



The Sixty-fifth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

“Sixty-five, but not retiring”

National Gallery of Art
2,592nd Concert

Suspicious Cheese Lords

Presented in honor of

Prayers and Portraits:

Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych

November 12, 2006

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Guillaume Dufay (c. 1397–1474)

Ave Regina caelorum

Gilles Binchois (c. 1400–1460)

Dixit sanctus Philippus

Jean de Ockeghem (c. 1410–1497)

Mort tu as navré

Josquin des Pres (c. 1450–1521)

Ave Maria . . . virgo serena

Pierre de La Rue (c. 1452–1518)

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes

Thomas Crecquillon (c. 1505–1557)

Vidit Jacob scalam

Antoine Brumel (c. 1460–c. 1513)

Benedictus

Josquin

La déploration de la mort de Johannes Ockeghem

INTERMISSION

Brumel

Mater patris et filia

Josquin

Gloria from Missa mater patris

Jheronimus Vinders (fl. 1525–1526)

O mors inevitabilis

Jean Mouton (c. 1459–1522)

Gloriosa virgo Margareta

Adrian Willaert (c. 1490–1562)

O magnum mysterium/Ave Maria

Nicolas Gombert (c. 1495–c. 1560)

Lugebat David Absalon

Elzéar Genet (c. 1470–1548)

Tibi Christe

The Musicians

The Suspicious Cheese Lords, a male a cappella ensemble, sings a repertoire that ranges from Gregorian chant to contemporary composition. In addition to its National Gallery debut on December 18, 2005, the group has performed at the Smithsonian Institution, the XM Satellite Radio live performance studio, and a number of Washington area churches. The *Washington Post* described a recent performance as “genuinely beautiful . . . rapturous music-making.” The ensemble has been profiled in publications as diverse as the *Washington City Paper* and *Early Music America* magazine. Earlier this year, the group was awarded the 2005 Washington Area Music Association’s “Wammie” for Best New Artist, making it the only classical ensemble ever to receive this honor.

The Suspicious Cheese Lords’ unconventional name is derived from the title of a Thomas Tallis (c. 1510–1585) motet, *Suscipe quaeso Domine*. In a playful mistranslation of the title, it was observed that *Suscipe* could be taken to mean “suspicious,” *quaeso* resembles the Spanish word *queso*, or “cheese,” and *Domine* is the Latin word for “Lord.” It was not long before “Suspicious Cheese Lords” was adopted as the name for the group. The Cheese Lords has released two world premiere CDs, both of which are available in the National Gallery Shops: *Maestro di Capella: Music of Elzéar Genet (Carpentras)*, which was described by J. F. Weber of *Fanfare* magazine as “a valuable addition to a discography that is much too short”; and *Missa l’homme armé: Sacred Music of Ludwig Senfl*.

Members of the Suspicious Cheese Lords participating in this concert are Daniel Boettcher, George P. Cervantes, Daniel Ebeling, Christopher Fominaya, Gordon Geise, James Heaney, Matthew Irish, Peter Larsen, Nathan Mitchell, Michael Raney, Christopher G. Riggs, Clifton N. West III, and Gary W. Winans Jr.

Program Notes

Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych, the first exhibition devoted to the subject, brings together almost forty pairs of Netherlandish panel paintings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Several paintings now owned by different institutions are reunited as diptychs by the exhibition, such as Rogier van der Weyden's *Virgin and Child* from California with his portrait of *Philippe de Croy* from Antwerp (c. 1460), and Michael Sittow's *Virgin and Child* from Berlin with his portrait of *Diego de Guevara (?)* from the National Gallery of Art (c. 1515/1518). In honor of this exhibition, the Suspicious Cheese Lords has assembled a program of vocal works by musical masters of the same period, most of whom were born and trained in what was then called the Low Countries, now The Netherlands. Both the visual medium and the vocal one were vehicles for the most reputable masters of the time. The exhibition remains on view in the West Building until February 4, 2007.

Tradition holds that Guillaume Dufay was born in the textile town of Cambrai, Flanders. His youth was spent as a choirboy at Cambrai Cathedral, a church renowned for its music. He is considered a founder of the so-called Burgundian school and is noted for using the third interval and introducing "modern" harmonies. His *Ave Regina caelorum* is a brief but brilliant three-voice Marian antiphon set in triple meter.

Scholars agree that along with Dufay and John Dunstable, Gilles Binchois (or de Bins) completes the triad of significant early fifteenth-century composers. His surviving repertoire, known for its melodic quality, includes about fifty sacred works and a greater number of chansons. *Dixit sanctus Philippus* is a three-voice motet relating Saint Philip's admonition against idol worship. In recent years, interest in this old master has grown, and in 1995 his music was the subject of an international conference in New York City.

Jean de Ockeghem's birthplace is believed to have been Saint-Ghislain, Hainaut, Belgium. The earliest surviving reference to him is dated June 24, 1443, when he was listed as a *vicaires-chanteur* at the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp. After an appointment as a singer in the chapel of Charles I, Duke of Bourbon, he entered the service of Charles VII, King of France, spending a considerable portion of his life in the service of the royal court. Ockeghem's skills extended well beyond singing and composing; in 1459 he became treasurer of the Abbey of Saint Martin in Tours, of which the king was the nominal abbot. His motet-chanson *Mort tu as navré* is an unusual work in that the upper voice sings a French ballade while the three lower voices sing in Latin, quoting the *Dies irae* plainchant at the end.

Josquin des Pres was employed in many places in Italy and his native France, including the papal chapel, where he sang from 1489 to sometime in the late 1490s (a time for which records have been lost). In the renovation of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel in the past decade, his name was found carved in the choir loft, where only singers were allowed. His *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena* opens with a simple line based on plainchant descending through voices, as if musically painting the image of the angel Gabriel saying "Ave!" (Hail!) while descending from the heavens. One highlight of the piece occurs at the text "*Ave vera virginitas*," where, in a new triple meter, the upper voice (superius) and middle voice (tenor) engage in a canon separated by a mere quarter note. Josquin's genius lies in the fact that the detailed structure never overpowers the beauty of the music.

A contemporary of Josquin's, Pierre de La Rue was one of the few Franco-Flemish composers who did not spend time in Italy; he remained in and around the Low Countries, serving in Cambrai, Cologne, Ghent, Nieuwpoort, and 's-Hertogenbosch. La Rue's *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*, a setting of psalm 116, demonstrates his tendency to shift between passages of compact four-voice polyphony and the spare texture of two voices. He also had a penchant for exploring the vocal depths of the bass voice, as exemplified by the final chord.

One of the leading composers of his generation, Thomas Crecquillon spent most of his career as a member of the imperial chapel of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles v. As such, he most likely would have traveled with the entourage throughout the empire, resulting in a wide dissemination of his music. He is primarily known as a prolific writer of chansons, with well over two hundred to his credit. His *Vidit Jacob scalam* is an antiphon for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church.

Canons and other forms of imitation were commonplace in sixteenth-century sacred music. Antoine Brumel's solitary *Benedictus*, written as a canon for two equal voices, is believed to be part of a lost mass setting. Considered a great composer of the Franco-Flemish tradition, Brumel was a pupil of Josquin's. In 1505 Brumel moved to the city-state of Ferrara in northern Italy, accepting a position at the prestigious court of the arts patron Alfonso d'Este.

Upon the death of Jean de Ockeghem, Josquin wrote a tribute, *La déploration de la mort de Johannes Ockeghem*, setting the text *Nymphes des bois* by French poet Jean Molinet against the cantus firmus of the *Requiem aeternam* plainchant. An interesting feature of this piece is apparent to the performers but not the audience, as this motet is an example of *Augenmusik* ("eye music"). Josquin scored the work only in black notation, rather than the standard black-and-white notes (as in modern notation), as if to indicate that the music itself is draped in black, in mourning for its esteemed champion.

In the context of Renaissance music, parody is unrelated to satire and ridicule. It refers, rather, to the practice of honoring another composer by incorporating melodic elements of his motet or chanson into a new, larger work, such as a mass setting. The first two pieces in the second half of the program, Brumel's brief three-voice *Mater patris et filia* and the four-voice *Gloria* from Josquin's *Missa mater patris*, serve as an example of parody. The fact that Josquin expanded on Brumel's motet is a bit puzzling, as composers generally used parody to honor the work of a teacher or elder, and Brumel was Josquin's junior by about ten years. It has been theorized that Josquin intended for his work to be an homage to the younger man, who preceded him in death.

Josquin's own death was commemorated by several composers, including Nicolas Gombert, Benedictus Appenzeller, and Jean Richafort. Among these elegies is a seven-voice motet by the Flemish composer Jheronimus Vinders, *O mors inevitabilis*. Almost nothing is known of Vinders, except that he served for a short time at the Janskerk (now the Cathedral of Saint Baaf) in Ghent. As did Ockeghem and Josquin before him, Vinders combined the sacred and secular: five voices sing a text that matches an epitaph in the church of Saint Gudule in Brussels; two additional voices sing a plainchant from the requiem mass, resulting in a full-sounding seven-voice sonority.

Gloriosa virgo Margareta is one of about one hundred motets by Jean Mouton, who served the French royal court, first under Queen Anne of Brittany and subsequently under King François I. The motet refers to Saint Margaret of Antioch, who was tortured and beheaded in the fourth century C.E. by order of Olybrius, the Roman prefect of Antioch, because she refused to renounce Christianity and marry him.

Mouton was the teacher of another significant Renaissance composer, Adrian Willaert. Born in Bruges or Roulers, Willaert is credited with cultivating the Franco-Flemish tradition in Italy. He was *maestro di cappella* of Saint Mark's Cathedral in Venice, a position he held from 1527 to 1558. He is considered the father of the Venetian school, since several of his students, including Cipriano de Rore and Andrea Gabrieli, made important stylistic leaps that later marked the beginning of the baroque musical era. *O magnum mysterium/Ave Maria* is a lovely two-part motet, in which each section ends with the same *Beata Virgo* text and music.

One of many lesser-known composers of the generation between Josquin and Palestrina, Nicolas Gombert was born in southern Flanders, near Lille. From about 1526 to 1540 Gombert served in the court chapel of Charles V, first as a singer and then as the master of choirboys, which gave him the opportunity to travel throughout Europe. The melody of his sublime eight-voice setting of the lament *Lugebat David Absalon* closely resembles that of another of his chansons, *Je prens congie de mes amours*.

Elzéar Genet, also known as Carpentras, sang in the papal chapel under Popes Julius II and Leo X, and in the court of the French King Louis XII. Although Genet was the first composer to publish his own collected works, his music has fallen into near-oblivion. There are no documented performances of his music until the early nineteenth century. *Tibi Christe* is a hymn for the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels (September 29). The archangel is mentioned in sacred texts such as the Koran, the Book of Enoch, and kabbalistic writings; the name “Michael” is derived from the Hebrew phrase “Who is like God?”

Program notes by George P. Cervantes and Christopher G. Riggs

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Peter de Groot, *countertenor*

Stephen Ackert, *harpsichordist*

Daniel Rippe, *gambist*

Seventeenth-century Dutch music

Presented in honor of

Strokes of Genius: Rembrandt's Prints and Drawings

November 19, 2006

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building Lecture Hall

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov