamba, and harpsichord. This manuscript contains seven arranged arias from five different operas by Handel, two from *Radamisto* (1720) and *Atalanta* (1736) each, and one from *Muzio Scevola* (1721), *Floridante* (1721), and *Lotario* (1729). These arrangements have been available in a modern edition since 2019, created by Leonore and Günter von Zadow.

BREZZA was inspired by this and created their own Handel arrangement. Since the ensemble members envisioned a somewhat fuller sound in the bass range, the continuo group was reinforced with cello, archlute, and baroque guitar. Another aim was to create a cross-section of a single opera through arranged arias. The choice fell on Handel's opera *Rinaldo*, which premiered in London in February 1711.

Handel had begun composing operas in Hamburg in the early 18th century, with his first German-language opera being *Der in Krohnen erlangte Glücks-Wechsel, oder: Almira, Königin von Castilien*, which premiered in 1705 when Handel was nineteen years old. In the fall of 1706, Handel traveled to Italy, the undisputed musical centre of Europe at the time. He spent extended periods in Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice, where he met leading musicians such as Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, and Agostino Steffani. Handel's first Italian opera, *Rodrigo* (1707), was composed for Florence, and his next, *Agrippina* (1709), for Venice. In 1710, Handel was appointed Kapellmeister to Georg Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover and later King George I of Great Britain. However, this position did not come with significant musical responsibilities at the court, which is why Handel left for London at the end of 1710. In London, Handel secured the commission to compose an Italian opera for the Queen's

Theatre at Haymarket, which had become the city's most important opera house. Its manager, Aaron Hill, intended to stage the first Italian opera specifically written for London and had hired an all-Italian ensemble for the opera season of 1710-11. Hill commissioned the Italian poet and language tutor Giacomo Rossi to write a libretto based on a scenario devised by Hill himself, which was inspired by an episode from Torquato Tasso's epic *Gerusalemme liberata* from the 16th century.

The success of *Rinaldo* in London received mixed reviews in contemporary music literature, but the research by Reinhold Kubik, undertaken for his 1982 dissertation, is considered substantial. According to Kubik, the reception of *Rinaldo* "in every respect corresponded to the contemporary average." Kubik has demonstrated that *Rinaldo* was performed 15 times by the end of the season. After that, Handel left London, but the series of performances did not stop: at least eight more performances took place by the spring of 1712. Handel returned to London in the fall of 1712, and performances are documented for the following years, from 1713 to 1715. In 1715, the Hamburg Opera presented *Rinaldo* in a German translation of the libretto by Barthold Feind, with some arias sung in Italian. Performances in Hamburg are traceable until 1730. For a new series of London performances in 1717, Handel created a new version of *Rinaldo*, eliminating one role and replacing several arias. In 1718, the opera was also rehearsed and performed in Naples by Nicolini, but it was expanded with a prologue and buffo scenes for which Leonardo Leo composed the music. In 1731, Handel created another new version, which, however, did not achieve the success of the original. *Rinaldo* disappeared, at least in its complete form, until it was revived in 1954 at the Handel Festival in Halle under the direction of Horst-Tanu Marggraf. The first recording was made in 1977 by Jean-Claude Malgoire and La Grande Ecurie Et La Chambre Du Roy.

While *Rinaldo* may have faded into relative obscurity as a whole after 1731, individual numbers from the opera remained in the repertoire for much longer. This was due to numerous music publications, some of which were printed in large numbers. Kubik has shown that in the program of the London publisher Walsh between 1711 and 1762, no fewer than 31 editions contained works from *Rinaldo*, both vocal and instrumental pieces. BREZZA's arrangement thus follows a well-documented historical practice very closely.

The plot of the opera is set in Jerusalem during the time of the Crusades, as the Christian Crusaders, led by their leader Godfrey (Italian: Goffredo), besiege the holy city previously held by the Muslim "Saracens" under their leader Argante. The title character, Rinaldo, sung by a castrato in keeping with the customs of the time and therefore in a high vocal range, is in love with Almirena, Godfrey's daughter. However, they can only marry if Rinaldo emerges victorious from the battle with the Saracens. Argante, on the other hand, is in love with Armida, the Queen of Damascus, who possesses magical powers. She is supposed to help Argante defeat Rinaldo. In Rinaldo's presence, Almirena is carried away on a cloud by Armida's magical command, and Rinaldo sets out on a quest to find his beloved, which takes on adventurous dimensions. In the meantime, in Almirena's presence, Argante develops lustful thoughts and pursues the young woman. Armida, in turn, encounters Rinaldo and falls in love with the Christian knight, whom she is supposed to destroy. Thanks to her magical powers, Armida can assume the form of Almirena, leading to various confusions and revealing that Argante's love for Armida has cooled. Rejected by both Argante and Rinaldo, Armida is deeply wounded.

In the third act of the opera, the resolution of the depicted conflicts is brought about – in a somewhat hair-raising manner from a modern perspective. In the end, Rinaldo and Almirena become a couple as hoped, and Argante and Armida are defeated. The latter converts to Christianity, and Godfrey generously sets them free.

## Comments about the numbers selected by BREZZA

Although *Rinaldo* was intended to introduce the London audience to the merits of Italian opera, the overture opens with characteristics of French instrumental music. A "Grave" with the typical dotted rhythm suggests the three-part French overture form, and this expectation is fulfilled with a lively section in a fugal style following the "Grave." Handel's original score notably features virtuosic figurations for solo violin and solo oboe, which are adopted by the transverse flute and violoncello in BREZZA's arrangement. However, after this section, there is no return to the opening "Grave." Instead, there is a sort of short instrumental recitative played by the solo oboe (performed on the flute in the arrangement), which eventually leads to another section with the character of a Gigue.

Almirena's aria "Combatti da forte" is addressed to Rinaldo. She, who sincerely loves Rinaldo but cannot marry him due to the pending battle, encourages her betrothed for the upcoming conflict, reminding him of his "masculine" virtues. Handel crafts this aria at a fast tempo and in a straightforward metre, with the singer's coloratura finding an instrumental counterpart in the solo oboe. In the middle section, often noticeably distinct from the outer sections in baroque opera arias, here, it is comparatively more aligned with the outer sections. In the arrangement, the viola da gamba takes on the vocal part, and the flute assumes both the role of the ripieno violins and the oboe line that follows the singing voice. Unlike the original, BREZZA has chosen to give more weight to the middle section, temporarily "slowing down" the flow with a cadence by the viola da gamba.

The following aria, "No, no, che quest alma," sung originally by a soprano voice since Goffredo's character in the opera is relatively inconspicuous, is a direct response to Argante's request to enter into a truce, albeit with the hidden intention of sidelining Rinaldo through Armida. Goffredo is confident of victory and acts generously, so the aria is concise and presented in a somewhat assertive manner. In BREZZA's arrangement, the aria is introduced by an improvised prelude on the flute, and the vocal line of the aria is performed by the flute and viola da gamba in octaves.

The subsequent aria, "Furie terribili," is a textbook example of a baroque entrance aria: the sorceress Armida enters for the first time to these sounds, accompanied in Handel's time by theatrical effects such as a chariot pulled by dragons, flames, and smoke. The aria's composition in a minor key, with a fast triple metre and quick violin figures, illustrates Armida's wild, unrestrained character and underscores her claim to power. In BREZZA's arrangement, where the vocal part is played by the viola da gamba, the initial appearance of the "singing voice" conveys an eerie rather than a raging and triumphant character, which fits well with Armida's supernatural powers.

The subsequent aria, "Cara sposa, amante cara," introduced by an improvised prelude on the cello, can be seen as Rinaldo's reaction to the loss of Almirena, who has been carried away by a black cloud at Armida's magical command. With a duration of approximately ten minutes, this aria is unusually extensive. It presents a particular challenge for its interpreters and underscores that Rinaldo is a sensitive character.

It is a classic lament aria, comparable to Gluck's "Che farò senz' Euridice". The dominant emotions are confusion over what has just happened and, above all, deep despair at the violently interrupted togetherness. Handel chooses a plaintive E minor, prescribes sighing figures for the violins, and leads the vocal line consistently downward. In the middle of the aria, there are a few bars of a fighting spirit, as if Rinaldo is preparing to take action, but the solemn mood quickly overtakes him again. In BREZZA's arrangement, the tonal proximity of the cello and viola da gamba is particularly appealing here. Since the cello takes over the role of the second violin, the ensemble can be heard as a trio with three fully-fledged protagonists in addition to the basso continuo.

The subsequent number, "Il vostro maggio," taken from the second act, is clearly referenced in the libretto to Homer's tale of Odysseus and the Sirens. Unlike in the *Odyssey*, Rinaldo cannot resist the seductive song of the Sirens because he did not block his ears with wax. Musically, Handel chooses the well-known "Siciliano" in baroque music, which, with its dotted triple metre, has a somewhat lulling quality. The effect is intensified by having the vocal part performed by two singers in unison. In BREZZA's arrangement, this is echoed by the flute and viola da gamba playing in octaves. The inclusion of baroque percussion instruments accentuates the dance-like character of the number.

Next comes the undoubtedly most famous aria from *Rinaldo*, possibly one of Handel's most famous opera arias alongside "Ombra mai fu" from *Serse*: "Lascia ch'io pianga." Film, radio, and television have significantly contributed to its fame, notably the version from Gérard Corbiau's film *Farinelli* (1994), where Farinelli's voice was digitally synthesised from a female voice and a falsetto male voice. It was also notably interpreted by Barbra Streisand on her legendary album *Classical Barbra* in 1976. As with any musical number that has become detached from a larger context, it is intriguing to consider it again in its original setting. In the plot of *Rinaldo*, it is sung by Almirena, who is a kind of luxury prisoner in the garden of Armida's enchanted palace. Argante has informed Almirena that he desires her and would grant her freedom if she yields to his advances. Almirena is horrified and rebuffs Argante. She requests the right to weep and mourn alone. So, the aria is clearly addressed to someone, emphasised by the imperative form of the second person singular, "Lascia." One could

call this aria a distancing aria; Almirena keeps her distance from Argante, creating space around herself. Interestingly, Handel omits an instrumental introduction here; the vocal line starts right in the first bar. Even though the theme is weeping, Handel does not overuse sigh motives or similar elements. Instead, the aria, through its measured triple metre, conveys the impression that Almirena is supported by inner strength, nourished by deep love for Rinaldo.

With the aria "Abbrugio, avvampo e fremo," Rinaldo comes into focus again. He is subjected to the advances of Almira, who alternately appears in her own form and transformed as Almirena. The aria reflects this back-and-forth. Textually, it is fed by typical baroque-era oppositions: hoping and fearing simultaneously. Rinaldo sings the aria still in the presence of Almira, so it is not a pure reflective aria; it also has an outward aspect. Handel uses figures in his setting that might remind one of signals, and if you will, something military. This may appear to contradict the word "fremo" (I tremble), but since we are dealing with a knightly Rinaldo, it does not seem too far-fetched to read this "military" music as Rinaldo's attempt to maneuver manfully out of this emotionally challenging situation.

The last two arias selected by BREZZA show Armida as a highly complex character. In the aria "Ah, crudel, il pianto mio," she is torn by conflicting feelings: on the one hand, she is attracted to Rinaldo and willing to leave everything behind, but on the other hand, her sense of duty keeps resurfacing. Handel uses a three-part structure in the aria, which, when started quickly, allows for a slowing down in the middle or, as here, when started slowly, a surprising acceleration. Harmonically, the so-called Neapolitan sixths are noticeable, which are usually expressing particularly deep-felt pain in baroque music.

The aria "Vo' far guerra, e vincer voglio" is the climax of a heated confrontation with Argante, where Armida is informed by Argante that he intends to turn away from her in love matters and turn to Almirena. Armida begins a revenge aria, one of the most fascinating elements of Western opera music. Deeply wounded by the double rejection by Rinaldo and Argante, she recalls the destructive aspects of her nature and throws herself into a fit of rage. Surprisingly, Handel included an extensive harpsichord solo in the instrumental introduction, which he may have played himself in the London performances. Even after the vocal part enters, the harpsichord

sound remains present. The short middle section is characterised by pizzicato, subtly referring to the harpsichord's method of sound production (plucking the strings with quills). The virtuosity introduced by the harpsichord in this aria is not an end in itself; Handel employs it in the service of the dramatic situation. Revenge is not merely a simple matter on the surface; it requires calculation, control, and precision. The virtuosic harpsichord episodes, taken from William Babell's arrangement in BREZZA's version, at least partially convey this musically.

BREZZA chose Armida's revenge aria as the starting and ending point for their *Rinaldo* selection. No arias from Act III are included. However, two instrumental pieces complete the journey through the piece, which reflects the action-packed plot of Act III. The Sinfonia that opens the act, like the overture to Act I, initially adopts a French style, but the acceleration does not lead to the typical fugal middle section. Instead, it leads to a more "warlike" episode, which briefly returns to the opening "Grave" but then gains the upper hand again.

In the Battaglia, a battle piece in the strictest sense, Handel used trumpets and drums, which pause only briefly in a minor key in the short middle section due to their limited tonal range. In BREZZA's arrangement, the trumpet is replaced by the sounds of a baroque piccolo flute—an instrument also associated with military music.

Marina Cabello del Castillo

## BREZZA

"Intelligence, quality, solvency, refinement, and honesty, these are outstanding features of these three young performers who are creating BREZZA, something great." Mario Guada in Codalario.

Founded during the stay of its members at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, BREZZA is one of the most versatile ensembles specialised in historically informed performance of 17th and 18th-century music in the current scene, inviting collaborators who enrich the experience of each of their programs.

BREZZA's repertoire focuses on 17th and 18th-century music, where the combination of three instruments - viola da gamba, traverso, and harpsichord - plays a crucial role. This includes the entire repertoire for flute and basso continuo, trio sonatas, as well as arrangements created by them. The use of original instruments or their replicas, along with a thorough historical study of performance practice through various treatises and sources, is BREZZA's main goal: to achieve a performance of the repertoire as close as possible to each composer's original conception. Another important aspect for BREZZA is the revival of the practice of "preluding."

Their status as winners of multiple national and international competitions has allowed them to advance and develop their professional careers. In spring 2023, BREZZA was awarded the "Young Art" prize from Castilla y León. In 2022, BREZZA won first prize at the International Early Music Competition in Gijón and became artists in residence, thus becoming the "Rheinsberg Hofkapelle" for 2022/2023 in Germany after winning the first prize. In the same year, they also became artists at AIEenRUTA. A year earlier, they received the first prize "GeneraciónSMADE 2021" at the 52nd Week of Early Music in Estella-Lizarra, the second prize at the "Biagio Marini Competition" in Germany, the Best Video award at the International Early Music Competition in Gijón, the Festival ECOS award, the Espurnes Barroques award, and became part of the network of concert series by Juventudes Musicales de España. In 2019, they won their first prize "Barrocos Bizarros" at the Baroque Music Festival in Ribera Alta.

All of this has helped them firmly establish themselves in the world of Early Music, participating in numerous festivals across various countries in Europe, including the International Early Music Festival in Utrecht (Netherlands), International Sacred Music Festival in Madrid (Spain), Festival Internacional de Santander (Spain), Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci (Germany), AMUZ Festival in Antwerp (Belgium), among others. They have been invited for the concert series organized by Freunde Alter Musik Basel and Fundación Juan March in Madrid.

"Worthy of remaining one of the most interesting chamber groups at the European level." Mario Guada in Codalario.

Pablo FitzGerald

Giulio Padoin

Teun Braken

We would like to thank you for your support and help
in making this project possible:

Familie Ritter
Familie Linder
Michael Limer
Michael Lehmann
Roger Braccini
Gonzalo Gigosos
Christoph Gaiser
Teodoro Baù
Laura Pomatta
Our families for always supporting us

SULGER-STIFTUNG

Kanton Basel-Stadt
**Kultur**

Sound engineer: Karel Valter

Photograpy by Martela Molucas
Translations by Marina Cabello del Castillo
Design by Teresa Fuentes and Pablo Gigosos

Editing and Publication Production: José Mª Martín Valverde

© & ℗: La Tirana, S.L., 2023

www.lindoro.es