

I Fagiolini

Winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society Ensemble Award, 2005



Photograph: Eric Richmond

Founded in 1986, I Fagiolini has undertaken a host of innovative productions of Renaissance and contemporary work, all designed around the core idea of how audiences actually receive music when much of it is several hundred years out of context. With director Peter Wilson, the group explored Italian Renaissance comedies and short French and Spanish pieces from the period, producing a masked version of Handel's *Acis & Galatea* and a puppet version of Purcell's *The Indian Queen*. In 2005, with The Opera Group, I Fagiolini performed Ed Hughes' *The Birds* for 10 singers, actor, two instrumentalists and no conductor.

Hailed by *The Times* as "A compelling but upsetting piece of theatre... A bleak but brilliant evening," and *The Guardian* as "an unforgettable experience", *The Full Monteverdi*, directed by John La Bouchardière, ran for 88 performances, finishing with a run at the Lincoln Center, New York. It was filmed for TV and released on DVD in January 2007, and reached Number 2 in both the opera and classical music DVD charts on Amazon.

The name I Fagiolini has been misspelt and mispronounced throughout the world: the group has visited some of its most interesting countries, including Hong Kong, China, Morocco, Egypt, Israel, the Ukraine and the USA, often as ambassadors for the British Council. In April 1997 the singers spent two weeks in South Africa working with a choir from Soweto on a partly improvised album, *Simunye*. This original and moving project was released by Erato on its crossover label *Detour*, and toured to Europe, South Africa and Bermuda, returning in May 2006 for an acclaimed UK tour.

Other collaborations have always been a pleasure: Bach with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Barokksolistene, Feinstein Ensemble and Academy of Ancient Music, Christmas Vespers in Venice with the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, Byrd with the viol consorts Fretwork and Concordia, and Warlock and Anne Dudley with the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Robert Hollingworth.

I Fagiolini's work on Monteverdi now appears on CD with Sweet Torment, the third in their Monteverdi series for Chandos. The group has released 14 other CDs including English Renaissance works and a focus on Venice with Carnevale Veneziano, Andrea Gabrieli – The Madrigal in Venice, and a DVD of Vecchi's masked comedy L'Amfiparnaso with actor Simon Callow. This was the first DVD of a staged Renaissance work and described as "a silk purse [turned] into one beaded in gold... we end up with the best of all worlds" (Gramophone) and "a triumph for I Fagiolini and Chandos and a benchmark for the DVD industry as a whole" (International Record Review). Mind you, a French reviewer absolutely loathed it. Find out more at www.ifagiolini.com.

Robert Hollingworth, director

Monteverdi specialist Robert Hollingworth founded I Fagiolini in 1986. Directing this group has taken up most of his time since but he has directed other ensembles at home and abroad, most recently the BBC Singers, NDR Chor, the Academy of Ancient Music and St James' Baroque. In 2004 he directed the Nederlands Kamerkoor in a ground-breaking new music-theatre project, Faust, which he created with Henk Schut. Acclaimed by the Dutch press, it was set in startling venues: a vast Amsterdam ship-building yard, a disused station, and Bremen Cathedral. He directed Opera Zuid's underground production of Monteverdi's L'Orfeo. He has conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in a project with The Full Monty composer, Anne Dudley, and the BBC Singers in programmes of Jakob Gallus, Giovanni Croce and Vivaldi. He writes and presents programmes for BBC Radio, notably The Early Music Show and Discovering Music, and has worked on a number of films including Quills. In 2006 he was appointed as one of the artistic advisors to the York Early Music Festival and for 2009 to the Trigonale Festival in Austria; he founded the spectacular Islington Winter Music Festival. He regularly leads choral courses and is once again directing at Dartington International Summer School in 2010.

SIOBHÁN ARMSTRONG

Historical Harps



Siobhán Armstrong is one of a small number of harpists worldwide who play harps from earlier centuries and who research historical playing techniques and repertoire appropriate to these instruments. She has an extensive collection of copies of instruments from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the baroque era. Siobhán was born in Dublin, lives in Ireland and works as a freelance performer and teacher, mainly in Europe.

Being Irish, Siobhán is particularly interested in encouraging the revival of the early Irish harp, which was played from at least 1000-1800 and strung in brass and sometimes silver and perhaps even gold wires. To this end she founded and chairs the Historical Harp Society of Ireland (www.irishharp.org). She plays a copy of the medieval Trinity College harp – the national emblem of

Ireland – strung in brass and 18-carat gold. Her solo recording on this instrument, *Cláirseach na hÉireann: The Harp of Ireland*, was released in 2004 on Maya Recordings.

Siobhán is the founder and director of **The Irish Consort**, an ensemble that explores continental repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries and the Irish repertoire of the same period. The Irish Consort first performed at The Galway Early Music Festival in 2006.

Alongside her solo work, Siobhán Armstrong performs and records internationally with some of the most prestigious early music soloists, ensembles, and directors in Europe including William Christie and Les Arts Florissants, Jeffrey Skidmore and Ex Cathedra, and Paul McCreech and The Gabrieli Consort, on Deutsche Grammophon, Sony, Teldec, Virgin Classics, Erato and Dorian.

Siobhán has performed, broadcast and taught throughout Europe, North America and Japan and has appeared as a soloist or ensemble player at venues including the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Southbank in London, the Opéra Comique in Paris and the Zankel Hall at Carnegie, New York.

Her web pages can be visited at www.siobhanarmstrong.com

THE IRISH CONSORT

The Irish Consort, founded and directed by Siobhán Armstrong, is an ensemble that explores continental repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries and the Irish repertoire of the same period. Their unique approach to this repertoire creates a bridge between the historical record of music in Ireland in the early music period and the oral musical tradition which remains so strong. The past 15 years has seen an explosion of research into Irish music in Irish, Scottish, and English 17th and 18th century sources which has led to historically informed performance of this music on the instrument for which it was written, the early Irish harp. Along with this, the relationship between this music and the music current in England and on the continent is revealing that Ireland's musicians, while conservative and having their own musical heritage, knew and were influenced by the wider musical world. The Irish Consort brings this dynamic musical world to life in all its complexity.

The Irish Consort first performed at The Galway Early Music Festival in 2006 with the programme *Gael agus Gall (Irish and Foreign)* and returned in 2007 with *The Life and Times of Grace O'Malley, the 16th-century Irish Pirate Queen*.

MISERICORDIA

Stephen Tyler, Anne Marie Summers

with **CLIVE FAIRWEATHER**, storyteller

The duo Misericordia specialises in the Music and Song of Medieval Britain and Europe.

Anne Marie Summers and Stephen Tyler have been playing and recording together as a duo for over a decade, taking some of the earliest scored music and combining it with the improvisational element of folk music for an exciting and dynamic performance. They are accomplished multi-instrumentalists, and their wide range of instruments allows them many different sound textures to match the different musical traditions of medieval Europe.

A performance by Misericordia will take you from the mesmeric drone-based harmonies of their trademark combination of bagpipes and hurdy-gurdy, to the harmonically sparser sound of recorder and citole, as well as to softer timbres such as voice and harp.

Misericordia regularly perform at concert venues and early music festivals throughout Britain and Europe and have made various recordings. Originally formed as a duo, they now work regularly with other instrumentalists and singers for a larger ensemble; all are professional and extremely versatile musicians specialising in early music.

Stephen Tyler

Hurdy Gurdy Player and Multi-instrumentalist
specialising in Historical and Traditional Music

Stephen Tyler began playing the hurdy gurdy in 1993, adding this instrument to the sound of the recently formed medieval music ensemble Misericordia, which he founded with Anne Marie Summers. He also plays Gothic Harp, Cittern and Citole.

In 1996, they joined with melodeon player Julian Sutton to form The Wendigo, playing their own compositions inspired by the traditional dance music of central France. It was with two such pieces that Steve, with Anne Marie, won first place in the competition for duets at Saint Chartier festival in 1999, playing hurdy gurdy and bagpipes.



In 2001 he joined medieval music and dance theatre group Daughters of Elvin for their spectacular medieval circus show "Garden of Earthly Delights", commissioned by the National Trust, and continues to play with them.

With these bands he has travelled and performed throughout Europe and recorded numerous CDs, most recently "Passion, Pestilence and Polyphony" comprising music and song from the fourteenth century, with Misericordia.

In 2006 he was featured on Radio 3's Early Music Show on the hurdy gurdy, along with Nigel Eaton, and played at Anost Fete de la Vielle with Jon Swayne and Becky Price.

Anne Marie Summers

Bagpiper, Multi-instrumentalist and Singer
specialising in Historical and Traditional Music



Anne Marie Summers has great experience in the field of early music. Her main instruments are the several varieties of bagpipes she has collected, along with recorders, hurdy gurdy, medieval lap harp and clarinet, and she has a rich alto singing voice. Anne Marie also plays other rare and ancient instruments, including pibgorn, saz, bone flutes, horns, gemshorn and different kinds of percussion.

As a singer with bands such as Misericordia and Gaita, she has a working knowledge of medieval French, thirteenth-century Spanish and Old and Middle English pronunciation. Her range is alto/tenor and her style leans much more toward folk than opera. She has a particular interest in British traditional song, which she has performed with various bands as well as unaccompanied.

Her interest in bagpipes and hurdy gurdy led her into the world of French and Breton music and in 1999, with hurdy-gurdy player Steve Tyler, she won the coveted duo competition at St. Chartier with two pieces of dance music of her own composition.

Clive Fairweather

Clive Fairweather is one of the Westcountry's leading traditional storytellers. He has worked with English Heritage, National Trust, and Early Music duo Misericordia. With a deep interest in folk history, Clive's repertoire of over 400 stories offers living interactions with the past in stories that convey the dramas and delights of other times.

