

ACRONYM in *The Battle of Vienna* on Pipino Series in Youngstown (Oct. 5)

by Robert Rollin



On Friday, October 5, the Baroque string band ACRONYM presented *The Battle of Vienna* in Youngstown's Ford Family Recital Hall on Youngstown State University's inaugural Donald P. Pipino Performing Arts Series.

The program was a

mélange of inventive 17th-century works employing novel techniques brought by Italian composers to the German-speaking lands, including Venetian polychoral effects. ACRONYM's consistently fine intonation and exceptional ensemble were nothing short of amazing all evening.

The highlight was Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber's innovative *Battalia a9* (1673). From the outset the players employed experimental techniques, the strangest of which was the weaving of paper between their strings.

This produced an especially eerie effect on Nate Chase's violone, soon echoed on Loren Ludwig's viola da gamba and Kivie Cahn-Lipman's cello. Simultaneously, violinist Edwin Huizinga played a hectic, intense solo. The performers frequently tapped on their strings with the wood of their bows.

In the most bizarre section, eight folk songs appeared at the same time in different keys, prefiguring the technique of polytonality to appear over 200 years later. Here Biber writes in the score, "Dissonance is everywhere as drunks shout out various songs."

The program opened with Biber's *Sonata in d*. The prodigiously tall Huizinga, stage right, answered by the diminutive Johanna Novom, stage left, provided the most appealing exchanges. Both played with incredible verve and amazing accuracy.

Simon Martyn-Ellis furnished marvelous bass colors with his enormous theorbo. Periodically, the gamba and cello took over the continuo line from the violone, contributing further timbral variety along with Elliott Figg's harpsichord.

The evening also included Biber's *The 1683 Turkish Battle of Vienna* as arranged by Andreas Anton Schmelzer. The piece celebrates the Austro-Hungarian forces' defeat of the Ottomans, effectively ending 300 years of conflict. An interesting prolonged unison passage added luster, soon followed by further conversations from Huizinga and Novom.

Cahn-Lipman, one the group's founders, unearthed much of this music from online databases, creatively adapting it for the group. Johann Heinrich Schmelzer's *Sonata Jucunda a5* employed the full complement of five violins and viola, and paired violin effects antiphonally. These techniques were also evident in selections by Poglietti, Bertali, and Pezel.

Samuel Friedrich Capricornus' *Sonata a8 in a* featured a beautiful gamba solo and expressive dynamic contrasts. Later, paired violins on stage right dominated until answered from stage left by the other three violins. Pairs of violins and gambas were also predominant in Giovanni Valentini's *Sonata a5*, and extended phrases of parallel thirds, played *dolcissimo*, made Adam Drese's *Sonata a6* unique.

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