

A detailed view of a classical painting, likely by Raphael, showing a woman in profile on the left and a man looking at her on the right. The woman has her eyes closed and a serene expression. She is wearing an ornate, light-colored dress with a high collar and a necklace. The man is wearing a dark, patterned garment. The background is a warm, brownish-gold color.

76TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

OCTOBER 29, 2017 / NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Program

Pomerium

Flemish Musical Mastery in the Age of Hieronymus Bosch

Alexander Blachly, Director

Celebrating *Bosch to Bloemaert: Early Netherlandish Drawings*
from the *Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam*

OCTOBER 29, 2017 / 3:30

WEST BUILDING, WEST GARDEN COURT

Orlande de Lassus (1532–1594)
O crux splendidior (6-voice motet)

Jacob Obrecht (c. 1450–1505)
Kyrie, *Missa Caput* (4-voice motet)

Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521)
Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria
(5-voice motet)

Guillaume DuFay (c. 1397–1474)
Gloria, *Missa Ecce ancilla Domini*
(4-voice motet)

Alexander Agricola (c. 1450–1518)
Ave que sublimaris (3-voice motet)

Cipriano de Rore (c. 1515–1565)
Agimus tibi gratias (5-voice motet)

Giaches de Wert (1535–1596)
Vox in Rama (5-voice motet)

Intermission

Henricus Isaac (c. 1450–1517)
Reple tuorum corda (3-voice motet)

Nicolas Gombert (c. 1495–c. 1560)
Sanctus, *Missa Je suis deshéritée*
(4-voice motet)

Josquin des Prez
Stabat mater (5-voice motet)

Loyset Compère (c. 1445–1518)
Agnus Dei, *Missa L'homme armé*
(4-voice motet)

Orlande de Lassus
Cum essem parvulus (6-voice motet)

The Musicians

POMERIUM

Pomerium was founded by Alexander Blachly in New York in 1972 to perform music composed for the famous chapel choirs of the Renaissance. The name Pomerium—medieval Latin for “garden” or “orchard”—derives from the title of a treatise by the fourteenth-century music theorist Marchettus of Padua, who explained that his *Pomerium in arte musice mensurate* contains the “flowers and fruits” of the art of music.

Widely known for its interpretations of DuFay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Josquin, Lassus, and Palestrina, the fifteen-voice *a cappella* ensemble has performed for numerous international festivals, including the Festival di Musica Sacra Bressanone e Bolzano, the Tage Alter Musik Festival in Regensburg, Germany, the Flanders Festival Antwerp, and the Holland Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht.

ALEXANDER BLACHLY / DIRECTOR

Active in early music as both performer and scholar for more than forty years, Alexander Blachly earned his post-graduate degrees in musicology from Columbia University. He is a recipient of the Noah Greenberg Award given by the American Musicological Society to stimulate historically aware performances and the study of historical performing practices. Prior to assuming the choral music directorship at the University of Notre Dame in 1993, Blachly taught early music and directed *collegia musica* at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, Rutgers University, and the University of Pennsylvania, where for eight years he directed the *a cappella* ensemble Ancient Voices. For fourteen years Blachly directed a summer workshop in Renaissance *a cappella* performance sponsored by the Syracuse Schola Cantorum; he has also been on the faculties of the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute and the Amherst Early Music Festival. In addition to Pomerium, Blachly directs the Notre Dame Schola Musicorum and Festival Baroque Orchestra.

Soprano

Kristina Boerger
Martha Cluver
Sarah Hawkey
Chloe Holgate
Dominique Surh

Countertenor

Peter Gruett
Emerson Sieverts

Tenor

Neil Farrell
Patrick Fennig
Michael Steinberger
Christopher Preston Thompson

Baritone

Thomas McCargar

Bass

Peter Becker
Kurt-Owen Richards



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Owl's Nest* (detail), c. 1505/1515, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Program Notes

The images in the exhibition *Bosch to Bloemaert: Early Netherlandish Drawings from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam*, currently on view at the National Gallery of Art, initially impress us with their extraordinary precision of detail. Even when the subject is as charming as Hieronymus Bosch's pen-and-ink drawing *Owl's Nest* (c. 1505–1515), our first response is likely wonder at the detailed feathers on the central owl's wing, rather than appreciation of the picture's larger subject matter. The artist's ability to transfer immediate details of our visual experience of the physical world to paper or canvas with such lifelike accuracy was not a talent unique to Bosch. On the contrary, it was a skill possessed by every Northern European artist of the Renaissance, including those featured in the current exhibition.

Precision of detail was also the prominent characteristic of the music by Netherlandish composers of the time. Their music did not take the world of nature as a starting point (there are no bird calls or barking dogs in Netherlandish music), but all of the composers in today's program shared a mastery of minute details of counterpoint and voice-leading that impresses the listener with moment-by-moment obedience to the musical "laws of nature." We will not hear in today's pieces such features of medieval music as clashing dissonances or *outré* melodic leaps. Nor will we find the music arranged in the abstract rhythmic patterns that characterize polyphony from the thirteenth century. The default melody is flexible and supple, with phrases making an effect comparable to the roundness of a branch or the softness of human limbs defined by light and shadow. Such phrases invite shapely performance.

Significantly, the Netherlandish visual artists were not content simply to mirror nature. Often their drawings and paintings convey a moral message. In the *Owl's Nest*, the message seems straightforward: the adult owl in the center of the drawing is teaching a young bird how to fly, and we almost unconsciously make the connection that for the old to teach the young is "natural," something that adult humans also do for their children. In the famous *Haywain Triptych* (c. 1485), Bosch conveys a more complicated message. In the first place, this brightly colored painting seems only tangentially related to the real world. It bears, rather, the aspect of a dream or, in the right panel, a nightmare. This is Bosch's allegory on the destructive nature of greed. The hay piled dangerously high on the cart represents wealth, which people from various walks of life try to pry loose with pitchforks, or try to clamber aboard with a ladder, or claw at with their hands. Ratlike monsters draw the cart toward Hell, which is depicted in the right panel, and away from Earthly Paradise in the left panel. The Pope and an emperor follow directly behind the haycart. They, too, have fallen prey to the hay's lure. Other people are about to be run over by the cart's wheels or are being crushed by those desperately grabbing what they can. Only the musicians atop the haystack and the monk drinking wine in the lower right corner seem at peace. The musicians may be captivated by sweet sounds saving them from greed, while the monk doesn't need to worry because the nuns to his left are filling a sack with handfuls of hay.

One might imagine that vocal music, with its sung text, could convey a narrative message as complex as Bosch's *Haywain Triptych*; but only in the last phase of the period in which Netherlandish musicians dominated Europe's musical courts—when Orlande de Lassus and Giaches de Wert were in their prime in the 1570s and 1580s—had musical style evolved to the point where melodies and harmonies could be directly illustrative of ideas, whether narrative or psychological. The vivid evocation of emotional states by composers active in the later sixteenth century stands in marked contrast with all earlier polyphony (some pieces by Josquin excepted). Most early Netherlandish vocal music not only lacked the stylistic means to yoke musical expression to textual expression (a possibility that composers of the time rarely exhibited any interest), but their sacred polyphony focused almost exclusively on the setting of ritual texts, such as the Ordinary of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Ritual words, whether of the Mass or Office, were heard innumerable times throughout the year and expressed only generalized sentiments, such as Christian dogma in the Credo, or prayers for mercy on joyful or sad occasions.

But the Netherlandish composers had another way of anchoring even a liturgical text to a specific idea: by the use of a preexistent melody (with its associated words) as the foundation for any sort of vocal polyphony, whether Mass Ordinary, Marian antiphon, sacred motet with newly written words, or secular song. The sounding of the two texts at the same time created a commentary on one by the other, prompting nearly the same level of “interpretation” by the listener as that required by the viewer of moralizing Netherlandish visual works of art. In today’s program, three pieces employ preexistent foundation melodies with their own words in this way: the Gloria from DuFay’s *Missa Ecce ancilla Domini* (the foundation melody being two Marian antiphons: *Ecce ancilla Domini* for the Annunciation and *Beata es, Maria* for the Visitation); Josquin’s *Stabat mater* (the foundation melody being the *rondeau* tenor of Binchois’s *Comme femme desconfortée*); and the Agnus Dei from Compère’s *Missa L’homme armé* (the foundation melody being the song *L’homme armé*).

Even in works on today’s program that do not employ multiple sets of words sounding simultaneously—works which therefore require no bitextual “interpretation” by the listener—we still hear the primary defining feature of Netherlandish music from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the skillful manipulation of melodies interacting in a web of counterpoint to create richly inventive polyphony. Two of today’s pieces were originally composed as abstract instrumental studies without words, to which sacred words were added early in the sixteenth century: Isaac’s *Reple tuorum corda* (transmitted in most sources as the instrumental carmen *La Morra*) and Agricola’s *Ave que sublimaris* (a polyphonic study, wordless in most sources, based on the tenor of Binchois’s *Comme femme desconfortée*—the same melody that Josquin uses as foundation melody in his *Stabat mater*). In music by DuFay, the technique of pervading imitation, whereby all voices of a piece engage in singing the same melodic motifs at different times, often starting on a different pitch of the scale, was just emerging. It would soon vie with the related technique of canon, whereby more than one voice reads the same notated music, but each interprets it differently, following some verbal or other clue. Josquin was the first master of both canon and pervading imitation, the hallmarks of his works in all genres. Some notable earlier examples had appeared sporadically prior to him, but his consistent approach served as the model for serious composition throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther marveled at Josquin’s ability to execute contrapuntal feats, and his assessment still rings true: “Josquin can make the notes do as he wishes, while other composers must do as the notes demand.”

The two works by Josquin in today’s program illustrate his unusual ability to create emotional effects with music composed to a slow-moving foundation melody. His *Stabat mater*, as just mentioned, has the tenor of Binchois’s chanson *Comme femme desconfortée* sounding throughout. The chanson’s words express a lover’s extreme pain at losing her lover: “I am like a woman in agony, who has no further hope in life and cannot ever be consoled, but wishes for death night and day.” Josquin’s setting thereby casts Mary as the forlorn lover, whose loss of her beloved son Jesus causes her unbearable pain. In *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria*, the foundation melody comes from the chant sequence *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria*. Josquin has it sounding in canon at the upper fifth, with the temporal distance between “dux” (leading voice) and “comes” (companion voice) shrinking in each successive large section of the work, from three breves (whole notes) in Part I, to two breves in Part II, to one breve in Part III. The listener, however, hardly notices this rigidly architectonic ground plan, finding his or her attention drawn instead to the beguiling melodic fragments chasing each other throughout the piece in the foreground. Thus, the canon remains largely inaudible though controlling the work’s harmonies, while the elaborate pervading imitation that attracts our attention in the foreground has so graceful and elegant a profile that it seems to unfold independently of the ground plan.

The prize for Netherlandish contrapuntal acrobatics in today’s program goes to Loyset Compère, whose entire *L’homme armé* Mass has the famous *L’homme armé* tune (the foundation melody of over forty polyphonic Masses during the Renaissance) sounding in the “wrong” mode on E (the Phrygian), rather than on F (modified Lydian with B-flat) or G (Mixolydian, modified by many composers by the addition of B-flat). In Agnus I the tune appears in canon at the half-step, with Final on E and Final on F. The verbal instruction for how the “comes” is to read the notes differently from the “dux” typically requires some thought to decipher, challenging the performers to transform the apparent meaning of the notation as it appears on the page. The instruction in Agnus I is “Canon in e la mi,” with the tune notated on F for the “dux.” The “comes” is therefore to read the tune a half-step lower, as if notated on E. In Agnus III the instruction is “Fuga unius temporis in epithono,” with the tune notated on D. Again the “comes” is to read the tune as if the Final is on E, but now a whole step *higher* than notated. Once the puzzle of the instructions has been solved, the musical effect of consonant canons at such close pitch proximity seems almost miraculous.

Netherlandish contrapuntal virtuosity stands as the musical counterpart to the Netherlandish visual artists’ virtuosity in the realm of drawing and painting. Especially in the period under investigation, the more closely we examine Northern art, whether visual or sonic, the more admirable and thought-provoking it appears.

Program notes by Alexander Blachly

O crux splendidior

O crux splendidior cunctis astris, hominibus
multum amabilis, sanctior universis, quae
sola fuisti digna portare talentum mundi.
Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulcia ferens
pondera, salva praesentem catervam
in tuis laudibus congregatam. Alleluja.

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria

Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria,
que es effecta fulgida celi porta.
O mater alma Christi carissima,
suscipe pia laudum preconia.

Nostra ut pura pectora sint et corpora
Que nunc flagitant devota corda et ora.
Tua per precata dulcisona
Nobis concedas veniam per secula.

O benigna, o regina, o Maria,
Que sola inviolata permansisti.

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax
hominibus bone voluntatis. Laudamus
te. Benedicimus te. Adoramus te. Glorifi-
camus 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.

O Cross more splendid

*O cross more splendid than all the stars, much
beloved by men, holier than any other; which alone
was worthy to bear the treasure of the world.
Sweet wood, sweet nails, bearing a sweet weight,
save the present congregation gathered here for
your praise. Alleluia.*

Lord have mercy

*Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.*

Inviolata, whole, and chaste are you, Mary

*Inviolata, whole, and chaste are you, Mary,
the gleaming gate of heaven.
O dearest nurturing Mother of Christ,
accept our pious prayers of praise.*

*That our hearts and bodies might be pure
our devout hearts and mouths now entreat.
By Your sweet-sounding prayers,
grant us forgiveness forever.*

*O blessed, O Queen, O Mary,
You alone have remained inviolate.*

Glory be to God on high

*Glory be to God on high, and on earth
peace to men of good will. We praise you.
We bless you. We worship you. We glorify you.
We give thanks to you for
your great glory. Lord God, heavenly
King, God the Father omnipotent.
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
Who take away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us. Who take away the sins of the
world, hear our prayer. Who sit on the right
hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you
only are holy. You only are the Lord. You only
are the most high, Jesus Christ. With the Holy
Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

Tenor:

Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat michi secundum
verbum tuum. Beata es Maria, que credidisti.
Perficiuntur in que dicta sunt tibi a Domino.
Alleluja.

Ave que sublimaris

Ave que sublimaris ad sidera notureris,
Virgo polo sumpta,
Fac nobis propera cuncta dilue peccata,
Virgo super astra levata,
Regnans in celis potentibus
Ore fideli eterna tribue polo
Conscendere sedem ac requiem
Prelii fessis in arce summo.

Agimus tibi gratias

Agimus tibi gratias, rex omnipotens
Deus, pro universis beneficiis tuis, qui
vivis et regnas per omnia saecula
saeculorum. Amen.

Vox in Ramah

Vox in Rama audita est, ploratus et
ululatus multus, Rachel plorans filios
suos, et noluit consolari, quia non sunt.

Reple tuorum corda fidelium

Reple tuorum corda fidelium,
et tui amoris in eis ignem accende,
qui per diversitatem linguarum
cunctarum gentes in unitate
fidei congregasti. Alleluia.

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus
Sabaoth, pleni sunt celi et terra
gloria tua, Osanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine
Domini. Osanna in excelsis.

*Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it done
unto me according to your word. Blessed are you,
Mary, who believed. What was said by the Lord
to you will be fulfilled. Alleluia.*

Hail, who have risen

*Hail, Virgin, known for having risen to
the stars, raised up in heaven:
quickly cause us to be cleansed of all sin,
Virgin, you who have been lifted above the stars,
reigning now at the gate in the mighty skies of
heaven eternal. Let the faithful gain
a seat, and grant to those weary in battle
peace in the highest citadel.*

We give thanks to you

*We give thanks to you, O God,
omnipotent King, for all your blessings;
you, who lives and reigns forever.
Amen.*

A voice in Ramah

*In Ramah a voice was heard, weeping and
loud lamentation: Rachel weeping for her children;
and she cannot be consoled, because they are no more.*

Fill the hearts of your faithful

*Fill the hearts of your faithful,
and light in them the fire of your love,
You, who despite the diversity of all
their languages, have brought together
people in unity of faith. Alleluia.*

Holy, holy, holy

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God
of hosts, heaven and earth are full of
Your glory. Hosannah in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name
of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest.*

Stabat mater dolorosa

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat Filius.

Cuius animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti.

Que merebat et dolebat,
Et tremebat dum videbat
Nati penas incliti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Christi matrem si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari
Piam matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?

Pro peccatis sue gentis
Jesum vidit in tormentis
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
Morientem desolatum
Dum emisit spiritum.

Eya mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris,
Fac ut tecum lugeam.

Fac ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum deum,
Ut sibi complaceam.

The sorrowing Mother stood

*The sorrowing Mother stood
weeping near the cross
on which her Son hung.*

*Her weeping soul,
sorrowful and grieving,
a sword had pierced.*

*O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed one,
the Mother of the Only-Begotten.*

*She grieved and mourned
and trembled when she saw
the sufferings of her glorious Son.*

*Who is the man who would not weep
to see the Mother of Christ
in such agony?*

*Who would not be saddened
to contemplate the holy Mother
grieving for her Son?*

*For the sins of His people
she sees Jesus in torment,
subjected to a scourging.*

*She sees her sweet Son
dying desolate
as He gives up the spirit.*

*Oh, Mother, fount of love, make
me feel the strength of grief,
that I may grieve with you.*

*Make my heart burn
with love for Christ the Lord,
that I may be pleasing to Him.*

Virgo virginum preclara,
Jam michi non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fac ut portem Christi mortem
Passionis ejus sortem,
Et plagas recolare,

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Cruce hac inebriari
Ob amorem filij.

Inflammatum et accensus,
Per te virgo sim defensum
In die iudicij.

Fac me cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi premuniri,
Confoveri gratia.

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac ut anime donetur
Paradisi gloria. Amen.

Tenor:

Comme femme desconfortée,
Sur toutes autres esgarée,
Quy n'ay jour de ma vie espoir,
D'en estre en nul temps consolée,
Mais en mon mal plus aggravée
Desire la mort main et soir.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

*O Virgin, foremost of virgins,
be not bitter towards me:
make me weep with you.*

*Make me bear the death of Christ,
the fate of His suffering,
and recall His wounds.*

*Let me be hurt by [these] wounds,
be inebriated by this cross,
because of love of your Son.*

*Inflamed and incensed,
may I be defended by you, O Virgin,
on the Day of Judgment.*

*Cause me to be guarded by the cross,
to be made safe by the death of Christ,
to be blessed by grace.*

*When my body dies,
cause the glory of paradise
to be given to my soul. Amen.*

*I am like a woman in agony,
distraught above all others,
who has no further hope in life
and cannot ever be consoled,
but is ever more aggrieved by her misfortune
and wishes for death night and day.*

Lamb of God

*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,
have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.*

Tenor:

L'homme armé doit on doubter,
On a fait par tout crier
Que chascun se viegne armer
D'un haubregon de fer.

Cum essem parvulus

Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus,
sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut
parvulus, quando autem factus sum vir,
evacuavi quae erant parvuli: videmus nunc
per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem
facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte,
tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum.
Fides, Spes, Charitas: tria haec: major autem
horum est Charitas.

*The man at arms ought one to fear;
One hears cried out everywhere
that all should arm themselves
with breastplates of iron.*

When I was a child

*When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I knew like a child, I thought like a child.
But when I became a man, I put away
childish things: for now we see through
a mirror unclearly, but then
face to face. Now I know in part,
then I shall know even as I am known.
Faith, Hope, Charity, these three: but the
greatest of these is Charity.*

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

The department of music produced these program notes. Copyright © 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

Cover Hendrick Goltzius, *The Sense of Hearing from the Series the Five Senses* (detail), c. 1595/1596, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam