

MUSIC BEFORE 1800

Louise Basbas, director

Blue Heron *Divine Songs*

Scott Metcalfe, harp and fiddle, artistic director

Kim Leeds and Sophie Michaux, cantus

Corey Dalton Hart, Jason McStoots, Mark Sprinkle,

Sumner Thompson, tenor and contratenor

Daniel Fridley and David McFerrin, bassus

O Maria, mater Christi Heinrich Isaac (c. 1450-1517)

Ave maris stella Jacob Obrecht (1457/8-1505)

Ung aultre l'a Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497)

L'autre d'antan Johannes Ockeghem

Missa sine nomine a 5 Johannes Ockeghem

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Ma bouche rit et ma pensee pleure Johannes Ockeghem

Quant j'ay au cuer Antoine Busnoys (c. 1430-1492)

Salve regina Johannes Ockeghem

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City
Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Please turn off cell phones. Photography and recording are not permitted.



Sunday, May 8, 2022, at 4 p.m., live at Corpus Christi Church
Sunday, May 15, 2022, at 4 p.m., online concert with live Q&A

MUSIC BEFORE 1800, 47th Season

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Spring Benefit

Honoring Lisa Terry

Wednesday evening, June 15

The Kosciuszko Foundation

Our annual spring benefit is back in person this year! We look forward to a delightful evening with friends and colleagues, as well as music, wine, and auction. Save the date!

Music Before 1800 requires everyone who comes to any of our concerts to show proof of vaccination and a booster. We also require concert attendees to stay masked while indoors.

Information 212.666.9266 • mb1800.org

Next Season's Concerts at 4 p.m.

October 2

Boston Camerata, Anne Azéma, director
We'll Be There: American Spirituals Black and White 1800-1900

October 23

Vox Luminis, Lionel Meunier, director
Bach: The Arnstadt Connection

December 11

Juilliard415, Laurence Cummings, director and harpsichord
The Splendors of Dresden

January 15

Twelfth Night
Aminta e Fillide

February 5

Les Délices, Debra Nagy, director and oboe; Emi Ferguson, flute
Winds of Change

February 19

Blue Heron, Scott Metcalfe, director
Un petrarchino cantato: A Musical Valentine of 16th-Century Madrigals

April 16

Cappella Pratensis, Stratton Bull, director
Canons of Beauty: Josquin and Mouton

May 7

Tiburtina, Barbora Kabátková, director
Celestial Harmony: Music for the Heavenly Court by Hildegard of Bingen

The concerts become available virtually one week after each respective performance.

PROGRAM NOTES

Johannes Ockeghem left us just four motets, about a dozen Masses, and two dozen songs—an extraordinarily rich and diverse oeuvre—yet small enough that we are able to present all of it in thirteen concert programs while also including a fair amount of music by other composers. (A few more works by Ockeghem are now lost and are known to us only because they are mentioned by contemporary theorists or poets.) If we were not engaged in a project to perform every surviving piece by the composer, even in such a relatively small body of works, there are a few that might easily be passed over or ignored. The five-voice *Missa sine nomine* is one of these. It lacks an appealing name, omits two movements of the usual five of a Mass Ordinary cycle, and is exceptionally short; the Credo is based on an unpromisingly monotonous plainchant. Unenticing as normal concert fare, the Mass is at the same time far too difficult to be useful as workaday service music. As always, however, Ockeghem has a few surprises up his sleeve.

The Kyrie, Gloria, and Credo that constitute the so-called *Missa sine nomine a 5* are uniquely transmitted in the *Chigi Codex*, copied a few years after Ockeghem's death in the Low Countries. The three movements are not particularly related beyond all three being based on Mass plainchants in the fourth mode (one of the Phrygian modes on E, using a scale with a semitone above the final or tonic note), extremely compact, and scored for five voices in five distinct ranges—though not exactly the same ranges in any two movements. They appear to constitute a *Missa brevis* (short mass) or *de feria* (for a weekday), but where other examples of those genres tend to be rather plain and unambitious, this one is far from simple.

The Kyrie and Gloria each consist of just one section. The Kyrie is so short that eight of its thrice-threelfold petitions occupy just one measure, while the ninth is extended to three, a miniature version of the final melismatic drive to the cadence found in virtually every piece by Ockeghem. Almost every petition—and thus every measure—features a different combination of voices, eight variations in all: first the top two, then the top four, then the second, fourth, and fifth, and so on. Quotations of the plainchant jump from voice to voice; the contrapuntal motion is very fast, the harmonies changing on almost every minim or half note (that is, twice per beat); the rhythms are complicated: it all makes for a dizzyingly complicated minute (or less) of music.

The Gloria is similarly brief, about thirty-five measures, and again, segments of the plainchant are heard now in one voice, now in another, as the texture shifts between various combinations of voices. But the overall impression is much simpler and lighter. The words are set syllabically almost everywhere. An arresting moment of homophony towards the middle of the movement, at the words “Suscipe deprecationem nostram” (receive our prayer), is one of just three passages deploying all five voices; the other two underline the words “Jesu Christe” and “In gloria dei patris, Amen” at the end.

In the Credo, the tenor presents a version of the familiar Credo I, intoning the text on the notes A and G in an almost undifferentiated stream of semibreves and minims (whole notes and half

notes). A glance at the manuscript reveals at once the nature of the tenor part. Is the composer being witty? It's as if he is portraying a bored priest at some Mass to which no one is listening, droning along heedlessly, barely paying attention to the rhythm or syntax of the text, while around him the other four singers engage in melodic and harmonic play. Finally, at the words "Et vitam venturi seculi, amen" (and the life of the world to come, amen), the celebrant seems to wake up and join in the fun.

We fill out our program with **songs and motets** by Ockeghem and his younger contemporaries Antoine Busnoys, Heinrich Isaac, and Jacob Obrecht. Isaac's *O Maria, mater Christi* is an expansive setting of a paraliturgical text in the haunting Phrygian mode (like Ockeghem's *Mass*), featuring a wide range of meters and tempos determined by proportional relationships. Obrecht's brief *Ave maris stella* places the melody of the hymn (you may recognize it from the well-known setting in Claudio Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers*) in the lowest of its three voices.

The three songs by Ockeghem could not be more different from each other. The rollicking *L'autre d'antan*, classified by the theorist Johannes Tinctoris as a "bucolic song," is a great jumble of metaphor, nicely conveying the topsy-turvy confusion of a man still head-over-heels in love with a woman who has dumped him. He can't even figure out exactly when it all started, babbling over and over again "The other year, the other day ..." *Ung aultre l'a* is one of several political polemics set by Ockeghem, referring opaquely to some sort of dispute which no one can now identify. The music is perplexingly sweet, the two principal voices singing in unhurried rapture above a busy lower contratenor part, here played on harp. What makes this rondeau "royal," as it is described by a rubric in one of its two sources, is anyone's guess. In the heartbreaking *Ma bouche rit et ma pensee pleure*, another piece in the Phrygian mode, cantus and tenor trade melodic motifs back and forth against a largely independent contratenor (in our performance played on fiddle).

The remaining item, Busnoys's *Quant j'ay au cuer*, is surely one of the most beautiful songs of the fifteenth century. Its text, addressing a benevolent lady who offers consolation and a sweet refuge in times of trouble, might easily be transferred from its overtly courtly setting to serve by analogy as a prayer to the Lady of Ladies, Queen of Heaven, and Mother of Mercy.

Ockeghem's *Salve regina* disguises its plainchant cantus firmus, the well-known Marian antiphon, with a strategy of misdirected expectation. The motet opens, as tenor motets so often do, with a duet of high voices, and the superius alludes audibly to the chant's opening melody sustained in long notes. Just as the duet approaches its first real cadence, the bass enters, closely followed by the tenor, which sings what appears to be the cantus firmus, just as one would expect, but this turns out to be a false flag. It is in fact the bass that carries the cantus firmus, lightly decorated, throughout the entire length of this most evocative and plangent setting of the imploring text.

—Scott Metcalfe

BIOGRAPHIES

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. It 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 it has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival. In New York City, it has performed at Music Before 1800, The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the 92nd Street Y, and in Washington D.C., at the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, and Dumbarton Oaks. It has made many other appearances: at the Berkeley Early Music Festival, at Yale University, and in Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, Seattle, and Vancouver, Canada. In England the choir has sung in Cambridge and London. Upcoming engagements include a visit to the University of California, Davis, and a debut at the Tage alter Musik Regensburg. 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 five-CD series of *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks*, including 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. The five discs are now available as a set entitled *The Lost Music of Canterbury*. Jessie Ann Owens and Blue Heron won the 2015 Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support the world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore’s *I madrigali a cinque voci*, released in 2019. In 2015 Blue Heron inaugurated *Ockeghem@600*, a multi-season project to commemorate the circa-600th birthday of Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497) by performing his complete works. 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 to accompany Thomas Forrest Kelly’s book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*, the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*, a compilation of medieval songs entitled *A 14th-Century Salmagundi*, and a live recording of a production of Guillaume de Machaut’s *Remède de Fortune*.

blueheron.org

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. He has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel + Haydn Society and Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Toronto Consort, The Tudor Choir, Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ) in music ranging from Machaut to Bach and Handel. Metcalfe 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. His scholarly activities include research on the performance practice of vocal music from the 14th through 17th centuries. An article on clefs, transposition, and pitch in music before 1600 has recently been published in the *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*. Two essays on music at Peterhouse (Cambridge) will finally see the light this year in a long-forthcoming book. He has edited a motet by Francisco de Peñalosa for *Antico Edition* (UK) and songs from the recently rediscovered *Leuven Chansonnier* for the Alamire Foundation (Belgium). A longterm project is a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois (c. 1400-1460). Metcalfe has taught at Boston University, Harvard University, the New England Conservatory, and Oberlin Conservatory. He holds 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).

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

O Maria, mater Christi, virgo pia,
maestorum consolatrix, pauperum adjutrix,
perditorum restauratrix, lapsorumque pia relevatrix,
languentium curatrix, nostrae salutis adamatrix.

Ave Domina, deitatis cellula,
inter omnes virgines castissima,
te petimus nostra dele facinora,
quae es caelis altior, terris latior,
stellis purior, abyssoprofundior,
O Maria, cunctis sanctis es sanctior.

O jucunda, tu es Aaron virgula fructifera
quae fructum vitae, Christum, nobis protulit,
omnes virtutes omnium lapidum in se continens
atque cunctarum herbarum vim retinens.

Ave sanctissima:
dele peccamina, reprime noxia,
sensus nostros visita et flagita,
ut gaudia possideamus caelica
post carnis exsilium, O Maria.

Ave maris stella,
dei mater alma
atque semper virgo,
felix celi porta.

Rondeau royal

Ung aultre l'a, n'en querés plus,
Car dorenavant je conclus
De garder en tout temps mon droit.
Chascun se garde en son endroit,
Car bien peu me chault du surplus.

Je ne vueil pas estre forcluz
D'acorder ou faire reffuz,
Mais ce que voulez orendroit

Ung aultre l'a, n'en querés plus,
Car dorenavant je conclus
De garder en tout temps mon droit.

Jamais en ce propos ne fuz
Que mon vouloir fust si confuz
D'entendre a tout ce qu'il voudroit.

O Mary, mother of Christ, holy virgin,
consoler of the sorrowful, helper of the poor,
restorer of the lost and merciful relief of the fallen,
cure of the infirm, great lover of our salvation:

Hail, Lady, shelter of deity,
most chaste of all virgins:
we beg you to remove our crimes,
you who are higher than heaven, broader than the earth,
purer than the stars, deeper than the abyss,
O Mary, holier than all the saints.

O happy one, you are Aaron's fruit-bearing rod,
which for us brought forth the fruit of life, Christ,
containing in it all the virtues of all precious stones
and bearing the power of all herbs.

Hail, most holy one:
remove sins, curb offenses,
visit and exhort our senses,
that we may possess heavenly joys
after our fleshly exile, O Mary.

Hail, star of the sea,
nurturing mother of God
and perpetual virgin,
happy gate of heaven.

Royal Rondeau

Another has it, seek it no more,
for henceforth I resolve
to protect my right at all times.
Let each look out for himself,
for precious little do I care about the rest.

I do not wish to be prevented
from agreeing or refusing,
but as for what you want at present,

another has it, seek it no more,
for henceforth I resolve
to protect my right at all times.

Never in this matter has
my will been so thwarted
from attending to all it would like.

De ce faire on me reprendroit,
Congnoissant que seroit abuz.
Ung aultre l'a, n'en querés plus ...

L'autre d'antan, l'autrier passa
Et en passant me transperça
D'ung regart forgié a Millan,
Qui m'a mis en l'arriere ban,
Tant malvais brassin me brassa.
L'autre d'antan, l'autrier passa.
Par tel façon me fricassa
Que de ses gaiges me cassa;
Mais, par Dieu, elle fist son dan.
L'autre d'antan, l'autrier passa,
Et en passant me transperça
D'ung regart forgié a Millan.
Puis apres nostre amour cessa,
Car onques puis qu'elle danssa,
L'autre d'antan, l'autre d'antan,
Je n'eu ne bon jour, ne bon an,
Tant de mal en moy amassa.
L'autre d'antan, l'autrier passa ...

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

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

People would reproach me for doing this,
recognizing that it would be an abuse.
Another has it, seek it no more ...

The other year, the other day, she passed by
and, in passing, pierced me through
with a glance forged in Milan
that knocked me into the rear ranks,
so rude a brew she brewed for me.
The other year, the other day, she passed by.
She made such a fricassee out of me
that she struck me from her payroll;
but, by God, she did her damage.
The other year, the other day, she passed by
and, in passing, pierced me through
with a glance forged in Milan.
And then our love ended,
for ever since she did her dance,
the other year, the other year,
I've had neither good day nor good year,
so much ill has piled up on me.
The other year, the other day, she passed by ...

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

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to
all of good will. We praise you. We bless you. We
adore you. We glorify you. We give thanks to you
for your great glory. Lord God, heavenly king,
almighty God the Father. Lord Jesus Christ, only
begotten Son. Lord God, lamb of God, Son of the
Father. Who takes away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us. Who takes away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer. Who sits at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are holy,
you alone are the Lord, the Most High, Jesus
Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the
Father. Amen.

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

Ma bouche rit et ma pensée pleure,
Mon oeil s'esjoye et mon cueur maudit l'eure
Qu'il eut le bien que sa sancté deschace
Et le plaisir que la mort me pourchace
Sans resconfort qui m'aide ne sequeure.

Ha cueur pervers, faulsaire et mansongier,
Dictez comment avez ousé songier
Que de faulser ce qu'aviez promis.

Puis qu'en ce point vous vous voulez venger,
Pensez bien tost de ma vie abreger:
Vivre ne puis ou point ou m'avez mis.

Voustre pitié vieult doncques que je meure,
Mays rigueur vieult que vivant je demeure;

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Begotten, not made; of one being with the Father, through whom all things are made. For us and for our salvation he came down from Heaven. He was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

He was crucified for our sake under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again, in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge both the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. And I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

And I await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

My mouth laughs and my thoughts weep,
my eye rejoices and my heart curses the hour
when it enjoyed the good that destroys its health
and the pleasure that brings me death,
without comfort to aid or succor me.

Ah, perverse, false, and lying heart,
tell me how you ever dared to dream
of breaking the promise you had made.

Since you will avenge yourself to this degree,
think of soon cutting short my life:
I cannot live in the plight in which
you've placed me.

Your pity, then, wants me to die,
but harshness wants me to survive,

Ainsi meurs vif et en vivant trespasse.
Pour celer le mal qui point ne se passe
Et pour couvrir le dueil ou je labeure,
Ma bouche rit et ma pensee pleure ...

Quant j'ay au cueur aulcun contraire
Et j'ay aulcunement affaire
Qu'aulcun me viengne secourir,
Il ne me fault que recourir
A vous, belle tres debonnaire.

Car vous estes mon doulx repaire
Ou je me voys tousjours retraire
Pour mon pouvre cueur resjouir

Quant j'ay au cueur aulcun contraire
Et j'ay aulcunement affaire
Qu'aulcun me viengne secourir.

Nully ne m'en sauroit hors traire,
Veu qu'avez voulu parfaire
La volenté de mon desir;
Pour ce vueil tousjours obeir
Et en toutes choses complaire.

Quant j'ay au cueur aulcun contraire ...

Salve regina, mater misericordie,
vita dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exules filii Eve,
ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eya ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.
Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui
nobis post hoc exilium ostende,
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis virgo semper Maria.

and so alive I die, and living pass away.
To hide the ill which has no end
and to conceal the grief in which I struggle,
My mouth laughs and my thoughts weep ...

Whenever my heart is burdened by adversity
and I have not the slightest prospect
that anyone will come to succor me,
I have only to turn
to you, most benevolent beauty.

For you are my sweet refuge,
to which I always retreat
in order to refresh my poor heart

whenever my heart is burdened by adversity
and I have not the slightest prospect
that anyone will come to succor me.

No-one could draw me thence,
since you have chosen to fulfill
the will of my desire;
thus I wish ever to obey
and in all things be pleasing.

Whenever my heart is burdened by adversity ...

Hail queen, mother of mercy:
life, sweetness, and our hope, hail!
To you we cry, exiled children of Eve;
to you we sigh, weeping and wailing
in this vale of tears.
Come then, our advocate,
turn your merciful eyes upon us,
and show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb,
after this our exile,
O merciful, O gentle, O sweet, ever virgin Mary.

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JAMES BASSI, *Protect*

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of Those Lost During COVID*

Wednesday, March 9 @ 7:30 PM

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