Masterworks from the Flemish Renaissance  
Saturday, March 14, 2009

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PROGRAM NOTES

All of the composers represented on this concert were Franco-Flemish, by which music historians mean that they were born in the region primarily represented by Belgium today, but were primarily francophone. With the exception of Clemens non Papa, who seems to have stayed around the Low Countries throughout his life, they were all international “superstars,” traveling and working all over Europe, and especially in Italy—in many ways the seat of wealth and culture during the Renaissance. Why were Franco-Flemish composers so successful? It certainly started with the strength of the maîtrises, the choir schools, who were training the most sought-after singers in Europe throughout this period and, in fact, dating back into the fourteenth century. Whether that was the reason so many generations of the best composers in Europe came from that region, we can only guess, but it was a remarkable flowering, and our concert tonight celebrates their accomplishments with what amounts to a “golden” anthology—a canon of their works, if you will.

Johannes Ockeghem, the earliest representative on the program, was said to have been ancient when he died in 1497 and it is thought that he may have been born (near Mons in southern Flanders) as early as 1410. Certainly, by ca.1450, he was first chaplain to the King of France, whom he served from his position as trésorier to the Royal Abbey of St. Martin in Tours. He was renowned in his day as a bass singer of extraordinary ability and, indeed, he is among the first to exploit a real bass range in his compositions. He is also known for his “seamless” textures, where the phrases are long and rarely seem to come to rest. His motet Intemerata dei mater shares its mode with his Missa Mi-mi, and in fact, it quotes the opening of that mass at the very beginning. The second section of the motet, furthermore, quotes Ockeghem’s Missa Fors seulement before presenting various trios and rare (for Ockeghem) instances of homophony (all voices declaiming together). One striking effect is the setting of the text, “spes nulla laboris,” where the texture sinks in archaic fauxbourdon (parallel first inversion chords) to a bleak and inconclusive cadence. The final section of the motet builds to a breathtaking acclamation at “Filius,” then spins a web of free counterpoint spiraling to a close.

Henricus Isaac was born in Flanders ca. 1450 and spent several years in Florence as court composer to Lorenzo il Magnifico de’ Medici, before moving to Austria to serve the Emperor Maximilian. The best testament to Isaac’s earlier association with the Medici is Quis dabit oculi mei, the motet he wrote lamenting Lorenzo’s death in 1492. It’s set to a poem by Lorenzo’s friend, Angelo Poliziano. Interestingly, the second part begins with the text “Laurus impetu,” but at this point the tenor part in the manuscript has the indication, “Laurus tacet,” meaning that the tenor voice of the normally four-voice texture is omitted for this section. But “Laurus tacet” is also a punning symbolic reference to Lorenzo’s tenor singing voice which was now silent. The two upper parts are paired in singing Poliziano’s lyrics while, below them, the bass voice descends step by step, as if into a tomb, repeating the phrase, “And let us rest in peace.” The final, section is no less moving.

Isaac’s motet, Rogamus te, occurs in one of the earliest prints by the first printer of music, Ottaviano Petrucci. Isaac must have been especially fond of the piece, because the music appears also as part of the Credo of his Missa O Praeclara, as well as untexted as an instrumental “fantasy”—though that usage, at least, may not have been Isaac’s own intent but rather the result of the work’s success as a piece of “abstract” counterpoint. The heart of the work is the motive, La Mi La Sol, which is actually the title associated with the instrumental version. That motive (and its “response,” La Sol La Mi), is heard first in extended, but then increasingly faster, note values in the Alto part, while it also furnishes figuration material for the counterpoint in the other voices. The Alto’s acceleration creates a stretto-like effect that propels the piece to its end.

Josquin Desprez is widely regarded as the greatest of all Franco-Flemish composers of the Renaissance, an opinion that was already current at the time and for some decades after his death. He was born Josquin Lebloitte dit Desprez between 1450 and 1455, and apparently worked for King René in Aix and King Louis XI of France in Tours, before moving to Italy after Louis’s death in 1483. After working
in Milan, Rome, and Ferrara, he returned to the Low Countries in 1504 and worked there until his death in 1521. Within a year or two after his arrival in Milan, his motet *Ave Maria* was copied, and it stands as the earliest of his works surviving in a datable manuscript. It is a classic example of the composer's balanced unfolding of motifs, with two-part imitation followed by four-voice imitative sections and punctuations in homophony. The melodic material for the opening points of imitation, at least, derives from the Gregorian sequence of the same name. Especially striking is the personal supplication at the end, where the composer's voice seems to be heard in the words, “O mater dei, memento mei.” Josquin's *Ave Maria* was honored by Petrucci as the opening work in his first printed motet collection in 1502.

Jean Mouton was born ca. 1459 in southern Flanders, probably at the little town of Holluigues. He worked at various places in northern France—Nesles, Amiens, St. Omer—before moving briefly to Grenoble. There he was heard and hired by Anne of Brittany, Queen Consort to Louis XII, and thereafter spent most of his career serving the French royal family, including Louis XII and François I. Although he remained in the north, his works were sought by Italian patrons and he further contributed to the musical world as teacher of Adrian Willært. Mouton's *Nesciens mater* uses a Gregorian chant as a basis for its Tenor voice, but the texture is so full and active that it cannot be heard clearly. The work is an undulating tapestry of sonority created, remarkably, by means of a four-voice imitative texture in canon with itself a fifth higher and a measure later. The technique of composition never intrudes on the beauty of this expressive work, however. *Per lignum* also uses a canon, but more modestly, with one of the Tenors following the Alto a fourth below and a beat behind.

Adrian Willært was born, possibly at Bruges, ca. 1490. After studies with Mouton in Paris, the most celebrated incident of his early life occurred in Rome in 1514–15, where Willært was attending the papal court with his patron, Cardinal Ippolito I d'Este. The young Willært was excited to hear the papal choir singing his own motet, *Verbum bonum*, while under the impression that it was by Josquin. As the theorist Zarlino tells the story, “When he said that it was his own (as it actually was) such was the envy or, I will say more delicately, the ignorance of those men, that they no longer wished to sing it”—(a mistake we will make up for tonight). After service in Ferrara, Willært was appointed *Maestro di cappella* of San Marco in Venice in 1527, a post he held until his death in 1562. *Verbum bonum* is actually remarkable among Franco-Flemish works for an insistent use of the cross-relation, a pungent cadential dissonance associated primarily with English music. *Aures ad nostras* is a setting of a strophic hymn for Quadragesima which Willært published in 1542. Having previously been set by Flemings living in Italy, like Guillaume Dufay and Johannes Martini, its text is reminiscent of the opening of Psalm 86, “Inclina Domine aurem tuam . . .”

Jacques, or Jacob, Arcadelt (b. ca.1507) was a Fleming by birth but seems to have spent most of his early career in Italy, notably in Florence and Rome. In Florence he became one of the first composers of the Italian madrigal, and his *Il bianco e dolce cigno* from his *First Book of Madrigals*, was the most reprinted piece of music in the Renaissance. Most of Arcadelt's sacred works, including this magnificent setting of the *Pater noster*, were probably composed during his time in the chapel of Pope Paul III. It was published in 1545.

Nicolas Gombert seems to have been born in southern Flanders ca. 1495, and may have studied with Josquin during the latter's final years in Condé. Around 1526, Gombert became a singer in the chapel of the Hapsburg Emperor Charles V, ultimately becoming *maître des enfants* and unofficial composer, and traveling with the court from Flanders to Spain, Italy, Austria, and Germany. Leaving court service around 1540, in 1545 he published *Musæ Jovis*, a lament for Josquin Desprez, who had died in 1521. Somber in mood throughout, it borrows the chant *Circumdederunt me*, from the Office of the Dead, that Josquin himself had used in the lamenting chanson, *Nymphes, nappés*. Gombert places it in successively faster note values on E, then G, A, and B, a choice of starting pitches that conspicuously avoids the F of Josquin's original cantus firmus. *Musæ Jovis* is oddly pagan in its text
for a motet by one cleric in memory of another, but is certainly a solemn tribute to the great master. Gombert’s beautiful setting of the Magnificat is remarkable for its expanding texture: it starts with a trio and gradually builds up to a stunning eight-voice final section. These alternate throughout with the chant recitation tone for the Magnificat.

Clemens non Papa was the nom de plume of the Franco-Flemish composer Jacques Clément (b. ca. 1510), who worked in the Low Countries in the early 16th century. The sobriquet is reputed to have been a joking reference (perhaps by fellow-choir members) to the fact that he shared a name with Pope Clement (d. 1534); Clemens non Papa = Clement not the Pope. He wrote numerous motets and masses for the Catholic rite as well as the Souterliedekens, a large collection of Protestant psalm settings in Dutch. Clément’s style in motets like *Ego flos campi* is characterized by a rich texture in almost constant imitation. He plays on that norm in setting the phrase “sicut lilium inter spinas,” which stands out in clear homophony in contrast to the intertwining musical “thorns” around it. That phrase also happens to be the motto of the Marian Brotherhood in ’s-Hertogenbosch, where Clément was employed as singer and composer in 1550. His brief motet, *Sancta Maria*, was published in 1554.

Cipriano de Rore (b. 1515/16), in spite of the Italianate given name by which he became known, was born in Ronse, south of Ghent, and where as a choirboy, he carved his still-visible name in the crypt of St. Hermes there. He is reputed to have been a pupil of Willaert but there is no documentation about his early career. By 1542 he was definitely in northern Italy and by 1546 was maestro di cappella for the Este court of Ferrara. In his madrigals, Rore would single-handedly emancipate music from the confines of meter, allowing the spoken rhythms of the text to determine his setting, and using unexpected and jarring syncopations and strange harmonic juxtapositions to color his unsettling work. It is not surprising that Monteverdi would later cite Rore as a pioneer of his new seconda prattica where the text was “mistress” of the music. His sacred compositions are comparatively few, however. *Descendi in hortum meum* was copied as the first work in a sumptuous manuscript prepared for Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria in Munich, and which seems to have been overseen by the composer himself during a visit in 1558. Demonstrating his compositional prowess while writing an exquisite piece of music, Rore conceals a canon in the seven intertwining voices, with the Tenor part following one of the Sopranos an octave below and two measures behind.

Roland de Lassus (widely known as Orlando di Lasso) was born, probably in 1532, in Mons, thus sharing a birthplace with Ockeghem. There is a legend that he was kidnapped three times as a choirboy because of his exceptional voice and, certainly, by the age of twelve, he was in the service of a member of the Gonzaga family and on his way to Italy. After years of travel, including back to the Low Countries where his first collection of compositions was published in 1555, he accepted an appointment at the court of Bavaria in Munich in 1556 and, aside from travel on behalf of the court, spent the rest of his life there. One of the most prolific composers of the Renaissance, his Musica dei donum was published in the year of his death, 1594, and is a moving tribute to music itself. His *Surrexit Dominus vere* is a responsory for Easter, published in 1592.

Philippe de Monte was born in Mechelen in 1521, so he was older than Lassus, although he lived longer, dying in Prague in 1603. His early years are obscure but seem to have included residence in Cambrai, to which he wished to return later in life (but was denied permission). By 1554, he was in London with the chapel of Philip II of Spain and, while there, his first book of madrigals was published in Rome. Monte was the most prolific madrigalist in history, publishing 34 volumes of them over nearly fifty years. Indeed, from the mid-1550s to the mid-1560s, Monte was in Italy, traveling in the service of various patrons. In 1568, he was appointed Kapellmeister to the Imperial court in Vienna, a post he held for the rest of his life, though the court moved to Prague about 1580. His *O suavitias et dulcedo*, published in 1575, is one of his most expressive motets.

—Ross W. Duffin
Intemerata Dei mater, generosa puella quam stipant agmina
divum respicie nos tantum si quid jubilando meremur. Tu scis,
virgo decens, quanti discrimine agatur exsulibus passimque
quibus jactemur arenis.

Nec sine te manet ulla quies nulla salus patriae, domus aut
potiunda parentis cui regina praees, dispensans omnia; laeto
suscipis ore pios, dulci quos nectare potas, et facis assiduos
epulis accumbere sacris.

Aspiciat facito miseros pietatis ocello Filius, ipsa potes; fessos
hinc arripe sursum, diva virgo manu, tutos et in arce locato.

Quis dabit capiti meo aquam? Quis oculis meis fontem
lachrimarum dabit, ut necte fleam? ut necte fleam? Sic turtur
viduus solet, sic cygnus moriens solet, sic luscinia conqueri.

Rogamus te, piissima virgo Maria, humiliter deprecantes que
de tuis meritis mundo pacem contulisti, ut nobis placabilem,
faciaux unigenitum tuum, ac piissimum redemptorem nostrum,
ut nos perducat ad veram dielectionem et pacem sine fine
mansuram.
O Maria, o regina, o domina piissima ad te confugimus, in te
confidimus, ad te flentes suspiramus, te gementes invocamus.
O Maria, o regina, o domina mitissima, esto nobis propitia in
seculorum secula.

Ave Maria gratia plena, Dominus tecum virgo serena, Ave
cuius conceptio, Solemnis plena gaudio, Celestia, terrestria,
Nova replet letitia. Ave cuius nativitas Nostra fuit solemnitas,
Ut lucifer lux oriens, Verum solem preveniens. Ave pia
humilitas, Sine vero fecunditas, Cuius unigenitum Nostra fuit salvatio. Ave vera virginitas, Immaculata castitas, Cuius
purificatio Nostra fuit purgatio. Ave preclara omnibus
Angelis virtutibus, Cuius fuit assumptio Nostra glorificatio.
O mater dei, Memento mei.

Per Lignum salvi facti sumus, et per sanctam crucem liberati
sumus: fructus arboris seduxit nos; Filius Dei redemit nos.

— Angelo Poliziano

— RWD after Tom Baker

Humbly praying, we ask of you, o most tender virgin Mary,
who by your merits brought peace to the world, that you
would make your only begotten son and our most tender
redeemer to look upon us with indulgence, that he might lead
us to true joy and abiding peace without end.
O Mary, o queen, o most tender lady, in you we shelter, in
you we trust, to you, weeping, we sigh, and groaning, we call.
O Mary, o queen, o most gentle lady, be gracious unto us for
ever and ever. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, gentle virgin.
Hail, whose conception, full of solemn joy, fills the heaven,
the earth, with new rejoicing. Hail, whose birth was our festival, as
the light-bearing rising light coming before the true sun. Hail,
pious humility, fertility without a man, whose annunciation
was our salvation. Hail true virginity, unsullied chastity,
whose purification was our cleansing. Hail, famous with all
angelic virtues, whose assumption was our glorification. O,
mother of God, remember me. Amen.

Through the wood of the cross we have been saved, and
through the Holy Cross we have been liberated; the fruit of the
Tree excluded us; the Song of God has redeemed us. Alleluia.
Nesciens mater virgo virum peperit sine dolore
Salvatorem seculorum ipsum regem angelorum Sola virgo
lactabit ubere de caelo pleno.

Verbum bonum et suave, personemus illud Ave, per
quod Christi fit conclave Virgo, mater filia. Per quod Ave
salutata mox concepit foecundata, Virgo David stirpenata,
inter spinas lilia. Ave, sponsa verb i summi, maris portus, signum dum,
aromatum virga fumi, angelorum domina, supplicamus,
os emenda, emendatos nos commenda tuo natu, ad
habenda sempiterna gaudia, alleluja.

Aureas ad nostras deitatis preces, Deus inclina; pietate sola
supplicum vota suscipe precamus, famuli tui.

Crimina laxa pietate multa, ablue sordes; vincula
disrumpe, parce peccatis, releva iacentes dextera tua.

Tu nobis dona fontem lachrymarum, jejuniorum fortia
ministra; vitia carnis retunde framea tua.

Gloria Deo sit aeterno Patri, sit tibi semper, genitoris nate,
cum quo aequalis Spiritus per cuncta saecula regnat.

Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum;
Adveniat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo
et in terra. Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus
debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a malo.

Musae Iovis
ter maximis proles canora plangimat,
comprimat Josquinus ille occidit, templorum decus et
vestrum decus saeviora mors et improba que templum
dulcis buonon Privat, et aulas principum malum tibi quod
imprecer tollenti bonos, parcenti malis. Apollo sed necem
mors minatur heus, mors pessima musas nortatur addere
et laurum comis Josquinucus (inquit) optimo et maximo
gratus Kovi triumphat inter caelites Et dulce carmen
concinit templorum decus, musarum decus.

Cantus firmus: Circumdederunt me genitus mortis
dolores inferni circumdederunt me.

A mother though she had no knowledge of man, the
maiden gave birth without pain to the Savior of the
world. She alone suckled the very king of the angels with
heavenly plenty.

Word good and sweet, let us cry aloud that Hail,
through which the Virgin is made the chamber of Christ,
Mother Daughter, through that salutation a Virgin born
of David’s line, a lily among thorns, soon conceived
fruitfully.

Hail Mother of just Solomon, fleece of Gideon, whose
childbirth the Magi praise with three gifts.

Hail, spouse of the highest Word, harbor of the sea, sign
of the thornbush, fragrant wand of incense, mistress of
angels, we beseech you, free us from sin, commend us,
cleansed by your Son, to eternal joys. Alleluia. Amen.

—E. M. Duffin

Turn your divine ears to our prayers, Lord, in your
goodness alone, accept your servants’ prayers for mercy,
we beseech you.

Punish our crimes, extend divine mercy, cleanse our
impurities, break our bonds, have mercy on our sins,
relieve the helpless by your right hand.

Christ, true light, benevolence and life, joy of the world,
boundless charity, who saved us from death by his rose
colored blood.

Spare us a fountain of tears, provide strength to the weak,
quell the thousand imperfections of the fleshly your
sword.

Glory be to God the eternal father, glory be to him
forever, born of the father, together with the Holy Spirit,
equal in status, He reigns forever. Amen.

—Murray Steib

Our father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us
our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Muses of the thrice great Jove, melodious offspring, weep.
The cypress crushes its leaves: Josquin, he is dead, the
glory of the temples and your glory. Cruel, wicked death,
who robs the temples of sweet sounds, and the halls of
the princes. Curses on thee I call down, who carries off
the good and spares the bad. But Apollo threatens to kill
thee, woe to thee, dreadful death. He bids the muses add
laurel to their tresses, and gold. He says, “Josquin, dear to
the best and greater Jupiter, triumphs among the heavenly
host, and creates a sweet song, the glory of the temples,
the glory of the muses.”

Cantus firmus: The plaints of death are around me, the
pains of hell encompass me.
Magnificat anima mea Dominum, et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salvatore meo, quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae. Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes, quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est, et sanctum nomen eius, et misericordia eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui; depositus potentiae de sede et exaltavit humiles; esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes. Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae, sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

— Luke 1: 46-55

Ego flos campi et lilium convallium. Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias. Fons hortorum et puteus aquarum viventium quae fluunt impetu de Libano.

Sancta Maria, succurre miseris, juva pusillanimes, refove flebiles, ora pro populo, interveni pro clero, intercede pro devoto femineo sexu: sentiant omnes tuum levamen, quicumque celebrant tuam sanctam commemorationem.

I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valley: Like a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among women; like a garden spring, the well of living waters that flow swiftly down from Libanus.

Holy Mary, be thou a help to the helpless, strength to the fearful, comfort to the sorrowful, pray for the people, plead for the clergy, intercede for all holy women consecrated to God; may all who keep thy sacred commemoration feel the might of thine assistance.

I went down into my garden to see the fruits of the valley, to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee.

Music, gift of God most high, attracts men, attracts gods. Music calms savage hearts and cheers sorrowful minds. Music moves even the trees themselves and savage wild beasts.

The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices. That they might come and anoint Jesus. Alleluia. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. Alleluia. Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

O suavitas et dulcedo humani generis, Jesu Christe, qui pro nostra salute in cruce extensus fuisti per omnia membra et ossa corporis tui, quae distenta in te et dinumerata fuerunt. Rogo te, piissime Jesu, ut me miserum sic tibi iungas, quod per prospera et adversa huius saeculi, a te nunquam possim separari. Amen.

O tenderness and sweetness of human birth, Jesus Christ, who for our salvation was extended upon the cross by the limbs and bones of Thy body, which were stretched and numbered: I beg Thee, O most merciful Jesus, to have pity on me and so unite me with Thee that, through the prosperity and adversity of this age, I can never be separated from Thee. Amen.
Quire Cleveland is a professional ensemble, founded in 2008, to perform the glorious choral masterpieces of the late Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque eras, and beyond. Members of the choir are highly-trained musicians, collectively representing nearly 500 years of choral experience. In addition to being soloists and choral leaders at many of the major churches in the greater Cleveland area, including the Cathedral of St. John, Church of the Covenant, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, and Trinity Cathedral, among others, they have sung together in historically-informed ensembles, such as the Case Western Reserve University Early Music Singers and Apollo’s Singers of Apollo’s Fire. Under the direction of conductor-scholar Peter Bennett, Quire brings to northern Ohio a new professional ensemble of unaccompanied voices, performing five centuries of a cappella repertoire.

Music Director Peter Bennett, who joined the CWRU Music Faculty in 2005, brings both scholarly and performance expertise to Quire Cleveland. A former organ scholar at Cambridge, Dr. Bennett studied organ and conducting at the Hochschule für Musik, Vienna, and harpsichord at Academia Chigiana, Siena. He later received his D.Phil. in Music from Oxford University with a dissertation on early 17th-century French sacred music, his research now centers on the music and institutions associated with Louis XIII’s Paris. As founder and director of Ensemble Dumont—a consort of singers, viols, and continuo—he has appeared widely in the UK and Europe, performing at the Bruges and Innsbruck Early Music Festivals, the MDR-Sommer Festival, the Wigmore Hall, London, and broadcasting on the BBC, RAI (Italy), MDR and SWR (Germany), and R3 (Belgium). His CDs of Dumont and Frémart for Linn Records have been received with critical acclaim.

**Sopranos:** Kathleen Bassett, Dana Clearwater, Donna Fagerhaug, Lisa Rainsong, Gail West  
**Altos:** John McElliott, Cheryl Moore, Ann Mullin, Amanda Powell, Beverly Simmons  
**Tenors:** Ross W. Duffin, Jeremiah Heilman, David Saffron  
**Basses:** José Gotera, Nathan Longnecker, Daniel Kenworthy, Raymond Lyons

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