

EARLY MUSIC DAY 21 MARCH 2021

3.00 pm NCEM, St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, York

THE GESUALDO SIX

Owain Park *director*

Guy James, Andrew Leslie Cooper *countertenors*

Joseph Wicks, Josh Cooter *tenors*

Michael Craddock *baritone*

Samuel Mitchell *bass*

JOSQUIN'S LEGACY

Intemerata Dei mater

Nymphes des bois

Johannes Ockeghem *c.1410–1497*

Josquin des Prez *c.1450/5–1521*

Quis numerare queat

Tous les regretz

Absalon fili mi

Loyset Compère *c.1445–1518*

Antoine Brumel *c.1460–?1512-13*

Pierre de la Rue *c.1452–1518*

Illibata Dei virgo nutrix

Josquin

Nesciens mater

Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin

Esto mihi

Antoine de Févin *c.1470–1511/12*

Jean Mouton *before 1459–1522*

Henricus Isaac *c.1450/5–1517*

O virgo prudentissima

Josquin

Infelix ego

Adrian Willaert *c.1490–1562*

To mark the 500th anniversary of his death, this programme explores the legacy of Josquin des Prez, drawing inspiration from the year he spent as *maestro di cappella* at the court of Ferrara. A key musical centre of the Renaissance, Ferrara attracted composers from France and the low countries (dubbed *Oltremontani*), of whom Josquin is the most famous example. These composers travelled to Italy to seek patronage and to work with the finest musicians of the day.

In the decades before Josquin's arrival at Ferrara in 1503, it was already a key centre for European music. Several notable fifteenth-century music manuscripts are thought to have been written or copied in Ferrara, including works by English composers such as Plummer and Dunstable, alongside pieces by Franco-Flemish composers such as Binchois and Du Fay. Johannes Ockeghem was one of the most famous composers of the generation between Binchois and Josquin, and wrote a motet-chanson deploring Binchois's death in 1460. Shortly before his own death, in 1497, Ockeghem's works were being copied in Ferrara alongside those of Josquin and Obrecht. *Intemerata Dei mater* is a Marian setting for five voices and undoubtedly one of his masterworks.

Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* (or *La déploration sur la mort de Johannes Ockeghem*) is a beautiful and personal setting of rhetoric by Molinet which calls for great composers of the day to lament Ockeghem's death in song: Josquin, Brumel, Perchon (Pierre de la Rue) and Compère are all mentioned in the text. Research by Dr Jeannette Jones suggests that the work probably dates from 1502/3, immediately before Josquin's arrival in Ferrara from Lyon. In early sources *Nymphes des bois* is written in black notation to signify mourning. The final section, 'Requiescat in pace' contains 64 notes, which is the sum of the numerical values of the letters OCKEGHEM.

Loyset Compère was a Franco-Flemish composer who was a regular correspondent with Josquin. His *Quis numerare queat* (a text also set by Obrecht) was possibly written to celebrate the Treaty of Bagnolo in 1484, which brought peace between Ferrara and a coalition of the Venetian and Papal states. 'Da pacem Domine' appears as a double *cantus firmus* canon in each of the three sections, a specific textual technique later used by many other composers with Ferrarese connections, including Gesualdo.

Another of the *Oltremontani*, Antoine Brumel was made *maestro di cappella* at Ferrara in 1512 by Ercole d'Este's son, Alfonso I. A prolific composer, many of Brumel's works were included in songbooks presented to King Henry VIII. *Tous les regretz* is a wistful chanson that was also set by La Rue and Gombert.

Originally ascribed to Josquin, *Absalon fili mi* is now thought to be by Pierre de la Rue, a composer celebrated by the French courts. A topic later tackled by Gombert, Tomkins and Weelkes, this early and astonishing setting of King David's lament for his dead son was originally written in an extremely low key.

Josquin's *Illibata Dei virgo nutrix* displays a more flamboyant side to his composition, and sets a Marian text possibly written by Josquin himself. The *Prima pars* contains an acrostic: IOSQVIN Des PREZ; while a smaller acrostic in the *Secunda pars* possibly refers to ESCAUT, where it is thought Josquin was born.

Antoine de Févin is one of the less famous *Oltremontani* composers known to have been at Ferrara, working there alongside Jean Mouton in the 1510s. It is possible that Févin's *Nesciens mater* inspired Mouton to write his own, much more famous setting, including a four-voice double-canon. Mouton's *Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin*, a relatively simple but heartfelt double canon, laments Févin's death in 1511/12 and was published alongside canons by Brumel and Willaert.

Girolamo Savonarola, the radical Florentine preacher, was born in Ferrara and was an important figure for the Este family, due in part to his often fiery opposition to papal influence. In the hours immediately before his death at the hands of a religious Florentine mob in 1498, Savonarola penned two psalm meditations, completing just one: *Infelix ego*, a reflection on Psalm 51 which was later set by William Byrd. It is likely that Josquin's famous setting of Psalm 51, *Miserere mei* dates from his tenure at Ferrara.

It is a sign of the high regard in which the Este family held courtly music that Duke Ercole I appointed Josquin ahead of Henricus Isaac in 1503, despite the now-famous letter written by the ill-fated male soprano and court spy Gian de Artiganova to Duke Ercole in 1502:

To me he [Isaac] seems well suited to serve Your Lordship, more so than Josquin, because he is more good-natured and companionable, and he 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, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary while Isaac will come for 120 – but Your Lordship will decide.

Esto mihi, from Isaac's famous *Choralis Constantinus*, is a setting of Psalm 70: *In te Domine speravi*, the subject of Savonarola's unfinished second meditation from prison, *Tristitia obsedit me*.

O virgo prudentissima is one of two settings by Josquin of a Marian text by the Medici-educated polymath Angelo Poliziano. The text references the title of the Ancient Greek hymn *Sub tuum praesidium*, a text set by many composers with Ferrarese connections. Josquin employs a double *cantus firmus* canon on 'Beata Mater', around which the remaining four voices weave an intricate polyphonic web.

Savonarolan texts were chosen by numerous composers with links to the Este court throughout the sixteenth century, including northern composer Adrian Willaert, later famous for his long career as *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's Venice. Between 1515 and 1527 Willaert was employed by various members of the Este family. Echoing Josquin's *Miserere*, Willaert's *Infelix ego* uses a descending and ascending *cantus firmus* of 'Miserere mei, Deus'.

Josquin's stay at Ferrara lasted for only 12 months, possibly in part due to the death of his patron Ercole I in 1505 and the outbreak of a plague which in 1506 claimed Josquin's successor, Obrecht. Despite this short tenure, Josquin's year at Ferrara left an indelible mark on the developing tradition of *Oltremontani* composers.

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TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Intemerata Dei mater (Ockeghem)

Intemerata Dei mater, generosa puella,
milia carminibus quam stipant agmina divum,
respice nos tantum,
si quid jubilando meremur.
Tu scis, virgo decens,
quanti discrimine agatur exulibus,
passimque quibus jactemur arenis.

Nec sine te manet ulla quies
spes nulla laboris,
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.

Nymphes des bois (Josquin)

Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines,
Chantres experts de toutes nations,
Changez voz voix fort clères et haultaines
En cris tranchantz et lamentations.
Car d'Atropos tres terrible satrape
Vostr'Ockeghem a trape en sa trape,
Le vray trésor de musique'et chief d'œuvre,
(Qui de tré pas dé sormais plus n'eschappe,
Dont grant doumaige'est que la terre cœuvre.

Undefined mother of God, noble maiden,
around whom thousands of the heavenly host
throng with their songs, pray look down on us,
if in our joyous praise we earn any merit.
You know, seemly maiden, how much danger
exiles are exposed to, and on what shoals
we are everywhere tossed.

Neither does any rest abide without you,
nor hope for our hardships,
nor salvation for our homeland,
nor attaining the abode of the Father,
over which you preside as queen.
Dispensing all things with a joyful face,
you sustain the pious, to whom you give
sweet nectar to drink, and whom you cause
to recline perpetually at sacred feasts.

Make the Son look upon the wretched with
the eye of piety: you yourself have this power.
Deliver the weary upward from this place,
divine maiden, by your hand,
and place them safe in the citadel.

Nymphes of the woods, goddesses of the fountains
singers renowned across all nations,
turn your voices most clear and high
to piercing cries and laments.
Because Atropos, the terrible satrape,
Has caught your Ockeghem in her trap,
the true treasure and masterpiece of music,
(who from death no longer escapes,
for whom great mourning covers the earth.

Acoutez vous d'abitz de deuil,
Josquin, Brumel, Perchon, Compère,
Et plorez grosses larmes d'œil;
Perdu avez vostre bon père.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE. AMEN.

Tenor

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Quis numerare queat (Compère)

Quis numerare queat bellorum seva peracta,
dampna referta malis irreparabilibus?
Censeat ipse bonus perpressus talia,
sed qui illa sibi intulerit censeat
ipse malus.

Dicat quisque quod hec nobis Deus omnia fecit,
nostris peccatis premia digna ferens.

Audiit ipse tamen populi gemitus lachrymosos,
ad pacem versus, hincque misertus ei,
pacem donavit e celi culmine tractam,
quam nec mortales
sic dare sufficerent.
Ergo omnis populus nunc cum júbilo moduletur
et Domino laudes eximias referat.

Fundant preces Itali exorent precibus omnes,
queque es in terris natio funde preces ad Dominum,
ut data pax sit duratura per evum,
neu modico leta tempore deinde gemas,
muneris et tanti ne si sis immemor
ipse lora trahat,
quare pacis habena cadat. Amen.

Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris,
quia non est alius qui pugnet pro nobis
nisi tu Deus noster.

Put on your clothes of mourning,
Josquin, Brumel, Perchon, Compère,
and weep great tears from your eyes;
you have lost your good father.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

Tenor

Give them eternal rest, Lord,
and let perpetual light shine on them.

Who could count the cruel deeds of the wars,
the damage filled with irreparable evils?
Let the good man himself count, who has suffered
such things, but let the bad man count who himself
has inflicted them on him.

Anyone would say that God did all this to us,
bringing us the merited wages of sins.

He himself, however, heard the tearful groans
of the people, turned to peace, and hence,
pitying them, gave peace from the summit
of heaven drawn, which mortals
would not be able so to give.
Therefore let all the people sing for joy
and give back extraordinary praises to the Lord.

Prayers of the Italians, exort all to prayer,
and every nation on earth pour prayers to the Lord,
that the given peace shall last forever,
lest you be joyful a little while and then groan,
and that if you be unmindful of so great a boon,
he himself may draw the lash,
whereby the rein of peace shall fall. Amen.

Give peace, O Lord, in our days;
for there is none other who fights for us,
but thee, our God.

Tous les regretz (Brumel)

Tous les regretz quonques furent au monde,
venez a moy
quelque part que je soie.
prenez mon cueur en sa dolleur par fonde
et le fendes que madame le voye.

All the sadness that has ever been of this world,
come hither to me,
wherever I may be.
Take my heart in its deep grief
and cleave it in twain when suddenly I see her.

Absalon fili mi (La Rue)

Absalon, fili mi,
Quis det ut moriar pro te,
Fili mi Absalon?
Non vivam ultra,
Sed descendam in infernum plorans.

Absalom, my son
Would that I had died instead of you,
My son, Absalom?
Let me live no longer,
but descend into hell, weeping.

Illibata Dei virgo nutrix (Josquin)

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.

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.

Unblemished Virgin nurse of God,
O mother of the king of Olympus [heaven],
The sole parent of the Word, by giving birth
You repaired the sin of man which was from Eve,
You are our saviour and mediator.
Scripture tells this with a clear light.
O daughter of your son through his good birth,
Grant that, by the joyful act of the Muses
Your hymn may prevail and it should be the 'Hail
[Mary]'; And that, with reinforced sound, our throats
Should offer prayer and praise, and shout Hail
To you with pure and zealous art.

Hail ornament of virgins and of men
And gate of heaven;
Hail lily, flower of the humble, noble virgin.
Hail indeed, all-beautiful as the moon,
Chosen and bright-shining as the sun, rejoice!
Hail you alone, with your sole friend,
Console those singing 'la-mi-la' in your praise.
Hail Mary, mother of virtues,
The artery and pulse of pardon, hail Mary,
Full of grace, God is with you;
Hail Mary, mother of virtues. Amen.

Nesciens mater (Févin)

Nesciens mater virgo virum
peperit sine dolore
salvatorem saeculorum.
Ipsam regem angelorum
sola virgo lactabat,
ubere de caelo pleno.

Virgo hodie fidelis
etsi verbum
genuit incarnatum virgo mansit
et post partum quam laudantes omnes
dicimus benedicta tu in mulieribus. Amen

Knowing no man, the Virgin mother
bore, without pain,
the Saviour of the world.
Him, the king of angels,
only the Virgin suckled,
breasts filled by heaven.

The faithful virgin brings forth
the incarnate Word today,
she remains a virgin during and after birth
and we all praise her
saying blessed are you among women. Amen

Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin (Mouton)

Qui ne regrettoit le gentil Févin,
Bien villain seroit:
Tres habile estoit,
Si doux et benign
Dont en nostre en droit
Prions de cueur fin
Qu'en paradis soit,
Ou souvent pensoit
Parvenir en fin.

He who did not mourn for gentle Févin
a boor [rough, bad-mannered] he would be,
Gentle Févin was very skilled,
gracious and benign,
Wherefore on our part
let us sincerely pray
that he be in paradise,
Where he often longed
to arrive at last.

Esto mihi (Isaac)

Esto mihi in Deum protectorem,
et in locum refugii,
ut salvum me facias:
quoniam firmamentum meum,
et refugium meum es tu:
et propter nomen tuum dux mihi eris,
et enutries me.

V. In te, Domine, speravi,
non confundar in aeternum:
in justitia tua libera me, et eripe me.

Be my protector
and place of refuge,
to keep me safe;
for you are my strength
and refuge;
and for the sake of your name,
you will lead and nourish me.

V. In you O Lord, I have put my trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
In your justice rescue me.

○ virgo prudentissima (Josquin)

○ Virgo prudentissima,
quam caelo missus Gabriel,
superni regis nuntius,
plenam testatur gratia.

Te sponsam factor omnium,
te Matrem Dei Filius,
te vocat habitaculum
suum beatus spiritus.

Tu stella maris diceris;
quae nobis inter scopulos,
inter obscures turbines
portum salutis indicas.

Per te de tetro carcere
antiqui patres exerunt;
per te nobis astriferae
panduntur aulae limina.

Audi Virgo puerpera,
et sola Mater integra;
audi precantes, quaesimus,
tuos Maria servulos.

Repelle mentis tenebras,
disrumpe cordis glaciem;
nos sub tuum praesidium
confugientes protege.

Tenor

Beata mater et innupta Virgo,
gloriosa regina mundi,
intercede pro nobis ad Dominum.
Alleluia.

○ most wise Virgin,
whom Gabriel, sent from heaven
as the messenger of the highest King,
witnesseth to be full of grace.

Thee the Creator of all calleth his bride,
thee the Son of God his mother,
thee the Blessed Spirit
his dwelling place.

Thou art styled the star of the sea,
who amidst the rocks,
amidst the dark whirlwinds,
showest us the haven of safety.

Through thee from the loathsome prison
our ancient forefathers depart;
through thee the doors of the starry palace
are opened unto us.

Hear, ○ Virgin that borest child,
the only Mother that art still whole,
hear, we beseech thee, ○ Mary,
thy humble servants as we pray.

Drive away the darkness of our minds,
break up the ice of our hearts,
keep us safe that seek refuge
under thy protection.

Tenor

Blessed Mother and Virgin unmarried,
glorious Queen of the world,
pray to the Lord on our behalf.
Alleluia.

Infelix ego (Willaert)

Infelix ego, omnium auxilio destitutus,
qui caelum terramque offendi.
Quo ibo? quo me vertam?
ad quem confugiam? quis mei miserebitur?
Ad caelum levare oculos non audeo,
quia ei graviter peccavi;
in terra refugium non invenio,
quia ei scandalum fui.

Quid igitur faciam? desperabo?
Absit. Misericors est Deus,
pius est salvator meus.
Solutus igitur Deum refugium meum;
ipse non despiciet opus suum,
non repellat imaginem suam.

Ad te igitur, piissime Deus,
tristis ac moerens venio,
quoniam tu solus spes mea,
tu solus refugium meum.
Quid autem dicam tibi,
cum oculos levare non audeo?
verba doloris effundam,
misericordiam tuam implorabo, et dicam:
Miserere mei, Deus,
secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.

Unhappy am I, deprived of all succour,
who have offended against heaven and earth.
Where shall I go? Where shall I turn?
To whom shall I flee? Who will have pity on me?
I dare not lift my eyes to heaven,
against which I have grievously sinned;
on earth I find no refuge,
for I have become an outrage to her.

What then shall I do? Shall I despair?
Let it not be. Merciful is God,
loving is my Saviour.
Therefore God alone shall be my refuge;
he will not despise the work of his hands,
will not reject his own image.

To you, then, most holy God,
sad and sorrowing I come,
for you alone are my hope,
you alone are my refuge.
But what shall I say to you,
since I dare not raise my eyes?
I shall pour out words of sorrow;
I shall plead for your mercy and shall say:
Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your great mercy.