

# Opera con Brio

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## “Beyond,” a Concert by Jacob Józef Orlinski The Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, 2024

**Jacob Orlinski Meets The Beyond, or The Early Baroque Meets Break Dancing**  
by Charles Jernigan, Guest Reviewer for *Opera con Brio*

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“Beyond” is an English word with several connotations which suggest an imprecise and perhaps emotional place or state of being which is more than (“beyond”) normal reality. It is the title of Jacob Orlinski’s recent CD album (August, 2023) and the title of his concert series this fall. From Innsbruck’s Festwochen der Alten Musik, it will travel to Bayreuth in September and on to numerous European cities in the coming months. According to Orlinski himself, “Beyond” is supposed to conjure a world which is out of the ordinary, where early baroque music can speak to contemporary generations.



Jacob Orlinski in “Beyond” Photo Veronika Lercher

Orlinski’s performance is also “beyond” in the sense that he gives more than a concert of seventeenth-century music, but a dramatic performance, which includes a striking entrance in a long, flowing black cloak (Salieri in the film *Amadeus*?), acting out the texts of several of

the arias and songs, his signature break dancing along with some very contemporary dance moves and a slow dramatic processional departure at the concert’s end. It is indeed a show which is “beyond” the norm for a classical music concert.



Jacob Orlinski in “Beyond” Photo: Veronika Lercher

When a song by Barbara Strozzi (1619-1664) declared that “I have been going in search...,” Orlinski circulated among the audience with a bright light as if searching himself. When two songs by Giovanni Cesare Netti (dates unknown) about old women came up, Orlinski wrapped himself in his cloak and hunched over like an old crone. Among the very appealing instrumental pieces heard between vocal sets was the overture to Carlo Pallavicino’s (1640-1688) opera *Demetrio*; Orlinski used the music to exhibit his famous break dancing. He also offered his adoring fans three encores at the end of the short program (with a few exceptions, all of the pieces are the same as heard on the CD album).

Orlinski’s voice is heralded as “angelic” (and perhaps is also “beyond”), and indeed it is a powerful, even countertenor with a pleasing tone. The beautiful, baroque Riesensaal in Innsbruck was not kind with its harsh acoustics (its natural amplification made everything sound exceptionally loud) and the lighting of hundreds of light bulbs in giant chandeliers was not equivalent to modern stage lighting, but that too was “beyond.” One might imagine that this is what it was like for an aristocratic audience to attend such a concert in ages past, and Orlinski’s very contemporary touches brought the past and the present together.

The ten-member orchestra “Il Pomo d’Oro” provided excellent and often lusty support. Particularly notable were Alia Bakieva (1st violin), Margherita Burattini (baroque harp), Jacopo Raffaele (Cembalo and organ) and especially Miguel Rincon, who played theorbo, lute and a very saucy guitar. The several instrumental pieces were most enjoyable.

The audience did not interrupt the concert with applause, and except for one brief pause to allow tuning, the music was continuous, without a break, and that too was “beyond” the norm. At the end, however, the applause and cheers went on for a long time as the audience jumped to their feet. Orlinski is indeed a rarity in today’s world, a star who combines a classical music aesthetic with popular appeal, performing some of the earliest music still in the repertory with a pop star’s stage magic. He also has a way of connecting directly with the audience, making it seem that he is singing personally for you. Maybe it is a little bit hokey, but it works.