



***The Seven Psalms of David,
Volume I***

La Donna Musicale, Laury Gutiérrez, viola da gamba and director

La Donna Musicale 2004

(available at www.ladm.org)

57:40 minutes

Not much is known about the early career of Venetian composer Antonia Padoani Bembo (c.1640-c. 1720). She was a fine singer and had private music tutors as well as lessons with San Marco's maestro di capella, Pietro Francesco Cavalli - this we know from letters her father wrote to the Duke of Mantua to report on her musical progress. A disastrous marriage and divorce from her husband, Lorenzo Bembo, eventually brought her to France, where she lived meagerly in a sheltered women's community.

More will be revealed in a forthcoming book about Bembo's musical life by Claire Fontijn, who plays the flute in the Boston-based ensemble La Donna Musicale. In the meantime, these specialists in music by Baroque women composers offer a glimpse of what Bembo left us.

Bembo's fine psalms are set for voices and continuo to French texts by Elisabeth-Sophie Chéron (1648-1711), a writer, musician, and painter. Bembo's instrumental writing is occasionally quirky, but there's also some fetchingly odd dissonances and clever word painting throughout. Bembo wrote well for the voice, and the singers of La Donna Musicale deliver excellent performances.

The program is rounded out with a lovely performance of a Sonata in A by Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (a contemporary of Bembo) featuring flutist Na'ama Lion, gambist Laury Gutiérrez, and harpsichordist Noriko Yasuda.

This is a self-produced recording on which exacting scholarship is backed up by high-quality performances and production values.

— Craig Zeichner

Reprinted with permission. Early Music America, Volume 11, No. 1, Spring 2005