

COPLAS A LO DIVINO

CLAUDIO ASTRONIO & MARIA PIA DE VITO
FEATURING PAOLO FRESU AND MICHEL GODARD

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| 1. JESU DULCIS MEMORIA | 2.16 | Gregoriano, elab. Astronio • De Vito |
| 2. DIFFUSA EST GRATIA | 3.54 | Giovanni Maria Nanino |
| 3. COPLAS I AVE MARIS STELLA | 4.47 | Astronio |
| 4. JESU CHRISTO, HOMBRE Y DIOS | 1.47 | Anonimo (from "Libro de cifra nueva" L. Venegas de Henestrosa 1555) |
| 5. UPON LA MI RE | 3.50 | Thomas Preston |
| 6. COPLAS II | 3.10 | Astronio • De Vito |
| 7. ADEST SPONSUS | 4.35 | Gregoriano, elab. Astronio • De Vito |
| 8. CORPUS CHRISTI CAROL | 3.09 | Benjamin Britten |
| 9. COPLAS III | 3.22 | Astronio • De Vito |
| 10. DIC NOBIS MARIA | 2.40 | Anonimo (from "Libro de cifra nueva" L. Venegas de Henestrosa 1555) |
| 11. IO PER ME | 5.10 | Alessandro Stradella (from Oratorio "S. Giovanni Battista") |
| 12. COPLAS IV | 4.32 | Astronio • De Vito (on a text by Juan de la Cruz) |
| 13. TIENTO | 3.51 | Astronio • De Vito (on a text by Juan de la Cruz) |
| 14. GLOSA A LO DIVINO | 1.24 | Astronio (inspired by the Canto del Cavallero by A. de Cabezon and a text by Juan de la Cruz) |
| 15. AVE MARIS STELLA | 5.14 | Gregoriano, elab. Astronio • De Vito |

Tot. time 54.58

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COPLAS A LO DIVINO

Claudio Astronio organ • **Maria Pia De Vito** voice & electronics

Featuring **Paolo Fresu** trumpet, flugelhorn, electronics • **Michel Godard** serpent, tuba

Reinventing a cantus firmus

The main idea of Coplas a lo Divino is to explore the contrasts between opposite poles facing each other.

The lyrics of Juan de La Cruz, with their constant ambiguity between holy and mystical poetry, and the evocation of human love, represent the heart of this research, the right suggestion of how close to each other sacred and secular beauties can be.

Each of us is placed near a border between styles and attitudes: yin and yang, black and white, night and day, arsis and thesis, tension and détente, sacred and profane, ancient and modern. But even in different languages, the meanings are the same, and Coplas is the result of this coming closer to the border ... while speaking to one another. There is much sacred music in this work, but the inspiration is not religious: sacred images in texts link us with that sacredness of art long ago invented and expressed magically by painters and musicians who were indeed not religious.

We have enjoyed hiding in this work a game of Chinese dolls, each containing its form of convergent dualism. Besides the musical one, the title, which is the most obvious, begins the game. Coplas a lo divino is the title of one of the most meaningful lyrics by the Spanish religious mystic Juan de la Cruz, an extraordinary poet and man of letters, whose work was rhetorically and poetically linked with the music of Antonio de Cabezon, the organist of Charles V, and of other great musicians who inhabited the world of sacral music and what is still called "el siglo de oro" of Spain and its art, the 16th century. In his lyrics, religious mysticism and the invocation of God are often transfigured into earthly love, just as the veneration of the Virgin in Spain today still comes close to the subtle dividing line between a litany of invocation and the ecstasy of love.

Old tenors and grounds have replaced the modern jazz pattern, stereotypes of today's early music filtered through the non-academic and pure approach of modern jazz musicians, and improvisation is the common playground.

The early music tracks, such as Diffusa est Gratia, Upon la mi re, Jesu Christo Hombre y dios, lo per me, Dic nobis Maria and Jesu dulcis memoriae, are played exactly as they are. Not one note has been added to the arrangements, except for some short and slight diminutions, as it used to be done in the past. Thomas Preston's Upon la mi re, a manuscript discovered in the British Museum, which is sung here by Maria Pia, is originally for a treble wind instrument, probably a cornetto. It seems like an improvisation ... but it is not.

The tenors Adest Sponsus and Ave Maris Stella are treated as modern standards, as the ground for the instantaneous creation of an improvised structure. Both tracks are pure and simple live improvisations. Another tenor Ave Maris Stella served as a ground for the improvisation of Coplas I. All the improvisations in Coplas I to IV were inspired by the related lyrics of Juan de La Cruz. Like the poetry of the original lyrics, we built up a sort of musical litany, the way to a constant, tense and intense invocation.

Finally, we have added a few modern compositions. Benjamin Britten's beautiful Corpus Christi Carol perfectly synthesises this walk along a knife's edge. Tiento and Glosa a lo divino have been newly composed by Claudio and Maria Pia. The first is based on the ground of the Xacara by Juan Bautista Cabanilles, formerly the bass pattern of modern flamenco; and the second is composed on a counterpoint made with three themes from Antonio de Cabezon's Canto del Caballero, this time expressed by a woman towards her impossible love for a knight. The text of the latter is the final quatrain of a lyric by Juan de la Cruz:

*"... por toda la hermosura yo nunca me perderè
si no por un no se que
que se alcanza por ventura"*

Claudio Astronio

Claudio Astronio organ
Maria Pia De Vito vocals, electronics
Michel Godard serpent, tuba
Paolo Fresu trumpet, flugelhorn, electronics

Michel Godard appears on tracks 3,4,6,7,9,12,13,14,15,
Paolo Fresu courtesy appears on tracks 7,10,11,12,14,15

Artistic Producer **Andrea Dandolo**
Sound engineering **Matteo Costa**
Production Manager **Nijolė Dorotėja Beniušytė & BAMAgency**
Remix & editing **Marco Gardini**
Stage assistance **Andrea Gallesi**

Recorded in Bolzano, Chiesa di S. Giuseppe ai Piani, 25,26 july and 2,3 october 2007.
Tracks 12 recorded live in concert in Bolzano 26 july 2007
Tracker Organ built by Andrea Zeni 2006

Tracks 10 and 11 recorded at Fonoprint Studio, Bologna 28 february 2008
Sound engineering **Roberto Barillari** • Pro Tools session pre-editing **Marco Gardini**
Organ built by **Giorgio Carli** • Organ assistance **Romano Danesi**

Tracks 5 and 8 recorded in Udine, Chiesa di San Quirino
Organ by **Francesco Zanin** and at Artsudio Udine 16 march 2009
Sound engineering **Stefano Amerio**

Thanks to: **Don Carlo**, **Mr. Giancarlo** and **Mr. Carlo Gobetti** for their kind assistance and for their patience during our church's invasion! **Don Claudio Como**, **Roberto Elli**, **Dan Laurin** for introducing us to Upon la mi re, **Marco Gardini** for his great job to make this tracks the way we love.