

THE
AFRICAN RENAISSANCE ENSEMBLE | 
IN CONCERT

The Hebrew Baroque II
More Hidden Treasures

A selection of exquisite works by Salomone Rossi, celebrating
the seldom-performed music of the Hebrew Baroque



Beit Emanuel Progressive Synagogue, Parktown

02 November

Sunday

15:30



AFRICAN RENAISSANCE ENSEMBLE

www.earlymusic.co.za

Founded by Adam H. Golding in 2017, The African Renaissance Ensemble is a group of South African musicians, striving to infect fellow South Africans with our love for early music. Our goal is to bring this exquisite, little known and seldom performed music to modern audiences. The music we perform is far more accessible to modern audiences than classical music. Pieces are short (between 1 and 10 minutes) and there is a surprisingly wide variety of sound. Much of the music is light-hearted and was composed specifically for dancing or for storytelling. It is all highly emotionally evocative and varied.

The instruments are very different to those in use today. These include gut string violins, period keyboards (harpsichord, virginal etc.) lutes, and winds that you have likely never seen before. Guitar and percussion also play an important role. You will hear a diversity of sound that you have never experienced before!

Our performances are not the formal affairs that one expects from a symphony concert, opera or classical chamber concert and neither is the music that we perform. Musical director, Adam Golding connects with audiences and provides context by using the music to weave together a story including anecdotes ranging from hilarious to grotesque.



Special thanks to **The Buskaid Soweto String Ensemble** for the loan of the **theorbo** and the **baroque guitar**.

Thinking in Monteverdi

Over the course of 2025, The African Renaissance Ensemble has immersed itself in the music of the Mantuan Court from the turn of the 17th Century. Whilst our focus has been the music of **Claudio Monteverdi**, **Salomone Rossi** was working in this court at the same time.

The highlight of this year's work was **Thinking in Monteverdi**, our collaboration with **William Kentridge** and **Neo Muyanga**, hosted by **The Centre for the Less Good Idea**, where we explore excerpts from Monteverdi's opera, *l'Orfeo*. The music was workshopped with **Kentridge**, testing it against the animations he is preparing for a full-scale production of *l'Orfeo* in Glyndebourne next year. We also experimented with new compositions by **Muyanga**, drawing from Monteverdi's original music, imagining what a contemporary reimagining of *l'Orfeo* in Johannesburg could sound like.

The complete video: <https://earlymusic.co.za/thinkinginmonteverdi/>

Reviews

A little goes a long way! If you enjoyed the concert we ask that you leave us a review on Facebook and/or Google. Doing this will really help us in reaching a wider audience for future concerts! You can copy and paste the same review for both.

Google

In Google, search African Renaissance Ensemble. In the info box on the right, click "Write a Review". Please leave us 5 stars and tell us what you enjoyed and your usual musical preference.



Facebook

Go to bit.ly/renaissancereview and click **Yes** in the box "Do you recommend The African Renaissance Ensemble". Tell us what you enjoyed as well as your usual musical preference. It's better to do this from a computer and not from a phone.



If you have any other comments or suggestions, please rather complete the online form on our website to share this with us directly: earlymusic.co.za/contact

The Birth of the Baroque

In the late 16th century, a group of musicians, poets, humanists and artists gathered at the home of the Florentine, Count di Bardi. The group became known as the Florentine Camerata and one of their goals was to resurrect Greek theatre as it had been performed thousands of years previously, with musical interludes, dance and sung sections. This gave rise to the first operas written at the turn of the 17th century.

This event coincided almost exactly with the advent of Baroque art and architecture. The music of the 17th century became influenced by the aesthetic quality of the art and architecture mimicking the high level of decoration, ornament and flourish with musical ornaments and virtuosity.

The Mantuan Court

The city state of Mantua was an important centre in Renaissance Italy, ruled by the powerful Gonzaga family. Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, a patron of the arts, attracted some of the finest musicians in Italy to his court, including the Cremonian composer, Claudio Monteverdi. It was here that Monteverdi's first operas were premiered, including *L'Orfeo*, the first opera ever written and still performed today. Along with his colleagues, Wert, Gastoldi and Rossi, Monteverdi was one of the composers to take music from the Renaissance into the Baroque with what became known as *Practica Seconda*.

Baroque Music

Historians often group European art music into 3 main eras: Early Music, Common Practice Period and 20th/21st Century Music. The Baroque period straddles the Early Music and Common Practice Period. It was during the Baroque that these common practices were established. These included instrumentation, tuning, intonation, tonality, major and minor scales, notation, harmony and form.

Like its architectural and artistic counterparts, Baroque music is characterised as highly decorative and ornate. Musicians in this period were expected to improvise ornaments and embellishments on the spot.

When thinking of Baroque music, the first names that come to mind are Bach, Vivaldi and Handel. However, these composers were only working in the last third of this period. It is the Baroque music from over a century earlier that we perform today.

Salomone Rossi



Rossi was born in Mantua in 1570 and quickly became one of the most respected musicians in the city, both as a violinist and composer. It is likely that he led the orchestra as concert master for Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. Little is known about Rossi's life, but it is recorded that he had a sister, the virtuoso opera singer known as Madame Europa. Little is known about her either, and some sources indicate that Salomone and Madame Europa may in fact have been the same person as men regularly took female roles in early operas.

What we do know, is that Rossi was so respected, that he was exempted from living in the Jewish Ghetto and from wearing the mark imposed on Jewish at the time. Despite living at court, he never lost touch with his roots and made a decision to never compose for the church; even with the knowledge that this would have repercussions for his advancement.

In 1630, Mantua was invaded by Habsburg mercenaries, following the Mantuan Wars of Succession and Rossi was likely murdered or died from the plague that they brought with them. This also marked the end of the golden age of Mantua.

Hashirim Asher L'Shlomo

In 1616 following much correspondence with Rabbi Leon of Modena, Rossi began composing musical works for synagogue, in the polyphonic musical language of his day. With Modena's encouragement, Rossi published a full collection of his Synagogue music in 1623 as *Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*, or *The Songs of Salomon*. There are records of this music being used in Synagogues during Rossi's lifetime in Venice and Ferrara.



These performances were met with very mixed responses and the idea of Synagogue music did not really take off for another 200 years. The music quickly fell into obscurity, until it was rediscovered by the Baron Edmund de Rothschild who commissioned the 19th century Jewish liturgical composer Samuel Naumbourg to rearrange the collection for modern audiences and to publish a new edition. Slowly, this led to much interest in the music of Salomone Rossi and a resurgence of his works in the late 20th century.

The Hebrew Baroque: More Hidden Treasures

Claudio Monteverdi (Italy 1567 - 1643)

- Toccata (*from l'Orfeo*)

Salomone Rossi (Italy, 1570 - 1630)

Suite I

- Sonata detta la Moderna
- Lamnatse'akh al Hagitit (*from Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*)
- Sonata Settima

Suite II

- Bar'khu (*from Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*)
- Sinfonia Seconda detta la Emiglia
- Bar'khu (*from Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*)

Suite III

- Sinfonia Decima a 3
- Gagliarda a 5 l'Andreasina
- Sinfonia a 5 & a 3, si placet
- Elohim Hashiveinu (*from Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*)
- Brando Secondo

Suite IV

- Sinfonia Nona
- Al Naharot Bavel (*from Hashirim Asher l'Shlomo*)
- Sonata a quattro violoni e due chittaroni

Claudio Monteverdi (Italy 1567 - 1643)

- *Ohimè dov'è il mio ben dov'è il mio core* SV140

Ludovico Saladin (Provence, 17th century)

- Canticum Hebraicum: *Notis Musicis Illustratum*

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Adam H. Golding – Musical Director

John Reid Coulter – Harpsichord Continuo

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INSTRUMENTALISTS

Kaleem Ahmed – Recorders

Isabella Bonnet – Baroque viola & violin

Dillon Davie – Theorbo (long-necked lute)

Adam H. Golding – Recorders

Andrew Gould – Voice (baritone)

Doron Kanar – Alto sackbut

Caleb Lester – Tenor sackbut

Esté Meerkotter – Traverso (baroque flute), voice (soprano)

Bryan Moore – Baroque Cello

Ute Smythe – Baroque violin

Tanya Spiller – Baroque violin

Jesse Stevens – Bass Sackbut

John Warner – Baroque viola

VOCALISTS

SOPRANOS

Glynnis Kanar, Esther Lategan, Este Meerkotter, Leigh Nudelman,

COUNTERTENOR

Joao Ribeiro

TENORS

Doron Kanar, Jesse Stevens

BASSES

Adam H. Golding, Andrew Gould, Caleb Lester



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