MA MAISTRESSE: SONGS, MASSES & A MOTET FOR MY LADY
8 PM • Saturday, October 14, 2017
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational
This program explores a complex of interrelated works—a song and two masses by Johannes Ockeghem, a song by one Barbingant, and a song by Firminus Caron. The first of this group of pieces seems to be Ockeghem’s song Ma maistresse, whose earliest source is a manuscript from the early to mid-1450s: it was probably composed around or shortly after 1450 and is one of the very earliest works of Ockeghem’s known to us. The song survives in eight sources, while its text (which David Fallows has suggested may be by Alain Chartier) is found in two purely poetic collections. The song’s opening gesture, setting the words “Ma maistresse,” is treated in imitation at the fifth between the cantus and tenor parts, a rather unusual technical maneuver for the mid-15th century. Perhaps it was in part this feature that inspired Barbingant to quote the figure, in imitation at the octave, when setting the same two words in his song Au travail suis.

Apparently undocumented in archival records, Barbingant is known to us by a small handful of ascriptions in musical sources from the 1460s and 1470s, including three French songs and one mass. His songs enjoyed considerable success: one (L’homme bannye de sa plaisance) is found in no less than three sources, while Ockeghem took its text (which David Fallows has suggested may be by Alain Chartier) in his song Au travail suis. Pre-concert talk by Sean Gallagher

To be honest, it is not entirely certain that Au travail suis borrowed its “Ma maistresse” figure from Ockeghem’s song, or whether the loan may have gone in the other direction. David Fallows has argued in favor of Barbingant originating the figure, largely on the grounds that Ockeghem’s handling of it in imitation at the fifth is more complex than Barbingant’s imitation at the octave, so that Ma maistresse appears to raise the stakes on Au travail suis. Fallows has also noticed what appears to be a direct quote of both cantus and tenor voices of Au travail suis, with imitation at the octave, in the tenor and bass at the beginning of the Gloria of the Missa Ma maistresse; Fallows did not remark upon it, but the same quotation, in the same two voices, is reprinted at the climactic final moments of the movement, at the words “In gloria Dei patris, Amen.” Furthermore, in some cases where we are sure of the chronology, the opening line of a later song quotes an internal line from another, rather than the reverse: Busnoys’s En soutenant votre querelle, for example, takes its textual incipit from the last line of Binchois’s indisputably earlier De plus en plus.

But both the chronology of the sources and considerations of musical style make a strong case that Ma maistresse was composed first, sometime in the early 1450s, Au travail suis perhaps a decade later. In this view, Barbingant honored Ockeghem with a quotation of Ma maistresse.
maistresse in the second half of Au travail sui, ensuring that the allusion was easily audible by employing the simpler technical device of imitation at the octave and setting the quotation off with a clear cadence immediately before it. Ockeghem then returned the tribute, rather subtly, by quoting Barbingant in the Missa Ma maistresse, and paid more lavish homage to him elsewhere with an entire Mass cycle which takes Barbingant’s song as its point of departure.

Songs & masses

Although the idea was not completely new, fifteenth-century composers absorbed secular melodies into sacred music with much greater frequency and freedom than did their predecessors, basing numerous Mass cycles and motets on preexisting music drawn from songs, which were often incorporated into the new composition in such a way as to be immediately recognizable to the listener. Far from violating propriety, the use of song melodies was meant to offer enlightening homage to him elsewhere with an entire Mass based on it—a Mass that, according to the capacity of its nature….It is also befitting Holy Writ, which is proposed to all without distinction of persons…that spiritual truths be expounded by means of figures taken from corporeal things, in order that thereby even the simple who are unable by themselves to grasp intellectual things may be able to understand it.

The most obvious and most common analogy made available by courtly love was between the unattainable object of desire and Mary, and the virelai Ma maistresse provides an exquisite example. The poem merits a rubric like that given by the Burgundian court chronicler and poet, Jean Molinet, to his poem Dame sans per: “Dictier qui se poueult adrescher soit a la viegre Marie ou pour un amant a sa dame” (“Poem that may be addressed either to the Virgin Mary or by a lover to his lady”). Ma maistresse speaks of a lady “perfect in good qualities, if ever a woman was, / She alone whose reputation and fame it is / To be without peer,” of the speaker’s urgent desire to see her and his hope for her pity. The song is one of Ockeghem’s most bewitching creations, and its soaring melodies lend an air of enchantment to the Mass based on it—a Mass that, according to an allegorical interpretation, may have originally been intended for a Marian feast or a Lady Chapel. Just the Kyrie and Gloria of the Missa Ma maistresse remain, although a complete cycle may once have existed. Both movements draw liberally and audibly on the discantus and tenor of the chanson. The bass of the Kyrie quotes the entire tenor line of the first section of the song, while in the Gloria both the first and second sections of the song’s discantus melody are quoted complete by the tenor. At the last moment, at the words “In gloria Dei patris, Amen,” the tenor reprises the opening gesture of the song; as noted above, the bass joins for moment of imitation in an apparent allusion to Au travail sui. Besides these direct and extended quotations, the song’s melodies are absorbed into all the lines of the Mass.

No two of Ockeghem’s Masses sound quite the same or address formal problems in the same manner. As Fabrice Fitch observes, “most of them present a highly distinctive profile, determined by features peculiar to the one work alone. Thus, the soundscapes of individual works vary considerably, and the differences between them are often more obvious than their similarities.” Indeed, the Missa Au travail sui presents a stark contrast with the Missa Ma maistresse. The distinctive features of the former include its unusual scoring—two lower parts moving in the same range and two upper parts very close in range—and its brevity, which may link it to a Missa brevis tradition centered in Milan. The Mass maintains an ambiguous relationship to its model: after citing the song’s tenor literally in the Kyrie, it then seems to abandon all reference to the song, aside from the head-motif of each Mass movement, which is drawn from the song’s opening gesture. As so often with Ockeghem, there seems to be no explanation of these mysteries.

Credo sine nomine & Cent mil escuz

Although based throughout on plainchant and otherwise unrelated to Au travail sui, the Credo sine nomine does share material with the Credo of the Missa Au travail in one passage, that setting the words “Et incarnatus…et homo factus est.” It is unclear which work quotes which, but the quotation of a Credo based entirely on chant in a freely-composed Mass based on song, or vice versa, is characteristic of Ockeghem, at once playful and serious, allusive, and densely layered.

Among the sacred works and elevated sentiments of the rest of the program, Cent mil escuz appears the odd one out. What is this decidedly mundane song—a hit composed by the memorably named Firminus Caron, praised by Tincorici alongside Ockeghem, like Regis—doing in such company? As Sean Gallagher has noticed, the song’s last phrase, setting the words “Aulcuneffoiz quant je pourroye,” is a close match for the opening point of imitation of Ma maistresse, here extended to involve the third voice as well. The motivation for the musical reference is hard to see, but just possibly it was this feature that inspired a considerably bawdier poem found in a handful of slightly later sources. (Reader, I blush to print it, but such is the record of our past.)
La teneur de cent mille escuz
Et le desus de ma maistresse
Je soubzhaitte pour prendre liesse
Et ne faire guerre que a culz
Auoir mes ennemis vaincuz
Toushiers sante auec jeunesse
Je soubzhaitte pour prendre lyesse

La teneur de cent mille escuz
Et le desus de ma maistresse
Lors lairrons ie lances et escus
Pour empoinger tetin et escus
Jamais ie nen gendreoy tristesse
Mais chanteroye auc bacus
La teneur de cent mille escuz
Et le desus de ma maistresse...

Just in case anyone has failed to perceive
with Bacchus I would sing / The tenor of
Au travail suis
outside the
classicizing text (its numerous errors
to the refrain can perfectly well be read as “But
the reference to two songs, the author has
have been emended by Leofranc Holford-
in the 1470s in France, contains fifty songs,
including among no less than three
settings of the Ordinary and the Requiem,
the Missa Au travail suis.

Son dict finy, tous instrumente cesserent,
Et sur ce poinct les chantres commencerent.

La du Fay, le bon homme survint,
Bunoys aussi, et autres plus de vingt,
Fede, Binchois, Barbingant et Doustable
Pasquin, Lannoy, Barizon tres notable:
Copin, Regis, Gille Joye et Constant.
Maint homme fut aupres d’eulx escoutant,
Car bon faisoit ouyr telle armonye,
 Aussi estoit la bende bien fournye.

Lors se chanta la messe de My My,
Au travail suis, et Cujus vis toni,
La messe aussi exquise et tres paraict
De Requiem par ledict defunct faicte.

Today’s performance of En attendant, which is very likely the first since the fifteenth century and certainly an American premiere, offers a small taste of the “new” repertoire in the Leuven Chansonnier, which has just been made public and has barely begun to be studied. Blue Heron plans to feature much more in future seasons.

As for Barbingant, whoever he was, he seems to have died before Ockeghem and ascended to heaven, where Guillaume Crétin’s Déploration...sur le trépas de Jean Okeghem records him among the choir of musicians who welcome Ockeghem by singing his works—including, among no less than three settings of the Ordinary and the Requiem, the Missa Au travail suis.

Their piece finished, all the instruments fell silent, and at this moment the singers began.

There Du Fay, the worthy man, stepped forth, Busnoys too, and others, more than twenty, Fede, Binchois, Barbingant, and Dunstaple, Pasquin, Lannoy, the very famous Barizon, Copin, Regis, Gille Joye, and Constant.
Many men were there listening to them, for it was good to hear such harmony, and the ensemble was well staffed, what’s more.

Then the Missa My my was sung, Au travail suis, and Cujus vis toni, and also the exquisite and most perfect Requiem mass composed by the deceased.
Barbingant must have been pleased.

—Scott Metcalfe
Celsitonantis ave genitrix sublimis Olympi, imperioque potens cunctis dominansque supernis, quam chorus angelicus rutilantem luce perenni, se super attollens, laudat, colit et veneratur, horrendique chaos cetus cui paret Averni! Nam tu celsa polo profundaque sciris abysso. Quis tibi, stella maris, maris expers, alma Maria, quis tibi, virgo parens, condigna referre valebit? ah, quibus et quantis et qualibet ipsa coruscas peccatrix anima penis crucianda barathri per te nunc aditum gaudet reperisse quietis!

Nam patris ingeniti genitus quo cuncta reguntur, alta ducum superat, regum sublimia vincens. A patre non cedens, in te descendit ab alto orbe, gemens facinus protoplasti, sponte peremptus, nobiliumque potens nutu fastigia ferre. Hic chorus iste tibi laudum modulmini cantat, te rogitans, natus pro nobis ut prece pulses, quatinus ipsa suo donet nos numine fungi. Amen.

Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient, On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir, Mays c’est pour ce que je ne puis voir Ma maistresse ainsi qu’autres feroient. Bien envieux certes aulcuns seroient, Si par sa grace du bien povoyme avoir.

Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient, On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir.

S’il m’avenoit, grant doleur porteroient, Car veoir mon bien leur feroit recepvoir Mal si tresgrant que si duroyt, pour voir Je suis tout seur que de duel creveroiroent.

Au travail suis...


Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient, On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir, Mays c’est pour ce que je ne puis voir Ma maistresse ainsi qu’autres feroient. Bien envieux certes aulcuns seroient, Si par sa grace du bien povoyme avoir.

Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient, On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir.

Au travail suis...

I am in agony, though few would believe it— anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly— but it is because I cannot see my mistress as others may do.

Some would be very envious, certainly, if by her grace I should have some good.

I am in agony, though few would believe it— anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly.

If it happened that I had mercy, some would suffer greatly, for upon seeing me benefit they would feel such very great pain that, if it lasted, in truth I am quite sure that they would die of grief.

I am in agony ...

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

I am in agony, though few would believe it— anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly.

I am in agony, though few would believe it— anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly.

A promise is made to Abraham that his descendance should increase as the sand and become equal to the stars.

I am in agony, though few would believe it— anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly— but it is because I cannot see my mistress as others may do.

Tenor

Abrahe fit promissio quod illus successio velut arena cresceret stillisque equalis fieret.

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**En attendant vostre venue,**
Mon bien que je desire tant,
Une heure me dure bien cent
Quant de vous seul je pers la veue.

Bien souvent seullete, esperdue,
Je passe mon temps en pleurant
En attendant vostre venue,
Mon bien que je desire tant.

Mai bon Espoir ma maintenue
Et de son bon gré m’assemant
Que je vous reverray briefment
Et de son bon gré m’assemant
Qui en joy m’a entretenue.

Que je vous reverray briefment
Et de son bon gré m’ai prepir
Mais bon Espoir m’a maintenue
Mon bien que je desire tant.

En attendant vostre venue,...


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, 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.

**Credo (see above)**

**Sanctus**
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.
Osanna dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

**Cent mil escuz quant je vouldroye**
Et paradis quant je mourroye:
Mieulx ne scaroye souhaitier.
Si j’avoye pour moy aidier
Mieulx je ne scaroye souhaitier.

**A hundred thousand escus...**
A hundred thousand escus when I wanted, and Paradise when I die:
I wouldn’t know what better to wish for except to ply my trade from time to time, when I could.

I wouldn’t worry about a thing, but I’d throw parties for the ladies, if only I had the aid of a hundred thousand escus when I wanted, and Paradise when I die: I wouldn’t know what better to wish for!

I’d have a thousand singers, and God knows I’d drink to the very last drop, more than any soldier ever.
In short you shouldn’t imagine that I’d be working very hard if I had a hundred thousand escus.

**Credo**

**OSANNA IN EXCELSIS.**
PLeni sunt celorum et terrae gloria tua.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

**AGNUS DEI, QUI TOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI, MISERERE NOBIS.**

**Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.**
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
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, GRANT US PEACE.**
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.

**LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, GRANT US PEACE.**
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.
Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye,
De mon desir la mortelle ennemye,
Parfaicte en biens s’onces maiz le fut femme,
Celle seuille de qui court bruit et fame
D’estre sans per; ne vous verray je mye?

Helas, de vous bien plaindre me devvoie,
S’il ne vous plait que brefvement vous voye,
M’amour, par qui d’autre aymer n’ay puissance.

Car sans vous voir, en quelque part que soye,
Tout quant que voys me desplais et ennoye,
Ne jusque alors je n’auray souffisance.

Incessammant mon dolent cuor larmye
Ne jusque alors je n’auray souffisance.

For when I do not see you, wherever I might be,
everything I see displeases and vexes me,
nor until I see you will I be satisfied.

Que ja ne soit, ma tant amée dame!
Maiz s’ainsy est, si malheureux me clame
Que ja ne soit, ma tant amée dame!

Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye...

My lady and my greatest friend,...

Gloria (see above)

Kyrie (see above)

Translations from the French by Scott Metcalfe

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Blue Heron has been acclaimed by The Boston Globe as “one of the Boston music community’s indispensables” and hailed by Alex Ross in The New Yorker for its “expressive intensity.” Committed to vivid live performance informed by the study of original source materials and historical performance practices, Blue Heron ranges over a wide repertory, from plainchant to new music, with particular specialities in 15th-century Franco-Flemish and early 16th-century English polyphony. Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007. In 2010 the ensemble inaugurated a 5-CD series of Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, including many world premiere recordings of works copied c. 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral; the fifth disc was released in March 2017. Blue Heron’s recordings also include a CD of chant and polyphony to accompany Thomas Forrest Kelly’s book Capturing Music: The Story of Notation and the live recording Christmas in Medieval England. Jessie Ann Owens (UC Davis) and Blue Heron won the 2015 Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support a multi-season project to perform the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497). Entitled Ockeghem@600, it will wind up around 2021, in time to commemorate the composer’s circa-600th birthday.

Bass-baritone Paul Guttry has performed throughout the USA and internationally with Sequentia, Chanticleer, the Boston Camerata, and New York’s Ensemble for Early Music. A founding member of Blue Heron, he has also appeared in and around Boston as soloist with Emmanuel Music, the Handel & Haydn Society, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Tanglewood Music Center, Cantata Singers, Boston Cecilia, Prism Opera, Boston Revels, Collage, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and Intermezzo. Paul can be heard on all Blue Heron’s recordings, on discs of medieval music by Sequentia, Kurt Well’s Johnny Johnson and French airs de cour with the Boston Camerata, and on Emmanuel Music’s Bach CDs.

Hailed for his “voice of seductive beauty” (Miami Herald), baritone David McFerrin has won critical acclaim in a variety of repertoire.
His opera credits include Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Florida Grand Opera, the Rossini Festival in Germany, and numerous appearances in and around Boston. As concert soloist he has sung with the Cleveland Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, and Boston Pops, and in recital at the Caramoor, Ravinia, and Marlboro Festivals. Recently Mr. McFerrin was an Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival in California, debuted with Boston Baroque (as Achilla in Handel’s Giulio Cesare) and Apollo’s Fire in Cleveland, and performed with the Handel & Haydn Society in Boston, New York, and California. He was also runner-up in the Oratorio Society of New York’s 2016 Lyndon Woodsdie Solo Competition. Upcoming highlights include the world premiere of The Nefarious, Immoral, yet Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke and Mr. Hare with Boston Lyric Opera, a debut with the Arion Baroque Orchestra in Montreal, solo appearances with the Handel & Haydn Society, and various programs with Blue Heron.

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

Reviewers describe Jason McStoots as having an “alluring tenor voice” (Arts Fuse) and as “the consummate artist, wielding not just a sweet tone but also incredible technique and impeccable pronunciation” (Cleveland Plain Dealer). In 2015 he won a Grammy in Opera with the Boston Early Music Festival for the music of Charpentier. A respected interpreter of early music whose solo appearances include Les plaisirs de Versailles (Charpentier), Orfeo, Il ritorno d’Ulisse (Monteverdi), Vespers of 1610 (Monteverdi), Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart), Christmas Oratorio, St. Mark Passion (Bach), Dido and Aeneas ( Purcell), and Messiah (Handel), he has appeared with Boston Lyric Opera, Emmanuel Music, Pacific MusicWorks, TENET, San Juan Symphony, Bach Ensemble, Casals Festival, Seattle Ear Art Music Guild, Tragicomedia, and Tanglewood Music Center. He is a core member of Blue Heron and can be heard on all of Blue Heron recordings. Other recording credits include Lully’s Psyclé, Handel’s Acis and Galatea, Blow’s Venus and Adonis, and Charpentier’s Acteon with BEMF (CPO), Fischer Vespers (Toccata Classics), and Awakenings with Coro Allegro (Navona).

Scott Metcalfe has gained wide recognition as one of North America’s leading specialists in music from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries and beyond. Musical and artistic director of Blue Heron, he was music director of New York City’s Green Mountain Project (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director) from 2010-2016 and has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Tudor Consort, and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), and Early Music America’s Young Performers Festival Ensemble. Metcalfe also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), Montreal Baroque (dir. Eric Milnes), and other ensembles, and directing the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory. He taught vocal ensemble repertoire and performance practice at Boston University from 2006-2015, is teaching a class in vocal ensemble performance at Harvard University this year, and is at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois. He holds degrees from Brown University and Harvard University.

Countertenor Martin Near enjoys a varied career exploring his twin passions for early music and new music. Mr. Near recently sang in the solo quartet of Arvo Part’s Passio with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, was the countertenor soloist in the premiere performance of Dominick DiOrio’s Stabat mater with Juventas New Music Ensemble, sang the role of Hamor in Handel’s Jephtha with Boston Cecilia, and was noted for his “fine work” in Buxtehude’s Heut triumphieret Gettes Sohn with Boston Baroque. He has been a member of Blue Heron since 2001 and appears on all of the group’s recordings. He also sings regularly with Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, and the Handel & Haydn Society, and was Music Director of Exsultemus from 2009 to 2012.

Soprano Margot Rood, hailed for her “luminosity and grace” by The New York Times, performs a wide range of repertoire. Recent and upcoming solo appearances include those with Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony, Handel & Haydn Society, Seraphic Fire, Lorelei Ensemble, Les Délices, A Far Cry, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Blue Heron, The Thirteenth, Cape Symphony, Bach Collegium San Diego, and Grand Harmonie, as well as onstage with the Boston Early Music Festival, Boston Baroque, Florida Grand Opera, the Rossini Festival, TENET, True Concord, San Diego Bach Collegium, and was Music Director of Exsultemus from 2006-2015, is teaching a class in vocal ensemble performance at Harvard University this year, and is at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois. He holds degrees from Brown University and Harvard University.

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performances and projects in New England and in chamber music, oratorio, and recording, with Massachusetts and is enjoying an active career.

Reed

Originally from Glasgow, Virginia, Stefan Reed is currently based in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts and is enjoying an active career in chamber music, oratorio, and recording, with performances and projects in New England and throughout the country. Mr. Reed has been characterized as an “intense, focused, lyric tenor” (Miami Herald) and his performances have been described as “dramatically expressive and technically impressive” (Boston Musical Intelligencer). He performs regularly with Boston Baroque, Blue Heron, Conspirare, the Handel & Haydn Society, and Seraphic Fire. Recent and upcoming solo engagements include performances with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Coro Allegro, the Handel & Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, and Boston Cecilia. Mr. Reed spent two summers as a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Festival and holds performance degrees from the New England Conservatory and George Mason University.

Praised for his “elegant style” (The Boston Globe), Sumner Thompson is highly sought after as both baritone and tenor. His appearances on the operatic stage include roles in the Boston Early Music Festival’s productions of Conrad’s Ariadne (2003) 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 the Handel & Haydn Society, Concerto Palatino, Tafelmusik, Apollo’s Fire, Les Boréades (Montreal), Les Voix Baroques, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the King’s Noyse, Mercury Baroque, and the symphony orchestras of Charlotte, Memphis, and Phoenix. Recent highlights include Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 and a new Vespers of 1640 with the Green Mountain Project, Buxtehude’s Membra Jesu Nostri with Les Voix Baroques and Houston’s Mercury Baroque, Mozart’s Requiem at St. Thomas Church in New York City, a tour of Japan with Joshua Rifkin and the Cambridge Concentus, a return to the Carmel Bach Festival, and Britten’s War Requiem with the New England Philharmonic and several guest choruses.

Ockeghem@600

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

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

Along the way we will also explore music of Ockeghem’s predecessors (Du Fay, Binchois, et al.), contemporaries (Regis, Busnoys, et al.), and songs by Ockeghem and other composers: Ockeghem, to be released in spring 2017, a new series of five CDs is being planned, including a 2-CD set of all of Ockeghem’s songs.

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

Ockeghem@600 | 2015-2021

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

2014-15 | Predecessors & contemporaries

1. Ockeghem & Binchois: Missa De plus en plus
2. The Five: Ockeghem, Regis, Busnoys, Faugues & Caron

2015-16 | Early masses I

3. L’homme armé

2016-17 | Early masses II

4. Ecce ancilla domini
5. Caput

2017-18 | Masses based on songs

6. Ma maistresse & Au travail suis
7. Fors seulement

2018-19 | Speculative music

8. Cuiusvis toni
9. Prolationum

2019-20 | Freely composed masses

10. Missa quinti toni
11. Missa sine nomine

2020-21 | Last things & legacies

12. Requiem
13. Missa Mi mi
THE MUSIC OF JOHANNES OCKEGHEM

Ockeghem's surviving music comprises two dozen songs, four motets, nine complete cyclic Masses, three partial Mass cycles, an independent Credo, and an incomplete Requiem.

SONGS

Aultre Venus Ma bouche rit
Baisiés moi Ma maistresse
D’un autre amer Mort tu as navré
Fors seulement contre ce Alias discantus super O rosa bella
Fors seulement l’actente Permanent vierge
Il ne m’en chault Prenez sur moi
Je n’ay dueil (two versions) Presque transi
La despourveue Quant de vous
L’autre d’antan L’autre d’antan
Les desleaux Les desleaux

MOTETS

Alma redemptoris mater Missa Au travail suis
Ave Maria Missa Caput
Interemerata dei mater Missa cuiusvis toni
Salve regina Missa De plus en plus

MASSES

Missa Au travail suis Missa Fors seulement
(Kyrie, Gloria, Credo) (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo)
Missa Caput Missa Ma maistresse
Missa cuiusvis toni Missa (Kyrie, Gloria)
Missa De plus en plus Missa sine nomine a 5
Missa Ecce ancilla (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo)
Missa L’homme armé Credo sine nomine
Missa Mi mi Requiem (incomplete)
Missa quinti toni a 3
Missa prolationum

WHO WAS JOHANNES OCKEGHEM?

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

Writing in 1477, the theorist Johannes Tintorius(0,3),(997,997) placed him at the head of an exalted company of modern composers:

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

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

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

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

—Scott Metcalfe
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1435</td>
<td>Ockeghem appointed first chaplain of the French royal chapel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1436</td>
<td>Charles VII becomes King of France</td>
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<td>1440</td>
<td>c. 1440 first extant compositions: <em>Missa Caput</em>, <em>Missa Caput</em> copied in Bruges</td>
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<td>1444</td>
<td>Ockeghem travels to Paris</td>
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<td>1445</td>
<td>Ockeghem travels to Damme</td>
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<tr>
<td>1446</td>
<td>Ockeghem travels to Soignies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1447</td>
<td>Ockeghem publishes first printed copy of the Cantebury Tales (written late 14th century)</td>
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<td>1448</td>
<td>Ockeghem’s surviving music composed by c. 1440?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1449</td>
<td>February 1453 Binchois retires from Burgundian court and moves to Soignies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Ockeghem dies on February 6, 1497, presumably in Tours</td>
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<tr>
<td>1451</td>
<td>D. Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, succeeded by John the Fearless</td>
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<tr>
<td>1452</td>
<td>by 1454 appointed first chaplain of French royal chapel</td>
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<td>1453</td>
<td>January 1, 1454 presents the king with “a book of song” and receives a New Year’s gift of four ells of cloth in return</td>
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<td>by 1454 appointed first chaplain of French royal chapel</td>
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HOW DID OCKEGHEM SPELL HIS NAME?

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

The county of Hainaut or Hainaut was a lordship within the Holy Roman Empire with its capital at Mons (Mergen in Flemish); the name comes from the river Haine. Hainaut comprised what is now the Belgian province of Hainaut and part of the French département of Nord, and included the cities of Charleroi, to the east of Mons, and, to the southwest, Valenciennes and the diocesan seat of Cambrai, both in latter-day France. In 1420 the county was ruled by Jacqueline, daughter of duke Wilhelm II of Bavaria-Staubing, but in 1432 it was ceded to the Duchy of Burgundy under Philip the Good; in 1477, upon the death of Charles the Bold, it passed to the Habsburgs. In 1450 until his death in 1497 he was a member of the chapel of the the king of France and lived in Tours, in the Loire Valley.

The Flemish family name was a source of endless confusion to speakers of French, Italian, German, and other languages, and it may be found spelled in a bewildering variety of ways in contemporary sources: Ockeghem, Okeghem, Okeghen, Ockegehm, Ockegheem, Ockeghem, Okenhenn, Oekam, Obekhan, Obeghe, Hochgeghen, Hoquegen, Hoquergan, Hoqreghen, Okegus. Eugène Giraudet, in Les artistes tourangeaux (Tours, 1885), reproduces a presumed autograph signature on p. 312, but fails to indicate the source, which is otherwise unknown and is now apparently lost. Nevertheless, modern scholarship has generally accepted the authenticity of the signature, in part due to the unusual formation of the c, which could be taken for an e; such an oddity, as Jaap van Marlip, Peufleix, and Jehan very likely grew up speaking French as his first tongue. By the mid-1440s he was living and working in France, and from about 1450 until his death in 1497 he was a member of the chapel of the king of France and lived in Tours, in the Loire Valley.

The signature, assuming it is authentic of the signature, in part due to the unusual formation of the c, which could be taken for an e; such an oddity, as Jaap van Bentheim has written, “might plead against any suggestion of a nineteenth-century attempt [at] forgery.” The signature, assuming it is indeed genuine, establishes that, at least on this one occasion, the composer spelled his last name OCKEGHEM.

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

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

Special thanks to Brett Kostrzewski for help preparing a performing edition of the Missa Au travail suis from the original sources.

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

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

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

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<td>$5,000 – $9,999</td>
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