ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI

8 PM  Saturday, October 15, 2016  First Church in Cambridge, Congregational
4 PM  Sunday, October 16, 2016  S. Stephen's Church, Providence
Living in an age of blithely easy access to digital copies of practically anything, we may find it hard to imagine just how precious a thing was notated music in the years before Ottaviano Petrucci developed a system for printing polyphonic music, issuing his first book, the *Harmonice musices odhecaton* (One Hundred Songs of Harmonic Music) of 1501. Composers seem to have worked out their creations on reusable slates, transcribing the results into some sort of exemplar from which a scribe would produce workaday performance copies or, in special cases, ornately decorated presentation manuscripts for nobles or other wealthy patrons. Virtually nothing in the hand of a composer survives from the fifteenth century, and even copies of treasures like polyphonic masses or motets are breathtakingly scarce. One single manuscript copied shortly after the death of Johannes Ockeghem in 1497 contains almost all of his settings of the Ordinary of the Mass (nine complete cycles and three partial cycles), plus the incomplete Requiem. While some of these survive in perhaps one other source, four Masses are transmitted uniquely in this one manuscript, as is Ockeghem’s short but typically rich setting of the Marian antiphon *Ave Maria*. We owe our knowledge of many of Ockeghem’s works to a kind of miracle—but because it was so handsomely written and so lavishly illuminated.

The Mass featured on today’s program, Ockeghem’s *Missa Ecce ancilla domini*, was originally the first work in the codex (its order was subsequently altered), and its first opening was spectacularly illustrated. Indeed, it is likely that the Chigi Codex survived not because later generations prized the music it contained—Chigi’s librarian noted laconically on a leaf of the book that “la musica è stimata molto buona” (the music is considered very good)—but because it was so handsomely written and so lavishly illuminated.

In addition to the lovely depiction of the Annunciation and the colorful marginalia, note the text in the tenor part at lower left—not the words of the Mass itself, but those of the plainchant antiphon which Ockeghem has taken as the basis of his piece: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according
to thy word” (Luke 1:38). This and later entries
of the antiphon text, alongside and sometimes
directly below the words of the Mass, appear
to instruct the performer to sing “Ecce ancilla
domini” where the tenor part quotes the chant,
an audible sign of the Mass’s dedication.

Manuscripts may be fragile bearers of cultural
artifacts like polyphonic music, but prints
from the early sixteenth century have not
fared all that much better. Petrucci’s books
were published in very small runs, most of
which has disappeared. Less than half of the
first edition of Odhecaton remains, just one
copy of the second edition of 1503, and five
of the third of 1504. And in the early years
of the new century a new format was becoming
more popular. Rather than the choirbook
format seen in Chigi, in which all the voices of
a polyphonic texture appear adjacent to each
other (not in score), scribes and printers were
beginning to favor partbooks, one for each
part. The partbook format brings with it a new
danger, that one (or more) of the books might
not survive. This is precisely what happened
with Petrucci’s Motetti a cinque of 1508, which
is the only source of Permanent vierge. Although unascibed in
Dijon, the song is copied there between two
other anonymous songs that are elsewhere
ascibed to Ockeghem. The attribution of
Permanent vierge to Ockeghem, first proposed
by the nineteenth-century music historian
August Wilhelm Ambros, has recently been
lent support in a detailed rhythmic analysis
by Sean Gallagher, adviser to Blue Heron’s
Ockeghem@600 project.¹ Permanent vierge
combines a French rondeau with two Latin-
texted cantus firmi, both Marian antiphon
chants, in a hybrid form known nowadays as
a motet-chanson. The French poem glosses
the text of yet another antiphon, Mulier amicta
sole, which the scribe wrote sideways in the
margin. The words are from Revelation 12:1:
“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven;
a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon
under her feet, and upon her head a crown of
twelve stars.”

—Scott Metcalfe

¹ Sean Gallagher, “Syntax and style: rhythmic patterns
in the music of Ockeghem and his contemporaries,”
in Philippe Vendrix, ed., Johannes Ockeghem. Paris:
Ave Maria gratia plena, dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus Christus. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ave Maria gratia plena, dominus tecum, virgo serena. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, qui peperisti pacem hominibus et angelis gloriaram, et benedictus fructus ventris tui qui coheredes ut essemus sui nos fecit per gratiam.

Blessed are you among women, who gave birth to peace for men and glory for angels, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, who, through his grace, made it possible for us to share his inheritance.

Per hoc autem ave mundo tam suave contra carnis iura, genuisti prolem, novum stella solem nova genitura. Tu parvi et magni leonis et agni, salvatoris Christi templum extitisti, sed virgo intacta.

And through this “Hail,” so sweet for the world, contrary to the law of the flesh you gave birth to your son, a new star from which would issue a new sun.

Te collaudat celestis curia, tu mater es regis et filia. per te reis donatur venia, per te justis confertur gratia.

Therefore, star of the sea, tabernacle of the word of God, and light of the dawn, gate of paradise, through whom the light appeared: pray to your son that he absolve us from sin and in his kingdom of light, grant us a place forever.

Tu parvi et magni leonis et agni, salvatoris Christi templum extitisti, sed virgo intacta.

Tu floris et roris, panis et pastoris, virginitum regina, rosa sine spina, genitrix es facta.

Tu civitas regis justitie, tu mater es misericordie, de lacu fecis et miserie theophilum reformans gratie.

Tu civitas regis justitie, tu mater es misericordie, de lacu fecis et miserie theophilum reformans gratie. The heavenly host praises you: you are the mother of the king, and his daughter. through you the guilty are forgiven, through you the just receive grace.

Tu parvi et magni leonis et agni, salvatoris Christi templum extitisti, sed virgo intacta.

Tu floris et roris, panis et pastoris, virginitum regina, rosa sine spina, genitrix es facta.

Tu civitas regis justitie, tu mater es misericordie, de lacu fecis et miserie theophilum reformans gratie.

Tu civitas regis justitie, tu mater es misericordie, de lacu fecis et miserie theophilum reformans gratie. The heavenly host praises you: you are the mother of the king, and his daughter. through you the guilty are forgiven, through you the just receive grace.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all of good will. We praise you. We bless you. We adore you. We glorify you. We give thanks to you for your great glory. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God the Father. Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son. Lord God, lamb of God, Son of the Father. Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Who takes away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Who sits at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are holy, you alone are the Lord, the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Il ne m’en chault plus de nul ame. 
Fors de vous qui mon cuer enflame
A vous bien loyaument amer,
Enfoncement douloureux du cuer
Et sans l’avoir trouvé menteur,
Luy donnez dueil a grant largesse.
Ma damoiselle...

Il ne m’en chault plus de nul ame
Fors de vous qui mon cuer enflame
A vous bien loyaument amer.

Car pour tout m’en vous tiens et clame
Que tant je vueil et que tant j’ame
Plus que nul sans riens excepter,
S’ils en devoyent tous crever
Et deusse perdre du corps l’ame.
Il ne m’en chault...

Ma damoiselle, ma maistresse,
Ayez pité de la destresse
De mon pauvre doloureux cuer
Ou autrement vostre rigueur
L’occira bien brief de tristesse.

Car tellement Desir le presse
Que son mal tous les jours ne cesse:
Il est mort, par mon creator.
Ma damoiselle, ma maistresse,
Ayez pité de la destresse
De mon pauvre doloureux cuer.

Vos voyez bien qu’il ne s’adresse
Qu’a vous seule, ne n’a promesse
Que d’estre vostre serviteur,
Et sans l’avoir trouvé menteur,
Luy donnez dueil a grant largesse.
Ma damoiselle...

I no longer care for another soul
Save you, who inflame my heart
To love you most loyally,
Never to abandon you,
Forever to be your lady.

Whether I am praised or blamed for it,
Whatever anyone has said, man or woman,
They can all grumble as much as they like.

I no longer care for another soul
Save you, who inflame my heart
To love you most loyally.

For I shall cleave to you forever and proclaim
How much I desire and how much I love,
More than any other without exception,
Even if they all burst from hearing it
And if I should lose the soul from my body.

Il ne m’en chault plus de nul ame
Fors de vous qui mon cuer enflame
A vous bien loyaument amer.

Car pour tout m’en vous tiens et clame
Que tant je vueil et que tant j’ame
Plus que nul sans riens excepter,
S’ils en devoyent tous crever
Et deusse perdre du corps l’ame.
Il ne m’en chault...

Ma damoiselle, ma maistresse,
Ayez pité de la destresse
De mon pauvre doloureux cuer
Ou autrement vostre rigueur
L’occira bien brief de tristesse.

Car tellement Desir le presse
Que son mal tous les jours ne cesse:
Il est mort, par mon creator.
Ma damoiselle, ma maistresse,
Ayez pité de la destresse
De mon pauvre doloureux cuer.

Vos voyez bien qu’il ne s’adresse
Qu’a vous seule, ne n’a promesse
Que d’estre vostre serviteur,
Et sans l’avoir trouvé menteur,
Luy donnez dueil a grant largesse.
Ma damoiselle...

My fair lady, my mistress,
take pity on the distress of my poor suffering heart,
for otherwise your hardness will very soon kill him from grief.

For Desire so presses him
that his pain never ceases:
he is dead, by my creator!

My fair lady, my mistress,
take pity on the distress
of my poor suffering heart.

You surely see that he addresses himself
to you alone, nor has he made any promise
but to be your servant,
and without having found him false
you are causing him sorrow in abundance.

My fair lady...
A woman clothed with the sun and the moon beneath her feet

Permanent virgin, more worthy than any other, woman clothed with the sun of justice, head crowned by divine artifice with twelve stars, standing above the moon.

Astounding nature and earthly law, you bore a child by supernal action,
permanent virgin, more worthy than any other, woman clothed with the sun of justice.

Preordained without any distinction the redeemer’s daughter, mother, and nurse: be a propitious advocate for us, we beseech you, most lovely, radiant, burnished, Permanent virgin, more worthy than any other...

Fair and comely art thou, O daughter of Jerusalem: terrible as an army arrayed for battle.

Holy mother of God, ever-virgin Mary, intercede for us with the lord Jesus Christ.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Translations from the French by Scott Metcalfe

Blue Heron has been acclaimed by The Boston Globe as “one of the Boston music community’s indispensables” and hailed by Alex Ross in The New Yorker for the “expressive intensity” of its interpretations. Combining a commitment to vivid live performance with the study of original source materials and historical performance practices, Blue Heron ranges over a wide repertoire from plainchant to new music, with particular specialties in 15th-century Franco-Flemish and neglected early 16th-century English polyphony. Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007. In 2010 the ensemble inaugurated a 5-CD series of Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, including many world premiere recordings of works copied c. 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral; four discs have been released to date and the fifth is due out in the spring of 2017. Blue Heron’s recordings also include a CD of plainchant and polyphony to accompany Thomas Forrest Kelly’s book Capturing Music: The Story of Notation and the live recording Christmas in Medieval England. Jessie Ann Owens (UC Davis) and Blue Heron won the 2015 Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support a world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore’s first book of madrigals (1542).

Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents a concert series in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival; in New York City at Music Before 1800, The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the 92nd Street Y; at the Library of Congress and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.; at the Berkeley Early Music Festival; and in San Luis Obispo, Seattle, St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. Blue Heron has been in residence at the Center for Early Music Studies at Boston University and at Boston College. In 2015 the ensemble embarked on a long-term project to perform the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem; entitled Ockeghem@600, it will wind up in 2020-21, in time to commemorate the composer’s circa-600th birthday.

Music historian and pianist Sean Gallagher (pre-concert speaker and adviser for Blue Heron’s Ockeghem@600 project) joined the faculty of the New England Conservatory in 2013. His research focuses on late medieval and Renaissance music in Italy, France and the Low Countries, with particular emphasis on Johannes
Ockeghem and his contemporaries. His book on the 15th-century composer Johannes Regis was published by Brepols in 2010, and he is editor or co-editor of four further volumes, including *Secular Renaissance Music: Forms and Functions* (Ashgate, 2013) and (with Thomas F. Kelly) *The Century of Bach and Mozart: Perspectives on Historiography, Composition, Theory and Performance* (Harvard, 2008). He has taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Harvard University (where he was awarded the Phi Beta Kappa Prize for excellence in teaching), and Boston University. In 2007 he was visiting Professor of Bach and Mozart at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Harvard University (where he was a member of the Board of Directors for the Handel & Haydn Society) and as a member of the Board of Directors for Boston Baroque. Voices of Ascension, Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, Emmanuel Music, and Musica Sacra New York. Margaret is also proud of her administrative work as chorus representative for the Handel & Haydn Society and as a member of the Board of Directors for Lorelei Ensemble.

Hailed for his “voice of seductive beauty” baritone David McFerrin has won critical acclaim in a variety of repertoire. His opera credits include Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Florida Grand Opera, the Rossini Festival in Germany, and numerous roles with Maestro Muti’s BSO. Last season Mr. McFerrin was an Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival in California, debuted with the Vermont Symphony and Boston’s chamber orchestra A Far Cry, and appeared with the Handel & Haydn Society in Boston, Canada, and California. He was also runner-up in the Oratorio Society of New York's 2016 Lyndon Woodside Solo Competition. Upcoming highlights include solo appearances with the Handel & Haydn Society in performances of Bach and Monteverdi, a debut with Boston Baroque as Achilla in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, and various programs with Blue Heron.

Acclaimed as a “lovely, tender high tenor” by *The New York Times*, Owen McIntosh enjoys a diverse career of chamber music and solo performance ranging from bluegrass to reggae, heavy metal to art song, and opera to oratorio. A native of remote Northern California, Mr. McIntosh has shared the stage with the country’s finest ensembles, including Apollo's Fire, Blue Heron, Boston Baroque, Carmel Bach Festival, Les Canards Chantants, New Vintage Baroque, Staunton Music Festival, TENET, Trident Ensemble, True Concord, San Diego Bach Collegium, and the Grammy-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street. Recent solo engagements include Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* with Boston Baroque, Haydn’s *L’isola disabitata* with the American Classical Orchestra, Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with Apollo’s Fire and with Green Mountain Project. Mr. McIntosh’s passion for Baroque as Achilla in Handel’s *Alcina*, Apollo in Monteverdi’s *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and Eumete and Giove in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, all with the Boston Early Music Festival, Pedrillo in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Evangelist in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*.

Scott Metcalfe has gained wide recognition as one of North America’s leading specialists in music from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries and beyond. Musical and artistic director of Blue Heron, he is also music director of New York City’s Green Mountain Project (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director) and has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), and Early Music America’s Young

Bass-baritone Paul Guttry has performed throughout the USA and internationally with Sequenita, Chanticler, the Boston Camerata, and New York’s Ensemble for Early Music. A founding member of Blue Heron, he has also appeared in and around Boston as soloist with Emmanuel Music, the Handel & Haydn Society, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Tanglewood Music Center, Cantata Singers, Boston Cecilia, Prism Opera, Boston Reverts, Collage, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and Intermezzo. Paul can be heard on all Blue Heron's recordings, on discs of medieval music by Sequenita, Kurt Well's *The New York Times* and has been guest director of *The New York Times* and *The New York Times*. He enjoys a diverse career of chamber music and solo performance ranging from bluegrass to reggae, heavy metal to art song, and opera to oratorio. A native of remote Northern California, Mr. McIntosh has shared the stage with the country’s finest ensembles, including Apollo's Fire, Blue Heron, Boston Baroque, Carmel Bach Festival, Les Canards Chantants, New Vintage Baroque, Staunton Music Festival, TENET, Trident Ensemble, True Concord, San Diego Bach Collegium, and the Grammy-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street. Recent solo engagements include Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* with Boston Baroque, Haydn’s *L’isola disabitata* with the American Classical Orchestra, Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with Apollo’s Fire and with Green Mountain Project. Mr. McIntosh’s passion for Baroque as Achilla in Handel’s *Alcina*, Apollo in Monteverdi’s *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and Eumete and Giove in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, all with the Boston Early Music Festival, Pedrillo in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Evangelist in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*.

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Performers Festival Ensemble. Metcalfe also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), Montreal Baroque (dir. Eric Milnes), and other ensembles, and directing the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory. He taught vocal ensemble repertoire and performance practice at Boston University from 2006-2015 and is at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois.

Countertenor Martin Near enjoys a varied career exploring his twin passions for early music and new music. Mr. Near recently sang in the solo quartet of Arvo Part’s Passio with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, was the countertenor soloist in the premiere performance of Dominick DiOrio’s Stabat mater with Juventas New Music Ensemble, sang the role of Hamor in Handel’s Jephtha with Boston Cecilia, and was noted for his “fine work” in Buxtehude’s Hæven triumphetet Gottes Sohn with Boston Baroque. He sings regularly with Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, and the Handel & Haydn Society. Mr. Near was Music Director of Exsultemus from 2009 to 2012.

Tenor Mark Sprinkle’s singing has been described as “expressive,” “very rewarding,” “outstanding,” “vivid,” and “supermely stylish.” He has collaborated with the Boston Early Music Festival, the Boston Camerata, the Mark Morris Dance Group, Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, the Handel & Haydn Society, and many others, performed at festivals in Bergen (Norway), Vancouver, Edinburgh, and Aldeburgh (UK), and worked as a soloist and ensemble singer under Seiji Ozawa, Christopher Hogwood, William Christie, Roger Norrington, John Nelson, Andrew Parrott, Grant Llewellyn, and Craig Smith. He has appeared as a soloist with Concerto Palatino and has sung the Evangelist in Bach Passions with the Handel & Haydn Society, the Boulder Bach Festival, the Oriana Singers of Vermont, Seraphim Singers, Boston’s Chorus Pro Musica, and the Andover Choral Society, among others. Mr. Sprinkle was a member of the Cambridge Bach Ensemble and a fellow of the Britten-Pears School and has recorded for Dorian, Koch, Harmonia Mundi, Decca, Arabesque, and Telarc.

Praised for his “elegant style” (The Boston Globe), Sumner Thompson is highly sought after as both baritone and tenor. His appearances on the operatic stage include roles in the Boston Early Music Festival’s productions of Conradi’s Ariadne (2003) and Lully’s Psyche (2007) and several European tours with Contemporary Opera Denmark as Orfeo in Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo. He has performed across North America as a soloist with Concerto Palatino, Tafelmusik, Apollo’s Fire, Les Boydés de Montréal, Les Voix Baroques, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the King’s Noyse, Mercury Baroque, and the symphony orchestras of Charlotte, Memphis, and Phoenix. Recent highlights include Monteverdi’s Vesper of 1610 and a new Vesper of 1640 with the Green Mountain Project, Buxtehude’s Membra Jesu Nostri with Les Voix Baroques and Houston’s Mercury Baroque, Mozart’s Requiem at St. Thomas Church in New York City, a tour of Japan with Joshua Rifkin and the Cambridge Conventus, a return to the Carmel Bach Festival, and Britten’s War Requiem with the New England Philharmonic and several guest choruses.

OCEGHEM@600

Ockeghem@600 is Blue Heron’s multi-year project to perform the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem, one of the very greatest composers of the Western tradition, in thirteen programs over the course of seven seasons. Inaugurated in the spring of 2015, Ockeghem@600 will wind up in 2020-21, just in time to commemorate the 600th anniversary of Ockeghem’s birth in circa 1420.

Besides concerts, the undertaking requires and will include a significant component of research into the many questions of fifteenth-century performance practice which remain unsolved puzzles—questions as basic as pitch level, voice types, and scoring. By the end we expect to have a better understanding of such issues. We will also have created a new complete practical edition of the music of Ockeghem, scrupulously based on the original sources and rigorously tested in practice.

Along the way we will also explore music of Ockeghem’s predecessors (Du Fay, Binchois, et al.), contemporaries (Regis, Busnoys, et al.), and followers (Josquin, Obrecht, Agricola, Isaac, et al.), developing and sharing with our audiences a sense of the entire fifteenth-century repertoire. Succeeding our series of recordings of music from the Peterhouse partbooks, the fifth and final volume of which will be released in spring 2017, a new series of five CDs is being planned, including a 2-CD set of all of Ockeghem’s songs.

Joining Blue Heron as adviser for Ockeghem@600 is Professor Sean Gallagher of the New England Conservatory, one of the world’s leading experts on Ockeghem and the music of the fifteenth century.

OCEGHEM@600 | 2015-2021

Most programs are organized around a setting of the mass, but all will also include motets and songs by Ockeghem and other composers: Binchois, Du Fay, Regis, Busnoys, Josquin, Obrecht, and others.

2014-15 | Predecessors & contemporaries
1. Ockeghem & Binchois: Missa de plus en plus
2. The Five: Ockeghem, Regis, Busnoys, Faugues & Caron

2015-16 | Early masses I
3. L’homme armé

2016-17 | Early masses II
4. Ecce ancilla domini
5. Caput

2017-18 | Masses based on songs
6. Ma maistresse & Au travail suis
7. Fours seulement

2018-19 | Speculative music
8. Cuiusvis toni
9. Prolationum

2019-20 | Freely composed masses
10. Missa quinti toni
11. Missa sine nomine

2020-21 | Last things & legacies
12. Requiem
13. Missa Mi mi
Johannes Ockeghem was born in Saint Ghislain, near the city of Mons in the county of Hainaut (now in Belgium) around 1420. He first enters the historical record in 1443 as a *vicaire-chanteur* at the church of Our Lady in Antwerp, a modest appointment appropriate to a young professional singer. By 1446 he had become one of seven singers in the chapel of Charles I, duke of Bourbon, and in 1451 he joined the musical establishment of Charles VII, king of France. He served the French royal court as *premier chapeiain* for the rest of his career, mainly residing in Tours in the Loire Valley, where he held the prestigious and well-remunerated post of treasurer at the royal collegiate church of Saint Martin. A friend and colleague of the greatest musicians of the previous generation, Guillaume Du Fay and Gilles de Bins (usually known by the sobriquet Binchois), he was esteemed by his contemporaries and successors as a master beyond compare, enormously skilled as both singer and composer, as well as virtuous, generous, and kind.

Writing in 1477, the theorist Johannes Tinctoris placed him at the head of an exalted company of modern composers:

…at this present time, not to mention innumerable singers of the most beautiful diction, there flourish, whether by the effect of some celestial influence or by the force of assiduous practice, countless composers, among them Johannes Ockeghem, Johannes Regis, Antoine Busnoys, Firminus Caron, and Guillaume Faugues, who glory in having studied this divine art under John Dunstable, Gilles Binchois, and Guillaume Du Fay, recently deceased. Nearly all the works of these men exhale such sweetness that in my opinion they are to be considered most suitable, not only for men and heroes, but even for the immortal gods, Indeed, I never hear them, I never study them, without coming away more refreshed and wiser.

Ockeghem died on February 6, 1497. His passing was mourned by numerous musicians and poets. The most famous lament on his death is *Nymphus des bois*, by the Burgundian court chronicler and poet Jean Molinet, later set to music by Josquin Desprez—an act of homage that Ockeghem had previously rendered Binchois with *Mort, tu as navré de ton dart*.

Ockeghem left us about two dozen French songs, just over a dozen Masses, and four motets, a relatively small output for one of the greatest composers of all time. Perhaps no composer other than Bach has equalled Ockeghem in contrapuntal skill, and the two men are also equally astonishingly able to invest their work with meaning at every level, from the smallest surface detail to the deepest, largest-scale, awe-inspiringly complex structure, in music that is at once intensely sensual and rigorously intellectual, of extraordinary beauty and rhythmic vitality. Ockeghem’s music has the miraculous effect of taking hold of and altering our sense of time, and to do so Ockeghem uses means both melodic and rhythmic (pitch and duration, the basic elements of music). His counterpoint spins out long-limbed, supple, and simply gorgeous melodies whose relationship to one another is not obvious—there are few unanimous cadences and few immediately noticeable points of imitation, although many subtle instances occur, often almost hidden within the texture of the music.

His rhythm, too, is complex and varied, oftentimes obscuring the music’s organization into regular metrical units of two or three. Captivating at first hearing, Ockeghem’s music rewards the closest possible study and repeated listening.

—Scott Metcalfe
Ockeghem

Music & other arts

History

1400

• Guillaume Du Fay
  b. c. 1397, Bersele, near Brussels
  • Gilles de Rins, dit Bincchois
    b. c. 1400, Mons
    • Rogier van der Weyden
      b. c. 1400, Tournaie
      • c. 1410 Jean, duke of Berry, commissions Trés riches heures, illustrated by Limbourg brothers
      c. 1412-16

• 1404 d. Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy; succeeded by John the Fearless
• 1409 Pope Alexander VI elected; there are now three popes

1410

• Johannes Ciconia d. 1412

• 1414-15 Council of Constance
• October 25, 1415 Battle of Agincourt
• 1419 d. John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy; succeeded by Philip the Good

1430

• Binchois is organist at St. Waudru, Mons, 1419-23
• Johannes Regis b. c. 1425
• Jean Fouquet b. c. 1420 (d. 1460)

• 1422 Charles VII becomes King of France

• 1431 Joan of Arc burned at the stake in Rouen by the English; Henry VI of England crowned king of France in Notre-Dame de Paris
• 1433 Treaty of Arras between France and Burgundy
• 1436 arms of Charles VII reclaims Paris

• 1433-44 earliest documentation: Vice-chanteur at church of Our Lady, Antwerp
• 1446-8 first of seven singers in the chapel of Charles I, Duke of Bourbon

• Jan van Eyck
  d. July 9, 1441, Bruges
• Alexander Agricola
  b. c. 1446, Ghent

• 1440s earliest cyclic Masses, composed in England, reach the continent via Flanders: Missa Caput, Missa Vitem hominem, etc.
• 1444 Cosimo de' Medici founds Laurentian Library in Florence
• 1448 Pope Nicholas V founds Vatican Library

• 1449 French reconquer Normandy

1450

• c. 1450 first extant compositions: Missa Caput, Missa Caput
• by 1451 joins the French royal chapel of Charles VII; lives in Tours until his death
• 1452 encounters Guillaume Du Fay at meeting between French royal court and ducal court of Savoy
• by 1454 appointed first chaplain of French royal chapel
• January 1, 1454 presents the king with "a book of songs"; receives a New Year's gift of four ells of cloth in return
• 1455 meets Du Fay again
• January 1, 1459 gives the king's "very richly illuminated song" and receives a New Year's gift in return
• 1459 named treasurer of the collegiate church of St. Martin in Tours

• 1460
  • c. 1460 Mort au navré de ton désir (lament for Busnoys)
  • 1462 travels to Bourges
  • June 1462 travels to Cambrai
  • February-March 1464 travels to Cambrai and stays with Du Fay ordained as a priest on this occasion?
  • c. 1465 d. Charles VII
  • c. 1466-7 travels to Spain on 1 or 2 diplomatic embassies (adds 4th voice to Cornago's Qvi mi ride propitant)
  • lament for Du Fay (lost)
  • 1476/7 Missa Mi mi copied in Bruges
  • 1476/7 Missa vasto vis mov in return copied in Bruges

• 1470 d. Charles VII
  • d. September 20, 1460, in Soignies
  • d. January 4/5 1465
  • Du Fay d. November 27, 1474, in Cambrai
  • 1478 William Caxton publishes first printed copy of the Canterbury Tales (written late 14th century)

• 1480
  • All of Ockeghem's surviving music composed by c. 1480?
  • August 1484 travels to Damme and Bruges; banquet in his honor at St. Donatian, Bruges
  • 1488 travels to Paris

• 1490
  • d. February 6, 1497, presumably in Tours

  • Binchois
    d. September 20, 1460, in Soignies
  • R. van der Weyden
    d. June 18, 1464, in Brussels
  • Charles d'Orléans
    d. January 4/5 1465
  • Donatello d. 1466
  • 1467-8 travels to Spain on 1 or 2 diplomatic embassies (adds 4th voice to Cornago's Qvi mi ride propitant)
  • lament for Du Fay (lost)
  • 1476/7 Missa Mi mi copied in Bruges
  • 1476/7 Missa vasto vis mov in return copied in Bruges

• 1450

• February 1453 Binchois retires from Burgundian court and moves to Soignies
• Heinrich Isaac b. c. 1450
• John Dunstable d. 1453
• Josquin Desprez b. c. 1450-53; houer Saint Quentin
• Jacob Obrecht
  b. c. 1457-8, Ghent
• Leonardo da Vinci
  b.1452 (died 1519)
• 1455 Johannes Gutenberg completes printing of the Bible in Mainz

• 1433 end of Hundred Years War between France and England
• 1453 Constantinople falls to the Ottoman Turks

• 1461 d. Charles VII
• 1467 d. Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy; succeeded by Charles the Bold
• 1468 wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York

• 1483 d. Louis XI
• 1490 d. Charles VII; succeeded by Louis XI
• 1489 d. Jean Fouquet
• 1489 d. Joan, duke of Bourbon
• 1490 d. John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy; succeeded by Philip the Good

• 1456 d. Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy; Burgundy absorbed into the French crown

• 1477 d. Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy; Burgundy absorbed into the French crown
• 1438 d. Charles VII
• 1484 d. Isabella of France

• 1455 Johannes Gutenberg completes printing of the Bible in Mainz
• 1461 d. Charles VII
• 1467 d. Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy; succeeded by Charles the Bold
• 1468 wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York

• 1483 d. Louis XI; succeeded by Charles VIII
HOW DID OCKEGHEM SPELL HIS NAME?

Jehan de Ockeghem was born around 1420 in the small town of Saint Ghislain, near Mons, in the county of Hainaut and in the diocese of Cambrai. Saint Ghislain lies in modern-day Belgium, about 50 miles southwest of Brussels and less than ten miles from the present border with France.

The county of Hainaut or Hainault was a lordship within the Holy Roman Empire with its capital at Mons (Bergen in Flemish); the name comes from the river Haine. Hainaut comprised what is now the Belgian province of Hainaut and part of the French département of Nord, and included the cities of Charleroi, to the east of Mons, and, to the southwest, Valenciennes and the diocesan seat of Cambrai, both in latter-day France. In 1420 the county was ruled by Jacqueline, daughter of duke Wilhelm II of Bavaria-Staunberg, but in 1432 it was ceded to the Duchy of Burgundy under Philip the Good; in 1477, upon the death of Charles the Bold, it passed to the Habsburgs with the rest of the Burgundian Netherlands.

The composer's given name was Jehan (or Jean), normally given as Johannes in Latin or other non-French contexts. The surname suggests that normally given as Johannes in Latin or other German, and other languages, and it may be found spelled in a bewildering variety of ways in contemporary sources: Ockeghem, Okeghem, Okeeghem, Ockegheem, Ockeghem, Okeghen, Okeghen, Okenhein, Oekhem, O Bekhan, Obergan, Hockhegen, Hoquegun, Hoquegian, Hocquergan, Holrehgan, Okegus. Eugène Giraudet, in Les artistes tourangeaux (Tours, 1885), reproduces a presumed autograph signature on p. 312, but fails to indicate the source, which is otherwise unknown and is now apparently lost. Nevertheless, modern scholarship has generally accepted the authenticity of the signature, in part due to the unusual formation of the c, which could be taken for an e; such an oddity, as Jaap van Benthem has written, "might plead against any suggestion of a nineteenth-century attempt [at] forgery." The signature, assuming it is indeed genuine, establishes that, at least on this one occasion, the composer spelled his last name OCKEGHEM.

Blue Heron's existence as a performing ensemble is made possible by the devotion, hard work, and financial support of a community of board members, staff, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers. We offer our grateful thanks to all those who join us in creating, nurturing, and sustaining an organization dedicated to making the music of the 15th and 16th centuries come alive in the 21st.

Special thanks to Brett Kostrzewski for help in the preparation of an edition of the Missa Eccae ancilla dei from the original sources. Many thanks to the Rev’d John D. Alexander, James Busby, Cory MacLean, and everyone at S. Stephen’s Church for welcoming us to Providence.

We are very grateful to the gracious hosts who offer their hospitality to musicians from out of town.

We are honored and grateful to have so many generous donors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Blue Heron is extraordinarily fortunate to work with a regular slate of talented, skilled, and devoted designers, engineers, videographers, and photographers. Our programs, postcards, season brochure, advertisements, and CD booklets are designed by Melanie Germond and Pete Goldust. Erik Bertrand maintains and rebuilt our website; the site was originally built by Evan Ingersoll, who also designed our programs for many years. Our concerts are brilliantly recorded by Philip Davis (Cape Ann Recordings) or Joel Gordon; Joel is also the engineer for our CDs, working with our producer Eric Milnes. Kathy Wittman (Ball Square Films) has recently joined us as videographer. Liz Linder is our photographer. Our debt to these wonderful people who have shaped our look and sound is impossible to overstate.

Many thanks to our board and to all our volunteers for their help this evening and throughout the year.

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