

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, October 7, 2021 1:15 pm

The Church of the Transfiguration in NYC

Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org, OurConcerts.Live, YouTube, and Facebook

The New Consort

Tomás Cruz ~ Garrett Eucker

Gregório Taniguchi ~ Brian Mummert ~ Jonathan Woody

The Evaporation of Grief: 500 Years of Josquin's Legacy

Plorer, gemir, crier

Pierre de la Rue (c. 1452–1518)

La Déploration de la mort de Johannes Ockeghem

Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521)

Omnium bonorum plena

Loyset Compère (c. 1445–1518)

Musae Iovis

Benedictus Appenzeller (c. 1480–1558)

Fais doncq un chant

Simon Frisch (b. 1990)

Illibata Dei Virgo nutrix

Josquin des Prez

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About the Program

Grief has angles; mourning has protocols.

For the Franco-Flemish school of composers, spanning the 15th through 16th centuries, a distinct practice of honorific motets to the memory of a deceased colleague called *déplorations* emerged. The school was so-called for the provenance of members, who typically originated as singer-composers in the orbit of court and church in France and the Low Countries. Their careers flourished internationally, with coveted composers frequently moving between courts and patrons abroad. Despite this scattered geography, an economy of comradery, emulation, and admiration linked composers across borders and generations. This manifested in several ways, most prominently with the ubiquitous parody masses that quoted (and elaborated on) the song or motet of a colleague-composer. In honoring Josquin des Prez at 500 years since his death, this program contextualizes his life and music with works of his colleagues that variously address grief and identity among musicians.

The *déplorations*, and motets of mourning generally, were unique. By sheer emotional force, grief pushed against the guiderails of a well-ordered musical system of notation and counterpoint. In these motets, the fabric of pitch-space comes undone, voices reach uncomfortable depths, bells toll in the choir texture, and familiar hollow noteheads turn solid black. Allegory and liturgy comingle with the invoked figures of living composers. A pageantry of compositional virtuosity—canons and riddles—is offset by sincere, devastating calls to the deceased. These composers have played carefully on the line between proper, collective mourning, and the excessive grief of the individual. Grief is expressed in vernacular or Latin, as individual or communal, sorrowful or spiteful, by audible or invisible means, or all the above. The act of grieving in these *déplorations*, therefore, acquires an expressive and symbolic vocabulary entirely unto itself. Cashed in each motet and their sources is a web of texts, images, and references that may even be known only the performer.

Yet to grieve is as much to reinforce and celebrate the communities that bind us as it is to honor the departed. In the juxtaposed *Nymphes des bois* and *Omnium bonorum*, composers are called to respectively memorialize and celebrate the great Johannes Ockeghem. With these and other motets, the guiding lights and professional genealogies of this artistic practice are codified in life or death. Josquin's own death was marked by several *déplorations*, among them Hieronymus Vinders' *O mors inevitabilis* and this afternoon's *Musae Iovis* of Benedictus Appenzeller. *Fais doncq un chant*, written expressly for The New Consort and this program, ties several of these source elements together, including texts by erstwhile contemporaries Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473–ca.1525) and Serafino dell'Aquila (1466–1500) addressed to Josquin. It is Josquin in the eyes of his colleagues, in a loving, flawed reconstruction of this expressive vocabulary of grief. Warped by centuries of doppler shift, however, the sounds and notation have become slippery, the speaker(s) obscured. It is dedicated above all to the musicians, and to this performance as an expression of our community ties.

Josquin's *Illibata Dei Virgo nutrix* ends the program, appropriately, with Josquin's own sign-off: the text is an acrostic of IOSQUIN DES PREZ. (Only the performers would get the tenor's pun, however.)

~Simon Frisch

About the Artists

Winners of the American Prize in Chamber Music, The New Consort is a vocal ensemble directed by baritone Brian Mummert. Musical variety is an integral part of the ensemble's identity; by embracing contrasts and drawing diverse works into conversation, The New Consort encourages audiences to forge connections with unfamiliar genres of musical expression.

NEXT WEEK : Eurasia Consort
Silk Road Journey to the East

**The New Consort:
The Evaporation of Grief
Texts and Translations**

Plorer, gemir, crier et braire
Me commant en grant desplaisir
Quant la mort [le père exemplaire
Ockeghem huy fait trespasser]
Requiescat in pace

Requiem eternam dona eis Domine

[missing text reconstructed by Antoine Guerber]

To lament, to moan, shout and wail
Such great grief commands me:
When death [comes today to cut down
Ockeghem, that greatest of fathers.]
May he rest in peace.

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord.

**La Déploration de la mort
de Johannes Ockeghem**

Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines,
Chantres experts de toutes nations,
Changez voz voix tant clères et haultaines
En cris trenchans et lamentations.
Car Atropos, très terrible satrape,
A vostre Ockeghem attrapé en sa trappe.
Vrai trésorier de musique et chief d'œuvre,
Doct, élégant de corps et non point trappe.
Grant dommage est que la terre le couvre.
Acoustrez vous d'habits de deuil
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
Et plourez grosses larmes d'œul:
Perdu avez vostre bon père.
Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Wood-nymphs, goddesses of the fountains,
Expert singers of every nation,
Change your voices, so clear and lofty,
To piercing cries and lamentation.
For Atropos, the terrible ruler,
Has caught your Ockeghem in her trap.
The true treasurer of music, and its master:
Learned, handsome and in no way homely.
It is a terrible loss that the earth covers him.
Put on your outfits of mourning,
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
And weep great tears from your eyes:
You have lost your great father.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Eternal rest give them, Lord,
And light perpetual shine on them.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Omnium bonorum plena

Virgo parensque serena
que sedes super sidera
pulchra prudens et decora.

Assistens a dextris Patris,
caeli terrae plasmatoris,
in vestige deaurato
nullius manu formata.

Nullus tibi comparari
potest certe nec equari
cui voce angelica
dictum est Ave Maria.

Turbata parum fuisti
sed consulta respondisti
ecce ancilla Domini
sicuro refers fiat mihi.

Dulcis fuit responsio
data caelesti nuntio
per quam statim concepisti
natum Dei et portasti

illum necnon peperisti
et post partum permansisti
Virgo pura et nitida
virgoque immaculata.

Omnium bonorum plena
Peccatorum medicina
cujus proprium orare
est atque preces fundare,

Pro miseris peccantibus
a Deo recedentibus
funde preces ad Filium
pro salute canentium.

Full of all good things,

serene Virgin and mother
who sits above the stars
fair, wise and graceful.

Seated at the right hand of the Father
the Creator of heaven and earth
in golden clothing
fashioned not by hands.

Surely none can be compared
with you, nor equalled,
you to whom by the angelic voice
was pronounced "Hail Mary."

You were little troubled
but, when asked, replied
"Behold the handmaiden of the Lord;"
thus, you replied, let it be done unto me.

Sweet was this reply
given to the heavenly herald,
by which you at once conceived
and bore the Son of God.

Not only did you bear him forth
but after the birth remained
Virgin pure and blooming
and Virgin without stain.

Full of all good things,
cure of sinners,
to whom it is proper to pray,
and also to lay the foundation of prayer

for poor sinners
retreating from God,
pour forth prayers to your Son
to save those who sing.

Et primo pro Guillaume Dufay
pro quo me, mater, exaudi
luna totius musicae
atque cantorum lumine.

pro Johannes Dussart, Busnois, Caron,
magistris cantilenarum
Georget, de Brelles, Tinctoris,
cimbali tui honoris,

ac Okeghem, des Pres, Corbet,
Hemart, Faugues et Molinet
atque Regis omnibusque
canentibus, scilicet me

Loyzet Compere orante.
Pro magistris puramente
quorum memor virgo vale
semper Gabrielis ave.
Amen.

And first for Guillaume Dufay
For whom, Mother, hear me:
Moon of all music,
And a light for singers.

For Johannes Dussart, Busnois, Caron,
Masters of melodies,
Georget, de Brelles, Tinctoris,
with cymbals for your honor.

And Okeghem, des Pres, Corbet,
Hemart, Faugues and Molinet,
Also Regis and all
who sing; and likewise for me

Loyzet Compère, praying,
pure in heart, for the masters.
Farewell, Virgin, the one we remember
as forever the "Ave" of Gabriel.
Amen.

Musæ Iovis ter maximi

Proles canora, plangite,
Comas cypressus comprimat
Iosquinius ille ille occidit,
Templorum decus,
Et vestrum decus.

Severa mors et improba
Quæ templa dulcibus sonis
Privas, et aulas principum,
Malum tibi quod imprecer
Tollenti bonos,
Parcenti malis?

Ye Muses, melodious offspring

of thrice-greatest Jupiter, make lamentation.
The cypress draws in its leaves.
The famous Josquin, he is dead:
the glory of temples,
and your own glory.

2. Grim and merciless Death,
who deprive the temples
and princely courts of sweet sounds,
what curse could I invoke upon you
who take away the good,
who spare the undeserving?

I. (to fellow musicians)

Fais doncq ung chant ainsi que de tenebres,
Sans mignotise et sans point d'illecebres,

Therefore make a song, together with shadows,
Without flattery and without allure.

II. (to Death)

O mors inevitabilis, mors amara, mors crudelis.
Mettil socto acque, pur non teme el fondo.

O fated death, bitter death, cruel death.
Put him underwater; still, he fears not the deep.

III. (to everyone, and to Josquin)

Priez Dieu pour les trepassez qui leur done
son paradis.
JOSQUIN, spes mea semper fuisti.

Pray to God for the deceased, who gives them
his paradise.
[Josquin,] you were always my hope.

Illibata Dei virgo nutrix

Olympi tu regis o genitrix
Sola parens verbi puerpera
Quae fuisti Evae reparatrix
Viri nephas tuta mediatrix
Illud clara luce dat scriptura
Nata nati alma genitura
Des ut laeta musarum factura
Prevaleat hymnus et sit ave
Roborando sonos ut guttura
Efflagitent laude teque pura
Zelotica arte clament Ave.

Virgin nurse of God,

Mother of the king of Olympus,
the sole parent of the Word,
you repaired what Eve had done,
you intercede for the wicked;
this is what the scriptures tell us clearly.
Daughter of your own son,,
grant that this joyful act of the Muses
may let your Hail Mary prevail,
strengthening our song
so that it might be pure praise,
crying "Hail" to you with zealous art.

Ave virginum decus hominum
Coelique porta
Ave lilium, flos humilium
Virgo decora.
Vale ergo tota pulchra ut luna
Electa ut sol, clarissima gaude.
Salve tu sola cum sola amica,
Consola "la mi la" canentes in tua laude.
Ave Maria, mater virtutum,
Veniae vena, ave Maria,
Gratia plena, Dominus tecum,
Ave Maria, mater virtutum.
Amen.

Hail virgin, glory of mankind
and heaven's gate,
hail lily, flower of the lowly,
graceful virgin,
hail, as beautiful as the moon,
chosen one, bright as the sun, rejoice.
Hail, only consoling friend,
as we sing la-mi-la in your praise.
Hail Mary, mother of virtues,
to whom pardoning is second nature,
hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Hail Mary, mother of virtues.
Amen.