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The Virgin and the Singer
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Saturday, June 12, 2010 at 8 pm
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

Program

Je ne vis oncques la pareille | DT AS PG
Gilles Binchois (c. 1400-1460)
Salve regina
Johannes Ghezelin (fl. 1491–1507)
Kyrie / Missa Ecce ancilla domini
Johannes Regis (c. 1425–1496)
Intemerata Dei mater | MN JM ST PG CB
Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1425–1497)
Par le regard de vos beaux yeux | DT AS SM
Guillaume Du Fay (c. 1397–1474)
Salve regina (IV)
Pierre de la Rue (c. 1452–1538)

INTERMISSION

Alma redemptoris mater
Ockeghem
Ma maitresse | LB LJ SM
Ockeghem
Kyrie & Gloria Ma maitresse
Ockeghem
Credo Je ne vis oncques la pareille (I)
Alexander Agricola (c. 1445/6–1506)
Agnus Dei / Missa Ecce ancilla domini
Regis

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The city of Constantinople, ancient capitol of Eastern Christianity, fell to the Turks in 1453, sending shock waves through Europe. On February 17 of the following year, Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, convoked the Knights of the Golden Fleece to a grand feast in the city of Lille. Philip had founded the order twenty-five years earlier with the idea of organizing a new crusade, an obsession that acquired new urgency in the wake of the Turkish victory on the very frontier of Christendom. The gathering in Lille, known as the Feast of the Pheasant or the Banquet of the Oath, was meant to win sworn commitments from his Knights. Several descriptions of the Feast have come down to us, including an eyewitness account (written, however, at least twenty years later) from a participant, the Burgundian chronicler and poet Olivier de la Marche, and another, nearly identical but somewhat more detailed, compiled by Mathieu d’Escouchy.

The hall where the banquet was held was large and beautifully hung with a tapestry depicting the life of Hercules. ... In this hall were three covered tables, one medium-sized, another large, and another small. On the medium-sized table there was a skilfully-made church with transept and windows, in which there were a ringing bell and four singers who sang and played organs when their turn came. ... The second table, which was the largest, had on it...a pastry in which there were twenty-eight living persons playing in turn various instruments. ... The third table, smaller than the others, had on it a marvellously large and beautiful hart, completely white with great golden antlers, and covered by a rich drape of vermilion silk. Upon this hart was mounted a young boy of twelve clothed in a short robe of crimson velour, wearing a small slashed black hat and pointed shoes. This child held in his two hands the horns of the hart. And on his entry this boy began to sing the dessus of a song, most loud and clear, and the hart sang the tenor, with no one else visible except the child and the artificial hart. And the song they sang was called Je ne vis onques la pareille.

After the bell had stopped ringing, three little children and a tenor sang a very sweet chanson. And when they had finished, in the pastry...a shepherd played a bagpipe in a very novel fashion. Hardly a moment after that there came in through the entrance to the room a horse walking backwards, richly covered with red silk. On it were two trumpeters seated back to back without a saddle. They were dressed in mantles of gray and black silk, with hats and masks; and they led the horse backwards up and down the length of the room, all the while playing a fanfare on their trumpets.

The entrements or between-course entertainments that followed included a performance on a German cornett, the entrance of a goblin "with the hairy legs and feet and long talons of a griffin from the waist down and the form of a man above the waist," a pageant featuring Jason, the mythological patron of the Order, motets played on the organs in the "church," and a "long chanson" called La Saulvegarde de ma vie sung from the pastry by three sweet voices.

The Virgin and the Singer

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The entertainments continued with music of flutes, lute, organs, trumpets, and fiddles, motets sung from the church, a fire-breathing dragon, and more mystery plays reenacting the battles of Jason. The climax of the evening was reached with the entrance of a huge giant dressed in green-striped silk.

On his head he wore a turban in the manner of the Saracens of Granada, in his left hand he held an enormous, old-fashioned mace, and with his right hand he led an elephant draped with silk. On the elephant there was a castle, in which there was a woman dressed like a nun in white satin. Over this she wore a cloak of black cloth, and her head was bound with a white kerchief in the style of Burgundy or of a nun.

Apparently played by La Marche himself, the woman represented the Holy Church herself, and she addressed a long lament in verse to the company.

Secular and sacred music intermingle seamlessly in the succession of *entremets* at the Feast of the Pheasant. A chanson is sung from the church as the festivities get underway: “What it was I could not say,” writes D’Escouchy, “but it seemed to me a pleasant benedictio for the commencement of the supper.” Motets are sung and played for entertainment, instrumental solos and ensemble pieces sound at the conclusion of religious allegories; music diverts and persuades, allegorical spectacle both impresses by its virtuosity and compels action, or at least the promise of action; meaning layers upon meaning.

Presented in a context so laden with symbolism, which is signalled from the outset by the horse riding backwards, and sung by a boy and a white hart, an unmistakable symbol for Christ, the song *Je ne vis oncques la pareille* acquires a significance beyond that of a perfectly conventional lyric of courtly love addressed to a “gracious lady”: the lady is Our Lady. The lyric lends itself easily to the transfer, for the lady’s identity, slipping between human and divine, is already questioned by the speaker: “Upon seeing you I marvel / And ask, could this be Our Lady?”

It must be said that, as information about performance practice, the chroniclers’ account of a three-part song sung by a boy and a hart—that rarest of cases in the fifteenth century, a fairly detailed description of the performance of a specific piece—is not exactly what one hopes for. Today we lack a boy and are missing the hart, but we do have a low contratenor, sung on this occasion by a man. (The original contratenor perhaps served as hindquarters for the “artifice du cherf.”) As for the song, it is grave and moving; one trusts the boy and stag did it justice. It is ascribed to Guillaume Du Fay in one source, but scholarly opinion now favors another manuscript’s ascription to Gilles Binchois, the Burgundian chanson composer par excellence, although he had retired from the court a year before the feast of 1454. (This year we commemorate the 550th anniversary of his death in 1460.)

*Je ne vis oncques la pareille* inspired a large family of works that drew upon its text or music. Jean Molinet, La Marche’s younger colleague at the Burgundian court and a poet with a great fondness for quoting chanson incipits in his own verse, uses the opening line of the song no less than four times. Three times he embeds it in courtly love poetry; the fourth instance is his *Oroison a Nostre Dame* of c. 1467, in which each of the 19 strophes begins and...
ends with the incipit of a song. The poem addresses the Mother of God amid a panoply of images from Biblical and liturgical sources traditionally used to signify the Virgin:

I have never seen the equal of you, gracious maid; Incline then your ear towards me, Since I prepare myself to serve you. As of all the most lovely, Mother of God, virgin and servant, Enclosed garden, key of David, Source of honor, throne of ivory, Seated beneath the nine heavens, You wound me, more than with a pike, By the sight of your beautiful eyes.

The last line of this strophe is the first of Du Fay’s Par le regard de vos beaux yeux.

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, courtly love lyrics were frequently put to use as Marian allegory, and the quotation of a secular song such as Je ne vis oncques la pareille in a piece of sacred music such as a mass or mass movement seems to have signalled the appropriateness of the music for a Marian feast. Thus Jacob Obrecht quoted the tenor of Je ne vis oncques la pareille in the Kyrie of his first Missa Plurimorum carminum (the ‘Mass of Many Songs,’ so-called by its modern editors for the large number of songs quoted), and Alexander Agricola based two Credo settings on it, both preserved in sources that suggest use in Marian masses. The Marian allegory is explicit, of course, if the song is quoted in a Marian antiphon setting, at the same speed as in the song itself. Later sections quote the traditional plainchant melody of the antiphon. (Note that both Ghiselin and La Rue’s works are alternatim settings in which the odd verses are sung in chant, the even verses cast in polyphony.) La Rue composed six settings of the Salve regina; this one uses the entire melody of the Je ne vis oncques la pareille and the regard de vos beaux yeux: the first section of this Salve, “Vita dulcedo et spes nostra salve,” uses the entire melody of Du Fay’s song in its highest voice, at normal speed, and the opening of the verse even combines Du Fay’s tune with the first gesture of the chant melody. In its unique source the scribe dubs this Salve, most appropriately, “Vita parlagræt.”

Never one to content himself with the simplest solution to a musical challenge, Agricola makes the most complicated uses of Je ne vis oncques la pareille in his two Credo settings based upon it. The Credo Je ne vis oncques I, with its luscious dark scoring for four low voices, uses material from the song in all of its three sections. In the first section, the first half of the song’s melody appears at normal speed in the superius (in this case one of three parts in the same range), sung against two other lines; as this quotation reaches its cadence a fourth voice enters with the tenor of the chanson, sung complete twice, first in doubly augmented note values, then at normal speed. In the second section, ‘Crucifixus,’ the song’s tenor appears in the bass, transposed down a fifth and curtailed, coming to an end one whole phrase early. The last section shows Agricola at his most compositionally virtuosic. The second half of...
the song’s tenor is divided into its two phrases and sung complete in the tenor of the Credo. The first phrase is subjected to what amounts to ninefold augmentation (the actual procedure is rather more complicated than this description suggests), and, triply-tripled, the triple meter of the song works as a *cantus firmus* against three voices cast in duple meter, so that one “measure” of the augmented tenor melody lasts for nine measures of everyone else’s music. Mind-bending complexities ensue when the next and final phrase of the song tenor is presented in values twice as fast as that, i.e., one-half of ninefold augmentation—are you following this?—so that now one augmented measure of the tenor equals four-and-a-half measures in the other parts. Ah, but the original phrase of the song lasts seven measures, plus its last note! Consider the result of multiplying 4 ½ by an odd number… But Agricola manages to make the music so diverting that the listener is not likely to notice the extra beat or half-measure at the end. Of course, augmentation by three times three carries a symbolic meaning in a piece already directed towards Mary, Queen of the Angels (all nine orders of them), “seated beneath the nine heavens.”

Not only these works, but all of the sacred music on this program quotes or alludes to other, preexistent music. Johannes Ockeghem’s *Alma redemptoris mater* paraphrases the original plainchant melody complete in its second-highest voice. His *Missa Maistresse*, consisting of just Kyrie and Gloria, draws liberally on both discantus and tenor of his chanson. The song itself, written as early as 1450 and perhaps the earliest we have from Ockeghem, is one of his most bewitching creations, and its soaring melodies lend their air of enchantment to the mass. The five-voice motet *Intemerata Dei mater* alludes to at least two of the composer’s own songs, *Presque transi, un peu mains qu’estre mort* and *Fors seulement l’actente que je mesue*. As both songs express a desperate desire for death, while the Latin text of the motet implores the mother of God to “snatch the weary up hence / … with a divine hand, and set them safe in the citadel,” Jeffrey Dean has interpreted the piece, another masterpiece, as Ockeghem’s vaudevillicdiction. Finally, in his *Missa Ecco ancilla Domini / Ne timues Maria*, Johannes Regis uses two plainchant Marian antiphons as principal *cantus firmi*, presenting them in combination and then on occasion stirring five more antiphons into the mix.

Regis is one of those composers whose star shone more brightly in the fifteenth century than it does now. Writing in 1477, Johannes Tinchor placed him in exalted company:

> …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 exhal 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.

As Sean Gallagher observes, of Tinchoris’s five contemporaries worthies, Regis is the only one actually “known to have had extended contact with both Binchois and Du Fay.” Regis served alongside Binchois in the collegiate church of St. Vincent in Soignies.
between Binchois’ arrival there in 1453, retiring from active service at the Burgundian court, and his death in 1460. Shortly after Binchois died on September 20, Regis was recruited for the position of choirmaster at Cambrai Cathedral, where Du Fay led the musical establishment. In the end Regis declined the post, but he stayed in contact with Du Fay, without a doubt the most celebrated composer in all of Europe, until the older man died in 1474.

What did Tinctoris mean by sweetness? The word fell so easily off sixteenth-century tongues that it is extremely difficult to attribute any specific meaning to it, but it may suggest suavity of melody, richness of harmony, or smoothness in the art of counterpoint. Tinctoris also praised a motet by Regis, Clangat plebs, and Ockeghem’s Ma maistresse as models of varietas, which Gallagher interprets as a “mode of composing” in which “composers could work out a sequence of musical passages, each having its own localized sense of regularity and coherence, the nature of which was continually changing.” In Ma maistresse, you can hear this as shifts in contrapuntal texture, with imitation deployed in ever-varied ways; as variation in the speed at which the melody moves forward, now urgent, now languidly suspended; and as changes in modal emphasis: note especially the way the harmonies in the second part of the piece create an entirely new mood.

In the two movements from Regis’s Missa Ecce ancilla Domini / Ne timeas Maria performed here, the listener may be most forcefully struck by the composer’s propensity to alternate between major and minor thirds sounding above a given note. Sometimes the two are closely juxtaposed; in one particularly dramatic instance in the second Kyrie they sound simultaneously and are sustained against each other.

The concluding portion of the program samples a Kyrie and Gloria from one partial setting of the Mass Ordinary, an independent Credo, and an Agnus Dei from another, complete mass, all by different composers, ordering them into a sort of Marian mass (although lacking a Sanctus). Although mass cycles are nowadays sometimes regarded as sacrosanct wholes, such an attitude was foreign to the fifteenth century, which, however much it valued complete masses, considered it perfectly seemly to extract and sing whatever was needed for the liturgy at hand; the numerous independent mass movements by fifteenth-century composers testify to the usefulness of single mass sections set polyphonically.

As our concert will not be graced by the entrance of a lady in a castle riding on an elephant, we hope you enjoy the extra varietas provided by other, more subtle means.

—Scott Metcalfe

Thanks to Sean Gallagher and Jennifer Bloxam for helping to inspire this program. Prof. Bloxam discusses Je ne vis oncques la pareille, Molinet, and Agricola’s two settings of the Credo based on the song in a recent essay, “I have never seen your equal”: Agricola, the Virgin, and the Creed,” in Early music 34 (August 2006): 391-407. Prof. Gallagher is, inter alia, the author of a forthcoming monograph on Johannes Regis.

Photo: Liz Linder
I have never seen the equal of you, my gracious lady, for your beauty is, upon my soul, by all others unequaled.

En vous voyant je m’esmerveille et dis qu’est ceci nostre dame? Je ne vis onques la pareille de vous, ma gracieuse dame.

Votre tres grant douceur rosseville mon espir, et mon oeil entame mon cuer, dont dire puis sans blame, puisq’a vous servir m’apareille:

Je ne vis onques la pareille…


Kyrie eleison. 

tenor i Ecce ancilla Domini: fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. 

tenor ii Ne timeris Maria, invenisti gratiam apud Dominum. 

Christe eleison. 

tenor i Beata es Maria que credidisti. 

Kyrie eleison. 

tenor i Perficientur in te que dicta sunt tibi a Domino.
Intemerata Dei mater, generosa puella, Milia carminibus quam stipant agmina divum, Respice nos tantum, si quid jubilando meremur. Tu scis, virgo decens, quanto discrimine agatur Exulibis, passimque quibus jacemur arenis.

Nec sin te manet ubi quies, ipsis nulli labori; Nulla salus patrie, donus aut potiusa parentis, Cui regina prees, dispensans omnia: leto Suscipis ore pios, dulci quos neclare potas Et facis asiduos epulos accumbere sacris.

Adjiciat facito miseros piétatis ocello Filius (ipsa potes); fessos hinc arripire sursum Diva virgo manu, tuto et in alce locato. Amen.

Par le regard de vos beaux yeux et de vo maintien bel et gent a vous, belle, vien humblement moy presenter vostre amoureux.

De vostre amour sui desireux et mon vouloir tout s’y consent par le regard de vos beaux yeux et de vo maintien bel et gent.

Or vous plaise, cuer gracieux, moy retenir a present pour vostre amy entierement, et je seray vostre en tous lieux.

Par le regard de vos beaux yeux...

Salve regina

Alma redemptoris mater, que pervaia celi porta manes, et stella mari, succure cadenti surgere qui curat populo, tu que genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem.

Virgo, prius ac postierius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud ave, peccatorum misericere. Undefiled mother of God, noble maiden, whom a thousand columns of angels attend with songs, be but mindful of us, if we deserve anything for jubilating. Thou knowest, fair virgin, in what great danger life is lived by exiles, and on what sands we are cast far and wide.

Nor without thee remaineth any rest, no hope in toil, no salvation in the fatherland, or our parental house to be obtained, O queen, thou presidest, steward of all things; with a glad smile thou receivest the pious, whom thou givest sweet nectar to drink and maketh to recline perpetually at the sacred banquets.

Make thy son look upon the wretched with the eye of pity (thou thyself canst); snatch the weary up hence, virgin, with a divine hand, and set them safe in the citadel. Amen.

Compelled by the sight of your beautiful eyes and your lovely and noble bearing, to you, beauty, I come humbly to present myself, your suitor.

Of your love I am desirous and my will assents to it completely Compelled by the sight of your beautiful eyes and your lovely and noble bearing.

So may it please you, O gracious heart, to accept me now, at this moment, for your friend, entirely, and I shall be yours in all places.

Compelled by the sight of your beautiful eyes ...

(see above)

Beneficent mother of the Savior, who keeps the door of heaven always open, and star of the sea: help those falling people who seek to rise up, you who, to the wonder of nature, begot your holy creator.

Virgin before and afterwards, from Gabriel’s mouth bearing that “Hail,” have mercy on us sinners.

Par le regard de vos beaux yeux, et de vo maintien bel et gent a vous, belle, vien humblement moy presenter vostre amoureux.

De vostre amour sui desireux et mon vouloir tout s’y consent par le regard de vos beaux yeux et de vo maintien bel et gent.

Or vous plaise, cuer gracieux, moy retenir a present pour vostre amy entierement, et je seray vostre en tous lieux.

Par le regard de vos beaux yeux...

Salve regina

Alma redemptoris mater, que pervaia celi porta manes, et stella mari, succure cadenti surgere qui curat populo, tu que genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem.

Virgo, prius ac postierius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud ave, peccatorum misericere.
Acknowledgments

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Ma maitresse et ma plus grant amye
De mon désir la mortelle enemy,
Parfaite en bien s’onces maiz le fut femme,
Celle seule de qui court bruit et fame
D’estre sans pe, ne vous verray je mye?
Hela, de vous bien plaindre me devroie,
S’il ne vous plaid que brefement vous voyez,
M’amour, par qui d’autre aymer n’ay puissance.
Car sans vous voir, en quelque part que soye,
Tout ce que voys me desplaiint et ennuye,
Ne jusqu’alors je n’auray souffissance.
Incessamment mon dolect enuer larmye
Doubtant qu’en vous pitié soit endormye.
Que je ne soit, ma tant amée dame;
Mais s’ainsy est, si malheureux me clame,
Que plus ne quis vivre heure ne demye.
Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye...

Gloria in excelsis deo, et in terra paix hominibus
vois. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui
tollis peccata mundi, sumptis ab omnibus.
Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, domine deus, domine
et in terra pax hominibus.

Maistresse et ma plus grant amye...

Gloria in excelsis deo, et in terra paix hominibus
vois. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui
tollis peccata mundi, sumptis ab omnibus.
Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, domine deus, domine
et in terra pax hominibus.

My lady and my greatest friend...

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
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.

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Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere

Agnus dei,

tenor

Ecce ancilla Domini: fiat mihi

Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem

Ne timeas Maria, invenisti gratia

Ecce concipies et paries filium.

Christum, filium dei unigenitum, et ex patre

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato:

Et ascendit in celum: sedet ad dexteram patris. Et

factorem celi et terre, visibilium omnium et

manifestum est de lumine, deum verum de deo vero. Genitum

non factum, consubstantialem patri: per quem

secundum scripturas.

Apud Dominum.

In you shall be accomplished what you have been told

Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.

According to your word.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,

I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. I confess one baptism for

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who

believe in the Glorification of the Father. He will come again to judge both the living

believe in the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

he has sung the role in the St. John Passion with

Carissimi’s St. Matthew Passion

and Vivaldi’s L’Estro Armonioso.

Ariadne Festival's productions of Conradi’s

Dehomicidio and several European

appeared in BEMF’s concert productions of

Carissimi’s Abraham and Isaac at the 92nd Street

Tafelmusik, Apollo’s Fire, Les Boréades de Montréal, the Green Mountain Project in New York City, and

Mezzo-soprano Daniela Tosić, a native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, is a soloist and chamber musician who specializes in early, contemporary, and world music repertoires. She has performed in concerts throughout the U.S. and Europe. Ms. Tosić is a founding member of the internationally renowned vocal ensemble Tapestry, winners of the Echo Klassik and Chamber Music American’s Recording of the Year. She has premiered numerous new works and performed Steve Reich’s Tehillim with the Colorado Symphony and Cabirlo Festival Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop. In the Boston area Ms. Tosić performs regularly with La Donna Musicale and Balmus. She is also a founding member of the medieval-world fusion ensemble HourGlass.
Blue Heron, Juventas New Music, Boston Secession, and Opera Boston.

Scott Metcalfe is a specialist in music between 1400 and 1750 whose career as a violinist and conductor has taken him all over North America and Europe. He has been invited to serve as guest director by Emmanuel Music, Monadnock Music, the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in works by Monteverdi, Biber, Buxtehude, Handel, Bach, and others, and in January 2010 he led the Green Mountain Project in an all-star 400th-anniversary performance of Monteverdi’s 1610 Vespers in New York City, which the New York Times called “quite simply terrific.” Metcalfe is concertmaster of the Trinity Consort of New York City, which the New York Times called “definitely and exquisitely.” Metcalfe keeps busy writing, teaching, translating, and editing. He is at work on a new complete edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois in collaboration with Sean Gallagher, and is a lecturer in choral repertoire and performance practice at Boston University. Metcalfe received a bachelor’s degree in biology, and in 2005 completed a master’s degree in historical performance practice at Harvard. He has been invited to serve as guest director by Emmanuel Music, Monadnock Music, the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in works by Monteverdi, Biber, Buxtehude, Handel, Bach, and others, and in January 2010 he led the Green Mountain Project in an all-star 400th-anniversary performance of Monteverdi’s 1610 Vespers in New York City, which the New York Times called “quite simply terrific.” Metcalfe is concertmaster of the Trinity Consort of New York City, which the New York Times called “definitely and exquisitely.” Metcalfe keeps busy writing, teaching, translating, and editing. He is at work on a new complete edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois in collaboration with Sean Gallagher, and is a lecturer in choral repertoire and performance practice at Boston University. Metcalfe received a bachelor’s degree in biology, and in 2005 completed a master’s degree in historical performance practice at Harvard.

Countertenor Martin Near began his professional singing career at age ten in the choir of men and boys at Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City, advancing to Head Chorister. He recently 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. A founding member of the professional early music ensemble Exultemus, Mr. Near took up the role of Music Director this season. He recently made his debut as record producer for a recording of sacred music by Josquin des Prez and Marbrianus de Orto with the vocal ensemble Cut Circle, to be released this year. Mr. Near served as composer and music director of the one act opera Six Character in Search of an Opera for Project ARIA (AIDS Response by Independent Artists). An advocate of the performance of new music, Mr. Near has been a soloist in numerous world premieres, including Temptation in the Desert by Elliott Gyger for Mr. Near and Seraphim Singers, and Some Reflections by John Eaton, a microtonal piece in 72 note equal temperament composed for the 40th anniversary of the Boston Microtonal Society.

Tenor Aaron Sheehan has appeared as a soloist with Tragicomedia, Concerto Palatino, New York Collegium, American Bach Soloists, Handel & Haydn Society, Aton Magna Festival, Monteverdi Vespers of 1610 with the Green Mountain Project in New York City, Bach cantatas with the American Bach Soloists in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the role of Amour in Lully’s opera Psyché at the Boston Early Music Festival in June 2007; in November of 2008 he performed as Head Chorister with the Harvard University Choir and Baroque Orchestra. A founding member of the professional early music ensemble Exultemus, Mr. Near took up the role of Music Director this season. He recently made his debut as record producer for a recording of sacred music by Josquin des Prez and Marbrianus de Orto with the vocal ensemble Cut Circle, to be released this year. Mr. Near served as composer and music director of the one act opera Six Character in Search of an Opera for Project ARIA (AIDS Response by Independent Artists). An advocate of the performance of new music, Mr. Near has been a soloist in numerous world premieres, including Temptation in the Desert by Elliott Gyger for Mr. Near and Seraphim Singers, and Some Reflections by John Eaton, a microtonal piece in 72 note equal temperament composed for the 40th anniversary of the Boston Microtonal Society.

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The vocal ensemble Blue Heron combines a commitment to vibrant live performance with the study of original source materials and historical performance practice. Blue Heron’s principal repertoire interests are fifteenth-century English and Franco-Flemish polyphony, from Dunstable and Du Fay through Ockeghem to the generation of Josquin Desprez; Spanish music between 1500 and 1600; and neglected early sixteenth-century English music, especially the rich repertory of the Peterhouse partbooks, copied 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). Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents its own series of concerts in Cambridge and has appeared at other venues throughout the Northeast, including the Boston Early Music Festival, St. Ignatius of Antioch and the 93rd Street Y in New York City, and Monadnock Music in New Hampshire. In July 2008 it made its West Coast debut at Festival Mosaic in San Luis Obispo, California, and in October 2009 celebrated its tenth birthday by opening the twentieth-anniversary season of the Boston Early Music Festival concert series. Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007 and was welcomed with international critical acclaim; its second, of music by Hugh Ashton, Robert Jones, and John Mason (Music from the Peterhouse partbooks, vol. 1) was released in March.

Described as “the kind of vocal velvet you don’t often hear in contemporary music,” displaying “rock solid technique” (Boston Phoenix), Jennifer Ashe, soprano, has been hailed by the Boston Globe as giving a performance that was “pure bravura… riveting the audience with a radiant and opulent voice.” Ashe is a familiar face in the Boston new music scene, frequently performing on series such as Harvard Group for New Music, New Music Brandeis, and the Prom Festival at Harvard. She is a senior member of the Callithumpian Consort led by Steven Drury, and the soprano for the Boston Microtonal Society’s chamber ensemble NotaRiotous. She is also a founding member of the flute and soprano duo Prana, with Alicia DiDonato, which was honored to be chosen as a semi-finalist at the 2007 Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition. She holds a DMA in vocal performance from New England Conservatory. Formerly on the faculty at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, she is currently an Assistant Professor at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Michael Barrett is active in the Boston area as a singer and conductor. While studying and working in the Netherlands he was a member of the Huelgas Ensemble, the Netherlands Bach Society and the Hemony Ensemble. In Boston Mr. Barrett directs Sprezzatura, a professional vocal ensemble, and Convivium Musicum, a Renaissance chamber choir; he co-directs Académie, a professional chamber choir and orchestra for Baroque music. At Harvard he directs the Holden Chamber Ensembles. As a singer Mr. Barrett has collaborated with Blue Heron, Seven Times Salt, and Boston Secessio, and has appeared in the two most recent opera productions of the Boston Early Music Festival. He also maintains a studio for private instruction in voice and music theory. Mr. Barrett earned an AB in music from Harvard University; an MM in choir conducting from Indiana University in Bloomington, and a first phase diploma in Baroque and Classical singing from the Royal Conservatory in The Hague.

Biographies
Cameron Beauchamp, bass, is in demand throughout the country as a soloist and chamber musician. In Boston, Cameron is a member of Blue Heron, Exsultemus, Cat Circle, Schola Cantorum, Boston Secessio, and the choir of the Church of the Advent. He also sings with Austin's Conspirare, Miami’s Seraphic Fire, Atlanta’s New Trinity Baroque, and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. A native of San Antonio and ten-year resident of the DFW area, Cameron frequently performed with the Dallas Bach Society, Texas Camerata, Orpheus Chamber Singers, Texas Choral Artists, the Helios Ensemble, and the Orchestra of New Spain, and was a regular soloist for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. He received his musical training from the University of North Texas, where he doubled in voice and jazz trombone. While at UNT, Cameron sang at two national ACDA conventions with the A Cappella choir, and Candens Lilium in Cologne. Upcoming solo engagements include Handel and Bach arias at the Foundling Museum in London, BWV 193 and Rameau’s In convertendo with the Connecticut Early Music Festival, and concert performances at the Schmittgen Museum in Cologne and the Cité de la Musique in Paris. Ms. Brotherton can be heard on recordings for Weit Deutsche Randfunk, Raumbild/mark aurel editions, Harmonia Mundi, Blue Heron, and CPO labels.

Tenor Allen Combs is a native of Idaho Falls, Idaho, and received his education at the University of Idaho, and the University of Lowell. In addition to his work with Blue Heron, Mr. Combs has performed with Schola Cantorum, Cappella Almare, and Exsultemus. His recital repertoire embraces music from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century and includes the major song cycles of Schubert and Britten. Mr. Combs has had world premieres at the Lowell New Music Festival and with Composers in Red Sneakers. He performs frequently at Phillips Academy, Andover, where he has been a member of the voice faculty since 1987. Currently a soloist and chorister at the Church of the Advent, Mr. Combs has also sung with the choirs of Emmanuel and Trinity Church. He has been music director and conductor of the Andover Choral Society since 1990, is the vocal director for the Composers’ Conference and Chamber Music Center at Wellesley College, and served for five years as music director for the New England Dance Ensemble in Derry, New Hampshire. Bass-baritone Paul Guttry enjoys the variety of operatic 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 Conspirare, 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, Cantat singers, Boston Cecilia, Prism Opera, Intermezzo, Boston Revels, and Collage. 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 on recordings of Bach by Emmanuel Music.

Laura Jeppesen is a graduate of the Yale School of Music. She is the principal violist of Boston Baroque and gambist of the Boston Museum Trio, and plays in many early music groups, including the Handel & Haydn Society, The Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Aston Magna, and the Carthage Consort. She has been a Woodrow Wilson Designate, a Fellow of Radcliffe’s Bunting Institute, and a Fulbright Scholar. In 2006 the Independent Critics of New England nominated her for an IRNE award for the score she produced as music director of the American Repertory Theater’s staging of Christopher Marlowe’s Dido, Queen of Carthage. She has performed as soloist under conductors Christopher Hogwood, Edo de Waart, Seiji Ozawa, Martin Pearlman, Grant Llewellyn, and Bernard Haitink. Her extensive discography includes music for solo viola da gamba, the gamba sonatas of J. S. Bach, Buxtehude’s trio sonatas opus 1 and 2, Telemann’s Paris Quartets, and music of Marin Marais. She teaches at Boston University and Wellesley College.

Jason McIntosh, a Grammy-nominated soloist, has been described by critics as “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.” He recently received critical acclaim for his Japanese solo debut in Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, in which he sang the part of the Evangelist and tenor arias, and for his performances in the revival of William Kentridge’s production of Monteverdi’s Return of Ulysses and Handel’s Acis and Galatea with the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF). As Arnalta in Monteverdi’s Coronation of Poppea with the Early Music Guild of Seattle he was praised by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer as “a born comic.” He has appeared with groups around the US including the Boston Lyric Opera, Pacific MusicWorks, Boston Camerata, Handel Choir of Baltimore, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, OperaBoston, Tragicomedia, Tanglewood Music Center, Granite State Opera and OperaProvidence. He can be heard on recordings with Blue Heron on the Blue Heron label and on BEMF’s Grammy-nominated recording of Lully’s Psyche on the CPO label. Forthcoming are solo performances in recordings of Charpentier and Blow, also on the CPO label.

The recipient of a master’s degree from the New England Conservatory of Music and a soloist featured in the 2009 Festival Ensemble Stuttgart, tenor Owen McIntosh is quickly gaining recognition at home and abroad. His most recent performances include the Evangelist in St. Luke and St. John Passions by Telemann, the role of Coprario in Opera Boston’s production of The Nose, and a Jordan Hall performance of Benjamin Britten’s Serenade for tenor and horn. He was featured as Dema in the NEC production of L’Orfeo, as Robert in the Kent Music Festival’s Händel and Zürück in Dessau, Germany, and as Ferrando in Così fan tutte and Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi with the North Star Opera Repertory Theatre. Mr. McIntosh sings with various Boston-based ensembles including Exsultemus, Boston Baroque,