

The background is a vibrant red abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes. The strokes are primarily horizontal and curved, creating a sense of movement and depth. The color varies from a deep, dark red to a lighter, more saturated red. There are some darker, almost black, outlines and accents scattered throughout the composition. The overall effect is dynamic and textured.

audite

Vol. 4

Gregor Joseph

**WERNER**

Antonio

**CALDARA**

Voktett Hannover  
**la festa musicale**  
Lajos Rovatkay

**ANTONIO CALDARA (1670-1736)**

**Sinfonia „La passione di  
Gesù Cristo signor nostro”**

- I. Grave 1:12
- II. Allegretto 1:32

**Madrigale primo „Dell’uom  
la vita è un sogno” 6:19**

**GREGOR JOSEPH WERNER (1693-1766)**

**Sinfonia in D Major**

- I. (Allegro) 2:14
- II. Largo 0:48
- III. Fuga 1:52

**ANTONIO CALDARA**

**Madrigale secondo „Mio Dio sin  
dall’eterno o in cielo” 5:34**

**Introduzione „Gesù Cristo condannato”**

- I. (Adagio) 1:10
- II. (Allegro) 1:53

**GREGOR JOSEPH WERNER**

**Ave maris stella 3:51**

**Fugue No. 6 in A Major 2:00**

**ANTONIO CALDARA**

**Regina coeli laetare 4:43**

**GREGOR JOSEPH WERNER**

**Tota pulchra es Maria**

- I. Tota pulchra es 0:55
- II. Aria: Tu gloria Jerusalem 2:35
- III. Intercede pro nobis 1:10

**Sonata à 4 in n D Minor**

- I. Largo 1:55
- II. Presto 1:42

**Requiem in G Minor**

- I. Requiem 1:43
- II. Kyrie 1:23
- III. Parce 2:04
- IV. Ad te levavi animam – Neque irideant  
me – Confundantur 3:11
- V. Sanctus – Pleni sunt caeli –  
Hosanna 1:32
- VI. Benedictus – Hosanna 2:31
- VII. Agnus Dei – Cum sanctis tuis 3:21
- VIII. Requiem – Cum sanctis tuis 2:28

**Voktett Hannover**

**Sopran**

Esther Tschimpke  
Felicia Nölke

**Alt**

Lea Wolpert  
Ida Barleben

**Tenor**

Clemens Liese  
Thoma Wutz  
Ferdinand Junghänel  
Justus Barleben

**Bass**

Sebastian Knappe  
Simon Wittkowsky  
Steffen Schulte

**la festa musicale**

**violin I**

Anne Marie Harer  
Alexandra Wiedner-Lorenz  
Katharina Lobé

**violin II**

Henriette Otto-Dierßen  
Karoline Stemberg  
Franciska Hajdu

**viola**

Maria Pache  
Bettina Ihrig

**cello** Christoph Harer

**Kontrabass** Soshi Nishimura

**Truhenorgel** Daniel Trumbull

**Laute** Andreas Nachtsheiml

**leader / conductor** Lajos Rovatkay

The sound sequence at the opening of Antonio Caldara's oratorio "**La passione del Gesù Cristo**" (1730) was a ground-breaking event, foreshadowing the dark, shimmering harmonic language of the mature Mozart half a century later. It was characteristic of Caldara (1670-1736) – a Venetian composer who had been appointed vice *Kapellmeister* at the imperial court in Vienna – and of his school in and around Vienna. However, the harmonic centrepiece of the nascent Viennese classical period that already appears here, the augmented sixth, is only seemingly "Viennese". Around 1720, it was a trendsetting trait of Caldara who introduced this highly expressive sound, alongside other suspenseful chromatic devices, from the workshop of his Venetian teacher Giovanni Legrenzi, who had already been using it around 1670. The augmented sixth became the expressive signature of Caldara's pupil Gregor Joseph Werner (1693-1766), Joseph Haydn's immediate predecessor as *Kapellmeister* at the Esterházy royal court in Kismarton in western Hungary (Eisenstadt in Austria since 1921).

The other distinctive feature of the works recorded here is the contrapuntal density, which manifests itself above all in the masterful fugues. Counterpoint was a trademark at the court of the music-loving emperor Charles VI, himself a pupil of Caldara. The renewed influence of the strict Palestrina counterpoint (*stile antico*) of the imperial chief *Kapellmeister*, Johann Joseph Fux, whose seminal Latin counterpoint textbook, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725), which is still valid today, was financed by the emperor himself (and whose first German translation, produced in Leipzig in 1742, probably inspired Johann Sebastian Bach), was fundamental to this. This went very well together with the versatile art of the Venetian vice *Kapellmeister* Caldara, who – like his master pupil Gregor Joseph Werner – was himself an outstanding writer of fugues. The mastery of counterpoint and fugal writing was not just the golden technical foundation of the approaching Viennese classical period: the high contrapuntal culture at the Viennese imperial court also ultimately enabled the Viennese soil to absorb Bach's musical cosmos from 1750 onwards. This in turn brought about the actual musical perfection of classical music in the late Mozart and Beethoven. Alongside Berlin, Vienna also became a powerful toehold for Bach's posthumous influence in the romantic nineteenth century and beyond.

Against this musical background, two still largely unknown pillars of Viennese music culture, Caldara and Werner, were presented side by side for this recording, as master and master student. The immediate impetus for this was provided by an unprecedented situation in relation to Werner's *Requiem in G minor*. Overall, this set of works proves to be a multi-faceted fugal compendium. What is significant about the instrumental works is that they are all fugues that present a retained countersubject alongside their primary subject in the exposition, thus from the outset providing the musical development with changing impulses. The central genre of the two-movement Viennese church sonata appears a total of three times, consisting of a slow introduction and fast fugue. The opening movement of Werner's three-movement **Sinfonia in D major** combines a lively Venetian ritornello structure with a gallant conversational tone. The fugue finale develops as a solemn peal of bells, in which the large chime of the primary theme is surrounded by the artfully canonic and filigree structure of the small bells. Caldara's introductory sinfonia opening the **passion oratorio "Cristo condannato"** is also significant in that the work can be considered the composer's Viennese debut (1717). It was intended to show the emperor, who was extremely knowledgeable about fugues, what Caldara was capable of achieving within the framework of a solemn five-part fugue with a cross-shaped double theme, not without alluding to his dignity as the guardian of the Roman-Christian faith, on a par with the Pope. Werner's **Fugue in A major** – from a Berlin fugue publication issued during the time of Frederick the Great – features three subjects, the third of which anticipates a characteristic *agitato* topos of Haydn and Mozart, rooted in the baroque. The **Sonata in D minor** by Werner confronts the solemn and songful first movement with a subsequent "heroic" fugue, whose descending subject and chromatically descending countersubjects convey the various shades of tragedy.

The three **Marian motets** on this recording also feature surprising designs: Caldara's Easter antiphon "**Regina coeli laetare**" is cast in rondo form, with a conspicuous lack of musical settings of the new text sections. The work, which was praised well into the nineteenth century, combines a strict contrapuntal structure with an almost whimsically exuberant sense of Viennese vigour. Only the popular figure of the Holy Virgin was able to inspire such a beguiling fusion of artistic craftsmanship and popular piety. Werner's hymn "**Ave maris stella**" originates from his cycle of Marian vesper hymns for the church year. In keeping with the famous text, musically the three verses remain exactly the same, but are enriched from within by finely decorated, imitative *stile antico* writing. Once again, this is a special document of the subtlety, skill and taste of Haydn's predecessor. Werner arranged the concertante motet "**Tota pulchra es Maria**" with obbligato violins as a triptych. The lusty introductory tutti is followed by a lyrically expressive, soloistic middle section and a concise, lively final fugue. A characteristic gem that can only be found in Werner.

GJ Werner's **Requiem in G minor** is an extremely personal, coded work. Werner deliberately left the title page without his name (an absolute exception among his c.420 surviving works) and obviously did not want any details about the origin of the music to become known. Around 45 years ago, I succeeded in unravelling the mystery of this work: the setting of the G minor Requiem is the work of two composers, Werner and Caldara, who each took on different sections. Werner used the first two works from Caldara's madrigal cycle – largely unknown today – with new texts. As in his other requiem settings, Werner here also deviates from the regular liturgical norm. However, it seems particularly significant in this case that the tractus, the "Dies irae" sequence and the Offertory are omitted, whilst sections of the nocturnal office for the dead are set to music. Caldara's **12 Madrigals** (1730/31) are among the last traditional madrigals of the late baroque period that also represent the variety of "madrigale morale", which meditatively convey Christian wisdom. They are masterpieces of late baroque vocal polyphony, with texts by the Venetian librettist Antonio Maria Lucchini, who worked in Dresden between 1717 and 1719. Caldara follows the old tradition of the "motet sequence", where each new section of text is combined with new musical themes (*soggetti*) and set using an imitative-fugal technique. Caldara always works the last section of the text into a large-scale fugue with several countersubjects.

The impressive seamlessness between the two musical layers does not lack drama. In the almost geometrically clear distribution of the sections composed by Werner and Caldara, it is noticeable that the obligatory fugue sections of the requiem fall to Caldara. The fact that Werner, the outstanding master of the fugue around 1750, left the fugues to the composer from whom he had obviously learnt this supreme craft is one of the great transcendental statements of the work. The *Requiem in G minor* provides an important insight into Werner's profound personality. Alongside his self-written epitaph, this work represents a retrospective before death. It is the unprecedented combination of the requiem ethos with reflections on his own artistic career alongside his teacher, who also enters community of saints. For today's listener, Werner's profound disposition and his approach to the musical material represents the quintessence of a great epoch of musical art and opens up a special glimpse towards Viennese classicism.

After decoding Werner's *Requiem in G minor* 45 years ago, followed by my scholarly publications on the subject in 2004 (in Hungarian) and in 2022 (in German), this complex discovery is now presented on disc for the first time.



### LAJOS ROVATKAY leader / conductor

The harpsichordist, organist, chamber musician, ensemble director, music researcher and educator Lajos Rovatkay studied at the conservatories of his native Budapest as well as in Frankfurt am Main, and played a prominent role in establishing historically informed performance practice in Germany. His detailed knowledge of the vocal and instrumental music of several centuries is fundamental both to his artistic work – concerts in Germany and abroad, as well as several CD recordings – and to his research activities.

The focal points of his work are the Venetian early baroque period, late baroque church music in Venice and Vienna, the Caldara pupil and Haydn predecessor Gregor Joseph Werner, as well as Agostino Steffani, whose first Hanoverian opera *Henrico Leone* Rovatkay presented as a modern premiere in 1989 at the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hanover Opera House with Capella Agostino Steffani (founded by Rovatkay), and performed in concert at the Boston Early Music Festival.

In 2014 Rovatkay founded the Forum Agostino Steffani for the public communication of the high baroque musical culture of the Welf court in Hanover. He is currently focused on recording the music of Gregor Joseph Werner. As a professor of harpsichord and organ, Rovatkay taught at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hannover, where he directed the “Studio for Early Music”, whose former participants have become indispensable pillars in renowned baroque ensembles in Germany and abroad.

## VOKTETT HANNOVER

The VOKTETT HANNOVER was founded in 2012 by students of the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media as a mixed and double-choir vocal ensemble and has since developed into one of the leading national a cappella formations. The eight singers perform a wide variety of programmes at renowned concert series and festivals throughout Germany. These include the Bachfest Leipzig, chor.com, the Kultursommer Nordhessen, Rheingau Musik Festival, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, MDR Musiksommer, Sommerliche Musiktage Hitzacker, Internationale A-cappella-Woche Hannover and the Stunde der Kirchenmusik Stuttgart.

The ensemble's extensive a cappella repertoire ranges from the beginnings of polyphonic vocal music to commissions from contemporary composers. In joint concert programmes, the VOKTETT HANNOVER also performs together with other renowned ensembles, including the baroque ensembles L'Arpeggiata, la festa musicale, Concerto Ispirato and the vocal ensemble VOCES8. The ensemble has given several performances of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St John Passion* in small vocal formation.

The VOKTETT HANNOVER won first prize of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University Competition in 2015 and of the German Choir Competition in 2018. The ensemble was awarded the German Record Critics' Prize for the album *Gregor Joseph Werner: Masses and Motets*. Other CD releases were also met with critical acclaim and a number of concert recordings and further contributions have been aired by various public broadcasters in recent years.

VOKTETT HANNOVER has been closely associated with Hanover's Markuskirche as its ensemble in residence for many years. Since 2024, the ensemble has received institutional funding from the city of Hanover (UNESCO City of Music).

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## LA FESTA MUSCALE

*la festa musicale* was founded in 2014 and has performed at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Handel Festival Halle, the Festival for Early Music Knechtsteden, the Niedersächsische Musiktag and the Tage Alter Musik Regensburg, among others.

The North German baroque ensemble stands for excellent artistic standards, which are reflected in creative, cross-disciplinary concert formats and top-class cooperation projects. The musicians are charismatic representatives of a new generation of historical performance practice. Concertmaster Anne Marie Harer is the artistic director.

*“Rarely have I experienced this combination of enormous joy of play, precision and spontaneity. My compliments!”* Andreas Scholl, countertenor (2016)

In July 2024, the ensemble released its latest CD *BACH reconstructed* with Bach transcriptions by ensemble cellist Christoph Harer. Prior to this, the third album in a highly acclaimed series with works by Haydn’s predecessor Gregor Joseph Werner, conducted by Lajos Rovatkay, was included in the list of best recordings by the German Record Critics’ Award. This was preceded on the audite label by the Venetian album *ANTONIO* with countertenor Alex Potter, *Storie di Napoli* (a baroque musical city tour through mythical Naples with recorder player Barbara Heindlmeier and soprano Maria Ladurner) and a much-praised album of concertos by Francesco Venturini. There are also recordings of J.S. Bach’s motets (with the Kammerchor Hannover) and church music by Bonifazio Graziani (alongside Collegium Vocale Hannover), Diogenio Bigaglia and Antonio Lotti (together with Knabenchor Hannover). Concerts performed by *la festa musicale* have been recorded by Bayerischer Rundfunk, Deutschlandfunk and Norddeutscher Rundfunk.

The ensemble performs together with internationally renowned soloists and conductors such as Jörg Breiding, Anna Dennis, Peter Kooij, Joanne Lunn, Hermann Max, Klaus Mertens, Alex Potter, Andreas Scholl, Jörg Straube and Zachary Wilder.

The musicians enjoy sharing their enthusiasm for early music with diverse and inquisitive audiences. They are particularly interested in creating their own programmes and performance formats. Family and children’s concerts, programmes presented by the ensemble, digital formats and music education projects bring musicians and listeners together.

In 2023/2024 *la festa musicale* has been selected as one of 16 orchestras and ensembles to participate in the federal funding programme “Germany’s Excellent Orchestral Landscape”. It is an official and institutionally sponsored partner of the UNESCO City of Music Hannover, Ensemble in Residence of Markuskirche Hannover and cooperation partner of the Forum Agostino Steffani.





*recording:*

April 25 - 28, 2024

*recording venue:*

Stephansstift, Hanoverr

*recording producer:*

Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

*sound & editing:*

Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer

*recording format:*

pcm, 96kHz, 24 bit

*cover image:*

detail of tendril from the treasury chamber's vaulted ceiling at Forchtenstein Castle, c.1696; picture credit: Esterházy private foundation, photo credit: Manfred Horvath

*photos:*

p. 10: Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt; engraving by Carl Franz Rohrich after a drawing by Ludwig Rohbock, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

p. 5: Nils Ole Peters (Lajos Rovatkay)

p. 7: Nadja Mahjoub (Voktett Hannover)

p. 9: Jérôme Gerull (la festa musicale)

*Co-operating partner:*

Haydneum –

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**audite**

info@audite.de · audite.de

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