



MUSIC ABOUT MUSIC & MUSICIANS

RenChorNY

CLAUDE LÉVY, *Artistic Director and Conductor*

Lassus: *Musica Dei Donum optimi* †
Moulu: *Mater floreat florescat* † Compère:
Omnium bonorum plena † Schuyt: *O*
Leyda gratiosa † Senfl: *Das Glaut zu Speyer*
† Josquin: *Déploration re; Ockeghem* †
Mouton: *re:Févin* † Certon *re: Sermisy*
† Lassus: *L'Echo* † Stobäus: *Laudent Deum* †
Lassus: *In hora ultima*

Two Concerts

OCTOBER 14 & OCTOBER 18, 2017

THE “MUSIC ABOUT MUSIC AND MUSICIANS” CONCERT

Today’s concert offers music from the 16th century Low Countries, featuring compositions which honor music itself or musicians. Apart from the purely liturgical, the music of that milieu expressed the inner reflections of medieval and baroque musicians; in this respect, it reflects the other art forms of that culture. Specifically, structural concepts of polyphonic music (e.g., balance, flow, and contrast) were profoundly influenced by the work of Flemish masters and their architecture. Historically, elements of earlier music were retained and transformed in this evolving music. Plainchant was used as *cantus firmus*. The familiar medieval English thirds (which had crossed the channel with Dunstable and others) found a new home with Du Fay, et al. Their texts acknowledged direct inspiration by the Psalmists, Orphic myths, and classical founders of the art like Pythagoras. More specifically, these pieces from the Franco-Flemish School show how changes in that region encouraged communication and exchange of influences among artists across Europe. Near ports and along transportation routes, as the isolation imposed by feudal political and financial systems began to ease up, the mercantile society of guilds and apprenticeships enabled artists to study and teach in distant regions. Instead of competing for patrons close to home, these Renaissance singers viewed each other as colleagues, sharing their music freely with each other and admiring their mentors and peers deeply and sincerely. In the Low Countries, affiliations between the music academies and the churches promoted the reputation of individual young artists to the point where promising young voices were lured and even occasionally abducted by distant courts. All these travels and the influences of formerly “exotic” cultures made for very interesting careers and some very unusual music. Today, we offer a small sample of how some of these musicians saw each other and their music.

I. THE THEME

“Music Dei donum optimi” (SSATTB) by Orlande de Lassus (Franco-Flemish, c. 1532-1594) opens our program. Here, de Lassus, arguably the most renowned and sought-after musician in the Renaissance, tells us what music is for: “a gift of God with the power to calm anger and raise sadness [which] moves the very trees and wild beasts.”

II. THE SINGERS' PRAYERS AND PRAISES

These encomium works all name many singers, including some who would otherwise be sadly forgotten. As can be recalled from 14th century motets, this was not a new genre; three pieces from one English source alone list a total of 41 singers. So much for the myth of the “anonymous church musician”! The pride and ego of artists has always been healthy.

“Mater floreat florescat” (SATB) by Pierre Moulu (Franco-Flemish, 1484-c. 1550) is a considerably lighter, more “secular” setting than the one by Compère which follows. Moulu is heavy with praise for many earlier singers, adding ten from later generations of his circle, many of whom worked together under the direction of Mouton. As a prominent court musician, Moulu was generous and eager to present other court musicians, by name and by repertoire, to incoming sovereigns and probably for Queen Claude, newly crowned Queen of François I upon her entry to Paris in 1517. In an appropriately festive mood, Moulu makes musical puns on their names. This piece earned inclusion in the 1518 Medici Codex as an early “singing commercial” for the Cappella!

“Omnium bonorum plena” (SATB) by Loyset Compère (Franco-Flemish, c. 1445-1518) is an earlier motet (c. 1472) which gives us a veritable “Grove” compendium of the singers of Compère’s generation and their precursors. Musicologists believe this piece was originally a prayer to the Virgin by the singers on the Dedication of a chapel in Cambrai. Most of the singers named in the *secunda pars* are presumed to have been students or colleagues of [Guillaume] Du Fay, “moon of all music and light of singers.” The fourteen listed musicians include Compère himself and Hayne [Ghizeghem], whose famous chanson “De tous biens plaine” serves as the tenor *cantus firmus*. The many duos brilliantly dovetail and explore the handing-off to each other of the memorably beautiful and energetic extended melody.

III. THE SOUNDS OF CITIES

“O Leyda Graziosa” (SSATB) by Cornelius Schuyt (Dutch, c. 1557-1616) shows us his appreciation of the music of Italy and of the cosmopolitan burgers of Leiden who sponsored his trip to study there. From his 1600 “Book I”, this piece honors his city with a still current civic text mentioning its attributes; the phrase “renowned in letters” is set lyrically and in contrast to martial block chords representing “valiant in arms.”

It is a very typical Italianate higher-voiced work which also accurately presents the progressive spirit of Renaissance Leiden.

The “Gelaut of Speyer” (SSATBB) by Ludwig Senfl (Swiss, c. 1490-1556) is an extraordinary piece. This student of Isaac was famed for his quodlibets and technically demanding works mimicking both pastoral and urban sounds (e.g., Parisian bird songs and “the cries of London”). We can so easily imagine him standing in the streets of Speyer, listening to its cacophony of church bells. But how, then, was he able to transform these off-beat and syncopated sounds into such a delightful piece? The text parodies the sonic confusion of the bell ringers, while the high singers make clingy/clangy sounds and the low ones make mouthy bass tones.

IV. REQUIEMS FOR BELOVED MUSICIANS

“Nymphes des bois” (SATBarB) by Josquin des Prez (Franco-Flemish, c. 1452-1521) is also equally well known as “*Déploration sur la Mort de Johannes Ockeghem*”. Like many other singers, des Prez set memorial texts, “*déplorations*” which included requiem chants and quotations from the departed’s own works. This Chanson-motet on a text by Jean Molinet is justly famous for its exquisite expression of grief and gratitude. Fellow singers (presumably all students and followers of Ockeghem) are asked to join in mourning their mentor. But even while the Baritone intones the solemn Gregorian requiem chant, we are teased with puns and word games: Ockeghem is introduced as “*trésorier*” of music, a play on his living role as the very wealthy Treasurer of the Abbey of St. Martin at Tours. How very human.

“Qui ne regrettait le gentil Févin” (SATB) by Jean Mouton (French, c. 1452-1522) honors Antoine de Févin, a musician who died tragically young c. 1512. Mouton was famous and brilliant enough as a court composer to compile the 1518 Medici Codex. This small piece uses a double canon at the octave, with tenor leading soprano, bass leading alto.

“Musiciens, chantres mélodieux” (SATTBB) by Pierre Certon (French, c. 1510-1572) is in memory of Claudin de Sermisy, who died in 1562. This piece again implores singers to mourn the departed musician; incidentally, the text mentions Certon as “*compositeur*,” placing this text as the first of our *déplorations* to use the term “composer” instead of the usual “musician” or “singer”. The requiem chant is repeated by the 2nd Tenor.

V. THE SOUNDS OF SOUNDS

“O la, o che bon echo” (SATB-satb) by Lassus (secularly known as Orlando di Lasso) employs a simple concept, executed in a tricky but marvelous manner. Again the versatile entertainer, Lassus here lightly charms the listener.

“Laudent Deum” (SATB) by Johannes Stobäus (Thuringia, 1560-1646) is a tiny but precious gem of this huge genre. While dozens of settings of the Psalms texts exist which mention the instruments of praise, not all of them model their sounds as effectively.

VI. THE INEVITABLE

“In hora ultima” (SSATTB) by Lassus is the final word in this program. Written late in life when he was prone to despair, he expresses his fears that all is gone. As in the preceding works, he mentions all the joys of life and models them vocally with trumpet, pipes, lyre, laughing, and song; in the end, however, he concludes that all is for naught: “ALL will PERISH”.

LONG LIVE MUSIC!

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

- I. ORLANDE DE LASSUS *Musica dei donum*
- II. PIERRE MOULU *Mater floreat florescat*
LOYSET COMPÈRE *Omnium bonorum plena*
- III. CORNELIUS SCHUYT *O Leyda gratiosa*
LUDWIG SENFL *Das Glaut zu Speyer*

INTERMISSION

- IV. JOSQUIN DES PRES *Nymphes des Bois/Déploration*
JEAN MOUTON *Qui ne regrettait le gentil Févin*
PIERRE CERTON *Musiciens, chantres mélodieux*
- V. ORLANDE DE LASSUS *O la, O che bon echo*
JOHANNES STOBÄUS *Laudent deum*
- VI. ORLANDE DE LASSUS *In hora ultima*

ORLANDE DE LASSUS: *Musica dei donum*

Musica, Dei donum optimi,
trahit homines, trahit Deos.
Musica truces molit animos,
tristesque mentes erigit.
Musica vel ipsas arbores
et horridas movet feras.

Music, God's highest gift,
draws men, draws Gods.
Music calms savage spirits,
cheers sad minds.
Music moves even the trees
and horrid ferocious beasts.

PIERRE MOULU: *Mater floreat florescat*

Máter, flóreat floréscat
moduláta musicórum melódia.
Créscat célebris Dufay
cadéntia,
prosperétur praeclárus Regis,
Busnois, Baziron subtilis glorientur.
Triúmphet Alexander magníficus,
congáudeant Obrecht, Compère,
Eloy, Hayne, La Rue
memorábiles.
Josquin incomparábilis
brávium accípiat.
Rútillet Délphicus de Longueval
tamquam sol ínter stéllas,
Lourdault, Prioris aménus.
Nec ábsint decóri
frátres de Févin,
Hilaire hiláris, Divitis félix.
Brumel, Isaac, Nynot, Mathurin,
Forestier, Bruhier facúndi,
Mouton cum véllere áureo:
dáte glóriam régi et regínae
in córdis et órgano.

Mother, may you flourish and prosper
the measured melody of music.
Increase the celebrated Dufay's
cadences,
make prosperous the famous Regis,
subtle Busnois and Bazion be glorified,
the magnificent Alexander triumph,
and altogether may Obrecht, Compère,
Eloy, Hayne, [and] La Rue
be remembered.
May the incomparable Josquin
be given the prize.
Shine the Delphic power of Longueval
like the sun among the stars,
Lourdault, the charming Prioris.
Nor forget to mention
the brothers de Févin,
Hilarious Hilaire, happy Divitis,
Brumel, Isaac, Nynot, Mathurin,
Forestier, Fecund Bruhier,
Mouton with the Golden Fleece:
Render glory to the king and queen
with strings and organum.

LOYSET COMPÈRE: *Omnium bonorum plena*

Omnium bonórum pléna,
Vírgo parénsque seréna,
quae sédes súper sídera,
púlchra prúdens et decóra,
assístens a déxtris Pátris,
caéli térrae plasmatóris,
in vestítu deauráto
 núllius manuformáto.
Núllus tibi comparári
pótest, cérte nec aequári,
cúi vóce angélica
díctum est, “Ave María”.
Turbáta párum fuísti,
 sed consúlta respondisti,
“Ecce ancílla Dómini,
sícút réfers fiat míhi”.
Dúlcis fúit respónsio
 dáta celésti núntio,
per quem státim concepísti
 nátum Déi,
et portásti illum nécnon peperísti
Et post pártum, permansísti
Vírgo púra et nítida,
Virgóque immaculáta.
omnium bonórum pléna
peccatórum medicína,
cújus próprium oráre
est átque préces fundáre
pro míseris peccántibus
a Déo recedéntibus
fúnde préces ad Fílium
pro salúte canéntium.
Et prímo pro Guillaume Dufay,
pro quo me Máter exáudi,

Rich in all good things,
Virgin, serene mother,
who sits above the stars,
beautiful, knowing and seemly,
seated at the right hand of the Father,
Heaven and earth’s Creator,
in vestments which gleam
 as no hand of man could create.
None can be compared to you,
and certainly none can equal you,
to whom the angelic voice
said, “Hail, Mary!”
You were uneasy in your soul,
 but, taking thought, you replied,
“Behold the handmaiden of the Lord;
be it to me according to your word.”
Sweet was the reply
 given to the celestial messenger,
by whom you instantly conceived
 the Son of God,
and you carried him and even gave birth.
And after his birth, you remained
a Virgin pure and radiant,
a Virgin undefiled.
rich in all good things,
healer of sinners,
whose province it is to plead
and to offer prayers
for wretched sinners
turning away from God,
pray to the Son
for the salvation of the singers.
And first, for Guillaume Dufay,
for whom, O Mother, hear me,

lúna tótius músicæ
atque cantórum lúmine.
Próque Dussart, Busnois, Caron,
magístris cantilenárum,
Georget de Brelles, Tinctoris,
címbalis túi honóris,
ac Okeghem, Despres, Corbet,
Hemart, Faugues et Molinet,
átque Régis omnibúsque
canéntibus, símul et me
Loiset Compere
oránte pro magístris púra mente,
quórum mémor Vírgo vále
sémper Gabriélis “Ave”.
Amen.

the moon of all music
and the light of singers;
and for Dusart, Busnois, Caron,
masters of song;
for Georget de Brelles and Tinctoris,
cymbals to Your honor;
and for Ockeghem, Despres, Courbet,
Hemart, Faugues and Molinet,
and Regis and all
singers, and likewise for me,
Loyset Compère,
praying for the masters with a pure heart;
mindful of them, O Virgin, adieu,
forever Gabriel’s “Hail!”
Amen.



City of Speyer before 1750

CORNELIUS SCHUYT: *O Leyda gratiosa*

O Leyda gratiosa,
Madre e nodrice di gentil spirti,
Amatori di mirti,
Ch'esser
di Phebo albergo porti il vanto,
Ricevi questo canto
D'un servitor
a te sol' obligato,
Chi vien in humilta mostrarsi grato,
Poiche da te deriva
Che versi canti
e che seguivo viva.
Che sara degna voce
Per cantar tuoi horori.
Illustre Leyda,
o perla preciosa,
Per lettere chiara,
in arme valorosa,
L'humana e troppo bassa.
Voi dunque, sacre vergini sorori,
Ch'haveate e letto ad esser
vostro troro
Leyda, cantate Leyda,
a divin sono.

O gracious Leyden,
Mother and lady of gentle spirits,
Lovers of Myrtle,
Proud to be
the resting place of Phoebus.
Receive this song
From a servant
obligated to you alone,
Who comes in humility
to show thanks,
Because from you comes
The way to sing and to help me live.
What a worthy voice
To sing your honors.
Illustrious Leyda,
O precious pearl,
Distinguished in letters,
valiant in arms,
Human and too low.
You therefore, sacred virgin nuns,
May what you have and bed
be your throne.
Leyden, sing Leyden,
a divine song.

LUDWIG SENFL: *Das Glaut zu Speyer*

High Voices (summary)



GLING, GLANG . . .

Laßt mehr angeh'n,
da müeßt ihr zue mir herstehn,
Nun kumbt hierher all
und helft mir, Meßner, einmal,
in diesem Saal,
Wem's Läuten g'fall' und siecht an bald,
treibt wenig G'schall,
Ziecht an, ziecht an,
wehr mag und kann.
Zue dem Fest, tue das Best'!
Drumb ich bitt', spar euch nit.
Jedermann soll hergon.
Laßt aufgahn! Nicht klagt' an!
Moch nicht fliecht!
Ziecht an, ziecht,
streckt die Arm',
macht euch warm.

GLING, GLANG . . .

Mit unsern Glocken,
laßt zammenlocken,
Ziecht unerschrocken!
Nit irret mich,
sunst hör' auf ich!
Flux fu der dich!
So Hans und Paul,
ziecht seid nit faul!
Wie schnauft ihr mit dem Maul?

GLING, GLANG . . .

Wiewohl zwar Andacht bloß
gott'sdienst ist groß geet über
s G'läut' am
Kirchtag heut'.

GLING, GLANG . . .

More must be done,
you must help me.
Now come here, one and all,
and help me, the Sexton, once again
in this hall.
Whoever likes to ring and starts soon,
doesn't ring too loudly.
Start to pull, start to pull,
whoever likes to and can.
For the feast, do your best!
Therefore I beg, spare yourself not.
Everyone ought to come!
Let the bells ring! Do not complain!
Don't flee yet, either!
Pull now, pull,
stretch your arm,
work till you're warm.

GLING, GLANG . . .

With our bells,
let us call our people together.
Pull the ropes without fear!
Don't fool me,
otherwise I shall stop!
Hurry, hurry up!
So, Hans and Paul,
don't be lazy!
Why are you panting so?

GLING, GLANG . . .

Although ours is merely devotion,
the church service is great,
more important than
the church bells today.

Ich mag nicht läuten lang.

GLING, GLANG . . .

Bitt' ich mir sag',

was ist für Tag,

daß man so läut'?

Nit zieht so schnell,

so klingt's baß hell.

So fein greift drein!

GLING, GLANG . . .

Die Schuler kommen schon,

glocken brummen habt,

viel Singens.

Gilt Anbringens so

Pfarrer aufstehy gen Opfer geht.

Solch's G'läut' zam in Gottes Nam.

Wer kommen will,

darf G'läuts nit viel,

mag hertreten ungebeten.

GLING, GLANG,

MAR MIR MAUN,

BUM . . .

Nun läut' zammen in Gott's Namen,

Wer wil kummen,

hat's vernummen.

Hab' wir lang g'läut.

An dem Fest heut'

MUR MAUN . . .

I don't like to ring long.

GLING, GLANG . . .

Please tell me,

what kind of day we have today,

that there is so much ringing?

Don't pull so fast,

then it will sound more clearly,

that's fine, put yourself into it!

GLING, GLANG . . .

The schoolchildren are already coming,

the bells are murmuring,

there will be much singing.

We must ring properly for the occasion so

the priest gets up for the Sacrament.

Such ringing makes me confused.

I don't like to hear myself,

so I just look up

and pull on the rope.

GLING, GLANG,

MAR MIR MAUN,

BUM . . .

Now ring together in God's name.

Whoever wants to come for the feast

has heard it.

We have run a long time.

Let them come .

MUR MAUN . . .

Low Voices (summary)

MUR MAUN, MUR MAUN

MIR MUR MAUN . . .

Nun kummt, ihr Knaben all,

greift an und läut' einmal,

daß Glockschall'!

Zieht an, lieben gesellen,

die mit mir läuten wollen.

MUR MAUN, MUR MAUN

MIR MUR MAUN . . .

Now come, all you boys,

go to work and ring

so that the bells will ring out!

Start to pull, dear fellows,

who want to ring with me!

MUR MAN BUM, MUR MAN BUM . . .
MAR MIR MUR MAUN,
MAR MIR MUR MAUN . . .
Streck' an, streck' an,
was ein jeder mit der Macht kann!
Nu zue diesem Fest,
tuet allsambt das Best'!
Nehmt hin Strick' und Seil,
zeichnet an resch, mit Eil'!

MAR, MIR, MUR, MAUN . . .
GLING, GLANG . . .
Seht zue mit und klenkt nit.
So tuet zammsteh'n,
last's wohl aufgeh'n,
daß so viel zwen.
So läut' gut Ding,
daß's tapfer kling' maus,
her am ring, das opfer bring
well man das Ambt singt.

MUR MAUN . . .GLING, GLANG . . .
Jan's auch anfang's.
Jetzt kling't wohl und
geht ganz recht.
So, so mein Knecht.

MUR MAUN . . .
Hui! Nun, läut' zusamm
in Gottes Nam'.
Wer kumbt, der kumbt,
Hans, tue dich munter umb,
daß Glock' entbrumm
und schau' mit zue,
daß's Seil nit brechen tue.

MUR MAN BUM, MUR MAN BUM . . .
MAR MIR MUR MAUN,
MAR MIR MUR MAUN . . .
Stretch now, stretch out,
as only a youth with strength can!
Now for this festival,
all of you do your best!
Take your ropes and pull
fast and strong, with vigor!

MAR, MIR, MUR, MAUN . . .
GLING, GLANG . . .
Watch with us and ring with us.
So stand together,
let it ring out
as if there were twice as many.
So bold make your ring,
that it sounds well.
Make it ring, so it brings
all people to the Matins.

MUR MAUN . . .GLING, GLANG . . .
Hans, start also.
Now it sounds finde and
just right.
There, there, my boy!

MUR MAUN . . .
Hui! Now ring together
in God's name.
Whoever comes, comes.
Hans, work hard so
the bell will boom,
but see to it that
the rope does not break.

JOSQUIN DES PRES: *Nymphes des bois/Déploration*

Nymphes des bois,
déesses des fontaines,
Chantres experts
de toutes nations,
Changez vos voix
tant clères et haultaines
En cris tranchants
et lamentations.
Car Atropos,
très terrible satrape,
A vostre Ockeghem
attrapé en sa trappe,
Vrai trésorier de musique
et chef d'oeuvre,
Doct, élégant de corps
et non point trappe;
Grant dommage est
que la terre le couvre.

Acoutez vous d'habits de deuil:
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
Et plourez grosses larmes d'oeil:
Perdu avez vostre bon père.
Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Nymphs of the woods,
goddesses of the fountains,
Skilled singers
of all nations,
Change your voices
so clear and proud
To sharp cries
and lamentations.
For Death,
terrible satrap,
Has caught your Ockeghem
in his trap,
True treasurer of music
and chef d'oeuvre,
Learned, handsome in appearance,
and not stout.
Great pity
that the earth should cover him.

Clothe yourselves in mourning,
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
And weep great tears from your eyes,
For you have lost your good father.
May he rest in peace. Amen.



JEAN MOUTON: *Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin*

Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin
bien villain seroit!
Tres habile estoit,
si doux et begnin,
dont en nostre endroit,
prions de cueur fin
qu'en Paradis soit,
ou souvent pensoit
parvenir enfin.

Who laments not the kind Févin
would truly be a churl!
So skilled was he,
so sweet and good,
that from our place,
we pray of the final selection,
that in Paradise may it be,
where often he thought
to arrive in the end.

PIERRE CERTON: *Déploration sur la mort de Claudin de Sermisy*

Musiciens, chantres mélodieux,
en piteux chants,
jetez l'armes des yeux
pour ce grand maistre,
expert et magnifique compositeur,
le thresor de Musique.
Helàs! Helàs!
C'est l'excellent Claudin
que Mort a pris,
ayant mis de sa main
plusieurs mottets et messes
par escrit en si doulx chants.
Prions à Jesus Christ
qu'un Libera
luy soit bientost donné,
et requiem aeternam, Domine.
Tenor: Requiem aeternam,
dona eis Domine.

Musicians, melodious singers,
in piteous song,
cry tears from your eyes
for this grand master,
expert and magnificent composer,
the treasure of Music.
Alas! Alas!
It is excellent Claudin
whom Death has taken,
having set with his own hand
many motets and masses
by writing in such sweet tones.
Let us pray to Jesus Christ
that Deliverance [from evil]
to him will soon be granted,
and rest eternal, Lord.
Tenor: Rest eternal,
grant him, Lord.

ORLANDE DE LASSUS: "Echo" song

O la ! O che bon echo !

Pigliamo ci piacere ?

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

Ridiamo tutti !

O, bon compagno,
che voi tu ?

Voria che tu cantassi
una canzona ?

Perche ? Perche si ?

Perche no ? Perche non voglio !

Perche non voi ?

Perche non mi piace !

Taci, dico ! Taci tu !

O gran poltron !

Signor, si ! ? !

Orsu non piu ! Andiamo !

Adio, bon Echo !

ADIO, BON ECHO !

Rest' in pace.

Basta ! Basta ! Basta, basta !

Basta, basta ! BASTA !!

Hey, there ! What a great echo !

Why don't we call it ?

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha !

We're all laughing !

O, good companion,
what do you want ?

Perhaps you would enjoy
singing a song ?

Why ? Why indeed ?

Why not ? Because I don't want to !

Why don't you want to ?

'Cause it's not to my taste !

Quiet then, I say ! Quiet yourself !

You great big poltroon !

Really, sir ! ? !

Alright, no more ! Let's go !

Good-bye, dear Echo !

GOOD-BYE, DEAR ECHO !

Rest in peace.

Enough ! Enough ! Enough, enough !

Enough, enough ! ENOUGH !!



JOHANNES STOBÄUS: *Laudent deum*
(PSALM 150, 3-5)

Laudent Deum
cithara,
chori vox,
tuba, fides,
cornu, organa:
Alleluia!

Praise God
lute,
choral voices,
trumpet, fiddle,
horn, organ:
Alleluia!

ORLANDE DE LASSUS: *In hora ultima*

In hora ultima,
peribunt omnia:
tuba, tibia et cythara,
jocus, risus, saltus,
cantus et discantus.

At the last hour,
all things shall perish:
trumpet, pipes and lyre,
jesting, laughter, dancing,
song and descant.



LONG LIVE MUSIC!

CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

Most music lovers know that Mozart dedicated a group of quartets to Haydn while dozens of other composers paid tribute to J. S. Bach using the musical translation of his last name (for which he himself had already given the example in his *Art of Fugue*).

Using fellow composers' music and adapting it to one's own era or style is another, not infrequent tribute, as when Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* quoted themes by Scarlatti. And of course, you can also have *Variations on a theme by . . .* (Brahms/Schumann) or tributes shown in the title of a piece like Ligeti's *Musica Ricercata IX (Béla Bartok in memoriam)*, or even in a piece by one of my own students (*Miserere à la mémoire de G. Ligeti*).

But showing respect to colleagues, alive or deceased, is nothing new; it existed as soon as composers stopped being anonymous. This form of tribute is what we want to demonstrate in this program: You will either read the admired peoples' names in the program notes as titles of the pieces we sing, or if you pay attention (and perhaps read along), you will hear more than a dozen names, some famous for 21st-century lovers of Renaissance music, others less famous or totally unknown.

I was thrilled when Sigmund Rosen, the president of RenChorNY, asked me to prepare such a project. Perhaps the hardest task was choosing which of the dozens of pieces we could have picked should be eliminated, as we didn't want to build a marathon concert. Then, once we had made our choice, the goal was to try to bring this music to life as much as possible, especially when this goal could involve a little fun.

Yes, a little fun! After all, this music comes from the era of Hieronimus Bosch, who was hardly a dull artist; research shows that this was also a time when Busnois and Molinet both especially loved using *double entendres* and other forms of wordplay, just for fun.

I would dare say that Moulu shared this approach: How could we not think that in *Mater floreat florescat*, he intentionally chose to use plain chords for "Lourdault" ("the heavy one") just before vocalizing on "hilarious Hilaire" or that a little later in the same piece, he started a little fugue on "Mouton" specifically to highlight the French word for "sheep". Aren't sheep the creatures most famous for following one another slavishly, as notes do in a fugue? This reference could be stretching too far. Or not.

In *Nymphes des bois*, Josquin takes full advantage of Jean Molinet's poem alliterations: Can you imagine a more aggressive, biting figure of Death than that series of rolling, almost growling Rs which we hear in the phrase, "Car Atropos, très terrible Satrape"?

One clear way for any composer to pay a tribute to a colleague is by quoting some of that colleague's music. The program notes point this out about both Guizeghem and Compère, but I can't help thinking that when Certon sets into music the words, "jetez larmes des yeux" ("cry tears from your eyes") on the same pattern which Josquin had used for the phrase, "bref mes jours définer" ("my days will soon dwindle away" in that composer's own *Mille Regretz*), *this coincidence cannot be just accidental.*

As a conductor, I am often asked the same question I myself often wonder when I am a spectator: "Who are these singers?" Tonight, you are not hearing a longstanding or permanent choir; on the contrary, these singers only started working together in August, to practice this specific program. I particularly like such opportunities to gather singers of various expertise; a number of them are instrumentalists, musicologists, even colleague conductors, but others have less formal training in music and may be more at ease holding an art brush, a tennis racket, or a stethoscope than they are holding a music score.

Tonight, we hope not only that you will experience the epiphany of the dark masterpieces of this program, but also that you will enjoy the lighter ones. After all, even in the face of loss, The Fun Also Rises!

CONDUCTOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Claude Lévy, a retired “agrégé” music teacher, founded La Cantarela chorus in his hometown of Béziers, France. He conducted repertoire ranging from the Renaissance chanson to 21st century premieres, including major oratorio works like Mozart’s *Requiem*, Beethoven’s *Mass in C*, and Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*. Since moving to New York, he has been a member of several choirs, as both singer and/or assistant conductor, from the Canby Singers to Essential Voices USA. He is currently a member of the Barnard-Columbia Chorus and the Renaissance Street Singers, and he was recently appointed Group Leader for the Mostly Mozart Festival 50th anniversary world premiere of “the public domain.” Initially trained as a pianist by a former student of Alfred Cortot, Mr. Lévy enjoys playing in recorder ensembles, and was a member of the RenChorNY production of Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* .

Last year he was Artistic Director and Conductor of RenChorNY concert of Music from The Gonzaga Court and Chapel.

SINGERS

Lee Ann Beauchamp

Steve Bonime

Susan Daum

Martin Donach

Sally Elliott

Kate Ellis

Ross French

Tom Frenkel

Paul Geidel

Ezra Halleck

Ruth Helfrich

John Hetland

Virginia Kaycoff

Art Manabat

Bruce Rickenbacher

Dorrie Rosen

Sig Rosen

Sara Ruderman

Anna Stratis

Elaine Tokanaga

Jonathan Wiener

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to all of you, dear audience, who came tonight, and to all the RenChorNY singers and to the many alumni and friends of this long-running group. We are ever grateful to Harold Brown and the legacy he began in founding the Renaissance Chorus Association of New York in 1960; as a non-profit organization (www.renaissancechorus.org), we continue to honor his work and thank his family for their generous continuing support.

Thanks to the New York Early Music Celebration 2017 for sponsoring this and other events around the City. Thanks, also, to the Vocal Area Network and the New York Choral Consortium for advertising and to everyone who posted our flyer, told their friends, and helped us gather our audience.

We are especially grateful for the generous and essential contributions of three people without whom this concert could not have happened: Claude Levy, our Artistic Director and Conductor; John Hetland, who (as Conductor for The Renaissance Street Singers) has edited over 400 pieces of early music; and Sig Rosen, whose energy, enthusiasm, and focus brought us all together to perform this program.

Additional thanks go to Dorrie Rosen our publication coordinator. She also provided nourishment through all those rehearsals, bringing her own brand of “chicken soup” to us all in need.

Sincere gratitude to Aileen Hengeveld for the graphic design of our magnificent flyers, charming postcards, and these programs.

Special thanks to all who struggled with us to find the best translations and pronunciation of various antique texts: Marty Morrell and Silvia Zerbio (Italian languages), Steve Bonime, Rob Hollander, Marge Naughton, Bruce Richenbacher (Altdeutsch specialist), and Anne-Marie Granier (emeritus Latin teacher who answered questions from France about some Old French and Latin phrases). Special thanks to Robert DiIorio for keeping our computers alive through it all, and to Ruth Helfrich for helping us edit everything into proper English.

We are especially grateful to all the venues which gave us space for these rehearsals and performances: Hudson View Gardens for weekly rehearsals, The Riverside Church (through Emma Matters), and Fort Washington Collegiate Church (through Diana Morales and Chris Whittaker). Thanks, also, to Sara Ruderman, our Stage Manager, for helping us find our way to move about in these two beautiful performance spaces.

www.renaissancechorus.org