

ArParla



ARPARLA – Biography

Maria Christina Cleary (harp) and Davide Monti (violin)

(526 words)

ARPARLA, an Italian/Irish duo, uses music as their way to speak and communicate with others, using the soft and refined sonorities of the harp and the expressive range of colours of the violin. Their repertoire focuses on the Baroque period and the transition period between classicism and romanticism (17th-19th centuries), a repertoire that their instruments can perfectly express the aesthetic of these epochs.

Davide began learning the violin at seven years old. His father, an amateur accordionist, played along with him during his practise, improvising harmonies and melodies, all playing by ear. Alongside his later formal Classical training, Davide continues to play traditional music, jazz, pop and folk dances.

Maria comes from a musical family and studied piano, recorder, harp and singing. Until university age, she was part of the inter-disciplinary Renaissance Capriol Consort in Dublin, directed by Doris Keogh, where everyone played several instruments, sung and danced. During her third-level studies, she moved into other styles of music: Contemporary, Electronics, Jazz and IP (informed practises), also experimenting with non-tonal tuning systems including micro-tuning systems.

Partners for nearly twenty years, Davide & Maria have joined forces to discuss and research the meaning of music, transcending any particular musical styles. They have formalised their thoughts on all aspects of music, particularly the case for including improvisatory elements in music, by founding the Helicon Method in 2013. Helicon teaches music improvisation while incorporating strategies taken from other Renaissance disciplines like dancing, theatre (Commedia dell'Arte), fencing and horse-riding, aiming to facilitate the opening of the mind and to explore the physicality of musical gestures. Up date, over 1000 people have followed courses in the Helicon Method.

With this inter-disciplinary approach, Arparla's performances are unique experiences, playing music from earlier epochs yet being firmly founded in today's society and audiences.

Arparla's first tour was to Japan in 2005 and since then the Monti/Cleary duo have performed across five continents in concert halls and most international early music festivals with energy and enthusiasm, receiving excellent reviews. In 2009 they premiered Spohr's Double Concerto No.1 WoO 13 on original instruments. Their tours in Australia (2011) and Canada (2019) were generously funded by Culture Ireland. Both Maria and Davide have parallel solo and ensemble careers performing with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto) and the American Bach Soloists (Handel Concerto) and Davide as leader of The European Baroque Orchestra (EUBO 2000) and as guest director and soloist with Tafelmusik Toronto (2014) and Camerata Brisbane (2018, 2024).

Besides performing, Arparla is dedicated to education, teaching and lecturing at over 30 universities and music conservatories in Europe (Mozarteum Salzburg, Guildhall London), US (Juilliard School) Asia, Australia and Africa. They have sustained the ONG COOPI and also have collaborated with the Menuhin Foundation MUS-E project. They currently work in conservatories in Verona, Vicenza, Cagliari and Geneva.

Arparla has released six duo CDs, two premiere recordings of music by Louis Spohr and the first CD featuring the harp as a single continuo instrument and soloist in 2010. Further CDs include works by Arparla's favourite composer Marco Uccellini and solo Toccatas by M. Rossi performed on the arpa doppia. They have collaborated on over 80 other CDs.

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Maria Christina Cleary (harp) and Davide Monti (violin)

Short Biography (290 words)

ARPARLA, an Italian/Irish duo, uses music as their way to speak and communicate with others, using the soft and refined sonorities of the harp and the expressive range of colours of the violin. Their repertoire focuses on the Baroque period and the transition period between classicism and romanticism (17th-19th centuries), a repertoire that their instruments can perfectly express the aesthetic of these epochs.

Arparla presents a whole palette of different colours due to their intense and varied transversal artistic activities. With energy and enthusiasm, the Cleary/Monti duo has performed to wide acclaim for audiences in Europe, as well as in Canada, Japan, Uganda and Australia, at international festivals, also working in collaboration with organisations such as the Italian NGO COOPI, with the Menuhin Foundation. Arparla's communicative performances deliver a powerful musical message that transcends cultures.

Davide and Maria founded the Helicon Method in 2013, which teaches musical improvisation in a historical multidisciplinary environment, using strategies drawn from disciplines such as dance, Commedia dell'Arte, fencing and horse riding, with the aim of facilitating the opening of the mind and exploring the physicality of the musical gesture. To date, over 1,000 people worldwide have taken Helicon Method courses. They have taught improvisation and historical performance practice in over 30 conservatories on five continents, including the Juilliard School of Music in New York, Mozarteum in Salzburg, Sydney Conservatorium and Makerere University in Kampala.

They teach at the Conservatorio di Verona, Vicenza, Cagliari and the Haute École de Musique de Genève.

Their discography includes over 80 CDs, including six Duo CDs of Spohr's complete sonatas for violin and harp (2 CDs), Marco Uccellini's Opus 4 and 5 for violin and basso continuo, a collection of 17th century Italian sonatas, and Michelangelo Rossi's Toccatas.



Maria Christina Cleary (harp) and Davide Monti (violin)

(550 words)

The ensemble ARPARLA was born from the desire to speak with music, using the refined and delicate sonorities of Maria Christina Cleary's harps, and the expressive potential of Davide Monti's violin, according to informed historical performance practices.

Their repertoire focuses particularly on two historical periods in which the pair of instruments render excellently the synthesis of the musical aesthetics of the time: the early baroque (17th century) and the transition between classicism and romanticism (late 1700s and early 1800).

Founded in 2005, Arparla toured Japan for the first time and since then has performed throughout Europe, Canada, Australia, Uganda and Singapore with energy and enthusiasm, garnering wide acclaim from a very diverse audience in different parts of the world, bringing a cross-cultural, cross-language and cross-state musical message. In 2009, they gave the world premiere of Spohr's Double Concerto No. 1 WoO 13 on original instruments.

Arparla has lectured and taught early music at NUS Singapore, RMIT Melbourne, Makerere University Uganda, The International University of Kampala, and the Africa Institute of Music. Monti and Cleary have collaborated with international organisations such as the Italian NGO COOPI, and the Menuhin Foundation.

The historical and expressive research work in preparation for a CD recording is always very long and thought-filled process. In a CD published by Stradivarius, they recorded the sonatas for violin and harp by L. Spohr, premiered on original instruments. A second CD contains some of the most significant pieces from the 17th century, from Marini to Pandolfi-Mealli, Selma, Uccellini, Frescobaldi, Merula, and Fontana. Both CDs received excellent reviews for the freshness of the performance and the innovative aesthetic concept. The recording of Marco Uccellini's Op. 5 Sonatas contains innovative and experimental compositions collected in the first collection in history of pieces entirely dedicated to the violin and basso continuo. A subsequent recording, *Geliebte Dorette*, completes the collection of Spohr's works for Violin and Harp, the culmination of extensive research work concluded with a PhD from Maria, dedicated to the technical achievements developed by Spohr's wife, harpist Dorette Scheidler.

The research work on Marco Uccellini's music continues and another CD has been produced containing his extravagant sonatas for violin and basso continuo, and bass violin and basso continuo, from Op. 4, and some Toccatas by Michelangelo Rossi for solo harp; this CD was produced by the Arparla duo with the contributions from Alberto Rasi on violone and viola da gamba, and Rogerio Gonçalves on bassoon. Arparla's latest release is a CD containing a second part of Toccate by Michelangelo Rossi for solo harp, and 3 sonatas for violin and bass by Tarquinio Merula and Maurizio Cazzati.

Their research work takes place not only on the performing side, but also in the educational area. In fact, Maria teaches at the HEM in Geneva, Vicenza and Verona and Davide teaches at the Conservatory of Cagliari. Further commitment is devoted, again in the pedagogical area, to the management and promotion of a method of musical improvisation called Helicon, a historical multidisciplinary strategy, which includes horsemanship, fencing, dance and theatre, which through the use of musical improvisation promotes the concrete research of the origin of expressive codes, in order to reproduce their essence and communicative power.

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