



*Josquin
Desprez
&*

the School of Flanders

MUSIC OF JOSQUIN · MOUTON · COMPÈRE & DE LA RUE

CONVIVIUM MUSICUM

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CHOIR FOR RENAISSANCE MUSIC

Scott Metcalfe, Music Director

**Josquin Desprez and the School of Flanders:
Music of Josquin, Mouton, Compère, and de la Rue**



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Saturday, May 22, 2004, 7 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church · 73 Lancaster Street, Worcester, MA

Sunday, May 23, 2004, 7 p.m.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church · 838 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA

Sunday, June 6, 2004, 7 p.m.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church · 15 St. Paul Street, Brookline, MA

Program

Ave Maria ... virgo serena Jean Mouton (before 1459–1522)
Salve mater salvatoris
Ave sanctissima Maria

Salve regina à4 Josquin Desprez (c. 1455–1521)
Salve regina (v) Pierre de la Rue (c. 1452–1518)

Missa Malheur me bat Josquin
Kyrie & Gloria

intermission

O genitrix gloriosa Loyset Compère (c. 1445–1518)

Ave gemma virginum Mouton
In omni tribulatione

O admirabile commercium Josquin
I. O admirabile commercium
II. Quando natus es
III. Rubum quem viderat Moyses
IV. Germinavit radix Jesse
V. Ecce Maria

Ave Maria ... virgo serena Mouton



Notes

To connoisseurs and patrons of sacred polyphony in western Europe around the year 1500 it appeared that practically every composer whose music was worth acquiring, every singer worth paying a good salary, came from a small corner of the continent over in the northwest, that area of northern France and the Low Countries comprising the regions of Burgundy, Picardy, Flanders, and Brabant. From the mid-fifteenth century through the later sixteenth, the roster of singer-composers from Franco-Flemish lands includes Binchois, Dufay, Busnoys, Ockeghem, Obrecht, Agricola, Tinctoris, Isaac, La Rue, Josquin, Mouton, Verdelot, Arcadelt, Clemens non Papa, Crecquillon, Gombert, Willaert, Rore, Lasso, and Wert — and this list omits a good number of less well-known composers, as well as numerous singers who left no musical works to posterity. Many of these musicians looked to Italy for a career in the princely chapels of the sunny south. As Pamela Starr has recently observed (*Early Music*, February 2004), Josquin managed his career particularly astutely, obtaining employment in a series of cultured courts and gaining prestige and independence as he went. After receiving his early training in a northern *maitrise* or choir school (possibly that of Notre Dame in Condé-sur-Escaut), he worked in turn for René of Anjou, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza of Milan, and the papal chapel in Rome, eventually serving for a year as *maestro di cappella* to Duke Ercole of Ferrara before returning to his homeland to enjoy the fruits of the ecclesiastical benefices for which he had successfully supplicated while in Italy. Loyset Compère, too, worked for a while in Milan, in the decade before Josquin arrived there. After his employer Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza was murdered in 1476, Compère was hired at the French royal court, and he made his next trip to Italy in the entourage of the invading King Charles VIII. Compère probably spent January 1495 in Rome along with Charles's occupying troops; here he may have crossed paths with Josquin. Compère's music presumably made a better impression in Rome than the king's army, for five motets and a Magnificat by him were copied into a Sistine Chapel choirbook shortly afterwards.

Neither Pierre de la Rue nor Jean Mouton ever worked for an Italian prince or prelate, although Mouton, who was associated with the French court for much of his maturity, visited Bologna in 1515 as a member of the chapel of the King of France, François I. La Rue spent

most of his career in service to Habsburg-Burgundian nobles, serving in turn Philip the Fair, his widow Juana of Spain, and his sister Marguerite of Austria, at her court in Malines or Mechelen. But the music of both these composers circulated widely throughout Europe, and indeed, most of the pieces you will hear this evening are found in Italian sources.

Josquin's is the most famous name on our program, and his celebrity seems already to have exceeded that of all other composers by the early sixteenth century. A pair of talent scouts at the court of Ercole of Ferrara, courtiers named Caglia and Gian, agreed on Josquin's supremacy, even while they disagreed on the wisdom of engaging him to be court composer. Caglia wrote the Duke that "by having Josquin in our chapel I wish to place a crown upon this chapel of ours," but Gian argued that Isaac was a better choice, "much more so than Josquin, because he is of a better nature among his companions and will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to, and not when one wants him to." If Josquin was truly the best of the lot, it must be said that he emerged from a very accomplished field of musicians. In any case, it is more interesting, albeit more difficult, to ask precisely what it is that makes Josquin Josquin — insofar as scholars can actually answer the vexed question of what pieces attributed to him are actually his work — and one of those things is a predilection for building up a contrapuntal texture from small motivic fragments.

At times this tendency borders on the obsessive. In the duet which opens the *Christe* of the *Missa Malheur me bat*, for instance, while the altus sings a melody borrowed from the tenor of the textless trio called *Malheur me bat*, the superius sings the same four-note rising figure six times in a row before finally moving on to new material, returning to it twice more before tenor and bass finally enter — and then three times again after that. In Josquin's hands this drastic economy of means, or extreme concentration on the possibilities inherent in one small motive, produces intense expression. Of course, a good deal of the specific quality of expression in the *Missa Malheur me bat* derives from the original composition upon which Josquin based his mass, the plangent, e-mode trio *Malheur me bat*, attributed variously to Malcort, Martini, or Ockeghem. (According to David Fallows, the most obscure among these, Malcort, whoever he may have been, is the likeliest candidate.) Its tenor part is sung entire by the tenor in the

mass, once in the *Kyrie*, and once again, with internal repeats of some melodic fragments, in the *Gloria*, and the other voices of the trio supply much of Josquin's supporting material.

A similar doggedness about constructing wonderful music out of technical limitation may be observed in his *Salve regina*, a canon 4 ex 2. Only two parts are notated (bassus and altus) and the other two are derived from those, the tenor imitating the bass a fourth higher and one beat later, the superius imitating the altus in the same fashion. Adding to the challenge, the altus melody is an elaborated version of the pre-existing plainchant. This peculiarly compelling piece, arguably Josquin at his oddest, is one of those not-so-rare cases in fifteenth-century polyphony which leaves open to question just what notes, exactly, the composer intended the performers to sing. In this case the principal issue is whether the imitating voices ought to proceed by exact intervallic canon or not. Whatever solution one settles on seems to test the limits of contrapuntal propriety.

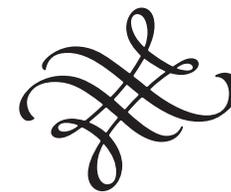
La Rue's *Salve regina* offers a less complicated approach to the popular Marian antiphon, although equally skilled and perhaps more personally expressive. The text is set alternatim, with polyphony supplied for the even verses, the odd to be sung in chant. La Rue's four voices are freely composed for the most part, but he scatters occasional allusions to the chant melody throughout the texture.

Compère's position in music history has been revised somewhat in light of recent changes in our understanding of Josquin's biography. These have separated Josquin the famous composer from another Josquin, a singer but not a composer, who was Compère's colleague in Milan in the 1470s, placing the composer's birthdate approximately fifteen years later than was once thought. Under this new chronology, certain developments supposedly pioneered by Josquin are beginning to look more like the invention of others, or at least like common stylistic property. Thus the duet textures and clarity so often seen as a hallmark of the "Italian" Josquin, which are obvious features of his motet cycle on antiphons for the Feast of the Circumcision, *O admirabile commercium*, are equally apparent in Compère's *O genitrix gloriosa*, and it now seems that Compère may have gotten there first.

Although he excelled at them, Josquin was not alone in loving technical puzzles, which are strewn throughout the work of his contem-

poraries. Mouton's *Salve mater salvatoris*, for example, is built around a mirror canon between tenor and bass: the tenor imitates the bass melody in inversion, at a distance of four beats. In this case the canon is handled with such ease and grace that its presence may not even be noticed. *Ave Maria, gemma virginium* is another thing altogether; here the four voices of the lower choir are imitated one octave higher, after four beats. Dense, sombre, and urgent, the piece seems to represent a multitude of troubled souls crying out to the Virgin. More representative of the "smoothly flowing melodic line" identified by the sixteenth-century theorist Glarean as one of Mouton's virtues is the exquisite *Ave Maria ... virgo serena*, a work that makes as perfect an ending for a concert as it does a beginning — so you will have the opportunity to hear it twice this evening.

— Scott Metcalfe



texts & translations

Ave Maria, gratia plena

Marian sequence

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum, virgo serena.
Tu parvi et magni,
leonis et agni,
salvatoris Christi
templum extitisti,
sed virgo intacta.
Tu floris et roris,
panis et pastoris,
virginum et regina,
rosa sine spina,
genitrix es facta.

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you, serene virgin.
Of small and great,
lion and lamb —
of our savior Christ —
you became the temple,
while still a virgin.
Of the flower and the dew,
of the bread and the shepherd,
O Queen of virgins,
O rose without thorns,
you became the mother.*

Tu civitas regis justitie,
tu mater es misericordie,
de lacu fecis et miserie
Theophilum reformans gratie.
Te collaudat celestis curia,
tu mater es regis et filia.
O Maria dulcissima,
per te reis donatur venia.
O Maria piissima,
per te reis donatur venia.
O Maria mitissima,
per te justis confertur gratia.
Pro nobis semper Christum exora.
Amen.

*You are the city of the king of justice,
you are the mother of mercy,
from the lake of dregs and misery
reforming the Lover of God to grace.
The heavenly host praises you: you are
the mother and daughter of the king.
O sweetest Mary,
through you the accused are forgiven.
O most loving Mary,
through you the accused are forgiven.
O most gentle Mary,
through you the just receive grace.
Entreat Christ on our behalf forever.
Amen.*

Salve, mater salvatoris

Salve, mater salvatoris,
vas electum, vas honoris,
vas misericordie,
sis pro nobis fons venie.

*Hail, mother of the savior,
chosen vessel, vessel of honor,
vessel of compassion,
be for us a fount of forgiveness.*

Ave sanctissima Maria

Ave sanctissima Maria,
mater Dei, regina celi,
porta paradisi, domina mundi,
singularis pura, tu es virgo;
tu concepisti Jesum sine peccato,
tu peperisti creatorem et
salvatores omnium,
in quo non dubito.
Libera nos ab omnibus malis,
intercede pro peccatis nostris.
Amen.

*Hail, most holy Mary,
mother of God, queen of heaven,
gate of paradise, Lady of this world,
uniquely pure, you are a virgin;
you conceived Jesus without sin,
you brought forth the creator and
savior of all,
of which I have no doubt.
Free us from all evils,
intercede for our sins.
Amen.*

Salve regina

Marian antiphon

Salve regina, mater misericordie;
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Eve.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et
flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte,
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum
ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis
virgo Maria.

*Hail, Queen, mother of mercy, our life,
our sweetness, and our hope, hail!
To you we cry, we exiled children of Eve.
To you we sigh, weeping and
wailing in this vale of tears.
Therefore, you our advocate,
turn your merciful eyes upon us,
and show us Jesus, the blessed fruit
of your womb,
after this our exile.
O merciful, O tender, O sweet
virgin Mary.*

O genitrix gloriosa

O genitrix gloriosa,
mater dei speciosa,
suscipe verbum divinum
quod tibi fuit transmissum
a Domino per angelum.
Beata virgo nitida
paries quidem filium,

*O glorious mother,
fair mother of God,
receive the divine word
that was sent to you
from God by the angel.
Blessed, radiant virgin,
you shall indeed bear a son,*

efficeris gravida
non habens detrimentum
virginitatis,
et eris benedicta
virgo semper intacta.

Ave virgo gloriosa,
Maria mater gratiae,
ave gemma speciosa,
mater misericordiae.
O Maria florens rosa,
tu nos ab hoste protege,
esto nobis gratiosa,
et hora mortis suscipe.
O gloriosa Domina,
excelsa super sidera,
qui te creavit provide
lactasti sacro ubere.
Quod Eva tristis abstulit,
tu reddis almo germine,
intrent ut astra flebiles,
caeli fenestra facta es.
Maria mater gratiae,
mater misericordiae.

Ave Maria, gemma virginum

Ave Maria, gemma virginum,
mundi domina, celi regina,
dominus tecum.
Audi benigna mater omnium,
tu nos adjuva in mortis hora
apud dominum.

In omni tribulatione

In omni tribulatione et angustia
Succurrat nobis pia virgo Maria.

*become heavy with child
without loss
of virginity,
and remain a blessed
virgin, forever intact.*

*Hail, glorious virgin,
Mary, mother of grace;
hail, beautiful gem,
mother of mercy.
O Mary, blossoming rose,
protect us from the enemy,
be gracious to us, and receive us
at the hour of our death.
O glorious Lady,
raised high above the stars,
he who providently created you,
you suckled at your holy breast.
That which woeful Eve took away,
you restore through your life-giving child,
that the wretched might enter into glory:
you are made the window of heaven.
Mary, mother of grace,
mother of mercy.*

*Hail Mary, jewel of virgins,
Lady of the world, queen of heaven,
the Lord is with you.
Hear us, kind mother of all,
help us at the hour of death,
before the Lord.*

*In every tribulation and anguish
Succour us, gentle virgin Mary.*

O admirabile commercium *Antiphons for the Feast of the Circumcision, January 1*

O admirabile commercium: creator
generis humani, animatum corpus
sumens, de virgine nasci dignatus
est: et procedens homo sine semine,
largitus est nobis suam deitatem.

Quando natus es ineffabiliter ex
virgine, tunc implete sunt scripture:
sicut pluvia in vellus descendisti, ut
salvum faceres genus humanum. Te
laudamus, deus noster.

Rubum quem viderat Moyses in-
combustum, conservatam agnovi-
mus tuam laudabilem virginitatem.
Dei genitrix virgo, intercede pro
nobis.

Germinavit radix Jesse, orta est stella
ex Jacob: virgo peperit salvatorem.
Te laudamus, deus noster.

Ecce Maria genuit nobis salvatorem,
quem Joannes videns exclamavit,
dicens: ecce agnus dei, ecce qui tollit
peccata mundi, alleluia.

*O wondrous exchange! the creator
of humankind, assuming a living
body, deigned to be born of a virgin:
and becoming a man without seed,
enriched us with his divinity.*

*By your ineffable birth to a virgin,
the scriptures were fulfilled: like rain
upon the grass you descended to save
humankind. We praise you, our God.*

*In the bush that Moses saw burning,
yet unconsumed, we recognize your
virginity, gloriously preserved. Virgin
mother of God, intercede for us.*

*The root of Jesse has blossomed, the
star of Jacob has risen: a virgin has
brought forth the savior. We praise
you, our God.*

*Behold, Mary has given birth to
our savior. When John saw him, he
exclaimed: Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins
of the world, alleluia.*

acknowledgments

Convivium would like to thank the rector and parish of St. John's Episcopal Church, Charlestown, where we rehearse. We would also like to thank our hosts at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Cambridge, Trinity Lutheran Church, Worcester and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Brookline. Many thanks also to Philip "Doc" Davis for recording our concerts.

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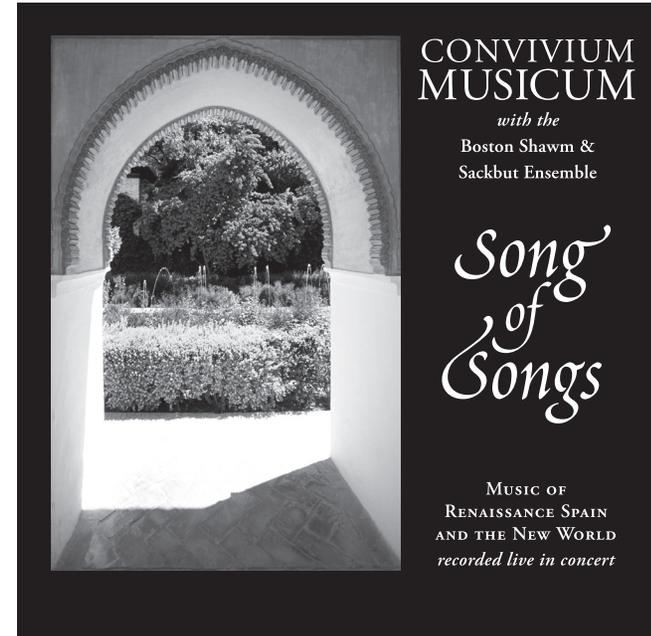
Convivium Musicum

Formed in 1987 and incorporated in 1990, Convivium Musicum has been praised by the *Boston Globe* for “the almost dancing lift given to the rhythms, both musical and verbal.” Convivium’s adventurous programming has ranged from Josquin’s *Missa Fortuna desperata* to early sixteenth-century Franco-Flemish settings of Dido’s lament to music from the Spanish New World, and has also included masterworks by Byrd, Victoria, Guerrero, Le Jeune, Sweelinck, and many other lesser-known composers. Convivium is proud to be a corporation run by its singers, who serve on the Board of Directors, manage the business affairs of the group, design programs and publicity, and seek out opportunities to perform Renaissance polyphony for new audiences. The musical growth of the ensemble over the last few years has been matched by the growth of an enthusiastic family of supporters and music lovers in a community that stretches across New England. We are especially pleased to have established a regular presence at Trinity Church in Worcester.

Scott Metcalfe, Music Director

A conductor with a repertoire extending from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth, Scott Metcalfe is now in his eighth season as music director of Convivium Musicum. Besides Convivium, he directs the vocal ensemble Blue Heron, and last season he was invited to conduct Bach’s *St. John Passion* with the Dryden Ensemble in Princeton, New Jersey and Handel’s opera *Amadigi* at Monadnock Music in New Hampshire. Also a violinist, Metcalfe is a member of La Luna and the concertmaster of the Trinity Consort in Portland, Oregon. He played viola in *The King’s Noyse* from its founding in 1987 until retiring from the group last spring, and he has played in the orchestra of every opera produced by the Boston Early Music Festival since 1993. He is currently pursuing a master’s degree in historical performance practice at Harvard University.

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