

# Tafelmusik

Baroque Orchestra  
Jeanne Lamon, Music Director

## ITALIANISSIMO!

### A CHAT WITH STEFANO MONTANARI



**This is your third appearance with Tafelmusik and there's an obvious and very special chemistry between you and the musicians. Tell us about that.**

It's magic. With Tafelmusik it's a love story, or at least for me it is, I don't know about for the group. Yes, even from the very beginning, the feeling between us was good. It's just magical really, because when I played with Tafelmusik for the first time, immediately the contact between me and the

orchestra was really, really good. The feeling was very friendly and spontaneous, especially during the concerts, because I find that with Tafelmusik I can play really freely and every concert is different. I can play as I want to, and immediately the group will follow me.

**Tell us about the first invitation to play with Tafelmusik. How did that come about?**

It was through my friend Marco Cera, one of the oboe players in Tafelmusik. He called me and asked about the possibility to play and to direct Tafelmusik. The joke now is that Marco Cera is my personal agent in Toronto, and for me it was a big surprise because of course I knew Tafelmusik by name; but it's not really possible to know Tafelmusik in Italy because it's this Canadian group we know on records, and we tend to know the European groups, from Germany, France, Spain, &tc. So for me it was a really big surprise. I was really excited to start this collaboration, and it was a great experience for me: all the musicians were very friendly, which was incredible, and the feeling, immediately, was terrific.

**As a musician who performs mainly in Europe, what is your impression of Toronto audiences?**

They are wonderful people! The public is slightly different in every place where I play; it's not a given, for example, that audiences in Italy are always going to be warmer. This simply isn't true.

In fact, there are places in Italy where the public can be a little hard to move. Whereas in Germany, for example, the audiences are extremely warm and receptive. They'll go crazy if they like a performance! And I found the same thing here in Toronto, which doesn't happen all the time in other places. Before I first performed in Toronto I thought, hmm, Canada is a cold, faraway place and the audiences are going to be cold too. But that was not the case at all! Toronto audiences have been amazing, with standing ovations and people greeting and thanking me when they see me on the street. When I see that the audience is so happy after a concert, I find it very gratifying. It means that what I tried to convey through the music was understood, and that it wasn't a mere entertainment. That's a beautiful experience for a musician.

**You are obviously an expert on Italian repertoire and we've thoroughly enjoyed being introduced to Italian composers who may not be as familiar here. What advice would you give to North American musicians when they approach Italian music?**

Italian music, especially at the beginning of the 18th century, is really simple music. And if we play "normal," the result is just "normal." We always have to try and find all the details in the writing of the music. It's really crazy to do, because there are a lot of little things you have to exaggerate a little bit. Especially for repertoire like Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, which we played here last time. It's not a normal concerto, it's not just a violin concerto. It's "*musica descrittiva*," it's just like pictures, and you have to try and exaggerate the dynamics a little, or the phrases, and create a little tension. When I play Italian music, I like to look for all the little, little details. And this is the best thing: that I can ask Tafelmusik to do this, to do maybe super-pianissimo or super-fortissimo, or to play super-cantabile or super-aggressive. It was really funny for me to rehearse *The Four Seasons* with Tafelmusik last time because in the first rehearsal they played it straight, just "normal," but after an hour of rehearsing together they played really Italian style. It was fantastic!

**What about pet projects for the future? Is there something that you would love to do?**

I don't know, I am happy! I love music, I love playing, I love conducting, I love my family, I love life. I hope to play music always with emotion. The day I play without emotion is a good time for me to stop and maybe change my job! You need to play music with enthusiasm and pleasure.

**When you're at home and you're not working, what music do you listen to?**

I don't have time to listen to music at home! I just have time to be a father, "Papà". I have two boys, four and seven years old, Eduardo and Alfredo. And I love music, but I don't listen to classical music at home. I love rock music, especially from the 1970s and 1980s, like Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and the first Police albums. And the last group that I liked a lot was U2; I remember a wonderful concert in Reggio Emilia in Italy ... 200,000 people.

And I also love jazz music. I play jazz sometimes with my father-in-law, the clarinetist and sax player Gianluigi Trovesi, and it was a really interesting experience for me. We played a lot in Europe, in France and Germany, and it was a combination between baroque music and free jazz. The context was interesting: it was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare and there were three different trios: baroque, folk and jazz trios. It was really fun.



**Stefano Montanari** has been first violinist with Accademia Bizantina from Ravenna since 1995. He performs with leading exponents in the field of early music, in particular with Christophe Rousset, with whom he has recently recorded the Sonatas for violin and harpsichord by J.S. Bach, and with Concerto Köln as leader and conductor, as well as with Kammerorchester Basel, with whom he will be making a world premiere recording of the violin concertos by the baroque Roman composer Antonio Montanari. He has recorded for Fonè, Frequenz, Denon, Opus 111, Erato, Virgin, Tactus, Astrée, Thymalus, Simphonya, Bottega discantica, Decca, Oiseau Lyre, Naïve and Arts. His recent recording of Corelli's Violin Sonatas op. 5 received widespread recognition and numerous international prizes, including a Diapason d'Or. He recently made his debut as conductor in

Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* with I pomeriggi musicali di Milano, and Donizetti's *Don Gregorio* and *Elisir d'Amore* at the Teatro G. Donizetti in Bergamo. Stefano Montanari holds diplomas from the Music Academy of Florence and the Swiss Italian School of Music in Lugano. He teaches at the International Music Academy of Milan, the Dall'Abaco Conservatory of Verona, and at the Novara Conservatory. We are delighted to welcome him back to the Tafelmusik stage.