



French Christmas 1500 & 1200



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Saturday, December 20, 2008, at 8 pm
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational

PROGRAM

France & Flanders, late 15th-century

O clavis David
O-antiphon for December 20 (plainchant: men)

Factor orbis
Jacob Obrecht (1457/8–1505)
PD MN / JM SS / MB AC / GB DY / CB PG

O virgo virginum
O-antiphon for December 24 (plainchant: women)

O virgo virginum
Josquin Desprez (c.1455–1521)
MN JM SS MB PG CB

Nesciens mater
Jean Mouton (before 1459–1522)
LB DT JM AC / SS MB GB CB

Nato canunt omnia
Antoine Brumel (c.1460–c.1512)
MN DT / JM SS / MB AC / GB DY / CB PG

INTERMISSION

Paris & Aquitaine, 12th century

Beata viscera

Perotin (fl.c. 1200)

LB LK PD DT

Lux refulget

Aquitaine, early 12th century

LB / PD DT

Viderunt omnes (*organum quadruplum / Gradual for Christmas Day*)

Perotin

Per partum virginis

Aquitaine, early 12th century

LK / PD DT

Sederunt principes (*organum quadruplum / Gradual for St Stephen's Day*)

Perotin

Blue Heron

Lydia Brotherton

Lydia Heather Knutson

Pamela Dellal

Daniela Tošić

Martin Near

Michael Barrett

Allen Combs

Jason McStoots

Stephen Soph

Cameron Beauchamp

Glenn Billingsley

Paul Guttry

Darrick Yee

Scott Metcalfe, *director*

Pre-concert talk by Sean Gallagher, Harvard University

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ADVENT, SOLSTICE & CHRISTMAS

No one living in New England can ignore the fact that for six months the days have been getting shorter. Seen from northern Europe, of course, New England suffers a relatively mild case of sun deprivation. Boston lies at about 42 degrees north, roughly the latitude of Rome, while Paris at nearly 49 degrees is a good 200 miles further north than Quebec City, and at the winter solstice the day length in Paris is about 50 minutes shorter than our nine hours and five minutes. But for all of us living here in the middle regions of the northern hemisphere, the fall brings more and more darkness, and by mid-December we live more in darkness than in light.

Whatever the reason or reasons early Christians settled on December 25 to celebrate the birth of Christ, placing the birthday just after the solstice locates the feast welcoming the savior at the cusp of the year when the sun begins, imperceptibly at first, to climb again in the sky. The penitential, preparatory season of Advent that precedes Christmas falls during the darkest weeks of the year, and it is here that we open our concert, with plainchant and motets for Advent by composers from the Franco-Flemish north.

France & Flanders, late fifteenth century

The plainchant antiphon *O clavis David* is one of a series of antiphons sung to the same melody, one each day for the seven days before the eve of Christmas, December 17–23. Written no later than the eighth century, the so-called O antiphons address the Messiah to come in various attributes: O Sapientia (wisdom), O Adonai (Lord), O radix Jesse (root of Jesse), O clavis David (key of David), O Oriens (the morning star), O Rex (king), O Emanuel (“God with us”). The initial letters of each word after the

O spell out the promise in a reverse acrostic, SARCORE, “ero cras,” “Tomorrow I shall be there.” An eighth antiphon for Christmas Eve, *O virgo virginum*, was often added to the original seven. In it the daughters of Jerusalem demand of the virgin Mary that she explain the unique wonder of her conception of Jesus, and she admonishes them that what they seek to know is a divine mystery.

Obrecht’s *Factor orbis* quotes both *O clavis David* and *O virgo virginum*, one at the end of each half of this most complex motet for five voices. *Factor orbis* draws its texts from nineteen separate liturgical items, in six instances setting the text to its plainchant melody. The liturgical texts, mostly for Advent, are introduced by an apparently newly-written plea to the Maker of the world to hear the cries of his servants “on this day that brings light.” The musicologist Jennifer Bloxam has interpreted *Factor orbis* as a sermon in music, an exegesis of the scripture “Canite tuba in Sion” (“Sound the trumpet in Sion”: Joel 2:1). To fully comprehend this sermon as it is preached in musical time would challenge the most accomplished musical mind of any era, for in more than one passage five different texts are sung simultaneously. Nevertheless, the motet’s continuously shifting textures bring now one, now another text to the foreground. The opening plea is sung in imitative duet by the highest voices, and just as they are coming to a cadence a third voice enters with “Veni Domini,” “Come, Lord,” whereupon the duetting voices, joined by the bass, break into the acclamation “Noe!” The entrance of the tenor on the cantus firmus “Canite tuba” is marked by a long hemiola in all parts. Most dramatic is the introduction of two non-Advent texts, “Deus qui sedes super thronos” from Epiphany, followed by “Media vita in morte sumus” from Lent, for at these words the texture changes from complex counterpoint to homophony. The homophonic texture is in turn swept away by a return to counterpoint

that moves twice as fast as anything beforehand in the motet, and this concludes the first part. This “double-time” music appears again to wind up the the second part, gathering all the voices together for the cries of “Noe” that conclude the work.

Josquin’s *O virgo virginum* sets the O-antiphon in its entirety (and in all six voices), quoting the plainchant melody complete in the top voice and alluding to it in the others. Josquin uses the six voices in antiphonal groups, for example setting the high trio of superius and two altus against the lower of tenor and two bassus. Equally characteristic is the hypnotic overlapping of short motives (as at “fiet istud” in the *prima pars* and “Filiae” at the beginning of the *secunda pars*). A disorienting metrical shift at “hoc quod cernitis” heightens the sense of mystery: here the mensural organization shifts proportionally from two beats per bar to three, but at the same time an extended hemiola at the next higher level of organization divides every pair of bars into three, effectively disrupting the listener’s sense of pulse.

With Mouton’s *Nesciens mater* we arrive at the Nativity itself, and what a delightfully sonorous and radiantly beautiful motet this is. Nevertheless, the work is another kind of tour de force, for all that serenity is generated by (and conceals) a difficult compositional trick, a canon *8 ex 4*. That is to say, only four voices of the piece’s eight are notated, and the other four are derived by imitation at the fifth above after a delay of two bars (two breves).

All four of the composers on the first half of the concert were born within a few years of each other in northern France or what is now Belgium: Josquin in the mid-1450s near St-Quentin in Picardy, Obrecht in 1457/8 in Ghent in Flanders, Mouton before 1459 in the Pas-de-Calais, and Brumel around 1460, possibly near Chartres. The points farthest from each other in this list lie just over 200 miles

apart. While travel was certainly more challenging in the fifteenth century than it is now, most northern musicians followed quite itinerant careers and the music they composed spread across Europe as well, becoming known to the professional musical community at large.

In such circumstances it is not surprising to come across instances of compositional emulation or rivalry in which one work answers or challenges another. Obrecht’s *Factor orbis* and Brumel’s *Nato canunt omnia* belong to a trio of such works. Both appear to pay homage to a Christmas motet by a master of an earlier generation, Johannes Regis (c. 1425–1496). All three motets are for five voices and feature an array of texts and multiple cantus firmi. Regis’s motet, *O admirabile commercium*, is further distinguished by a peculiarly archaic mensuration (or time signature, more or less) and its rhythmic complexity exceeds anything found in Obrecht or Brumel. But the relationship of *Nato canunt omnia*, in particular, to Regis’s motet is unmistakable. *Nato canunt omnia* quotes the same triple-meter Christmas melody used in *O admirabile commercium*, the rollicking and popular-sounding “Magnum nomen domini Emanuel”—an unusual moment of pure levity in a highbrow genre—and the striking stacked fifths that begin the *secunda pars* (“Puer natus est”) are taken directly from *O admirabile*, with more voices thrown in for good measure. And where *Factor orbis* conveys penitence and prophetic mysticism, Brumel’s work is filled with high spirits throughout, manifested not least in a superabundance of jaunty cross relations (all left, in the practice of the time, to the judgment of the singers) and, following the triple-meter carol section, the twelve-fold repetition, at three pitch levels, of a short cadential motive in the upper voice.

Paris & Aquitaine twelfth century

Master Leoninus was generally known as the best composer of *organum*, who made the great book (*Magnus liber*) of *organa* for Mass and Office, for the enhancement of the Divine Service. This book was in use until the time of the great Perotinus, who made a redaction of it and made many better clausulas, that is, *puncta*, he being the best composer of discant and better than Leoninus... This Master Perotinus made the best *quadrupla*, such as *Viderunt* and *Sederunt*, with an abundance of striking musical embellishments; likewise, the noblest *tripla*, such as *Alleluia*, *Posui adiutorium* and *Nativitas* etc. He also made three-voice conductus, such as *Salvatoris hodie*, and two-voice conductus, such as *Dum sigillum summi patris*, and also, among many others, monophonic conductus, such as *Beata viscera* etc. The book, that is, the books of Master Perotinus, were in use in the choir of the cathedral of the Blessed Virgin in Paris... up to the present day.

Anonymous IV,
De mensuris et discantu, c. 1270–80

This passage from a treatise written by an Englishman who studied at the University of Paris in the second quarter of the thirteenth century is the source of virtually everything that we know about Perotinus or Perotin, “little Peter.” Anonymous IV (so called because his was the fourth in a nineteenth-century edition of anonymous medieval musical treatises) names two men who composed polyphonic elaborations of liturgical plainchant which were preserved in a large book at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. While Leonin was known for *organum* (in which a single voice sings a florid line above and around a slowed-down plainchant melody), Perotin was celebrated as the best maker of discant

(in which the added voice or voices move basically note for note against the plainchant). Anonymous IV singles out Perotin’s *quadrupla* or four-voice compositions for special praise, and he names two of them, *Viderunt* and *Sederunt*, along with several other works. All seven of the pieces attributed by Anonymous IV to Perotin can be located in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts, copies of the original *Magnus liber*.

Perotin’s two *quadrupla*, the only *quadrupla* in the *Magnus liber*, are both settings of a gradual, *Viderunt* for Christmas Day and *Sederunt* for the feast of St. Stephen on December 26, and both feature both organum and discant textures. In a gradual, a chant from the Proper of the Mass, a choral respond surrounds a psalm verse which is performed by a soloist. In Perotin’s settings the chant melody or tenor is sung complete: those portions of the chant that would have been sung by the choir (most of the respond, after the intonation of the first word or two, and the end of the verse) are sung in ordinary plainchant, while the soloist’s material is greatly elaborated in rhythmically measured polyphony. Much of the time the tenor or plainchant note is held out at extreme length while the three newly-composed voices move quickly above it (organum); at other times the tenor moves at approximately the same rate of speed as the new voices (discant).

While music in two parts had existed in some written form for several centuries by the late twelfth century, the great innovation of Perotin’s generation was a notational system that could specify rhythm, giving the maker of a piece the ability to coordinate several simultaneous parts and precise, metrical control over the passage of time. Perotin’s music may come as a revelation to modern listeners hearing it for the first time, an effect perhaps similar to that on the congregation of the faithful at Notre Dame de Paris that was its first audience around the year

1200. Three upper parts, their motion organized by repeating rhythmic cells, dance above an endless drone—the plainchant melody, slowed to unrecognizable length. Short melodic motifs are exchanged between voices. The melodic patterns shift slowly, kaleidoscopically, in rising waves of tension and release generated by dissonance and consonance; the rhythmic units, too, are both balanced and gradually evolving. A single vowel is maintained for so long that a change of syllable becomes a dramatic event. At last the chant changes to another note and a new cycle begins. By these means Perotin takes control of the listener’s experience of time and holds one’s rapt attention for as long as twelve minutes (measured by the clock—a measure that did not exist for most people in his day).

As Anonymous IV noted, Perotin also composed several *conductus* or non-liturgical songs with a text in Latin verse, usually on a serious or sacred subject. His monophonic *Beata viscera* sets a text by the Parisian cleric and poet, Philip the Chancellor (d. c. 1237), of which we perform the first and last two verses; the remainder are poisonously anti-Jewish, a bitter reminder of our human capacity for hatred. The first strophe of the poem paraphrases a Christmas responsory, while later lines interpret events that took place during the Israelites’ forty years wandering in the desert as prefiguring the coming of Christ: “the nut of the mystical rod” is from Numbers 17:8 (“the rod of Aaron...brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds”); “water from a rock” refers to the way God provided Moses and his people with water in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-6); and “the pillar leading the way” is God leading them after their escape from Egypt: “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire” (Exodus 14:21).

Interspersed with the music of Perotin we have placed two pieces of music from early twelfth-century Aquitaine. Written down several generations before the invention of rhythmic notation, *Lux refulget* and *Per partum virginis* seem closer to a tradition in which a virtuosic soloist improvised a countermelody, sometimes highly ornamented, to a pre-existing chant (although here, especially in the case of *Per partum*, both lines may have been composed at the same time). Almost everything about the performance practice of music this early involves creative imagination in the nearly complete absence of historical evidence. In preparing this concert we have benefitted from the guidance of two great pioneers in the performance of medieval music, founders of the ensemble Sequentia. Lydia Knutson and Pamela Dellal learned both of these rapturous Aquitanian works over a decade ago from the late Barbara Thornton and recorded them under her direction on the Sequentia CD *Shining Light*. Benjamin Bagby graciously gave his permission for us to use Barbara’s transcriptions of *Lux refulget* and *Per partum virginis*, which we have relied on while consulting facsimiles of the original twelfth-century sources. Ben further inspired us by spending a couple of hours singing chant to and with us when he was in town in November. To these performers and teachers, many thanks.

—Scott Metcalfe

Texts & Translations

O clavis David et sceptrum domus Israel, qui aperis et nemo claudit, claudis et nemo aperit: veni et educ vinc̄tum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris et umbra mortis.

O-antiphon for December 20

Factor orbis, Deus, nos famulos

Exaudi clamantes ad te tuos,
Et nostra crimina laxa
Die ista lucifera.

Noe, noe!

Veni Domine et noli tardare: relaxa facinora plebis tue Israel.

Ecce Dominus veniet, noli timere, alleluia.

Canite tuba in Sion, quia prope est dies Domini: ecce veniet ad salvandum nos, alleluia.

Ad te Domine levavi animam meam: Deus meus in te confido, non erubescam.

Craſtina die erit vobis salus.

Deus, qui sedes super thronos et iudicas equitatem, esto refugium pauperum in tribulatione: quia tu solus laborem et dolorem consideras.

Media vita in morte sumus: quem querimus adiutorem nisi te Domine?

O clavis David et sceptrum domus Israel, qui aperis et nemo claudit, claudis et nemo aperit: veni et educ vinc̄tum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris et umbra mortis.

Canite tuba in Sion, quia prope est dies Domini: ecce veniet ad salvandum nos, alleluia.

Spiritus Domini super me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me.

Veniet fortior me, cuius non sum dignus corrigiam calciamentorum eius solvere.

O key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens: come and lead the captive from the house of prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Maker of the world, God, hear us your servants
Crying unto you
And loose the bonds of our sins
On this day that brings light.

Noel, noel!

Come, O Lord, and delay not: loose the bonds of the grievous sins of your people Israel.

Behold the Lord shall come, fear not.

Sound the trumpet in Sion, for the day of the Lord is near: behold he shall come to save us, alleluia.

To you, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul: O my God, in you I out my trust; let me not be ashamed.

On the morrow you shall have salvation.

O God, who sits upon the throne and judges justice, be the refuge of the poor in tribulation: for you alone consider labor and sorrow.

In the midst of life we are in death: whom shall we seek to help us but you, O Lord?

O key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens: come and lead the captive from the house of prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Sound the trumpet in Sion, for the day of the Lord is near: behold he shall come to save us, alleluia.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

There shall come after me one mightier than I, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to loose.

Hodie scietis quia veniet Dominus, et mane videbitis gloriam suam.

Erunt prava in directa et aspera in vias planas.

Bethlehem, es civitas Dei summi, ex te exiit dominator Israel.

Craſtina die erit vobis ſalus, dicit Dominus exercituum.

Craſtina die delebitur iniquitas terre: et regnabit ſuper nos ſalvator mundi, alleluia.

De celo veniet dominator Dominus, et in manu eius honor et imperium.

O virgo virginum, quomodo fiet iſtud? quia nec primam ſimilem viſa es, nec habere ſequentem. Filiae Jeruſalem, quid me admiramini? Divinum eſt miſterium hoc quod cernitis.

Beata es Maria, que crediſti: quoniam perficientur in te que dicta ſunt tibi, alleluia.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benediſta tu in mulieribus, et benediſtus fructus ventris tui.

Ecce Dominus veniet, et omnes ſancti eius cum eo: et erit in die illa lux magna, alleluia.

Veni Domine et noli tardare, alleluia. Noe, noe!

Cento of Advent texts

O virgo virginum, quomodo fiet iſtud? quia nec primam ſimilem viſa eſt, nec habere ſequentem.
Filiae Jeruſalem, quid me admiramini? Divinum eſt miſterium hoc quod cernitis.

O-antiphon for December 24

This day you ſhall know that the Lord will come, and on the morrow you ſhall ſee his glory.

The crooked ſhall become ſtraight and the rough ways ſmooth.

Bethlehem, you are the city of the moſt high God, out of you ſhall come forth the ruler of Israel.

On the morrow you ſhall have ſalvation, ſays the Lord of hoſts.

Tomorrow the wickedneſs of the earth ſhall be blotted out: and the ſavior of the world ſhall reign over us, alleluia.

From heaven ſhall come the Lord, the ruler, and in his hand honor and ſtrength.

O Virgin of virgins, how ſhall this be? For thou waſt not ſeen to have one like unto thee before thee, nor after thee. O Daughters of Jeruſalem, why do ye wonder at me? That which you behold is a divine miſtery.

Bleſſed are you, Mary, who has believed: thoſe things ſhall be wrought in you which were ſpoken to you, alleluia.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, bleſſed are you among women, and bleſſed is the fruit of your womb.

Behold the Lord ſhall come, and all his ſaints with him: and on that day there ſhall be a great light, alleluia.

Come, Lord, and delay not, alleluia. Noel, noe!

O Virgin of virgins, how ſhall this be? For none like unto thee was ſeen before thee, nor after thee.
Daughters of Jeruſalem, why do ye wonder at me? That which you behold is a divine miſtery.

Nesciens mater virgo virum peperit sine
dolore salvatorem seculorum. Ipsum regem
angelorum sola virgo lactabat ubera de celo
pleno.

*Antiphon for the Octave of the Nativity
(January 1)*

Nato canunt omnia

Domino pie agmina,
sillabatim neupmata
perstringendo organica.
Hec dies sacrata,
in qua nova sunt gaudia
modo plena dedita,
Hac nocte precelsa
intonuit et gloria
in voce angelica.
Fulserunt et immanua
nocte media
pastoribus lumina.
Dum foveant sua peccora
subito diva
precipiunt monita.
Magnificatus est rex pacificus
super omnes reges universe terre.
Angelus ad pastores ait: Annuntio vobis
gaudium magnum, quia natus est hodie
salvator mundi, alleluia.
Natus alma virgine,
qui extat ante secula. Noel, noel!
*Joseph fili David, noli timere accipere Mariam
conjugem tuam: quod enim in ea natum est
de Spiritu Sancto, alleluia. Noel, noel!*

Puer natus est nobis, et filius datus est nobis:
cuius imperium super humerum eius: et
vocabitur nomen eius magni consilii angelus.
Puer natus est nobis, et filius datus est nobis.
Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis,
et vidimus gloriam eius, quasi unigeniti a
patre, plenum gratie et veritatis.
Magnum nomen Domini
Emanuel,

The virgin mother, not knowing a man, gave birth
without pain to the savior of the world. To the
very king of the angels the virgin alone gave suck,
her breasts filled by heaven.

The whole host sings piously
to the new-born Lord,
with words fitted syllable by syllable
to melodious music.
This is the blessed day
on which new joys
are given to the whole world,
And on this night
angel voices have rung out:
“Glory in the highest.”
And at midnight
a great light has shone
upon the shepherds.
While they tended their flocks,
suddenly they heard
the heavenly message.
More glorious is the King of Peace
than all the kings of the whole world.
The angel said to the shepherds: To you I proclaim
great joy, for today is born the savior of the world,
alleluia.
He is born of a gentle virgin,
he who was before time. Noel, noel!
*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your
wife: for truly, he is born in her of the Holy Spirit,
alleluia. Noel, noel!*

A child is born to us, and a son is given to us: whose
government is upon his shoulder; and his name
shall be called the Angel of great counsel.
A child is born to us, and a son is given to us.
The Word was made flesh and lived among us,
and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten
of the father, full of grace and truth.
Great is the name of the Lord,
Emmanuel,

quod annuntiatum est
per Gabriel,
Hodie apparuit
in Israel,
per Mariam virginem
et per Joseph.

Eya, eya!
virgo Deum genuit,
sicut divina voluit
clementia.

Pax in terra reddita
nunc letentur omnia
nati per exordia.

Ipsa sua pietate
solvat omnia
peccata nostra.

Alleluia. Noel, noel!

*Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis corde:
miserans et miserator et justus Dominus.*

Cento of Christmas texts; tenor text in italics

Beata viscera marie virginis
cuius ad ubera rex magni nominis
veste sub altera vim celans numinis
ditavit federa dei et hominis.

O mira novitas et novum gaudium
matris integritas post puerperium.

Legis mosaice clausa misteria
nux virge mystice nature nescia
aqua de silice columpna previa
prolis dominice signa sunt propria.

O mira novitas...

Solem quam libere dum purus oritur
in aura cernere visus non patitur.
Cernat a latere dum repercutitur
alvus puerpere qua totus clauditur.

O mira novitas...

Philip the Chancellor

He who was announced
by Gabriel
Today appears
in Israel,
through the virgin Mary
and through Joseph.

Come then!
a virgin gives birth to God,
as was the will of divine
mercy.

Now let all rejoice
to see peace restored to earth
by the birth of this child.

For he by his obedience
takes away all
our sins.

Alleluia. Noel, noel!

*In the darkness is arisen a light to pure hearts: merciful
and compassionate and righteous is the Lord.*

Blessed womb of the virgin Mary,
at whose breast the king of great name,
hiding his divine power in another form,
enriched the covenant between God and man.

O fresh wonder and new joy,
the mother's chastity after childbirth!

The hidden mysteries of the Mosaic law—
the nut of the mystical rod, defying nature;
water from a rock; the pillar leading the way—
these are signs proper to a lordly offspring.

O fresh wonder...

However bold, the naked eye
cannot bear to regard the sun rising in the sky.
But it sees it sideways, when it is reflected
in the childbearer's womb, in which everything is
contained.

O fresh wonder...

Lux refulget de supernis edita
Adest dies a prophetis indita
Gaudeat ecclesia
Resonemus inclita preconia
Vocis cum harmonia
Resonantes clara natalicia
Emanuel, Emanuel
Cuius nomen claruit in Israel.

Light shines, sent forth from on high!
Here is the day foretold by the prophets.
Let the church rejoice,
let us sound out glorious songs of praise,
with harmony of voice
proclaiming the bright birthday:
Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
whose name shone forth in Israel.

Viderunt omnes fines terre salutare dei nostri:
jubilate deo omnis terra.
*Notum fecit dominus salutare suum: ante
conspēctum gentium revelavit iusticiam suam.*
Viderunt omnes...

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of
our God: sing joyfully to God, all the earth.
*The Lord hath made known his salvation: He hath
revealed his justice in the sight of the peoples.*
All the ends of the earth...

*Gradual for Christmas Day; text set
polyphonically in italics*

Per partum virginis
dei et hominis
sunt iuncta federa.
Vita tribuitur
culpa diluitur
que clausit ethera.
Verbum lumen dei patris
sumpta carne alvo matris
in hac die claruit.
Verus deus verus homo
est de Jesse natus domo
ut propheta docuit.
Sub carnis tegmine
homo pro homine
sol verus latuit.
Felix puerpera
que nos et supera
unire potuit.
Quam miranda quam laudanda
quam ditanda celebranda
dei est clemencia,
Qui pro nobis fit mortalis
ante manens immortalis
omni dignus gloria.

Through the virgin's giving birth
the covenant between God and man
is joined.
Life is bestowed,
that sin washed away
which closed heaven.
The Word, light of God the Father,
taking on flesh in his mother's womb,
shone forth on this day.
True God, true man,
he is born of the house of Jesse,
as the prophet taught.
Beneath cover of a body,
man for the sake of man,
the true Sun lay hidden.
Happy childbearer,
who could unite
us and the divine!
How wondrous, how praiseworthy,
how generous and much to be celebrated
is the clemency of God,
Who for our sake is made mortal,
before remaining immortal,
worthy of all glory.

Inmortalis
fit mortalis
sola tactus gracia.

The immortal one
is made mortal,
touched by grace alone.

Sederunt principes et adversum me loquebantur:
et iniqui persecuti sunt me.

*Adjuva me, Domine Deus meus: salvum me fac
propter misericordiam tuam.*

Sederunt principes...

The rulers were seated in council and spoke
against me: and my enemies persecuted me.

Help me, O Lord my God: save me because of
your mercy.

The rulers were seated...

*Gradual for St Stephen's Day; text set
polyphonically in italics*

The image shows a page of musical notation, likely a score for a polyphonic setting of the Gradual for St Stephen's Day. The notation is arranged in ten staves. A large, ornate initial 'C' is visible on the third staff. The word 'runt' is written at the bottom of the page.

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, ranging from Dunstable and Du Fay through Ockeghem to Josquin; Spanish music between 1500 and 1600; and neglected early sixteenth-century English music, especially the rich and unexplored repertory of the Peterhouse partbooks (c. 1540). The ensemble has also reached outside these areas to perform very early music (organa by the twelfth-century French composer Perotinus), very recent music (new works by the Australian composer Elliott Gyger), and more, including the complete *Eighth Book of Madrigals* by Luca Marenzio at the international Marenzio conference at Harvard University in April 2006. Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents its own series of concerts in Cambridge, performs regularly at Monadnock Music in New Hampshire, and has appeared at other venues throughout the Northeast, including the 2005 Boston Early Music Festival and the 92nd Street Y in New York City. In July 2008 it made its West Coast debut as a guest of the Festival Mozaic (formerly the Mozart Festival) in San Luis Obispo, California. Blue Heron's first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in March of 2007.

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 l'Academie, a professional chamber choir and orchestra for Baroque music. At Harvard he directs the Holden Chamber Ensembles and

the Dudley Chorus. As a singer Mr. Barrett has collaborated with Blue Heron, Seven Times Salt, and Boston Secession, 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.

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, Cut Circle, Schola Cantorum, Boston Secession, 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 won a prestigious Downbeat award with one of the university's world famous jazz ensembles. Cameron has participated in recording projects for numerous record labels, including Harmonia Mundi, Edition Lilac, Pro Organo, Klavier, and GIA. He has also performed for BBC Radio, WGBH Boston, and WRR Classical Radio of Dallas. With Conspirare he will perform on a future television project for PBS.

Baritone **Glenn Billingsley** made his debut with the New York City Opera National Company. He has sung with the Santa Fe, Chautauqua, and Lake George Opera companies, appeared in the Spoleto and Madeira Bach Festivals, toured most of the western hemisphere with the Waverly Consort, and done 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, and 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 inception. Glenn's wife, soprano Monique Phinney, is on the voice faculty of The Boston Conservatory, their son Ken is the drummer for the band Exhale, and their daughter Lisa is majoring in Music Theater at The Boston Conservatory. Earlier this year Glenn joined the Boston Early Music Festival as its first Director of Development.

Lydia Brotherton, soprano, received her B.A. in Music with honors from Brown University; her honors thesis was published as a winner of the prestigious University Prize. Now residing in the Boston area, Ms. Brotherton is working towards an M.Mus. in Historical Performance from Boston University, and performs regularly with the Boston Camerata, Sprezzatura, and Blue Heron. She has sung under Martin Pearlman in performances of Bach's *Wedding Cantata* and the in title role in Eccles' rarely-heard opera *Semele*, and has appeared as a soloist with the Connecticut Early Music Festival, as well as with the Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series in productions of Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and Charpentier's *Actéon*. Ms. Brotherton recently toured Australia and New Zealand with the Boston Camerata and the Tero Saarinen Dance Company in *Borrowed Light*, for which her part was praised as being "familiar yet fresh, exquisitely sung" (*Dominion Post*, NZ).

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 and Cappella Alamire. His recital repertoire embraces music from the Renaissance to the twentieth century and includes the major song cycles of Schubert and Britten. Mr. Combs has given world premieres at the Lowell New Music Festival and with Composers in Red Sneakers. He performs frequently at Phillips Academy, Andover, where he is a member of the voice faculty. Currently a soloist and cantor at the Church of the Advent, Mr. Combs has served as music director of the Andover Choral Society since 1990. He is also the vocal director for the Composers' Conference and Chamber Music Center at Wellesley College and music director for the New England Dance Ensemble.

Pamela Dellal, mezzo-soprano, is a much sought-after oratorio soloist who has performed with renowned ensembles in Boston and throughout the world. She has been featured in leading roles in operas of Purcell, Mozart, Britten, and others. As a member of Sequentia's women's ensemble, Vox Feminae, Ms. Dellal has recorded the music of Hildegard von Bingen and toured the US, Europe, and Australia. She appears frequently with Musicians of the Old Post Road and Ensemble Chaconne and is a regular soloist with Emmanuel Music. Her broad repertoire ranges from early chamber music to contemporary pieces.

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 November, with Sequentia, he was part of the “opening act” for the Boston Symphony’s performance of Carl Orff’s well-known work for orchestra and chorus, singing excerpts from the medieval *Carmina Burana* manuscript. 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.

Mezzo-soprano **Lydia Heather Knutson** has performed around the world, appearing on radio and at leading international music festivals in the US, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and Australia. She is a founding member of the medieval ensemble Fortune’s Wheel, sang for many years with the women’s ensemble of Sequentia, Cologne, and has sung with Blue Heron since 2003. Locally, she has performed with the Boston Camerata, Boston Cecilia, La Donna Musicale, and Emmanuel Music, among others. She has recorded for Dorian, Erato, and BMG Classics/Deutsche Harmonia Mundi. In addition to singing, Dr. Knutson is a chiropractor and the director of the Lydian Center for Innovative Medicine in Cambridge.

Jason McStoots has performed throughout the US in the genres of opera, oratorio, recital, and musical theater, and has been described by critics as “a natural, a believable actor and a first-rate singer” and as having “a silken tenor voice” and “sweet, appealing tone.” He has performed with numerous organizations including Boston Lyric Opera, The Early Music Guild of Seattle, Handel Choir of Baltimore, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Emmanuel Music,

Granite State Opera, OperaProvidence, Tragicomedia, Blue Heron, and the Boston Early Music Festival, and has long standing relationships with Intermezzo: The New England Chamber Opera Series and the Florestan Recital Project. Particularly noted for his interpretations of new or modern music and music of the baroque era, he is both a champion of living composers’ works and frequent interpreter of the works of J.S. Bach, performing regularly as a part of the weekly cantata cycle at Emmanuel Music, where he was honored to be the Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson Fellow for 2007-08. McStoots is a member of the voice faculty at Brandeis University and the Walnut Hill School.

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. Besides directing Blue Heron, he serves as concertmaster of the Trinity Consort in Portland, Oregon, under the direction of Eric Milnes, enjoys a varied freelance career as a player, teacher, conductor, and writer, and is presently becoming an active member of Montreal’s burgeoning early music scene, working with Montreal Baroque, Arion, Les Boréades, and other groups. He appears on recordings on harmonia mundi, ATMA, Dorian, Wildboar, and elsewhere. Metcalfe directed the Renaissance choir Convivium Musicum from 1996 through 2007 and was a founding member of La Luna and The King’s Noyse. He received a bachelor’s degree in 1985 from Brown University, where he majored in biology, and in 2005 completed a master’s degree in historical performance practice at Harvard. This year he is a Lecturer in choral repertoire and performance practice at Boston University.

Countertenor **Martin Near** began his professional singing career at age ten, advancing to Head Chorister at Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City. Mr. Near recently made his debut with the

Boston Cecilia as alto soloist in Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, and has also appeared as guest soloist with the Fromm Players at Harvard, Crescendo, Seraphim Singers, Boston Choral Ensemble, the Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus, the Andover Choral Society, and NotaRiotous. He currently sings with Blue Heron, Sprezzatura, Vox Trinita, Boston Secession, Amiable Consort, and the choir of Church of the Advent. Trained in composition at New England Conservatory under Michael Gandolfi, Mr. Near served as composer and music director of the one act opera *Six Characters in Search of an Opera* for Project ARIA (AIDS Response by Independent Artists). The opera was given five performances in Boston and was made possible by a grant from the American Composers Forum Boston. Mr. Near is an advocate of the performance of new music, and has been a soloist in numerous world premieres, including *Temptation in the Desert* by Elliott Gyger for Mr. Near and Seraphim Singers, *On Prayer and Praying* by Rodney Lister for Mr. Near and organist Ross Wood, and *You Are There* by Johanna Malone, a microtonal piece in 72-note equal temperament. Mr. Near is in the midst of 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, for release in 2009.

With a voice hailed as "sweetly soaring" by the *Dallas Morning News*, tenor **Steven Soph** is an active performer in chamber music and oratorio. He sings with Blue Heron, Boston Secession, Schola Cantorum, Cut Circle, Philovox, Exsultemus, and the Choir of Church of the Advent. Recent solo engagements include Bach's *St. John Passion* with New Trinity Baroque of Atlanta and Musikanten Montana, Schütz's *Musicalische Exequien* with the Providence Singers, and Bach's cantatas BWV 148 and 76 with Musica Maris. While studying at the University of North Texas with Julie McCoy and David Sundquist, he performed with the Orpheus

Chamber Singers, Texas Choral Artists, Dallas Bach Society, Helios Ensemble, Orchestra of New Spain, Paradigm Singers, and the Chancel Choir of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation. Mr. Soph appears on recordings for Arsis, Edition Lilac and Pro Organo labels. When not singing, he restores electro-pneumatic organs for Spencer Organ Co. in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Mezzo-soprano **Daniela Tošić**, a native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, toured with the Belgrade-based ensemble Renaissance throughout the former Yugoslavia. In the Boston area she has worked with Ensemble P.A.N., Revels, Balmus, Foundling, and La Donna Musicale. Ms. Tošić is a founding member of Tapestry, the acclaimed vocal ensemble that records with Telarc International and MDG and tours widely throughout the US and abroad. Tapestry is a recipient of the Chamber Music America Outstanding Recording of the Year Award in 2000 and the European Echo Klassik Prize for Outstanding Recording of the Year in 2005. Ms. Tošić is also a founding member of the medieval-world fusion ensemble HourGlass.

Darrick Yee has performed regularly with a wide array of Boston-area vocal ensembles over the past fifteen years, from the close-harmony groups Downtown Crossing and the Harvard Krokodiloes to the early music ensembles Exsultemus and Blue Heron. He has performed on local and national stages, including Boston's Symphony Hall, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, and in nationally televised performances on ABC, A&E, and PBS. His diverse interests have afforded him the opportunity to perform with such luminaries as Bryn Terfel, Simon Carrington, Barry Manilow, and Sarah Jessica Parker, in programs ranging from vocal jazz and pop to sacred early music. Darrick appears on recent recordings of Philovox Ensemble, Boston Secession, and Blue Heron.

Acknowledgments

Our grateful thanks to Benjamin Bagby for an inspiring session in November working on 12th-century plainchant, and for his permission to use Barbara Thornton's transcriptions of Aquitanian repertoire, which were originally made for the Sequentia CD production *Shining Light* (DHM/BMG Classics). Thanks to the Cambridge Society for Early Music for a grant supporting this season's pre-concert talks. Visit Blue Heron's website for our podcast series featuring pre-concert talks and concert performances.

Evan Ingersoll (angstrom images) designs our programs and our website, Chris Clark (Cave Dog Studio) designs our publicity materials and program covers, and Philip Davis records our concerts. Special thanks to our devoted volunteers, for their help this evening and throughout the year.

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*p.13: facsimile of the first page of Perotin's *Viderunt**

*above: frontispiece of the *Magnus Liber**

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