



# A MASS FOR ST MARGARET

Saturday, October 16, 2010 at 8 pm  
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

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## NICHOLAS LUDFORD, *MISSA REGNUM MUNDI*

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### A MASS FOR ST MARGARET

Introit: Me expectaverunt peccatores

*Sarum plainchant*

Kyrie XII (Conditor)

*Sarum plainchant*

Gloria / Missa Regnum mundi

*Nicholas Ludford (c. 1490-1557)*

Gradual: Specie tua

*Sarum plainchant*

Alleluya: Veni electa mea

*Sarum plainchant*

Credo / Missa Regnum mundi

### INTERMISSION

Offertory: Offerentur regi virgines

*Sarum plainchant*

Sanctus / Missa Regnum mundi

Agnus Dei / Missa Regnum mundi

Communion: Feci iudicium

*Sarum plainchant*

Ite missa est

*Sarum plainchant*



Votive antiphon: Gaude virgo mater Christi

*Hugh Aston (c. 1485-1558)*



# BLUE HERON

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Paul Guttry  
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Scott Metcalfe, *director*

Pre-concert talk by James Simpson  
(Harvard University),  
*sponsored by the Cambridge Society for Early Music*



Blue Heron · 45 Ash Street, Auburndale MA 02466

(617) 960-7956 · [info@blueheronchoir.org](mailto:info@blueheronchoir.org) · [www.blueheronchoir.org](http://www.blueheronchoir.org)

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## A MASS FOR ST MARGARET

The title of this evening's concert should perhaps end with a question mark: A Mass for St Margaret? Among the many unsolved puzzles concerning music from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is the very basic question of why composers wrote the masses they did. Many cyclical settings of the Mass are based on a *cantus firmus*, or a pre-existent melody, often a piece of plainchant. The pre-existent melody is generally quoted in the tenor of the polyphonic composition, the other voices relating and alluding to it. But why choose any one *cantus firmus* in particular? The answer most often proposed is that the *cantus firmus* carries symbolic meaning, connecting the unchanging ritual texts of the Ordinary to a specific occasion for which the polyphonic Mass was composed. In the case of Nicholas Ludford's *Missa Regnum mundi*, the *cantus firmus* is the chant "Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum seculi contempsi," the ninth responsory at Matins from the Common of Virgin Martyrs—that is, liturgical items to be chanted on the feasts of saints who are virgin martyrs and who do not have their own special set of texts. This seems unpromising. Why compose such a splendid (not to mention lengthy) Mass for such an apparently generic purpose?

In fact, the Use of Salisbury, the liturgical calendar that governed medieval English Christianity, includes just two feasts of virgin martyrs celebrated with nine lessons at Matins whose responsories and other texts were drawn from the Common rather than from the saint's own individual Office and Proper. These are St Margaret of Antioch, whose feast day was July 20, and the Welsh saint Winifred, honored on November 3. Of the two, Margaret was by far the more popular, with over 250 churches dedicated to her in England; the most famous of these is St Margaret's, Westminster, which lies immediately adjacent to Westminster Abbey and is

today the parish church of the Houses of Parliament. This was Nicholas Ludford's parish church from the early 1520s until his death in 1557; he was buried there on August 9 of that year. While Ludford was not employed at St Margaret's—he spent most of his career at St Stephen's Chapel, a collegiate church attached to the royal palace of Westminster—he seems to have been actively involved with his parish, acting as witness to the churchwardens' accounts on seven occasions, contributing to the purchase of various furnishings for the church, which had been rebuilt between 1482 and 1523, and serving as a warden himself between 1552 and 1554. In 1533/4 St Margaret's churchwardens bought a book of polyphonic music from him for 20 shillings. It thus seems most likely that Ludford originally composed the *Missa Regnum mundi* for a feastal mass at St Margaret's on the patronal festival of July 20; perhaps it was included in the book of music that Ludford sold to the church.

Once composed and performed for the first time, a polyphonic Mass might make its way in the world for uses independent of its original purpose, so a Mass whose *cantus firmus* was chosen to refer to St Margaret might be sung on another notable occasion. If this were not so, Ludford's Mass would certainly not have survived until today, for the only source we have of the piece is one unrelated to St Margaret's, Westminster, or indeed to any other church that might have celebrated her feast day (or that of St Winifred, for that matter) with such splendor. How precisely, we do not know, but by 1539 the work had arrived at Magdalen College, Oxford, where it was copied by the lay-clerk (that is, professional singer) and music scribe Thomas Bull into a large collection of Masses, Magnificats, and votive antiphons that he would bring with him in 1540 to his new position in the choir of Canter-



bury Cathedral. Bull's work is manifestly that of a professional copyist hired to assemble, in considerable haste, a great quantity of music intended to be sung in church services, rather than for study or for presentation to a noble as a gift. Since the chapel at Magdalen College was dedicated to Mary Magdalene and Canterbury lacks a chapel honoring St Margaret, it is unlikely that either institution would have had any use for a Mass that could only be sung for her feast. They must rather have regarded the work as of more general purpose.

Why did Bull copy so much music, so quickly? He appears to have been acting on commission. The monastic foundation at Canterbury was dissolved by Henry VIII in April 1540, just one of nearly a dozen great monastic cathedrals dissolved in 1539-41, mostly to be refounded in short order as secular institutions subject not to an abbot, a member of a religious order, but to a bishop and thus to Henry as head of the Church of England. Some of the New Foundation cathedrals aspired to considerably more pomp and circumstance than their monastic predecessors and sought to assemble a large choir of professional singers as well as boys in training. Bull appears among twelve vicars-choral on a list, undated but probably drawn up in the summer of 1540, of the staff of the newly-refounded Canterbury Cathedral; the first of the twelve is Thomas Tallis, and there are also ten "queresters" (choristers, "quire" being the normal sixteenth-century spelling of the word) and their master. Such a grand and much expanded choral establishment would require an entirely new library of up-to-date polyphonic repertory, and this Bull supplied, bringing about 70 works with him from Oxford.

But this brilliant choral institution would not last long. Henry died in 1547 and the Protestant Refor-

mation that ensued took a dim view of such popish decorations as professional choirs and the highly sophisticated Latin music they sang. All the elaborate polyphonic music of late medieval English Catholicism became, at best, obsolete; at worst it was viewed as gaudy ornament to a despicable ritual. If a manuscript escaped deliberate destruction by zealots, it might be subjected to other indignities:

A greate nombre of them whych purchased those superstysyouse mansyons [former monasteries], reserved of those librarye bokes, some to serve their jakes [privies], some to scoure their candelstyckes, and some to rubbe their bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and sope-sellers... Yea the universytees of thys realm are not all clere in this detestable fact... I know a merchaunt man, whych shall at thys tyme be namelesse, that boughte the contentes of two noble lybraries.... Thys stuffe hath he occupied in the stede of graye paper [wrapping-paper] for the space of more than these x yeares, and yet hath store ynough for as many yeares to come.

(Preface to *The laboryouse Journey & serche of Johann Leylande for England's Antiquities* (1549) quoted in Roger Bray, *The Blackwell history of music in Britain: The sixteenth century*, pp. 7-8.)

Very few books of church music survived. The main extant sources from the first half of the sixteenth century comprise a mere three choirbooks, four sets of partbooks, and one organ manuscript. (Compare this paucity to, for example, the sixteen choirbooks once owned by a single establishment, Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1524.) Bull's manuscripts, a set of five partbooks (one each for the standard five parts of early sixteenth-century English polyphony: treble, mean, contratenor, tenor, and bass), wound

up in the library of Peterhouse, Cambridge, by the 1630s, survived yet another cataclysm of Protestant destruction—that wrought by the Puritans in the 1640s—and today may be consulted on the worldwide web in astonishingly high-resolution photographs taken by DIAMM, the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music.

Or, at least, some of Bull's set may be seen. Somewhere along the way, one of the five books disappeared, the tenor partbook, along with several pages from the treble book. Now, of the 72 pieces in this set of partbooks (known today as the Peterhouse partbooks, for their present location, and more specifically as the Henrician set, for the monarch during whose reign they were copied), 39 of the pieces are transmitted uniquely in this manuscript, while another dozen or so are incomplete in their other sources. The result is that some fifty pieces of music—a very significant portion of everything that remains from pre-Reformation England—now lack their tenor, and some of these are also missing all or part of their treble. We are able to sing this music today only thanks to the extraordinarily skilled reconstruction of the English musicologist Nick Sandon. It is also Sandon who pieced together the story about the genesis of the partbooks and of the *Missa Regnum mundi* that I have related above.

Sandon completed his dissertation on the Peterhouse partbooks in 1983, including in it recompositions of most of the missing tenor lines; in the years since he has been refining his work and gradually issuing it in Antico Edition. Both the *Missa Regnum mundi* and Hugh Aston's votive antiphon *Gaude virgo mater Christi* come from Sandon's editions of Peterhouse repertoire. *Gaude virgo mater Christi* survives complete in another source and so Sandon has simply transcribed and edited the piece. For the

Mass he recomposed the entire tenor line—and from a point midway through the Credo, the treble as well. (I challenge anyone to identify where his reconstruction begins, either on hearing the piece or studying the score.)

This evening's event is a concert, not a mass, nor yet a liturgical reconstruction of any kind. Still, we have chosen to present the *Missa Regnum mundi* in a musical context something like that of the purported original occasion, a festival mass for St Margaret. Thus we surround Ludford's polyphonic Mass Ordinary (those texts sung invariably at any mass) with selected plainchant items from the Proper (the texts specific to the occasion in the liturgical calendar, in this case a mass for the feast of a virgin martyr). As usual in early sixteenth-century English Masses, the *Missa Regnum mundi* does not include a Kyrie, so we sing this in chant as well. Following the dismissal ("Ite missa est"), we will pause for a moment to signal the passage of time between the end of mass and the end of the evening office of Compline, a time when a votive antiphon like *Gaude virgo* might have been sung as a final act of corporate devotion before bed.

Blue Heron's performances this week of the *Missa Regnum mundi* are almost certainly the first ever in North America, since, on the one hand, the tenor part has been missing for centuries, probably since at least the 1630s, and, on the other, we know from Nick Sandon himself (and from his North American representative, the Von Huene Workshop right here in Brookline) about how many of his editions of the Peterhouse music are sold over here in our day (not many). The *Missa Regnum mundi* was published for the very first time in 2007. It is an outstanding piece of music, melodious, radiant, and full of invention and color, brilliantly exploiting the range

of sonorities offered by the five-part texture and its five distinct voice types, from bass up through tenor (a lowish tenor or lyric baritone in today's terms), contratenor (not a falsettist, as implied nowadays by the English word countertenor, but a tenor with a wide range emphasizing the high end), and mean or medius (originally an adult male singing in falsetto, on occasion a boy with an equivalent range), to treble (originally a boy with an extended high register, an English specialty from the late fifteenth century until the Reformation). Each of the four movements opens with the same extended passage (fifteen breves or, in modern terms, measures long), challenging the singers to find appropriately different ways to express the very different words it sets ("Et in terra pax hominibus voluntatis," "Patrem omnipotentem, factorem celi et terre...", "Sanctus," or "Agnus dei").

That early sixteenth-century singers were expected to express the text clearly and dramatically, to respond to the rhetorical opportunities offered by text and music, is suggested by contemporary statements like this one:

Thus...to be regarded as of the highest judgment are those who, in singing, put all their effort into expressing the words well, for these are of the essence, and who make the music accompany them in such a way that the words are the masters, accompanied by servants so as to appear more honor-worthy, not making the affections and expressions serve the music, but rather the music serving the expressions and affections...

It may be surprising to learn that this typically "Baroque" understanding of the relationship of text and music was set down in 1504, by Vincenzo Calametta in his biography of the poet and singer Serafino

Aquilano. Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516 conveys a similar attitude:

Their musike...dothe so resemble and expresse naturall affections, the sound and tune is so applied and made agreable to the thinge, that whether it bee a prayer, or els a dytty of gladnes, of patience, of trouble, of mournynge, or of anger: the fassion of the melodye dothe so represente the meaning of the thing, that it doth wonderfulye move, stirre, pearce, and enflame the hearers myndes.

Nicola Vicentino, in his *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* of 1555, describes some of the methods that may be used to achieve the desired effect:

Sometimes a composition is performed according to a certain method that cannot be written down, such as uttering softly and loudly or fast and slow, or changing the measure [i.e. tempo] in keeping with the words, so as to show the effects of the passions and the harmony. This technique of having all the singers at once change the tempo will not seem strange, provided the ensemble agrees on when the tempo is to be changed, thus avoiding errors. A composition sung with changes of tempo is pleasing because of the variety, more so than one that continues on to the end without any variation of tempo. Experience with this technique will make everyone secure in it. You will find that in vernacular works the procedure gratifies listeners more than a persistent changeless tempo. The measure should change according to the words, now slower and now faster.

Of course, in a Mass there is a basic difference between the movements with regard to text: the Gloria

is quite wordy, the Credo more so, while the Sanctus and Agnus dei have very short texts. Nevertheless, Ludford's Gloria and Credo are about the same length, and while the Agnus dei is relatively shorter, it is still plenty expansive. The Sanctus is positively luxuriant, nearly a third again as long as the Gloria and Credo. Thus the word setting is relatively terse in the Credo, whereas in the Sanctus bars and bars are sung on one single syllable: in the course of the work we understand all the text, and also revel in the sheer sonic pleasure of vocalizing.

The *Missa Regnum mundi* displays in marvellous form many hallmarks of late-medieval English polyphony that one can hear in other Peterhouse repertoire: a constantly varying texture of duos, trios, and quartets building towards sections for the full five parts; long melismas at the ends of text phrases or even at the ends of individual words; imitation used sometimes for the sake of variety, sometimes as a structural device, according to the inspiration of the composer; an extraordinarily supple sense of melody and rhythm, with each individual line pursuing its own nearly independent course while at the same time interacting with and commenting upon its fellows; and a fine sense of large-scale development leading to a satisfying conclusion. The conclusion in this instance is serene and completely assured.

Aston's *Gaude virgo*, on the other hand, creates an irresistible sense of momentum over the course of a lengthy piece, culminating in a glorious Amen. All the votive antiphons in Peterhouse are structured in more or less the same way. Begin with a text addressed to Mary (occasionally to Jesus), which praises her attributes in hypnotically repetitive poetry, leading to a supplication, often in prose, for her aid and comfort. Set the text in two musical sec-

tions, the first in perfect (triple) mensuration, the second in imperfect (duple). Follow the principles outlined above regarding the alternation of passages for reduced and full scoring. Conclude with a long Amen, the first syllable extended luxuriantly across bars of melisma, the second reserved until the very end. This recipe is no more formulaic than sonata form, and the ways in which these composers refresh and reimagine the basic idea are fascinating and musically compelling. Aston, a composer whose present-day renown has surely suffered from the fact that half of his eight known vocal works survive incomplete, is especially adept at crafting breathtaking "Amens," and in *Gaude virgo* the conclusion is driven by an ostinato, a short figure that repeats obsessively in the bass. The figure, a mere four notes long, develops intervallically (D-F-E-D becoming D-G-E-D, and then D-A-E-D) and then gradually increases in speed, building up tension which is finally released into exuberance. As the music unfolds the ostinato figure invades the other voices, too, until at the last moment it turns to major (D-F sharp-E-D) and takes them over completely, sounding in all five voices one after another in the last few bars, like bells pealing.

—Scott Metcalfe

The *Missa Regnum mundi* and *Gaude virgo mater Christi* are edited by Nick Sandon and published by Antico Edition as RCM135 and RCM41, respectively. The plainchant is from the 1532 *Graduale ad usum ecclesie Sarisburiensis*. Much of the historical information on the Peterhouse partbooks and the Mass is drawn from Sandon's edition and from his 1983 dissertation. Thanks also to Anne Smith and Bruce Haynes for sharing with me, in advance of publication, ideas and source material about rhetorical performance in the sixteenth century.





St. Margaret of Antioch. Illuminated manuscript ca. 1440, Netherlands.  
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

**Me expectaverunt peccatores** ut perderent me: testimonia tua, Domine, intellexi. Omnis consummationis vidi finem, latum mandatum tuum nimis.

*Ps.* Beati immaculati in via: qui ambulant in lege Domini.

Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto: sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper, et in secula seculorum. Amen.

*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: I will consider your testimonies, O Lord. I have seen an end of all perfection, but your commandment is exceeding broad.*

*Ps.* Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

**Kyrieleyson.** Christeleyson. Kyrieleyson.

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

**Gloria in excelsis deo**, et in terra pax hominibus bone voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine deus, rex celestis, deus pater omnipotens. Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine deus, agnus dei, filius patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum sancto spiritu in gloria dei patris. Amen.

*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.*

**Specie tua** et pulchritudine tua: intende prospere et regna. V. Propter veritatem et mansuetudinem et iusticiam: et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua.

*In your comeliness and beauty, hearken, prosper and reign. V. Because of truth and meekness and justice: and your right hand shall lead you wondrously.*

**Alleluya.** Veni electa mea et ponam te in thronam meum: quia concupivit rex speciem tuam.

*Alleluya. Come, my chosen one, and I will place you on my throne: for the king has desired your beauty.*

**Credo in unum deum**, patrem omnipotentem, factorem celi et terre, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum dominum Jesum Christum, filium dei unigenitum: et ex patre natum ante omnia secula. Deum de deo, lumen de lumine, deum verum de deo vero. Genitum non factum, consubstantiali patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de celis. Et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine: et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato: passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas. Et ascendit in celum: sedet ad dexteram patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria iudicare vivos et mortuos: cujus regni non erit finis. Et in spiritum sanctum dominum et vivificantem qui ex patre filioque procedit. Qui cum patre et filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per prophetas. Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi seculi. Amen.

**Offerentur regi virgines:** proxime eius offerentur tibi in leticia et exultatione, adducentur in templum regi domino.

**Sanctus**, sanctus, sanctus, dominus deus sabaoth. Pleni sunt celi et terra gloria tua.

Osanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini.

Osanna in excelsis.

**Agnus Dei**, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

**Feci iudicium** et iustitiam, Domine: non calumniantur michi superbi: ad omnia mandata tua dirigebar: omnem viam iniquitatis odio habui.

**Ite missa est.** Deo gratias.

*I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Begotten, not made; of one being with the Father, through whom all things are made. For us and for our salvation he came down from Heaven. He was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He was crucified for our sake under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again, in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge both the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. And I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And I await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

*The virgins shall be offered to the king: her companions shall be offered to you with gladness and rejoicing: they shall be led into the temple, to the Lord, the king.*

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.*

*Heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

*Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

*Hosanna in the highest.*

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

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

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

*I have wrought judgement and justice, O Lord: let me not be oppressed by the haughty. I have been guided by all your commandments: and I have hated every false way.*

*Go, it is finished. Thanks be to God.*

**Gaude virgo mater Christi,**  
que per aurem concepisti,  
Gabriele nuncio.  
Gaude, quia Deo plena  
peperisti sine pena  
cum pudoris lilio.  
Gaude, quia tui nati,  
quem dolebas mortem pati,  
fulget resurrectio.  
Gaude Christo ascendente  
et in celo te vidente  
motu fertur proprio.  
Gaude, quod post ipsum scandis,  
et est honor tibi grandis  
in celi palatio,  
Ubi fructus ventris tui  
per te detur nobis frui  
in perhenni gaudio.  
O Maria virgo, mater redemptoris nostri:  
O Maria, virgo nobilissima, que jam regnas  
cum angelis, coronata in gloria:  
ibi nostri memor esto.  
O virgo sanctissima, funde preces tu pro nobis,  
ut possimus illic tuo sociari collegio.  
Amen.

*Rejoice, virgin, mother of Christ,  
who conceived through the ear  
by the message of Gabriel.  
Rejoice, for replete with God  
you brought forth without travail  
with the lily of chastity.  
Rejoice, for there shines out  
the resurrection of your son,  
whom you lamented to suffer death.  
Rejoice in Christ ascending  
and in your seeing that he is carried  
into heaven of his own volition.  
Rejoice, because you ascended after him,  
and great honor is accorded to you  
in the palace of heaven,  
Where the fruit of your womb,  
through you, is given to us  
to feast upon in perpetual rejoicing.  
O virgin Mary, mother of our savior:  
O Mary, most noble virgin, you who now reign  
with the angels, crowned in glory:  
there be mindful of us.  
O most holy virgin, pour out prayers for us,  
so that there we may join your retinue.  
Amen.*

## BIOGRAPHIES

The vocal ensemble **Blue Heron** combines a commitment to vivid 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 repertoire of the Peterhouse partbooks, copied in 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; its second, of music by Hugh Aston, Robert Jones, and John Mason followed last March; both discs have received international critical acclaim.

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 92nd Street Y in New York City, and Monadnock Music in New Hampshire. In July 2008 the ensemble made its West Coast debut at Festival Mozaic in San Luis Obispo, California, and in October 2009 celebrated its tenth birthday by opening the 20th-anniversary season of the Boston Early Music Festival concert series. In 2010-11 the ensemble will perform at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. and on the series Music Before 1800 in New York City, and will be in residence at Boston College for programs in October and March.

**Michael Barrett** is active in the Boston area as a professional musician and teacher. As a singer he

has collaborated with the Boston Camerata, Huelgas Ensemble, Blue Heron, the Netherlands Bach Society, L'Académie, Seven Times Salt, and Exsultemus, and has performed in several recent operas produced by the Boston Early Music Festival. He can be heard on harmonia mundi and Blue Heron record labels. Mr. Barrett directs the Renaissance choir Convivium Musicum and the professional vocal ensemble Sprezzatura, and he serves on the advisory board of L'Académie, a professional ensemble for Baroque music. Mr. Barrett has worked as a conductor and music theory teacher at Harvard University. He is a faculty member of IMC, a New York-based company for music curriculum and instruction, and has served as a workshop leader for professional development courses. He also maintains a studio for private instruction in voice, piano, and music theory. Mr. Barrett earned an AB in music from Harvard University, an MM in choir conducting from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and First Phase Diploma in Baroque and Classical singing from the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. In the fall of 2010 he began doctoral studies in choral conducting at Boston University.

Before entering the world of academic and arts fund raising, baritone **Glenn Billingsley** made his debut with the New York City Opera National Company and sang with the Santa Fe, Chautauqua, and Lake George Opera companies, appeared in the Spoleto and Madeira Bach Festivals, toured Europe and the Western Hemisphere with the Waverly Consort and the SEM Ensemble, and did significant solo work in New York with Musica Sacra, the Ensemble for Early Music, the Bach Aria Group, Johannes Somary's Amor Artis Chorale, and others, as well as with numerous choral organizations in Boston. A longtime member of the Choir of the Church of the Advent, he has been a part of Blue Heron since



its founding in 1999. Glenn and his wife Monique Phinney, who is on the voice faculty of The Boston Conservatory, have two adult children: guitarist, drummer, and songwriter Ken, and dancer and singer Lisa.

**Noël Bisson**, soprano and co-founder of Blue Heron, has sung with many groups across the country and locally, including the Choir of the Church of the Advent, the Boston Camerata, Woodley Consort in Washington, D.C., and Ensemble Mi contra Fa in Los Angeles. She is featured as soloist with the Woodman Consort of Viols in a recording of sacred and secular works of Gombert, directed by Peter Urquhart, recently released by Naxos. In addition to her work in early music, Noël has recorded several works by twentieth-century composers, including the boy soprano part in George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* on a Grammy-nominated recording with the Philadelphia-based Orchestra 2001. She holds a doctorate in musicology from Harvard University with a dissertation on the Eton Choirbook and a scholarly focus on English sacred music just prior to the Reformation. She has taught as a lecturer in music at Harvard and at Colgate University. Noël is Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education at Harvard University.

**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 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, Cantata 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.

**Jason McStoots**, 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 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 *Pysché* on the CPO label. Forthcoming are solo performances in recordings of Charpentier and Blow, also on the CPO label.

**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." He has recently been appointed Music Director of Early Music America's first Young Performers Festival, to be held in conjunction with the Boston Early Music Festival in June 2011. Besides playing and directing, 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.

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 last season. In 2002 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 20th anniversary of the Boston Microtonal Society.

Praised for "impressive musicality, soaring beauty and great skill" (*Opera-Opera*) and described as "superb, with a voice of penetrating beauty, precision and variegated colours" (*Sydney Morning Herald*), Australian soprano **Jane Sheldon** has sung under the direction of Charles Dutoit, Reinbert de Leeuw, Antony Walker, and Ola Rudner, amongst others. Specialising in early music and also active in the commission, creation and performance of new works, she has performed with ensembles such as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, Pinchgut Opera, Synergy Percussion, Firebird Ensemble and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. Her first solo album, *Song of the Angel*, was released by ABC Classics, and she is a guest artist on a number of their other releases, includ-

ing Teddy Tahu Rhodes' award-winning album *The Voice*. Her recording of Elena Kats-Chernin's *Wild Swans* reached no.1 on the UK iTunes classical music charts in 2007. Highlights of this season include performances with Blue Heron, Boston Camerata, Salut! Baroque (Australia), and at the Peninsula Summer Music Festival (Australia). More information can be found at [www.janesheldonsoprano.com](http://www.janesheldonsoprano.com).

Tenor **Mark Sprinkle** has appeared as a soloist in Carissimi's *Abraham and Isaac* at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, with the Handel & Haydn Society in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* in Symphony Hall, Boston, in Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers* at the Emerson Majestic Theatre under Grant Llewellyn, in concerts of Handel's Chandos Anthems with Christopher Hogwood in Jordan Hall, and with Concerto Palatino, the Boston Camerata, the Boston Early Music Festival, Emmanuel Music, and Blue Heron. An active Bach Passion Evangelist, he has sung the role in the St. John Passion with Chorus Pro Musica (Boston) and with the Boulder Bach Festival in Boulder, Colorado, among others; his performance has been described as "supremely stylish." He was a founding member of the Cambridge Bach Ensemble, has performed at music festivals in Bergen (Norway), Vancouver, Edinburgh, and Aldeburgh, UK, and has recorded with Dorian, Koch, Harmonia Mundi, Decca, Arabesque, and Telarc. He was a Fellow of the Britten-Pears School. In addition to singing and teaching, he is an American Canoeing Association Open Water Sea Kayaking Instructor and a Registered Maine Guide.

New to Boston, soprano **Julia Steinbok** is thrilled to be joining Blue Heron for the first time. Her versatility and unique musical presence have made her increasingly sought after on the concert, recital, and operatic stage, and her interpretation

of Renaissance and Baroque works has met with critical acclaim. The *Washington Times* praised her "breathtaking expertise" in performances with the Folger Consort at the National Gallery and the Folger Shakespeare Library, and her *Messiah* with the Arcadia Players was admired for her "flawless intonation and expressive declamation delivered with exquisite clarity" (the *Republic*). Ms. Steinbok's operatic experience has included such diverse roles as Diane in Charpentier's *Actéon*, Rowan in Britten's *Let's Make an Opera*, Virtù and Proserpina in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *L'Orfeo*, the title role in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and appearances as Dido and the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with American Opera Theater. An avid recitalist and proponent of contemporary music, Ms. Steinbok has paid particular attention to women composers past and present. Upcoming projects include performances as Humilitas in *Ordo virtutum* with Cappella Clausura, and performances with La Donna Musicale. Born in Moscow, Ms. Steinbok pursued graduate studies at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and now makes her home in Brighton.

Hailed as "the real thing" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) and 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 productions from Boston to Copenhagen, including the Boston Early Music Festival's productions of Conradi's *Ariadne* (2005) and Lully's *Psyché* (2007) and several European tours with Contemporary Opera Denmark as Orfeo in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. He has performed across North America as a soloist with Concerto Palatino, Tafelmusik, Apollo's Fire, Les Voix Baroques, Les Boreades de Montréal, the Green Mountain Project in New York City, and many other ensembles and

orchestras of both conventional and early music inclinations. Also a noted recitalist, Mr. Thompson has sung in Stuttgart, Amsterdam, and Regensburg, and at London's famed Wigmore Hall.

Hailed as "compelling to watch" (*Tufts Daily*) and praised for his "rich bass-baritone voice and eloquent projection" (Lawrence Budmen, writer and music consultant), **Ulysses Thomas** made his professional debut in 2008 with Opera Boston/Boston Baroque in Handel's *Semele* as the High Priest and his company debut the following season with Boston Lyric Opera. Other stage credits include roles in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *The Magic Flute*, *La bohème*, Dominick Argento's *Postcard from Morocco*, Massenet's *La Navarraise*, Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, Lee Hoiby's *A Month in the Country*, Gianni Schicchi, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and Philip Glass's *Galileo Galilei*. Mr. Thomas has sung with a number of ensembles in and around the Boston area including Boston Baroque, Masterworks Chorale, Cambridge Concentus, Exsultemus, and Emmanuel Music. Mr. Thomas received his BM from Clayton State University (Morrow, GA) and his MusM from Boston University, where he is currently a doctoral student in vocal performance. Amongst his honors and awards, Mr. Thomas spent two summers as a vocal fellow at Tanglewood Music Center was a finalist in the 2001 Orpheus National Competition for Vocalists, where he received the Richard Strauss Award.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although Blue Heron appears to be a performing ensemble, we are much more than that, for without the hard work and financial support of board members, staff, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers, the ensemble would not exist. Those of us fortunate enough to have music as our trade give most grateful thanks to those who love listening to music enough to join us in this endeavor of creating, nurturing and sustaining an organization dedicated to making the music of 15th and 16th centuries come alive in the 21st.

Special thanks to Nick Sandon, who recommended the Ludford *Missa Regnum mundi* to us, as well as restoring its tenor and most of its treble lines. Dr. Sandon also provided us with copies of the plainchant propers for the feast of St Margaret from the 1532 *Graduale ad usum ecclesie Sarisburiensis*.

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 three give generous support to us 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 continued support of our pre-concert talks. Many thanks to our devoted 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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## BLUE HERON'S LATEST CD!



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.

“... 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.”

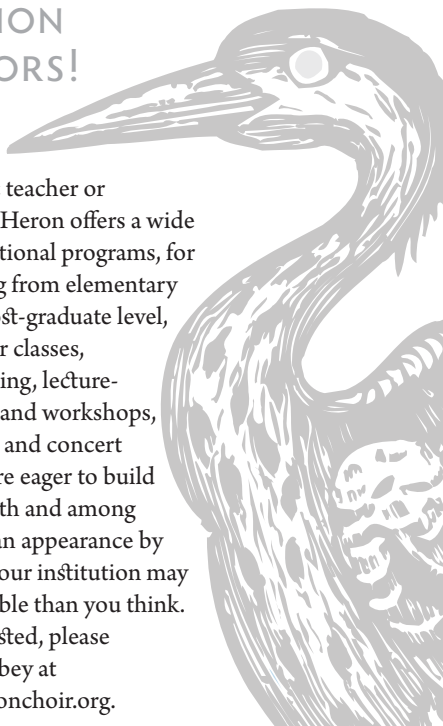
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Craig Zeichner, *Early Music America* | Fall 2007

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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 estes campieur... More, please.*

Fabrice Fitch, *Goldberg* | August/September 2007

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