

# BLUE HERON

21<sup>23RD</sup> 22  
SEASON

SCOTT METCALFE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



## Un Petrarchino cantato Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in song

Saturday, February 12, 2022



## BLUE HERON

Sophie Michaux, *mezzo-soprano*

Kim Leeds, *mezzo-soprano*

Jason McStoots, *tenor*

Aaron Sheehan, *tenor*

Sumner Thompson, *tenor*

Paul Guttry, *bass*

Jade Guerra & Alessandro Quarta, *readers*

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Scott Metcalfe

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## PRE-CONCERT TALK

Christopher Martin (Boston University)



The musicians will be unmasked during the performance; masks are required for all audience, staff, and volunteers. All performers, staff, and volunteers are fully vaccinated.

# Un Petrarchino cantato

## Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in song

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2022 🕒 FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE, CONGREGATIONAL

### IN VITA

*Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse*  
Giaches de Wert (1535-96)

*Lasciar' il velo*  
Francesco de Layolle (1492-c. 1540),  
with diminutions by  
Giovanni Camillo Maffei (fl. mid-16th c.)

*Chiare fresche et dolci acque*  
Jacques Arcadelt (?1507-1568)

*Quante volte diss' io*  
Adrian Willaert (c. 1490-1562)

*Solo et pensoso*  
Arcadelt

*Solo e pensoso*  
Luca Marenzio (1553/4-99)

*Italia mia*  
Philippe Verdelot (c. 1480/5-?1530/32)

### IN MORTE

*Oimè 'l bel viso, oimè 'l soave sguardo*  
Leonardus Barré (fl. mid-16th c.)

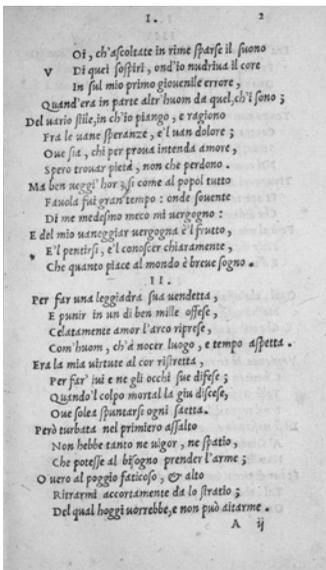
*Che debb' io far?*  
Matteo Rampollini (1497-c. 1553)

*Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri*  
Costanzo Festa (c. 1485/90-1545)

*Ov' è condotto il mio amoroso stile?*  
Marenzio

*Mia benigna fortuna e 'l viver lieto*  
Wert

*Vergine bella* (stanza 10 & stanza ultima)  
Cipriano de Rore (1515/16-1565)



## Texts & translations

Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono

*Canzoniere* 1

Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono  
di quei sospiri ond' io nudriva 'l core  
in sul mio primo giovenile errore  
quand' era in parte altr' uom da quel ch' i' sono:

del vario stil in ch' io piango et ragiono,  
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,  
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,  
spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.

Ma ben veggio or sì come al popol tutto  
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente  
di me medesmo meco mi vergogno;

et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,  
e 'l pentersi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente  
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

You who hear in scattered verses the sound  
of those sighs with which I fed my heart  
in my first errant youthful days  
when in part I was another man than who I am today:

for the varying style in which I weep and speak  
amid vain hopes and vain suffering,  
where there is anyone who knows love through  
experience  
I hope to find pity, not just pardon.

But now I see clearly how I've been the talk  
of people all around for a long time, for which  
I often feel ashamed for myself within me;

and shame is the fruit of my raving,  
and repentance, and the clear knowledge  
that whatever pleases in the world is a fleeting dream.

*Il Petrarca (Rerum vulgarium fragmenta; Canzoniere e trionfi)*, Venice, 1546. Fifth and last edition of Petrarch printed by the Aldine Press, founded by Aldus Manutius in 1494. University of Manchester Library.

## Lasciar' il velo o per sol' o per ombra

*Canzoniere* 11

Lasciar' il velo o per sol' o per ombra,  
donna, non vi vidd'io  
poi ch'in me conoscesti il gran desio  
ch'ogn'altra voglia dentr'al cor mi sgombra.

Mentre portava i bei pensier celati  
c'hanno la mente desiando morta,  
vidivi di pietate ornar 'l volto,  
ma poi ch'Amor di me vi fec' acorta  
fur' i biondi capelli alhor velati  
e l'amoroso sguard'in se raccolto.

Quel che piu desiav'in voi m'e tolto;  
si mi governa 'l velo,  
che per mia morte et al cald'et al gelo  
de bei vostr'occhi il dolce lum'adombra.

## Chiare fresche et dolci acque

*Canzoniere* 126, stanza 1

Chiare fresche et dolci acque  
ove le belle membra  
pose colei che sola a me par donna,  
gentil ramo ove piacque  
(con sospir mi rimembra)  
a lei di fare al bel fianco colonna,  
erba et fior che la gonna  
leggiadra ricoverse  
co l'angelico seno,  
aere sacro sereno  
ove Amor co' begli occhi il cor m'aperse:  
date udiencia insieme  
a le dolenti mie parole estreme.

I have never seen you put aside your veil,  
Lady, in sun or in shade,  
since you learned of the great desire within me  
that empties my heart of all other wishes.

As long as I kept concealed those fair thoughts  
that bring my heart death by desiring,  
I saw you adorn your face with pity,  
but ever since Love made you aware of me  
your blond tresses have been veiled  
and your lovely gaze kept to itself.

What I most desired in you is taken from me;  
thus the veil rules me,  
for to cause my death in both warm and icy weather  
it shades the sweet light of your fair eyes.

Clear, cool, sweet waters,  
where she who alone seems to me to be  
a lady would rest her lovely body;  
gentle branch with which it pleased her  
(I sigh to remember it)  
to make a column for her lovely side;  
grass and flowers which her fine  
gown covered  
along with her angelic breast;  
sacred, serene air  
where Love with those fair eyes opened my heart:  
listen all of you together  
to these my mournful last words.

## Quante volte diss' io

*Canzoniere 126, stanza 4*

Quante volte diss' io  
allor, pien di spavento,  
"Costei per fermo nacque in paradiso!"  
Così carco d'oblio  
il divin portamento  
e 'l volto e le parole e 'l dolce riso  
m'aveano, et sì diviso  
da l' imagine vera,  
ch' i' dicea sospirando,  
"Qui come venn' io o quando?"  
credendo esser in ciel, non là dov' era.  
Da indi in qua mi piace  
quest' erba sì ch' altrove non ò pace.

## Solo et pensoso i più deserti campi

*Canzoniere 35*

Solo et pensoso i più deserti campi  
vo misurando a passi tardi et lenti,  
et gli occhi porto per fuggire intenti  
ove vestigio human la rena stampi.

Altro schermo non trovo che mi scampi  
dal manifesto accorger de le genti,  
perché negli atti d'alegrezza spenti  
di fuor si legge com' io dentro avampi:

sì ch' io mi credo omai che monti et piagge  
et fiumi et selve sappian di che tempre  
sia la mia vita, ch' è celata altrui;

ma pur sì aspre vie nè sì selvagge  
cercar non so, ch' Amor non venga sempre  
ragionando con meco, et io con lui.

How often I did say  
then, full of awe,  
"For certain she was born in Paradise!"  
And so her divine manner,  
her face and words and sweet smile  
so filled me with forgetfulness  
and so divided me  
from the true image  
that I kept saying, with a sigh,  
"How did I come here, and when?"—  
thinking I was in Heaven, not where I was.  
Since then I have been so pleased  
by this bank of grass that nowhere else do I find peace.

Alone and deep in thought I measure out  
the most deserted fields with slow, halting steps,  
and I keep my eyes intent, ready to flee  
wherever vestige of human footprint marks the sand.

I find no other defence to protect myself  
against the knowing glances of people,  
for in my bearing all bereft of joy  
one sees from outside how I burn within.

So now I think that mountains and plains  
and rivers and woods know the temper  
of my life, which is concealed from others;

and yet I can never find a path so harsh  
or so wild that Love does not always come along  
speaking with me, and I with him.

## Italia mia

*Canzoniere* 128, stanza 1

Italia mia, ben che 'l parlar sia indarno  
a le piaghe mortali  
che nel bel corpo tuo sì spesse veggio,  
piacemi almen che' mei sospir' sian quali  
spera 'l Tever' et l'Arno  
e 'l Po, dove doglioso et grave hor seggio.

Rettor del cielo, io cheggio  
che la pietà che ti condusse in terra  
ti volga al tuo dilecto almo paese.  
Vedi, Signor cortese,  
di che lievi cagion' che crudel guerra:  
e i cor', che 'ndura et serra  
Marte superbo et fero,  
apri tu, padre, e 'ntenerisci et snoda;  
ivi fa' che 'l tuo vero,  
qual' io mi sia, per la mia lingua s'oda.

## Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo

*Canzoniere* 267

Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo,  
oimè il leggiadro portamento altero,  
oimè il parlar ch'ogni aspro ingegno et fero  
facevi umile ed ogni uom vil, gagliardo;

et oimè il dolce riso, onde uscio 'l dardo  
di che morte, altro bene omai non spero.  
Alma real, dignissima d'impero  
se non fossi fra noi scesa sì tardo:

per voi conven ch'io arda e 'n voi respire,  
ch'i pur fui vostro; et se di voi son privo  
via men d'ogni sventura altra mi dole.

Di speranza m'empie et di desire  
quand' io partì' dal sommo piacer vivo;  
ma 'l vento ne portava le parole.

O, my Italy, though words be useless  
to heal the mortal wounds  
I see all over your lovely body,  
I wish at least for my sighs to be one  
with the hopes of the Tiber and the Arno  
and the Po, where I now sit, sad and grieving.

Ruler of Heaven, I beg  
that the mercy which brought you down to earth  
turn you towards your beloved, holy land.  
See, gracious Lord,  
what trivial reasons cause such cruel war,  
and those hearts hardened and closed  
by fierce and haughty Mars—  
open them, Father, soften and unbind them;  
and there let your truth,  
whatever I myself may be, be heard from my tongue.

Alas the beautiful face, alas the gentle glance,  
alas the carefree, noble bearing,  
alas the way of speaking that made every harsh  
and savage mind humble, and every base man, valiant;

and alas the sweet smile whence came forth the dart  
from which I now hope for death, and no other good.  
Regal soul, most worthy of empire  
had you not descended among us so late:

for you I must burn and in you breathe,  
for I have been only yours; and if I am deprived of you  
all other misfortune pains me much less.

With hope you filled me, and with desire,  
when I took leave of my highest pleasure, still living;  
but the wind carried away the words.

**Che debb' io far? che mi consigli, Amore?**

*Canzoniere 268, stanza 1*

Che debb' io far? che mi consigli, Amore?  
Tempo è ben di morire,  
et ho tardato più ch' i' non vorrei.

Madonna è morta et ha seco il mio core,  
et volendol seguire  
interromper convien quest' anni rei,  
perché mai veder lei  
di qua non spero, e l'aspettar m' è noia;  
poscia ch' ogni mia gioia  
per lo suo dipartire in pianto è volta,  
ogni dolcezza di mia vita è tolta.

**Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri!**

*Canzoniere 274*

Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri!  
non basta ben ch' Amor, Fortuna e Morte  
mi fanno guerra intorno e 'n su le porte,  
senza trovarmi dentro altri guerrieri?

Et tu, mio cor, ancor se' pur qual eri?  
disleal a me sol che fere scorte  
vai ricercando et se' fatto consorte  
de miei nemici sì pronti e leggieri.

In te i segreti suoi messaggi Amore,  
in te spiega Fortuna ogni sua pompa,  
et Morte la memoria di quel colpo

che l'avanzo di me convien che rompa,  
in te i vaghi pensieri s'arman d'errore,  
perché d'ogni mio mal te solo incolpo.

What should I do? what do you counsel me, Love?  
It is now time to die,  
and I have put it off more than I would like.

My lady is dead and has with her my heart,  
and wishing to follow it  
I must interrupt these wretched years,  
for I can never hope  
to see her here, and waiting pains me;  
since all my joy  
is turned to tears by her departure,  
all the sweetness in my life is taken away.

Give me peace, O cruel thoughts of mine!  
Isn't it enough that Love, Fortune, and Death  
wage war around me and at the gates,  
without finding other foes within?

And you, my heart, are you still what you were?  
Disloyal only to me, giving shelter  
to cruel spies and making yourself an ally  
of my enemies, so quick and ready.

In you Love reveals his secret charms,  
in you Fortune displays her every pomp,  
and Death the memory of that blow

which must break whatever is left of me;  
in you my restless thoughts arm themselves with error,  
and so I blame my every ill on you alone.

### **Ov' è condotto il mio amoroso stile?**

*Canzoniere 332, stanza 3*

Ov' è condotto il mio amoroso stile?  
A parlar d'ira, a ragionar di morte.  
U' son i versi, u' son giunte le rime,  
che gentil cor udia pensoso e lieto?  
Ov' è 'l favoleggiar d'amor le notti?  
Hor non parl' io, nè penso altro che pianto.

Where has it been led, my amorous style?  
To speak of wrath, to talk of death.  
Where are the verses, where are the rhymes  
a noble heart used to hear, thoughtful and happy?  
Where is that talk of love through all those nights?  
Now I speak and think of nothing but weeping.

### **Mia benigna fortuna**

*Canzoniere 332, stanzas 1-2*

Mia benigna fortuna e 'l viver lieto,  
i chiari giorni et le tranquille notti,  
e i soavi sospiri e 'l dolce stile  
che solea risonar in versi e 'n rime,  
volti subitamente in doglia e 'n pianto  
odiar vita mi fanno et bramar morte.

My kindly fortune and my life, so happy,  
the bright days and the tranquil nights,  
the gentle sighs and the sweet style  
that used to resound in my verses and rhymes,  
suddenly turned to grief and weeping,  
make me hate life and yearn for death.

Crudele acerba inesorabil Morte,  
cagion mi dai di mai non esser lieto  
ma di menar tutta mia vita in pianto  
e i giorni oscuri e le dogliose notti;  
i miei gravi sospir non vanno in rime,  
e 'l mio duro martir vince ogni stile.

Cruel, bitter, inexorable Death,  
you give me reason never to be happy,  
but to live all my life in weeping,  
in dark days and sorrowful nights;  
my heavy sighs do not fit into rhymes,  
and my harsh torment defeats all style.

## Vergine bella

Canzoniere 366, stanza 10 & congedo

Vergine humana et nemica d'orgoglio,  
del comune principio amor t'induca:  
miserere d'un cor contrito humile,  
che se poca mortal terra caduca  
amar con sì mirabil fede soglio,  
che devrò far di te, cosa gentile?

Se dal mio stato assai misero et vile  
per le tue man' resurgo,  
Vergine, i' sacro et purgo  
al tuo nome et pensieri e 'ngegno et stile,  
la lingua e 'l cor, le lagrime e i sospiri.  
Scorgimi al miglior guado,  
et prendi in grado i cangiati desiri.

Il dì s'appressa et non pote esser lunge,  
sì corre il tempo et vola,  
Vergine unica et sola,  
e 'l cor or conscientia or morte punge.  
Raccomandami al tuo Figluol, verace  
homo et verace Dio,  
ch'accolga 'l mio spirto ultimo in pace.

Virgin so kind and enemy of pride,  
may love of our common origin move you:  
have mercy on a contrite and humble heart,  
for if I am accustomed to loving a frail bit of mortal earth  
with such marvelous faith,  
how will I love you, a noble thing?

If from my wretched and vile state  
I rise up at your hands,  
Virgin, in your name  
I purge and consecrate my thoughts and wit and style,  
my tongue and heart, my tears and sighs.  
Lead me to the better passage  
and accept my changed desires.

The day draws near and cannot be far off,  
for time so runs and flies,  
one and only Virgin,  
and now conscience, now death pierces my heart;  
commend me to your Son, true  
man and true God,  
that He accept my final breath in peace.

*Translations by Scott Metcalfe*

## SOURCES

- Wert, Voi ch' ascoltate  
*Madrigale del fiore, libro secondo* (Venice, 1561)
- Layolle, Lasciar' il velo, with diminutions by Maffei  
*Delle lettere del Sr. Gio. Camillo Maffei da Solofra* (Naples, 1562)
- Arcadelt, Chiare fresche et dolci acque  
*Il primo libro de le muse a cinque voci* (Venice, 1555)
- Willaert, Quante volte diss' io  
*Madrigali a quatro voce di Geronimo Scotto ... libro primo* (Venice, 1542)
- Arcadelt, Solo et pensoso  
*Madrigali ... di messer Claudio Veggio, con la gionta di sei altri di Arcadelt della misura a breve* (Venice, 1540)
- Marenzio, Solo e pensoso  
*Il nono libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice, 1599)
- Verdelot, Italia mia  
*De i madrigali di Verdelotto et de altri eccellentissimi auttori a cinque voci, libro secondo* (Venice, 1538)
- Barré, Oimè 'l bel viso, oimè 'l soave sguardo  
*Di Verdelotto tutti li madrigali del primo et secondo libro a quatro voci* (Venice, 1540)
- Rampollini, Che debb' io far?  
*Il primo libro dela musica ... sopra di alcune canzoni del divin poeta M.Francesco Petrarco* (Lyons, c. 1554)
- Festa, Datemi pace  
*Il secondo libro de li madrigali de diversi eccellentissimi auttori a misura di breve* (Venice, 1543)
- Marenzio Ov' è condotto  
*Madrigali a quatro, cinque et sei voci, libro primo* (Venice, 1588)
- Wert, Mia benigna fortuna  
*Il nono libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice, 1588)
- Cirpiano de Rore, Vergine bella  
*Musica di Cipriano de Rore sopra le stanze del Petrarca in laude della Madonna* (Venice, 1548)



# Un Petrarchino cantato

**F**RANCESCO PETRARCA was born on July 30, 1304, in Arezzo, the eldest son of a notary who

had been exiled from his native city of Florence in 1301. In 1312 the family moved to Avignon, the seat of the papacy, likewise in exile. Francesco received his early education in nearby Carpentras and then studied law at the universities of Montpellier and Bologna. He lived for a while on his inheritance but was eventually forced to devise other ways of supporting himself. In 1330 he entered the service of the Colonna family of Rome as a private chaplain, and from then on lived essentially as an independent scholar and poet, protected by various patrons and making his residence in turn in Vaucluse (near Avignon), Milan, Venice, Pavia, and Padua.

Although he wrote many thousands of pages of verse and prose in Latin, Petrarch gained greatest fame for a cycle of lyric poems, the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (“fragments of things in the vulgar tongue”), known in Italian as the *Rime sparse*, (“scattered rhymes”) or simply the *Canzoniere*. He composed the 366 poems — mainly sonnets, canzonas, and sestinas — of the *Canzoniere* over many years, from the early 1330s until the mid-1350s or so, compiling them into a cycle by about 1359 and continuing to work on a definitive version in the last years of his life, until his death in 1374. The motivating event of the cycle took place, according to Petrarch, “in

my youth, in the year of our Lord 1327, on the sixth day of April, in the church of St. Clare in Avignon, at matins.” It was Good Friday, the anniversary of Christ’s crucifixion.

It was the day the sun’s rays had turned pale  
with pity for the suffering of his Maker  
when I was caught (and I put up no fight),  
my lady, for your lovely eyes had bound me.

It seemed no time to be on guard against  
Love’s blows; therefore, I went my way  
secure and fearless — so, all my misfortunes  
began in midst of universal woe.

Love found me all disarmed and saw the way  
was clear to reach my heart down through the eyes,  
which have become the halls and doors of tears.

It seems to me it did him little honor  
to wound me with his arrow in my state  
and to you, armed, not show his bow at all.

*Canzoniere* 3, trans. Mark Musa

Surrounded by congregants mourning the death of the incarnate Lord, Petrarch beheld a lovely young woman, Laura, and was instantly pierced through by love at once carnal and spiritual. His love for Laura would obsess, torment, and inspire him until her death from

the plague in 1348 and beyond, for the rest of his life, shaping his work and the very meaning of his existence.

Or so Petrarch tells us. It is not entirely certain that Laura actually existed, although on the whole the evidence suggests that she did. But the subject of the *Rime sparse* is not really Laura, but Petrarch: his psychology, his memories, his acute self-awareness and probing self-analysis, his transmutation of experience into verse, his poetic virtuosity. The sequence of poems constructs a narrative fiction, a “conceit of temporal process” (in the words of Roland Greene in his book *Post-Petrarchism*). The sequence appears to narrate a trajectory through time, a curve of emotional history departing from the poet’s *innamoramento* and pointing towards his release from desire and union with God upon his longed-for death, with Laura’s death the pivotal event dividing the *Canzoniere* into two sections traditionally labelled *in vita* and *in morte*. The temporal fiction derives principally from Petrarch’s obsessive reconstruction of *then* and *now*: poem after poem looks back from the *now* of the poet’s current emotional state to the *then* of prior experience, with both *now* and *then* slipping backwards and forwards in time as the whole gradually advances towards the *now* of “shame ... and repentance, and the clear knowledge that whatever pleases in the world is a brief dream,” which is described by the first poem and finds its culminating expression in the last.

Though he certainly expected his verse to be read aloud, Petrarch did not intend it to be sung. There is one notable setting by his contemporary Jacopo da Bologna and one other by Guillaume Du Fay from the 1420s, but for many years musicians turned to Petrarch only very occasionally; perhaps his poetry seemed too complex and too serious to be successfully conveyed in music, which was bound to exert competing claims upon a listener’s attention. Towards the end of the 1400s a number of composers, notably Italians working in the circle of Isabella d’Este in Mantua, began to set Petrarch’s verse in a style known as the *frottola*, a relatively simple and inexpressive vehicle for reciting text in song and most likely intended for performance by a solo singer

accompanied instrumentally. The *frottola*’s popularity was widespread, if short-lived; the pioneering printer Ottaviano Petrucci issued eleven volumes of *frottole* between 1504 and 1514, the last volume containing a large number of Petrarch settings. But the madrigal proper was born in Florence in the 1520s, the child of mostly northern composers who seem to have applied the idea of polyphonic treatment of secular poetry, known to them in the guise of the early 16th-century French *chanson*, to Italian verse.

Petrucci’s very first publication, the *Odhecaton* of 1501, was a landmark achievement in the early history of music printing, a tour-de-force of technical accomplishment. The year 1501 also saw the publication of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* edited by the Venetian Pietro Bembo. The coincidence of these two events set the stage for the sixteenth-century development of the madrigal. Bembo’s edition of 1501 was the first of more than 160 printed over the next century; a pocket-sized book of the *Canzoniere* — a *petrarchino* or little Petrarch — became an essential possession for anyone with cultural aspirations (or pretensions). The vogue for Petrarch spread quickly in the musical world, inspiring an enormous number of compositions setting his poetry, and the new technology of printing enabled the dissemination of the repertoire all over the continent.

Bembo did more than simply put Petrarch back in the public eye. In the course of editing the poems he developed a theory of the relationships in verse between sound, rhythm, and meaning. In his *Prose della volgar lingua* (Book II, 1525) Bembo argued that the meaning of poetry derived at least in part from its sonic qualities. He defined words as either *grave* (serious, austere) or *piacevole* (pleasant) based on the sound of their constituent vowels and consonants and showed how a poem acquired significance through its *suono* (sound, including rhyme), *numero* (number, rhythm, or accent) and *variazione* (the calculated counterpoint of *gravità* and *piacevolezza*). Sound and rhythm are, of

course, the basic materials of measured music and it was surely not lost on musicians that the sonic quality of verse could only be fully realized in performance.

Our program, entitled “A *petrarchino* in song,” should really bear an even more diminutive title, for in no way is it a complete presentation of the *Rime sparse*, nor even a particularly representative sample. It offers a very small and rather haphazard selection of Petrarch set to music composed in Italy between roughly the mid-1520s and the mid-1590s — scattered fragments from a huge repertoire of possible choices. Such a tiny selection of poems obviously cannot do justice to the scope and complexity of the entire cycle, any more than a tiny selection of madrigals can accurately convey the immense richness of the Italian repertoire. But the program follows the temporal logic of the *Canzoniere*, from its opening address to “You who hear in scattered rhymes . . .” (you who *hear*, note, not *read*) through a variety of emotional states experienced by the poet while Laura still lived and into the second section of hundred or so lyrics that follow her death, which is announced in no. 264; it includes a political polemic and lament, *Italia mia*, revealing other sides of Petrarch, the statesman and patriot; and it concludes with the last stanza and *congedo* of Cipriano de Rore’s complete setting of the famous canzone *Vergine bella*, the final poem of the *Canzoniere*, in which Petrarch commends his soul to the care of the Blessed Virgin.

Along the way you will hear some of the most expressive, beautifully crafted, and emotionally powerful music of the sixteenth century, from the gravity and dignity of Verdelot, Rampollini, Willaert, Arcadelt, and Rore to the hair-raising virtuosity of Marenzio and Wert. A musical setting of a poem as rich, layered, and superbly crafted as a Petrarchan sonnet does, it must be admitted, run the risk of obscuring the poem itself as it is declaimed polyphonically by four or five singers. The risk may be heightened by the addition of

virtuosic diminutions such as those applied by Maffei to his arrangement of Layolle’s *Lasciar’ il velo*, but the ability to improvise such ornamentation and toss it off effortlessly was a prized tool in the kit of the Renaissance singer. At the same time, music can add meanings to those already present in the verse, and music, according to some Renaissance artists, surpasses poetry in its mysterious power to engender emotion in its listeners. As Leonardo da Vinci wrote, “although poetry reaches the seat of judgment through the sense of hearing, like music, it cannot describe musical harmony, because the poet is not able to say different things at the same time” and so “in the representation of invisible things, [the poet] remains behind the musician.”

I would not like to suggest that Petrarch remains behind Giaches Wert, but consider Wert’s *Mia benigna fortuna*, setting the first two stanzas of a double sestina, a virtuoso poetic form in which the same six rhyme-words are used to end the six lines of each stanza, their order systematically rearranged from stanza to stanza. According to Robert Durling, “In Petrarch’s sestinas the recurrence of the six rhyme-words express the soul’s obsession with its inability to transcend time. The rhyme-words recur cyclically but with changing meanings, and the form reflects the nature of the mutable world, governed by cycles in which all things change but recur: *omnia mutantur, nihil interit* (*Metamorphoses* 15.165).” Wert’s madrigal *Mia benigna fortuna* is a tour de force, an extraordinarily compact work whose ambiguous tonality and protracted ending defeats every attempt on the part of the listener to make predictive guesses about where the music is headed. The most sophisticated style is employed to portray a suffering so intense that it “defeats every style”: in the end, all we can do is listen to every moment, experiencing it to the utmost. A more Petrarchan piece of music has perhaps never been written.

— Scott Metcalfe

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# BLUE HERON

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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.” The ensemble ranges over a wide repertoire from plainchant to new music, with particular specialties in 15th-century Franco-Flemish polyphony and early 16th-century English sacred music, and is committed to vivid live performance informed by the study of original source materials and historical performance practices.

Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents a concert series in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival; in New York City at Music Before 1800, The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the 92nd Street Y; at the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.; at the Berkeley Early Music Festival; at Yale University; in Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, Seattle, and Vancouver; and in Cambridge and London, England. Blue Heron has been in residence at the Center for Early Music Studies at Boston University and at Boston College, and has enjoyed collaborations with A Far Cry, Dark

Horse Consort, Les Délices, Parthenia, Piffaro, and Ensemble Plus Ultra.

Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007. Between 2010 and 2017 the ensemble issued a 5-CD series of *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks*, including many world premiere recordings of works copied c. 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral and restored by Nick Sandon. The fifth CD was awarded the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music and the five discs are now available as a set entitled *The Lost Music of Canterbury*. In 2015 Professor Jessie Ann Owens and Blue Heron won the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support the world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore’s



PHOTO: LIZ LINDER

*I madrigali a cinque voci*, released in 2019. In 2015 Blue Heron also inaugurated *Ockeghem@600*, a multi-season project to perform the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497) which, although delayed by the pandemic, will wind up in 2023, still more or less in time to commemorate the composer's circa-600th birthday. A parallel project to record all of Ockeghem's songs and motets bore its first fruits in 2019 with the release

of *Johannes Ockeghem: Complete Songs, Volume I*, which was named to the *Bestenliste* of the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik*. Blue Heron's recordings also include a CD of plainchant and polyphony that accompanies Thomas Forrest Kelly's book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*, the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*, and a compilation of medieval songs entitled *A 14th-Century Salmagundi*.



**Jade Guerra** is a Boston-based actor and educator. She is a member of Theatre Espresso, an educational company that tours around New England, bringing history to life for children and adults, and a resident company member of Actors Shakespeare Project (ASP). Her recent credits include a

reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* on Zoom (ASP), *Miracle on 34th Street* (Greater Boston Stage Co.), *King Lear* (ASP), and a reading of *Young Nerds of Color* (Central Square Theatre). She is excited to join Blue Heron's poetry and musical arts team.



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 of Blue Heron's recordings and on discs of medieval music by Sequentia.



Praised for her "rich, smooth mezzo soprano" (*St. Louis Post*), **Kim Leeds** has appeared as a soloist with Bach Akademie Charlotte, Ad Astra Musical Festival, Back Bay Chorale, American Bach Soloists Academy, Handel Society of Dartmouth, Les Délices, Bach Society of St. Louis, Tafelmusik, and the Oregon

Bach Festival. As a choral artist, Ms. Leeds has performed with the Weimar Bach Academy, the Junges Stuttgart Bach Ensemble, and the Handel & Haydn Society as well as the Grammy-nominated ensembles True Concord and Seraphic Fire. In recent years, Ms. Leeds has garnered multiple accolades including winning the Tafelmusik Vocal Competition in 2016, being selected as a Virginia Best Adams Fellow at the 2017 Carmel Bach Festival, and working with Philippe Herreweghe as a Britten-Pears Young Artist in a Bach cantata program in 2019.



**Christopher Martin** (pre-concert speaker) is professor of English at Boston University, specializing in European literature of the early modern period. His publications include *Policy in Love: Lyric and Public in Ovid, Petrarch, and Shakespeare* and *Constituting Old Age in Early Modern English Literature, from Queen*

*Elizabeth to King Lear*, and he is editor of the Penguin anthology *Ovid in English* as well as Bloomsbury's forthcoming *A Cultural History of Old Age in the Early Modern Period (1400-1650)*.



Reviewers have praised **Jason McStoots** as having an “alluring tenor voice” (*ArtsFuse*) 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 award in Opera with the Boston Early Music Festival

(BEMF) for their recording of works by Charpentier. His recent stage appearances in period-style baroque opera with BEMF include *Le Jeu* in *Les plaisirs de Versailles* by Charpentier, *Apollo* in Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, and *Eumete and Giove* in Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*. Other recent solo performances include *Pedrillo* in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and St. Mark Passion with Emmanuel Music, and Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610* with the Green Mountain Project. He has appeared with Boston Lyric Opera, Pacific MusicWorks, Boston Camerata, TENET, San Juan Symphony, The Bach Ensemble, Pablo Casals Festival, Early Music Guild of Seattle, Tragicomedia, and the Tanglewood Music Center. He is a core member of Blue Heron and can be heard on all their recordings. With BEMF, he appears on recordings of Lully’s *Psyché* (nominated for a Grammy), Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* (as Damon), John Blow’s *Venus and Adonis* (soloist), and Charpentier’s *Actéon* (as Orphée).



**Scott Metcalfe** is widely recognized 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 since its founding in 1999, he was music director of New York City’s Green Mountain Project from 2010-19 and has

been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Toronto Consort, The Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in music ranging from Machaut to Bach and Handel. He also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), L’Harmonie des Saisons (dir. Eric Milnes), and other ensembles. Metcalfe’s scholarly work centers on the performance practice of medieval and Renaissance vocal music, including two studies in a long-forthcoming book on the Peterhouse partbooks and upcoming articles in the *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*. He has edited music by Francisco de Peñalosa for Antico Edition (UK) and songs from the recently rediscovered Leuven chansonnier for the Alamire Foundation (Belgium); a long-term project is a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois (c. 1400-1460). He has taught at Boston University and Harvard University, served as director of the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory, and been a visiting member of the faculty of Music History at the New England Conservatory. He received a bachelor’s degree from Brown University (1985), where he majored in biology, and a master’s degree in historical performance practice from Harvard (2005).



Praised for her “warm, colorful mezzo” by *Opera News*, **Sophie Michaux** has become one of Boston’s most versatile and compelling vocalists. Born in London and raised in the French alps, Sophie’s unique background informs her artistic identity, making her feel at home in an eclectic span of repertoire ranging

from grand opera to French cabaret songs. Sophie’s recent engagements include solo recitals of Barbara Strozzi’s music at the Fondazione Cini in Venice, and in Boston. A consummate singing actor, Sophie appeared as Ceres in Boston Early Music Festival’s production of Lalande’s *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, garnering acclaim from the *Boston Musical Intelligencer* for her “astonishing range and flexibility.” She won second place at the Handel Aria competition in Madison, WI. She is a core member of the Lorelei Ensemble, Boston’s groundbreaking women’s ensemble, in which she has been featured soloist in numerous works from Renaissance polyphony to Björk. She regularly collaborates with BEMF, Blue Heron, and A Far Cry, among others. Sophie belongs to Beyond Artists, a coalition of artists who donate a percentage of their concert fees to organizations they care about. Through her performances, she supports The Ocean Clean Up.



A conductor, keyboard player, singer, composer, and linguistic coach, **Alessandro Quarta** is the founder and director of Concerto Romano, an ensemble dedicated to the rediscovery of Roman and other Italian repertoire of the 16th to 18th centuries that has performed throughout Italy and in Austria, Germany, Belgium,

the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States, and has released three CDs, including the world premiere recording of Bernardo Pasquini’s *Sete di Christo*, which was awarded the 2016 Diapason d’or. Quarta is guest conductor of the Orchestra barocca nazionale dei Conservatori italiani, the Kurpfälzisches Kammerorchester in Mannheim, Germany, the Theater Kiel (Germany), Staatstheater Darmstadt (Germany), Darmstädter Barocksolisten, and the Teatro Comunale Claudio Abbado in Ferrara, as well as directing baroque opera at the Reate Festival in Rome, and he has played with the Boston Early Music Festival Ensemble and directed the Consortium Carissimi of Minneapolis. He has taught workshops and masterclasses at the Eastman School of Music and in Cologne, Bremen, Milan, and Vicenza. Since 2007 he has been a docent at the International Early Music Course in Urbino presented by the Fondazione Italiana per la Musica Antica (FIMA), since 2018, Artistic Director of FIMA’s International Festival of Early Music, and since 2019, professor of early music for voices and instruments at the Conservatorio “E. F. Dall’Abaco” in Verona.



Tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, recognized internationally as a leading interpreter of baroque repertoire, is equally at home on the concert platform and the opera stage. He made his professional operatic debut with the Boston Early Music Festival in the world premiere staging of Mattheson's *Boris Gudenow*, winning praise

from *Opera News* for his "sinuous and supple" voice, and went on to further roles with BEMF in Lully's *Psyché*, Charpentier's *Actéon*, Monteverdi's Orfeo, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. He sang the title role in BEMF's recording of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, which won Best Opera Recording at the 2015 Grammy Awards. Aaron has appeared worldwide at venues including the Tanglewood Festival, Lincoln Center, Concertgebouw, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Gran Teatro Nacional del Perú, Beethoven Festival Warsaw, Boston Symphony Hall, Musikfestspiele Postdam Sanssouci, Royal Opera at Versailles, Washington National Cathedral, and the early music festivals of Boston, San Francisco, Vancouver, Houston, Tucson, Washington, DC, and Regensburg, Germany. He has performed with Seattle Symphony, American Bach Soloists, Handel & Haydn Society, Boston Early Music Festival, Boston Baroque, Tafelmusik, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Perú, Philharmonia Baroque, North Carolina Symphony, New York Collegium, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony, Musica Angelica, Charleston Bach Festival, Baltimore Handel Choir, Les Voix Baroque, Pacific Chorale, Tempesta di Mare, Aston Magna Festival, Bach Collegium San Diego, Pacific Music Works, Boston Museum Trio, Tragicomedia, and Concerto Palatino. He has sung with Blue Heron for twenty years and appears on many of the ensemble's CDs, from its first (music of Guillaume Du Fay) to its recent recording of songs by Johannes Ockeghem and the anthology *A 14th-Century Salmagundi*.



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 have included roles in the Boston Early Music Festival's productions of Conradi's *Ariadne* (2003) and Lully's *Psyché* (2007) and several European tours with

Contemporary Opera Denmark as 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, TENET, Mercury Baroque, and the symphony orchestras of Charlotte, Memphis, and Phoenix. Highlights of the last several seasons include Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* and other programs with the Green Mountain Project (2010-20), a tour of Japan with Joshua Rifkin and Cambridge Concentus in the St. Matthew Passion, repeat appearances at the Carmel Bach Festival, and performing as a soloist in Britten's *War Requiem* with the New England Philharmonic.

# BLUE 25<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary HERON Campaign

September 2021 – September 2024

Laura Jeppesen & Daniel Steptner, Honorary Co-Chairs

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1999, Blue Heron has earned recognition as North America's leading early music vocal ensemble. Now acclaimed internationally, having won the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music and the 2020 *Bestenliste* (Quarterly Critics' Choice) of the prestigious *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik* (German Record Critics' Award), Blue Heron looks to the future with confidence and excitement.

Buoyed by your generous support of our previous campaign, we are now launching our 25th Anniversary Campaign. This campaign has a **goal of \$400,000** and reaffirms that Blue Heron's mission and highest priority is live performance. With your support, we will build on our successes with the following goals:

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Making our music more accessible to a wider and more diverse audience

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Sharing the expertise we have acquired by training the next generation of musicians

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Building upon our worldwide reach through our online presence and in international festivals and other prestigious venues and platforms

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Maintaining a regular schedule of CD releases

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Fortifying our financial and administrative position for the long term

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*All sponsorship levels are commensurate with our 2020 Strategic Plan goals. Copies of the Strategic Plan are available upon request. For more information on participating in the Campaign, please contact Kathleen Brittan at [kathleen@blueheron.org](mailto:kathleen@blueheron.org) or 978-395-1145.*



# BLUE HERON

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## Acknowledgments

BLUE HERON'S EXISTENCE is made possible through the devotion, hard work, and financial support of a large community of musicians, staff, board members, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers. Never has this been more true than in the last year and a half. Many thanks to all those who join us in creating, nurturing, and sustaining an organization dedicated to making the music of the past come alive in the 21st century.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to work with a slate of talented, skilled, and devoted designers, engineers, videographers, and photographers. Our concerts are recorded by Philip Davis (Cape Ann Recordings) or Joel Gordon. Joel is the engineer for our CDs, and our producer is Eric Milnes. Kathy Wittman (Ball Square Films) is our videographer, working with Joel to produce our concerts for remote broadcast. Our programs, printed publicity materials, and CDs are designed by John Kramer. FlashPrint in Harvard Square prints our programs. Erik Bertrand built our website and keeps it functioning properly. Liz Linder is our photographer. Our debt to these wonderful people who have shaped our look and sound is impossible to overstate.

We are very grateful to the gracious hosts who offer their hospitality to musicians from out of town. This week we extend our gratitude to James Busby and to Laura Jeppesen and Daniel Stepner.

Many thanks to our board and to all our dedicated volunteers for their help in person, this evening, and always.

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

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Today's program traces its origins to a graduate seminar on madrigals setting Petrarch texts which was taught by Mauro Calcagno at Harvard University in 2004; some of works heard tonight were sung in a concert at the conclusion of the semester. Earlier versions of this program were presented in New York City in 2012, performed by TENET (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director) under the direction of Scott Metcalfe, and, performed by Blue Heron, in 2014 and 2015 in Cambridge, at Boston University, and for a madrigal conference at SUNY Binghamton.



# BLUE HERON 21<sup>23RD SEASON</sup>22

SCOTT METCALFE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## 2021–2022 CONCERTS IN CAMBRIDGE & ONLINE

### OCTOBER 15-16 — OCKEGHEM@600

The next installment in our complete Ockeghem cycle, featuring the *Missa quinti toni* for three voices as well as motets & songs by Ockeghem, Regis & Busnoys.

### DECEMBER 17-18 — CHRISTMAS IN BAROQUE GERMANY

WITH DARK HORSE CONSORT

Music by Praetorius, Scheidt, Schein & others, with 12 singers, cornetts & sackbuts, a 5-part violin band, organ & theorbo.

### FEBRUARY 12 — UN PETRARCHINO CANTATO

A musical valentine of 16th-century madrigals setting poetry by Petrarch. Music by Arcadelt, Willaert, Rore, Wert, Marenzio & others.

### MARCH 18-19 — OCKEGHEM@600

MISSA SINE NOMINE A 5

Blue Heron's complete Ockeghem cycle continues with a five-voice Kyrie, Gloria & Credo based on plainchant melodies, as well as motets and songs by Ockeghem, Busnoys & others.

### APRIL 22-23 — MANY VOICES

A celebration of diverse voices & polyphonic styles from the 15th (Obrecht), 16th (Aleotti), 20th (*Le cantique des cantiques* by Jean-Yves Daniel-Lesur) & 21st centuries (*Devran* by Mehmet Ali Sanlikol & a motet by Kevin Allen).

[www.blueheron.org](http://www.blueheron.org)

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Received between October 6, 2020 & January 25, 2022



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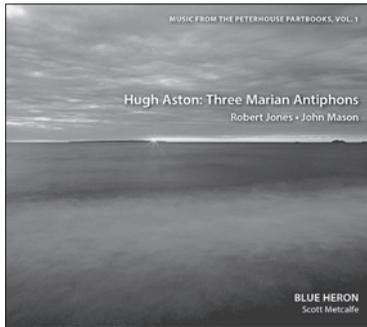
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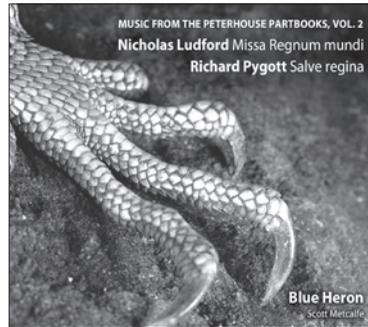
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