Song of Songs / Songs of Love

Saturday, June 9, 2012 · 8 pm · First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

Sunday, June 10, 2012 · 4 pm · St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church, New York City
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**I**

*Song of Songs 1:1-4 (spoken)*

*Sicut lilium inter spinas*  
*Sebasüh de Vivanco (c.1550-1622)*

*De los álamos vengo, madre*  
*Juan Vásquez (c.1500-c.1560)*

*Surge, propera, amica mea*  
*Francisco Guerrero (1528-99)*

**II**

*Song of Songs 2:8-13 (spoken)*

*Ojos morenos, ¿quándo nos veremos?*  
*Vásquez*

*Claros y frescos ríos*  
*anonymous (Cancionero de Medinaceli, MS, c.1569)*

*Tota pulchra es, Maria*  
*Guerrero*

**III**

*Song of Songs 3:1-5 (spoken)*

*Ay luna que reluzes*  
*anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)*

*Si la noche haze escura*  
*anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)*

*Sigo silencio tu estrellado manto / I attend, Silence, to your starry mantle (spoken)*  
*Francisco de la Torre (?1534-1594)*

*Vadam et circuibo civitatem*  
*Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)*

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**INTERMISSION**
IV

**Song of Songs 2:1-7 (spoken)**

*Dime, robadora*  
*Morenica me era yo*  
*De las dos hermanas*  
*No sabe qué es amor quien no te ama / He knows not what love is who loves not you (spoken)*  
*Veni dilecte mi*  

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**Anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)**

*Morenica me era yo*  
*De las dos hermanas*  

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**Lope de Vega (1562 -1635)**

*No sabe qué es amor quien no te ama / He knows not what love is who loves not you (spoken)*  

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**Vivanco**

V

**Song of Songs 5:2-8 (spoken)**

*Trahe me post te*  
*Desdeñado soy de amor*  
*A la noche / To the night (spoken)*  
*Anima mea liquefacta est*  
*Ojos claros y serenos*  
*Anima mea liquefacta est*  

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**Nicolas Gombert (c.1495-c.1560)**

*Desdeñado soy de amor*  
*Ojos claros y serenos*  
*Pues que no puedo olvidarte*  

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**J. M. de Vivanco**

VI

**Song of Songs 4:7-11 (spoken)**

*Vidi speciosam sicut columbam*  
*Descendid al valle, la niña*  

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**Victoria**
difficilem...et periculo proxima de amoris natura disputationem

“to discuss the nature of love is difficult and dangerous”

Origen (3rd century), *In Canticum Canticorum*

**THE SONG OF SONGS**

The Hebrew love poem known as the Song of Songs was likely written down sometime in the third century BCE and was admitted to the canon of Hebrew Scripture long after the Torah and the Prophets, probably towards the end of the first century CE. In the two millennia since it has customarily been interpreted by its religious guardians as an allegory—mystical, theological, historical, ecclesiastical, or otherwise. Learned commentaries have explained that the Song represents “the love of God and Israel, Christ and the Church, or Christ and the believer’s soul; the chaste love of the Virgin Mary; the marriage of Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter, or of the active and passive intellect; the discourse of Solomon with Wisdom; the trials of the people of Israel; or the history of the Church.” We have much to thank these interpreters for, and not only their enormous contributions to scholarship on the history and language of the Song. It is likely that the religious-allegorical view of the Song—boosted by the later, erroneous ascription of the poem to Solomon, one of Israel’s most famous kings—made possible its inclusion in the canon of Holy Scripture, without which it may have been lost to us forever. But as anyone who reads the original poem without an *a priori* commitment to a religious meaning is bound to see, the Song of Songs is plainly about love between two human beings, a young woman and a young man (a girl and a boy, really) in the freshness of their first passion, and specifically about erotic love. This is made obvious by the repeated use of the Hebrew verb *dodim*, “a comprehensive term for lovemaking” with an unambiguously sexual meaning.\(^3\)

For centuries, however, the Song has been read by Jews and Christians as part of holy scripture. Western Christians read the poem in translation, at first in Greek or in the Latin of the early versions of Biblical texts known as the *Vetus Latina*. In the fourth century Jerome made two versions of the Song, the first a revision of the *Vetus Latina*, the second translated directly from the original Hebrew; the latter was incorporated into Jerome’s complete Latin Bible, the Vulgate. Translated into Latin prose, the Song’s intoxicatingly sensuous images eventually found their way into texts of antiphons, responsories, and other items of the Catholic liturgy. Here passages are often freely remixed and rearranged, suggesting that the makers of liturgy knew the poem so thoroughly that they didn’t refer back to a written original, in an attempt to quote it accurately, but simply drew on their memory. This phenomenon is most evident in the text of the final motet on our program, *Vidi speciosam sicut columbam*. A respond sung on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on August 15, the text lifts one striking line directly from the Song (“Who is this, who rises out of the desert like a pillar of smoke from the spices of myrrh and frankincense?”) and surrounds it with a profusion of images found scattered throughout the poem: doves, rivers, scented garments, and flowers.

The erotic meaning of the Song has sometimes been evaded or obscured by its translators. Where the Hebrew has *dodim*, for example, the King James Version uses the more general “love”; the Vulgate has *ubera*, literally meaning “breasts” but in Latin often intended in a figurative sense as richness or fertility, perhaps suggesting abundant love. (The Vulgate also uses *ubera* in the literal sense: compare its meaning in, for example, *Veni dilecte mi* and *Trahe me post te.*) Some transformations wrought by the scriptural versions
The Hebrew \textit{tappuach}, for example, which present-day scholars generally identify as an apricot, became \textit{malus} or apple, a fruit not found in biblical Palestine. Other changes produce a reading even more intensely sensual than the original. The Hebrew \textit{libbatini}, which Bloch and Bloch render, with the King James, as “You have ravished my heart,” is in the Vulgate \textit{vulnerasti cor meum}: “You have wounded my heart.” And where the Hebrew continues, “You have ravished my heart with ... one link of your necklace,” Jerome’s Latin has the considerably more physical image “with one hair of your neck.”

\textbf{THE SONG IN SPAIN}

The texts set to music by Francisco Guerrero, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Sebastián de Vivanco, Nicolas Gombert, and other sixteenth-century composers are drawn from the liturgies of various feasts of the Virgin Mary. Many of the verses are intensely erotic: “My soul melted when my beloved spoke”; “I will climb into the palm tree and take hold of its fruit: and may your breasts be like clusters of grapes on the vine, and the scent of your mouth like apples.” Language like this addressed to the Mother of God signals a marvelously expansive concept of the divine. Nowadays we are apt to find the expression of erotic sentiment as a way of celebrating the relationship of a believer to Mary confusing, discomfitting, or even unseemly. There is no doubt that the frank sexuality of the Song has often proven challenging to its religious interpreters. But we twenty-first century Americans tend to speak and act, without examining our own preconceptions or questioning their correspondence to our own real lives, as if sexuality and spirituality, or the sacred and secular, are somehow separable or even opposed to one another—as if human beings themselves don’t fully contain both things, or as if God created the soul but not the body; as if sex itself were not a gift of creation, or as if our constitutional principle regarding the establishment of religion in the body politic has some sort of analogy within the human creature as well.

We’re not the first to be so confused, by any means, but we shouldn’t assume that such attitudes are, or ever were, universal. Antipathy towards sex is not necessarily the attitude of the Hebrew scriptures, as Ariel and Chana Bloch point out, citing various passages in Proverbs:

\begin{quote}
Three things I marvel at, four I cannot fathom:
the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship in the heart of the sea,
the way of a man with a woman.
\textit{Proverbs 30:18–19}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Let your fountain be blessed;
take delight in the wife of your youth,
a loving doe, a graceful gazelle.
Let her breasts fill you with pleasure,
be entranced always by her love.
\textit{Proverbs 5:18–19}
\end{quote}

In the Song motets composed by Guerrero, Victoria, Vivanco and Gombert, the voluptuousness of the language is matched everywhere by a profound sensuousness in the music. However these sixteenth-century human beings may have interpreted the Song of Songs, their music puts us directly in touch with all the unmediated sensual power of the original lyric. When a man as pious as Francisco Guerrero (who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1588–9 at the age of 60, published a book about his travels a year later, and was preparing for a return voyage when he died at age 71) writes sacred music as powerfully sensuous as \textit{Tota pulchra es, Maria} or \textit{Trahe me post te}, one can only embrace the generous inclusiveness of his spirituality. The music of this evening’s program invites us to sing love songs to God as well as to one another.

Our program explores settings of the Song of Songs by three sixteenth-century Spanish composers, including two of the greatest musicians of the century,
Francisco Guerrero and Tomás Luis de Victoria, and a strong and distinctive contender, Sebastián de Vivanco. (Notable by his absence is Cristóbal de Morales, who seems not to have written a single Song motet.) We also include works by Nicolas Gombert, a contemporary of Morales’s who travelled extensively in Spain as part of the famous capilla flamenca ("Flemish chapel") employed by the Habsburg emperor Charles V, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. Gombert’s music is found in numerous Spanish manuscripts and in the Villancicos de diversos autores printed in Venice in 1556. His expressive, sometimes highly dissonant style was esteemed by Spanish musicians and inspired tributes such as Morales’s Missa Aspice Domine, based on one of his motets. Gombert’s counterpoint often presents the performer with knotty problems in the application of the principles of musica ficta and recta. Certain chromatic alterations were usually unspecified by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century composers, leaving it to the singer to decide when, for example, to raise a leading note at a cadence, or to alter B-natural to B-flat in order to avoid a direct tritone relationship with F. Inspired by the work of Peter Urquhart, who has written extensively on these issues, our solutions follow the linear logic of the individual parts. The result, especially in Tota pulchra es, is a texture dense with expressive dissonance, in which two chromatically different forms of a note (natural and lowered by a flat, or natural and raised by a sharp) sometimes occur simultaneously.

**Songs of Love**

Side by side with the sacred polyphony, the program presents selections from the enormous and delightful repertoire of Spanish love songs, by turns sweet, saucy, heartbroken, bitter, swaggering, urgent, and comic. We feature the songs of Juan Vásquez, printed in two collections of 1551 and 1560, and draw as well from the Villancicos de diversos autores published in 1556 (also called the Cancionero de Upsala after the present location of its only surviving copy) and the manuscript known as the Cancionero musical de la casa de Medinaceli, which contains the date 1569. Many of the songs, like so much of the Song, are set in a natural world that reflects and enhances the mood of the speaker. Sometimes nature is used as a distraction. The boy in De los álamos says to his mother, who must have been pestering him about his whereabouts, “Oh, I was just over in the poplar groves, mother, enjoying the way the wind blows through the leaves, over in the poplars in Seville, mother…” Somewhere in the midst of all the breezy chatter about trees he slips in, just once, that he may also have seen his girlfriend.

To all these voices discussing the nature of love—the Hebrew poem, its English translation, Jerome’s Latin Bible, the Catholic liturgy, the English of the King James Bible—we add two more, those of the sixteenth century poets Lope de Vega and Francisco de la Torre, speaking of silence, night, love, and God. Their works will be read in English translation: the original Spanish may be found in the texts provided.

**Pitch and Performing Forces**

If you have heard or sung some of the music on this program before, you may be surprised by some lower sounds than you are used to. A great deal of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century music was written down in a system of so-called high clefs. There is plenty of explicit evidence, dating at least as far back as 1543, that the high clefs signalled the performers to transpose down a fourth or fifth. The instances of high-clef notation most familiar nowadays are Laudá Jerusalem and the Magnificat of Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610, but these are merely the best known cases of a widespread practice. The repertoire affected includes much of Victoria and a great deal of Palestrina; on this program, both settings of Tota pulchra es (by Guerrero and by Gombert), Veni dilecte me, Trahe me post te, and Vidi speciosam, as well as a number of the songs. Once transposed down, the music no longer suits our idea of an SATB choir but it does lie more happily for the normal Renaissance ensemble of male falsettists (or boys, or their female counterparts, mezzo-sopranos),
high and low tenors, and basses; no longer bright and high, it returns to the dark, rich, and sonorous palette the sixteenth century seems to have favored. This evening we add further richness in the form of the bajón or dulcian. Spaniards appear to have combined voices and instruments in sacred music more freely than was normative elsewhere in Europe, and a bajón was a standard member of a sixteenth-century Spanish choir, where it reinforced the bass with its reedy tone.

—Scott Metcalfe

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3 Bloch and Bloch, pp. 27–8.
The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.

Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!
Your sweet loving
is better than wine.

You are fragrant,
you are myrrh and aloes.
All the young women want you.

Take me by the hand, let us run together!

My lover, my king, has brought me into his chambers.
We will laugh, you and I, and count
each kiss,
better than wine.

Sicut lilium inter spinas
Sebastián de Vivanco (c.1550–1622)

Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among daughters.
Like the apple among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among sons. I sat in his shade, as I had so much desired, and the fruit was sweet to my taste.

Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias.
Sicut malus inter ligna silvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios. Sub umbra illius quam desideraveram sedi: et fructus dulcis gutturi meo.

Song of Songs 2:2–3

De los álamos vengo, madre
Juan Vásquez (c.1500–c.1560)

I’m coming from the poplars, mother,
watching how the air stirs them.
From the poplars of Seville
(seeing my fair love),
just watching the air stir them.

De los álamos vengo, madre,
de ver como los menea el ayre.
De los álamos de Sevilla
(de ver a mi linda amiga)
de ver como los menea el ayre.
Surge, propera, amica mea
Francisco Guerrero (1528–99)


Song of Songs 2:10–12
Cantus firmus: Veni, sponsa Christi.

Arise, hasten, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come. Lo, the winter is over, the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear in the land, the time of pruning is come.

The voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the fig puts forth green fruits, the flowering vine gives off its scent. Arise, arise, my love, and come.

Cantus firmus: Come, bride of Christ.

II (Song of Songs 2:8–13)

The voice of my love: listen!
bounding over the mountains
toward me, across the hills.

My love is a gazelle, a wild stag.
There he stands on the other side
of our wall, gazing
between the stones.

And he calls to me:
Hurry, my love, my friend,
and come away!

Look, winter is over,
the rains are done,
wildflowers spring up in the fields.
Now is the time of the nightingale.
In every meadow you hear
the song of the turtledove.

The fig tree has sweetened
its new green fruit
and the young budded vines smell spicy.
Hurry, my love, my friend,
come away.
Ojos morenos, ¿quando nos veremos?

Vásquez

Ojos morenos,
¿quando nos veremos?
Ojos morenos
de bonica color,
soys tan graciosos
que matays de amor.

Oh brown eyes,
when will we see each other again?
Brown eyes,
of such a pretty color,
you are so charming
that you kill with love.

Claros y frescos ríos

anonymous (Cancionero de Medinaceli, MS, c.1569)

Claros y frescos ríos
que mansamente báis
siguiendo vuestro natural camino;
desiertos montes míos
que en un estado estáis
de soledad contino;
abes en quien ay tino
de descansar cantando;
árboles que bibís y al fin morís,
oydme juntamente
mi boz amarga, ronca y muy doliente.

Clear and cool streams,
which flow gently
along your natural path;
my deserted mountains,
which are in a state
of perpetual solitude;
birds, who have the knack
of resting while singing;
trees, which live and in the end die:
hear, together,
my voice—bitter, hoarse, and most sorrowful.

Tota pulchra es, Maria

Guerrero

Tota pulchra es Maria, et macula non est in te.
Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni coronaberis.

You are all beautiful, Mary, and there is no flaw in you.
Come from Lebanon, my bride, come, you shall be crowned.

Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa, in uno oculorum tuorum, et in uno crine colli tui.

Song of Songs 4:7–9

You have wounded my heart, my sister, my bride, with one glance of your eyes, and with one hair of your neck.

III (Song of Songs 3:1–5)

At night in my bed I longed
for my only love.
I sought him, but did not find him.
I must rise and go about the city,  
the narrow streets and squares, till I find  
my only love.  
I sought him everywhere  
but I could not find him.

Then the watchmen found me  
as they went about the city.  
“Have you seen him? Have you seen  
the one I love?”

I had just passed them when I found  
my only love.  
I held him, I would not let him go  
until I brought him to my mother’s house,  
into my mother’s room.

Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me  
by the gazelles, by the deer in the field,  
that you will never awaken love  
until it is ripe.

Ay luna que reluzes  
 anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)

¡Ay, luna que reluzes,  
toda la noche m’alumbres!  
Ay, luna tan bella,  
alumbresme a la sierra,  
por do vaya y venga.  
Toda la noche m’alumbres.

Ah, shining moon,  
light my way all night!  
Ah, moon so lovely,  
light my way through the hills  
wherever I come and go.  
Light my way all night!

Si la noche haze escura  
 anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)

Si la noche haze escura  
y tan corto es el camino,  
¿cómo no venís, amigo?  
La media noche es pasada  
y el que me pena no viene:  
mi desdicha lo detiene,  
que nascí tan desdichada.  
Házmeme bivir penada  
y muéstraseme enemigo.  
¿Cómo no venís, amigo?

If the night is dark  
and the road so short,  
why do you not come, my love?  
Midnight is past  
and he for whom I suffer doesn’t come:  
my misfortune stops him,  
for I was born so unfortunate.  
He makes me live in pain  
and reveals himself my enemy.  
Why do you not come, my love?
Sigo silencio tu estrellado manto  
*Francisco de la Torre (?1534–1594)*

I attend, Silence, to your starry mantle  
adorned with transparent lights:  
enemy of the illustrious Sun,  
nightbird with ill-omened song.

El falso mago Amor con el encanto  
de palabras quebradas por olvido,  
convirtió mi razón, y mi sentido,  
mi cuerpo no, por deshazelle en llanto.

You who know my woe, and you, who were  
the principal occasion of my torment,  
because of whom I was blessed, and cursed:

Oye tú solo mi dolor: que al triste  
a quien persigue, cielo violento,  
no le está bien que sepa su cuidado.

You who alone hear my pain: for to a wretched man  
persecuted by a violent sky  
it does no good for his cares to be known.

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Vadam et circuibo civitatem  
*Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)*

I will rise and go about the city: in alleys and in broad streets I will seek him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, to tell him that I am weak with love.

What is your beloved, that you so charge us? My beloved is white and ruddy, the choicest among thousands. Such is my beloved, and such is my love, O daughters of Jerusalem. Where has your beloved gone, O loveliest of women? Where has he turned to? and we shall seek him with you. He has climbed into the palm tree and taken its fruit.

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*Obras del bachiller Francisco de la Torre (Madrid, 1631), Soneto 5*

*Song of Songs 3:2, 5:8–10, 5:16, 6:1, 7:8*
IV (Song of Songs 2:1–7)

I am the rose of Sharon, 
the wild lily of the valleys.

Like a lily in a field 
of thistles, 
such is my love 
among the young women.

And my beloved among the young men 
is a branching apricot tree in the wood. 
In that shade I have often lingered, 
tasting the fruit.

Now he has brought me to the house of wine 
and his flag over me is love.

Let me lie among vine blossoms, 
in a bed of apricots! 
I am in the fever of love.

His left hand beneath my head, 
his right arm 
holding me close.

Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me 
by the gazelles, by the deer in the field, 
that you will never awaken love 
until it is ripe.

Dime, robadora
anonymous (Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556)

Dime, robadora, ¿que te mereçi?
¿Qué ganas agora que muera por tí? 
Yo siempre sirviendo, tú siempre olvidando, 
yo siempre muriendo, tú siempre matando: 
yo soy quien t’adora y tú contra mí. 
¿Qué ganas agora que muera por tí? 
Tell me, thief, what have I deserved from you? 
What do you gain from my dying for you? 
I always serving, you always forgetting, 
I always dying, you always killing: 
I am he who adores you, and you are against me. 
What do you gain from my dying for you?
Morenica me era yo  
**Vásquez**

Me, I used to be a little cutie—
some say yes, some say no.
Those who love me much
say yes;
others who die for me
say no.

De las dos hermanas  
**Vásquez**

Knowing the two sisters as I do,
may the charm of the younger favor me!
The younger is more elegant,
more refined, and more beautiful:
him who loves, she kills and heals.
May the charm of the younger favor me!

No sabe qué es amor quien no te ama  
**Lope de Vega (1562 –1635)**

He knows not what love is who loves not you,
celestial beauty, bridegroom fair;
your head is of gold, and your hair
like the treetop woven by the palm,
your mouth like a lily which spills
liquor at dawn; of ivory your neck;
your hand the wheel, and on its palm the seal
which the soul, disguising, calls hyacinths.

My God! what thought I when, abandoning
such beauty and seeing mortal things,
I lost what I might have been enjoying?

But if I take offense at the time I’ve lost,
I shall make such haste that one hour of love
will defeat the years I spent in feigning.

---

Me, I used to be a little cutie—
some say yes, some say no.
Those who love me much
say yes;
others who die for me
say no.

Knowing the two sisters as I do,
may the charm of the younger favor me!
The younger is more elegant,
more refined, and more beautiful:
him who loves, she kills and heals.
May the charm of the younger favor me!

He knows not what love is who loves not you,
celestial beauty, bridegroom fair;
your head is of gold, and your hair
like the treetop woven by the palm,
your mouth like a lily which spills
liquor at dawn; of ivory your neck;
your hand the wheel, and on its palm the seal
which the soul, disguising, calls hyacinths.

My God! what thought I when, abandoning
such beauty and seeing mortal things,
I lost what I might have been enjoying?

But if I take offense at the time I’ve lost,
I shall make such haste that one hour of love
will defeat the years I spent in feigning.
Veni dilecēte mi

_Vivanco_

Veni, dilecēte mi, egrediamur in agro, commoremur in villis. Mane surgamus ad vineas; videamus si floruit vinea, si flores fructus parturient, si florerunt mala punica: ibi dabo tibi ubera mea. Mandragorae dederunt odorem suum, in portis nostris omnia poma nova et vetera, dilecēte mi, servavi tibi.

_Song of Songs_ 7:11–13

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge at the farms. Let us go up early to the vineyards, to see if the vine flourishes, if the flowers of the fruit appear, if the pomegranates bud forth: there I will give you my love. The mandrakes give forth their aroma; at our gates all manner of fruits, new and old, O my beloved, I have stored away for you.

_V (Song of Songs 5:2–8)_

_I was asleep but my heart stayed awake._

_Listen! my lover knocking:_

“Open, my sister, my friend, my dove, my perfect one!
My hair is wet, drenched with the dew of night.”

“But I have taken off my clothes, how can I dress again?
I have bathed my feet, must I dirty them?”

My love reached in for the latch and my heart beat wild.

_I rose to open to my love, my fingers wet with myrrh, sweet flowing myrrh on the doorbolt._

_I opened to my love but he had slipped away._

How I wanted him when he spoke!

_I sought him everywhere but I could not find him._

I called his name but he did not answer.
Then the watchmen found me
as they went about the city.
They beat me, they bruised me,
they tore the shawl from my shoulders,
those watchmen of the walls.

Swear to me, daughters of Jerusalem!
If you find him now
you must tell him
I am in the fever of love.

Trahe me post te
Guerrero

Trahe me post te, virgo Maria, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum. Quam pulchra es et quam decora, carissima, in delitiis: statuta tua assimilata est palmae, et ubera tua botris. Dixi: ascendam in palmam, et apprehendam fructum eius; et erunt ubera tua sicut botri vineae, et odor oris tui sicut malorum.

*Song of Songs 1:4, 7:6–8*

Desdeñado soy de amor
anonymous (*Villancicos de diversos Autores, 1556*)

Desdeñado soy de amor:
guádeos Dios de tal dolor!
Desdeñado y malquerido,
maltrató y aborrecido;
del tiempo que os he servido
no tengo ningún favor:
guádeos Dios de tal dolor!

I am scorned by love:
God keep you from such pain!
Disdained and hated,
ill-treated and abhorred;
for all the time I have served you
I have not one token of favor:
God keep you from such pain!

A la noche
Lope de Vega (1562–1635)

Noche fabricadora de embelecos,
loca, imaginativa, quimeriosta,
que muestrás al que en ti su bien conquista,
los montes llanos, y los mares secos.

To the night

Night, creator of deceptions,
crazy, fantastical, chimerical,
who shows to him who conquers his good in you
mountains as flat and the seas dry;
Habitadora de celebros huecos, 
mečánica, filósofa, alquimista, 
encubridora vil, lince sin vista, 
espantadiza de tus mismos ecos.

La sombra, el miedo, el mal se te atribuya, 
solícita, poeta, enferma, fría, 
manos del bravo, y pies del fugitivo.

Que vele, o duerma, media vida es tuya; 
si veo, lo pago con el día, 
y si duermo, no siento lo que vivo.

*Rimas (Madrid, 1602), no. 137*

Anima mea liquefaêta est 
*Nicolas Gombert (c.1495–c.1560)*

Anima mea liquefaêta est ut dilectus locutus est: 
quæsivi et non inveni illum, vocavi illum et non 
respondit mihi. Invenerunt me custodes civitatis, 
percusserunt me et vulneraverunt me: tulerunt 
pallium meum custodes murorum. 
Filio Jerusalem, nuntiate dilecto meo quia amore 
langueo.

*Song of Songs 5:6–8*

Ojos claros y serenos 
*Guerrero (Cancionero de Medinaceli, MS, c.1569)*

Ojos claros y serenos, 
si de un dulçe mirar sois alabados, 
¿por qué si me miráis, miráis airados? 
Si quanto más piadosos, 
más bellos paresçéis a quien os mira, 
no me miréis con ira, 
porque no paresçáis menos hermosos. 
¡Ay, tormentos rabiosos!
Ojos claros y serenos, 
ya que ansi me miráis, 
miradme al menos.

Bright and serene eyes, 
if by a sweet glance you are honored, 
why, if you glance at me, do you look angry? 
If however more compassionate, 
the more lovely you appear to him who regards you, 
do not regard me with anger, 
so that you might not appear less beautiful. 
Ah, violent torments! 
Bright and serene eyes, 
even if you look at me thus, 
look at me, at least.
Pues que no puedo olvidarte
Ginés de Morata (Cancionero de Medinaceli, MS, c.1569)

Pues que no puedo olvidarte,
¡tómete el diablo, llévete el diablo,
el diablo que aya en ti parte!
Elvira, pese a mal grado,
quiéreme, siquiera un día,
que boto a diez, vida mía,
que bibo desesperado.
Si en pago de mi cuydado
en ti creçe el descuydarte,
¡tómete el diablo, llévete el diablo,
el diablo que aya en ti parte!

VI (Song of Songs 4:7–11)

You are all beautiful, my love,
my perfect one.

Oh come with me, my bride,
come down with me from Lebanon.

Look down from the peak of Amana,
look down from Senir and Hermon,
from the mountains of the leopards,
the lions’ dens.

You have ravished my heart,
my sister, my bride,
ravished me with one glance of your eyes,
one link of your necklace.

And oh, your sweet loving,
my sister, my bride.
The wine of your kisses, the spice
of your fragrant oils.

Your lips are honey, honey and milk
are under your tongue,
your clothes hold the scent of Lebanon.

Since I cannot forget you,
may the devil take you, may the devil seize you,
may the devil win you!
Elvira, despite your unwillingness,
love me, even for just one day!
for I swear to God, my life,
that I live a desperate man.
If in return for my troubles
your neglect of me increases,
may the devil take you, may the devil seize you,
may the devil win you!
Tota pulchra es
Gombert

You are all beautiful, my love, and there is no flaw in you. Come from Lebanon, my dove, come, you shall be crowned.

Song of Songs 4:7–8

Descendid al valle, la niña
Vásquez

Come down to the valley, my girl, for the day is already come.
Come down, girl of love, for the dawn is already come.
You shall see your love, who would be cheered to see you, for the day is already come.

Vidi speciosam sicut columbam
Victoria

I beheld the beautiful one like a dove arising from above the rivers of water, whose matchless scent was strong in her garments, and as on a spring day she was surrounded by flowers of roses and lily of the valley.
Who is this, who rises out of the desert like a pillar of smoke from the spices of myrrh and frankincense? and as on a spring day she was surrounded by flowers of roses and lily of the valley.

Song of Songs 3:6 etc.

English version of spoken verses from the Song of Songs translated from the Hebrew by Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, The Song of Songs: a new translation (Berkeley, 1995). Text spoken by the girl in italics; that spoken by the boy in Roman. All other translations by Scott Metcalfe; translations of biblical texts draw from the version of the King James Bible of 1611.
The vocal ensemble **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; the *Boston Musical Intelligencer* calls Blue Heron “a fantastic model for the fully-realized potential of early music performance in the 21st century.” Combining a commitment to vivid live performance with the study of original source materials and historical performance practices, Blue Heron ranges over a wide and fascinating repertoire, including fifteenth-century English and Franco-Flemish polyphony, from Dunstable and Du Fay through Ockeghem to the generation of Josquin; Spanish music between 1500 and 1600; and neglected early sixteenth-century English music, especially the rich repertory of the Peterhouse partbooks, copied c. 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral. The ensemble has also reached outside these areas to perform very early music (organum by the twelfth-century French composer Perotin) and very recent music (new works by the Australian composer Elliott Gyger).

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* with a disc of music by Hugh Aston, Robert Jones, and John Mason. Both recordings have received international critical acclaim and the Peterhouse CD made the Billboard charts. The second volume of the Peterhouse series, featuring works by Nicholas Ludford and Richard Pygott, was released in March.

Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents subscription series in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in New York City. The ensemble has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival; in New York City at The Cloisters, the 92nd Street Y, and Music Before 1800; at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., and Monadnock Music in New Hampshire; in Pittsburgh for the Renaissance and Baroque Society; and with the wind band Piffaro and the viol consort Parthenia in Philadelphia. Blue Heron made its West Coast debut at Festival Mozaic in San Luis Obispo, California, and will return to California this June for a debut at the Berkeley Early Music Festival.

**Cameron Beauchamp**, bass, is in demand throughout the country as a soloist and chamber musician. Currently living in Austin, he sings regularly with Blue Heron, Conspirare, Miami’s Seraphic Fire, New York’s Roomful of Teeth, Atlanta’s New Trinity Baroque, and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and he is co-director of the Austin-based Convergence Vocal Ensemble. Cameron has been an artist in residence at Stanford University, the University of Utah, the University of North Texas, Williams College, College of the Holy Cross, Harvard University, the University of Oregon, and Mass MoCA. He has recorded on Harmonia Mundi, Pro Organo, GIA, Edition Lilac, Klavier, and PBS, as well as with Blue Heron, and appears on two Grammy-nominated albums and one *Downbeat* award-winning album.

**Marilyn Boenau** received a Soloist’s Diploma from the Schola Cantorum in Basel, Switzerland, where she studied recorder and shawm with Michel Piguet, and dulcian and bassoon with Walter Stiftner. She performs with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the Handel & Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, Tempesta di Mare, and Opera Lafayette. She can be heard on recent recordings of Rameau arias with Opera Lafayette (Washington, DC), and Fasch suites with Tempesta di Mare (Philadelphia). She has performed Renaissance music with the Folger Consort and with Andrew Lawrence-King’s Harp Consort. Her playing has been called “breathtaking” by the *Portland Oregonian*. Marilyn is the Executive Director of Amherst Early Music, Inc., which presents the Amherst Early Music Festival at Connecticut College in New London.

**Kateri Chambers** hails from the San Francisco Bay Area and now performs widely as an actor, dancer, and
musician. She has degrees from Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Peabody Conservatory, and Johns Hopkins University. She is researching French vocal ornamentation for her DMA dissertation at Boston University. She can currently be seen with the Maryland Historical Society Players and has recently acted with theatre companies and for embassies in the Boston and Washington, D.C., areas.

Pamela Dellal, mezzo-soprano, is an acclaimed soloist and recitalist whose singing has been praised for her “exquisite vocal color,” “musical sensitivity,” and “eloquent phrasing.” She has been featured in leading roles in operas of Purcell, Mozart, Britten, and others. With Sequentia, Ms. Dellal has recorded the music of Hildegard von Bingen and toured the US, Europe, and Australia. Passionate about chamber music, early music, and contemporary music, she performs frequently with Dinosaur Annex, Boston Musica Viva, Ensemble Chaconne, Blue Heron, and the Musicians of the Old Post Road. She has been a regular soloist in the Emmanuel Music Bach Cantata series for twenty-five years and has performed almost all 200 of Bach’s extant sacred cantatas. Recent appearances include the premiere of a new John Harbison work, The Seven Ages, at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, followed by performances in San Francisco, Boston and London.

Bass-baritone Paul Guttry enjoys the variety of opera, oratorio, and a specialization in early music. A former member of Chanticleer, Paul has performed throughout the USA and internationally with Sequentia, the Boston Camerata, and New York’s Ensemble for Early Music. He has appeared in concert and opera with the Seattle Early Music Guild, St. Paul’s Ex Machina, the Plymouth Music Series in Minneapolis, the Austin-based choir Consipirare, and the Santa Fe Pro Musica. In Boston he has appeared as soloist with Emmanuel Music, the Handel & Haydn Society, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Tanglewood Music Center, Cantata Singers, Boston Cecilia, Prism Opera, Intermezzo, Boston Revels, and Collage. This summer he will sing the role of Osmin in the Connecticut Early Music Festival’s production of Mozart’s Die Entführung aus dem Serail. In addition to Blue Heron’s discs, Paul can be heard on recordings of medieval music by Sequentia, Kurt Weill’s Johnny Johnson and French airs de cour with the Boston Camerata, and music of Bach by Emmanuel Music.

Tenor Owen McIntosh is the recipient of a master’s degree from the New England Conservatory of Music. Heralded by critics as “stylistically impeccable,” “he sings with vocal energy and rhythmic bite” and his “strong yet sweet tenor voice” produces the “clearest lines and most nuanced performances.” Recent performances include the title role in Helios Early Opera’s production of David et Jonathas by Charpentier, Bach’s B Minor Mass with Tucson Chamber Artists, the Evangelist in Telemann’s St. Luke and St. John Passions, Coprimario soloist in Opera Boston’s production of The Nose, and a Jordan Hall performance of Benjamin Britten’s Serenade for Tenor and Horn. Mr. McIntosh is also a member of various ensembles, including Blue Heron, Exsultemus, Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, the Handel & Haydn Society, Harvard Baroque, Tucson Chamber Artists, and Seraphic Fire.

Tenor Jason McStoots has performed around the world and throughout the US in opera, oratorio, and recital. He has been described by critics as “a natural, a believable actor and a first-rate singer,” “light and bluff, but neither lightweight nor bland, and with exemplary enunciation,” and as having “a silken tenor voice” and “sweet, appealing tone.” Recent appearances include a Japanese tour of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion and his European debut in the Christmas Oratorio with the Bach Ensemble in Belgium, both under the direction of Joshua Rifkin; Monteverdi’s Return of Ulysses and 1610 Vespers in Seattle, directed by Stephen Stubbs; and Handel’s Acis and Galatea with the Boston Early Music Festival. McStoots has appeared with
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), whose performances of Monteverdi’s *Vespers* have been hailed by *The New York Times* as “quite simply terrific” and by *The Boston Globe* as “stupendous.” Metcalfe has been a guest director of TENET (New York), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), and he conducted Early Music America’s Young Performers Festival Ensemble in its inaugural performance at the 2011 Boston Early Music Festival. Metcalfe also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist and currently plays with Cleveland’s Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), Montreal’s Arion, and other ensembles in Boston, Montreal, and elsewhere. When not playing or directing, he is at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois (c.1460-1460) and teaches choral repertoire and performance practice at Boston University.

Countertenor Martin Near began his professional singing life at age ten in the choir of men and boys at Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City, advancing to Head Chorister. Mr. Near enjoys a varied singing career, exploring his passions for early music—both as a soloist and in ensemble settings—and new music. In March 2011 he took the role of Hamor in Handel’s *Jepthha* with Boston Cecilia, and was noted for his “fine work” in Buxtehude’s *Heut triumphieret Gottes Sohn* with Boston Baroque. In 2008, Mr. Near appeared as alto soloist with Boston Cecilia in Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*, and was praised as “winsome and lyrical” in the role of David in Handel’s *Saul* with the Harvard University Choir and Baroque Orchestra in 2009. He also relishes ensemble work as a renowned ensemble singer with Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, and Handel & Haydn Society, and as a producer for Cut Circle’s upcoming CD release, *Roman Warriors: L’homme armé Masses by Marbrianus de Orto and Josquin des Prez*. A founding member of the professional early music ensemble Exsultemus, Mr. Near has been Music Director since 2009. Recent engagements include appearing as countertenor soloist in Dominick DiOrio’s *Stabat Mater* with Juventas New Music Ensemble.

Grammy-nominated tenor Aaron Sheehan has quickly established himself as one of the leading American tenors of his generation. His voice is heard regularly in the U.S. and Europe and he is equally comfortable in repertoire ranging from oratorio and chamber music to the opera stage. His singing has taken him to many festivals and venues, including Tanglewood, Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Washington National Cathedral, the early music festivals of Boston, San Francisco, Houston, Tucson, Washington, D.C., and Madison. Known especially for his Baroque interpretations, Aaron has made a name as a first-rate singer of oratorios and cantatas. He has appeared in concert with Blue Heron, the Green Mountain Project, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, North Carolina Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Boston Cecilia, Charleston Bach Festival, Baltimore Handel Choir, Pacific Chorale, Boston Early Music Festival, Tempesta di Mare, Aston Magna Festival, Washington National Cathedral, Bach Collegium San Diego, Tragicomedia, Folger Consort, and Les Voix Baroques.
Tenor **Mark Sprinkle** has sung throughout the US and Europe and has appeared as a soloist and ensemble singer with such distinguished conductors as Seiji Ozawa, Christopher Hogwood, William Christie, Roger Norrington, John Nelson, Andrew Parrott, Grant Llewellyn, Harry Christophers, and Craig Smith. He has collaborated with the Boston Early Music Festival, the Boston Camerata, the Mark Morris Dance Group, Emmanuel Music, Concerto Palatino, Boston Baroque, the Handel & Haydn Society, Blue Heron and many other groups. He was a founding member of the Cambridge Bach Ensemble and can be heard on their recording of vocal music of the German Baroque, “The Muses of Zion.” An active Bach Evangelist, his singing has been described as “expressive,” “very rewarding,” “outstanding,” “vivid,” and “supremely stylish.” He has sung the part 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. He was a fellow of the Britten Pears Institute and has sung at the Bergen Music Festival in Norway, Scotland’s Edinburgh Festival, and the Aldeburgh Festival, UK.

Praised for his “elegant style” (Boston Globe), **Sumner Thompson** is one of today’s most sought-after young baritones. His appearances on the operatic stage include roles in the Boston Early Music Festival’s productions of Conradi’s *Ariadne* (2003) and Lully’s *Psyché* (2007) and several European tours with Contemporary Opera Denmark as Orpheus in Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*. He has performed across North America as a soloist with Concerto Palatino, Tafelmusik, Apollo’s Fire, Les Boréades 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 *Vesperi di 1610* and the new *Vespers 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 Concentus, a return to the Carmel Bach Festival, and Britten’s *War Requiem* with the New England Philharmonic and several guest choirs.

Mezzo-soprano **Daniela Tošić**, a native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, is a soloist and chamber musician who specializes in early, contemporary, and world music repertories. She has performed in concerts throughout the U.S., Europe, and South America. Ms. Tošić is a founding member of the internationally renowned vocal ensemble Tapestry, winners of the Echo Klassik and Chamber Music America’s Recording of the Year and the medieval-world fusion ensemble Hourglass. She has premiered numerous new works and performed Steve Reich’s *Tehillim* with the Colorado Symphony and Cabrillo Festival Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop. In the Boston area Ms. Tošić performs regularly with Blue Heron, La Donna Musicale and Clash of Civilizations. Recent appearances include the role of *Yangchen* in a premiere of Sheila Silver’s *The White Rooster*, a dramatic cantata composed for six Tibetan singing bowls, hand percussion, and four treble voices commissioned by the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, and *Humilitas* in Capella Clausura’s production of Hildegard’s *Ordo Virtutum*. Ms. Tošić has recorded for Telarc, MDG, and several independent labels.

Described as possessing a “remarkably clear, flexible lyric tenor,” **Zachary Wilder** is a much sought-after performer on both the operatic and concert stage. He has performed with numerous groups across the United States, including Apollo’s Fire, the Boston Early Music Festival, Camerata Ventepane, Emmanuel Music, Harvard Baroque Orchestra, Houston Bach Society, Mercury Baroque, Pacific Musicworks, Portland Baroque Orchestra, San Antonio Symphony, and Seraphic Fire. He made his European debut as Renaud in Lully’s *Armide* at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers in Paris, returning to France in the summer of 2011 to
perform as Coridon in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* at Festival d’Aix en Provence and again at La Fenice in Venice. He was the 2010-2011 Lorraine Hunt Lieberson Fellow at Emmanuel Music in Boston and is a former Gerdine Young Artist at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as well as a Tanglewood Music Center Fellow. Summer plans include the Carmel Bach Festival Adams Vocal Masterclass as well as the Aldeburgh Music Festival with Christoph Rousset. He will be joining the cast of Jardin des Voix for an international tour with William Christie in 2013.

Soprano **Shari Alise Wilson** is among the new generation of singers specializing in early and modern music, demonstrating great versatility and stylistic sensitivity. Recent highlights include performances at the Houston Early Music Festival with La Donna Musicale, Bach’s *Magnificat* with American Bach Soloists, Handel’s *Messiah* with the Austin-based Ensemble VIII, David Lang’s *Little Match Girl Passion* with Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and the NYC debut of Kile Smith’s *Veșpers* with Piffaro and The Crossing Choir. An active ensemble singer, Ms. Wilson sings with Boston’s acclaimed Blue Heron, La Donna Musicale, Lorelei Ensemble, Exsultemus, and the Philadelphia-based Crossing Choir under the direction of Donald Nally. She made her New York City solo debut in 2006 at Merkin Hall in a world premiere performance in Benjamin C.S. Boyle’s *Cantata: To One in Paradise*, and has travelled to the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, she collaborated with artists including Gian Carlo Menotti, Richard Hickox, Steven Mercurio, Carlos Saura, and Gunther Kramer. In the fall of 2012 she will join Austin’s Conspirare for the International Polyfollia Choral Music Festival in Saint-Lo, as well as Miami’s Seraphic Fire for the opening of the new season. She can be heard on Blue Heron’s newly-released world premiere CD, *Nicholas Ludford: Missa Regnum mundi* and Kile Smith’s *Veșpers* with Piffaro and The Crossing Choir.
Blue Heron has undertaken a recording project of international musical significance: a five-disc series of Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks – a glorious collection of music from the golden age of English church music by the greatest composers working in England c. 1510–1540.

Blue Heron will record three more CDs in the series over the next few years. The Peterhouse partbooks, copied in 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral, are the largest and most important extant source of pre-Reformation English sacred music, but the repertoire has gone unsung, unheard, and unregarded, largely on account of the disappearance, centuries ago, of one of the five partbooks and a portion of another. For providing a remedy to this situation we are indebted to the English musicologist Nick Sandon, retired from the University of Exeter, who has devoted the greatest part of his professional life to the Peterhouse music and by now has published brilliant and idiomatic reconstructions of nearly all of the incomplete music. Blue Heron has been involved with the Peterhouse repertoire since its founding in 1999 and is deeply steeped in the particularities of its richly melismatic style; the ensemble is thus ideally suited to act as an ambassador on behalf of this wonderful music and Doctor Sandon, its devoted restorer, who has joined Blue Heron as an advisor in this undertaking.

A set of five CDs will surely help restore the Peterhouse repertoire to the central position in music history and in concert life that it merits. This is an expensive and ambitious undertaking, and we thank those who have provided seed money in this early phase. Please consider providing a significant gift in support of our plans for a 5-CD Peterhouse set, which will help expose more and more of this important repertoire to the world. Please contact John Yannis (jy@blueheronchoir.org) to discuss plans for a special recording fund.

Blue Heron’s series of recordings of music from the Peterhouse Partbooks is made possible by our Peterhouse Partners, a leadership group of donors who pledge support for the complete 5-disc series, enabling Blue Heron to bring this extraordinary and neglected repertoire to a wider modern audience. We are deeply grateful for their vision, commitment, and generosity.

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To learn more about becoming a Peterhouse Partner, please contact Blue Heron at office@blueheronchoir.org.
Blue Heron is much more than an ensemble of musicians. Without the devotion, hard work and financial support of a community of board members, staff, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers, Blue Heron would not exist. Those of us fortunate enough to have music as our trade give most grateful thanks to all those who join us in this endeavor of creating, nurturing and sustaining an organization dedicated to making the music of the 15th and 16th centuries come alive in the 21st.

Thanks to our rehearsal hosts, The Church of the Good Shepherd in Watertown, The Church of Our Saviour in Arlington, and Grace Church in Newton.

Evan Ingersoll (Angstrom Images) designs our programs and built our website, Erik Bertrand maintains the website, Chris Clark (Cave Dog Studio) designs our publicity materials and program covers, and Philip Davis records our concerts. All of them support us generously in ways that extend beyond their professional services. We are fortunate to have such expertise on our side.

Thanks to the Cambridge Society for Early Music for supporting the pre-concert talks.

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

We are honored and grateful to have so many generous donors. Blue Heron would not exist without you. Many thanks to you all!

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Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, vol. 2
Nicholas Ludford Missa Regnum mundi
Richard Pygott Salve regina
Restored by Nick Sandon

The second installment in Blue Heron’s 5-CD series of Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks features Nicholas Ludford’s radiant Missa Regnum mundi, sung in a musical context like that of its probable original occasion, a festal mass for St Margaret, with plainchant items from the Proper according to the Use of Salisbury. The disc concludes with Richard Pygott’s extraordinary Salve regina, one of the longest votive antiphons extant and a marvel of rhetorical expression.

This is the world premiere recording of all the music on the disc.

“…transcendently rich and sweet… Fascinating as the history is, it would matter little if the music were less gorgeous—but as it turns out, this is music of rare beauty, and as always, Blue Heron does it full justice.”

Rick Anderson | Music Media Monthly
Blue Heron’s second CD presents superb music by three English composers of the early 16th century: Hugh Aston, Robert Jones, and John Mason. Although their music is gorgeous and of superlative quality, Aston, Jones, and Mason are virtually unknown to performers and scholars today, for the primary extant source of the music—in the case of Robert Jones’s, the sole extant source—is now incomplete through the loss of one partbook and a portion of another, out of an original set of five. The set, known as the Peterhouse partbooks for its present location in the library of Peterhouse, Cambridge, was copied in 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral and is the largest and most important source of English music surviving from the period just before the Reformation; it contains over seventy works, fifty of which are unique to Peterhouse. Blue Heron’s recording uses brilliantly idiomatic reconstructions by Nick Sandon, a British musicologist now living in France, who has devoted his career to the music of the Peterhouse partbooks.

This is the first disc in a projected series of recordings of music from the Peterhouse partbooks and includes world premiere recordings of three works and the first of another in the form recorded here.

“…my sense of Aston’s voice owes much to Blue Heron’s imaginative realization of his scores. Through an array of interpretive choices – fine gradations of dynamics; pungent diction; telling contrasts of ethereal and earthly timbres; tempos that are more lusty than languid; a way of propelling a phrase toward a goal – the music takes on narrative momentum, its moods dovetailing with the theme of the text. It is good to feel a hint of turbulence, of mortal fear, in performances such as Blue Heron’s ...; with that quiver of passion, the music inspires even greater awe."

Alex Ross | The New Yorker, January 10, 2011

“simply gorgeous....Each selection is a gem....a splendid addition to anyone’s collection.”

Karen Cook | Early Music America, Spring 2011

“... the American ensemble BLUE HERON [has] a fine sense of the idiom of this distinctive music, and their performances are rich, muscular and expressive ... the singing and interpretations are impeccable.”

D. James Ross | Early Music Review (UK), June 2010

“It would be impossible to overstate the luscious beauty of this recording, and its deep musical and historical significance is beyond argument. The sound quality is warm, rich and inviting. …I simply have to rate this disc as utterly essential in every way.”

Rick Anderson | Music Media Monthly, June 2010
Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music of Guillaume Du Fay, including three iso-rhythmic motets, two hymns, the Sanctus “Papale,” and a selection of chansons. Also available through our website, and through CD Baby: www.cdbaby.com.

...glorious performances with incandescent singing ... a triumph for an American ensemble in a field long dominated by Europeans.

Craig Zeichner | Early Music America, Fall 2007

This debut marks Blue Heron as a leading new actor in the field of early Renaissance music, both for studying the sources and bringing them to life.... Altogether, this is one of the finest Dufay collections to come out in recent years...

J. F. Weber | Fanfare, September/October 2007

The most attractive aspect of this recital is its feeling of immediacy and freshness.... For me, the high points are the Sanctus Papale, for which it is very welcome to have such a confident and poised rendition; and some of the later songs, for example Malheureux cuer, que veux tu faire, and the cheeky Puisque vous estez campieur ... More, please.

Fabrice Fitch | Goldberg, August/September 2007

Attention educators!

Are you a music teacher or professor? Blue Heron offers a wide variety of educational programs, for students ranging from elementary school to the post-graduate level, including master classes, ensemble coaching, lecture-demontrations, and workshops, as well as recital and concert programs. We are eager to build relationships with and among educators, and an appearance by Blue Heron at your institution may be more affordable than you think. If you are interested, please contact Gail Abbey at office@blueheronchoir.org.

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2012-2013 SEASON

Fridays & Saturdays at 8 p.m. at First Church in Cambridge / Sundays at 4 p.m. in New York City

October 13 in Cambridge / October 14 in New York City (St. Ignatius of Antioch)
And at St. Cecilia Parish, Boston, on October 11
Nicholas Ludford: Missa Inclina cor meum (North American premiere)
& other music from the Peterhouse Partbooks (c. 1540)

December 21 & 22 in Cambridge
Christmas in 15th-century France & Burgundy
Music by Du Fay, Josquin, Obrecht, Brumel & others

March 2 in Cambridge
Divine Songs
Connections and exchanges between secular song and sacred music, featuring the music of Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1425–1497)

May 4 in Cambridge / May 5 in New York City (St. Luke’s in the Fields)
Chansons de printemps
Songs for Spring from 16th-century France and nearby, with music by Le Jeune, Sermisy, Jannequin, Sweelinck & others, with the viol consort Parthenia (New York)

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Background image: our current-favorite image of fan vaulting is Steve Cadman’s photo of the Peterborough Retrochoir, Creative Commons license.