Made Perfect
Music of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Program

Missa Brevis
Palestrina
Kyrie / Gloria / Credo / Sanctus / Benedictus / Agnus Dei I & II

Surge amica mea, à 5
Diffusa est gratia, à 5
Accepit Jesus calicem, à 6
Agnus Dei (from Missa Benedicta Es), à 6

Exhortation (2005) John Tavener

Thomas Edward Morgan, Artistic Director and Conductor
Brian Dukeshier, Assistant Conductor

Tonight’s program will be presented without an intermission.

Friday, October 15, 2021 – St. Paul Community of Faith, Denver
Saturday, October 16, 2021 – First United Methodist Church, Boulder

Soprano
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John Adams
James Boyd
John Butterfield
Ryan Hardman
Paul Munsch
Eric Pahlke
Dan Wessler
Don Wilson
Steve Winograd
Joshua Young

1 quartet in Missa Brevis–Gloria
2 octet in Missa Brevis–Credo
3 trio in Missa Brevis–Benedictus
4 high school apprentice

Kimberly Brody, Executive Director

www.arsnovasingers.org
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525–1594) was an Italian Renaissance composer of sacred music and the best-known 16th-century representative of the Roman School of musical composition. His work is often regarded as the culmination of Renaissance polyphony. Born in the small town of Palestrina, where his ancestors are thought to have lived for generations, as a child he was taken to nearby Rome. Between 1537 and 1539 he studied music at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, where he was also a choirboy. After seven years as maestro di cappella at the cathedral of his native town, he went to Rome in 1551 at the summons of Pope Julius III to become chapel master of the Cappella Giulia at St Peter’s. He later became a singer at the Sistine Chapel, but was dismissed by Paul IV on account of his unacceptable married status. Palestrina enjoyed a long and illustrious career as an organism, singer, teacher, and composer, serving in many prestigious posts and mentoring numerous other composers. Extraordinarily prolific, his output includes hundreds of compositions, among them many masses, 68 offertories, 250 motets, 45 hymns, 33 Magnificats, several litanies, 5 sets of Lamentations, and at least 140 madrigals. Interestingly, there is no surviving documentation of him composing any purely instrumental pieces.

Palestrina died in Rome of pleurisy in 1594. A five-part psalm for three choirs was sung at his funeral at St. Peter’s; he was buried beneath the floor of the basilica. His tomb was later covered by new construction, and attempts to locate the site have been unsuccessful. He was quite well-known in his day, and his reputation and influence increased after his death. J.S. Bach studied and hand-copied Palestrina's first book of masses, and in 1742 wrote his own adaption of the Kyrie and Gloria of the Missa sine nomine. Felix Mendelssohn placed him in the pantheon of the greatest musicians, writing, “I always get upset when some praise only Beethoven, others only Palestrina and still others only Mozart or Bach. All four of them, I say, or none at all.” Other composers such as Wagner, Verdi and Debussy all acclaimed Palestrina as a prime inspiration.

The Missa Brevis that we’ll perform this evening is one of the composer’s 105 mass settings. It was first published in 1570 and was deemed one of his more successful works as it was reprinted several times before 1620. Its title is perhaps misleading, as a missa brevis commonly refers to a short mass (frequently omitting the Credo), which this is not. It is among the most performed of Palestrina’s polyphonic repertoire. The work is transitional in style, looking both backwards and forwards. The imitative counterpoint–and the striking passages of descending sequences which end each of the first three movements–strongly suggest the continuing influence of Josquin des Prez, the pinnacle of Renaissance musical style. However, this piece also exhibits the increased use of chordal writing and the use of syllabic setting of the text (most notably in the Gloria and Credo), showing the effect of the edicts of the Council of Trent (1545-65), which had sought to make the words of church music more intelligible to congregations. Peter Phillips, conductor of the Tallis Scholars, wrote of this piece:

“The music has a strong character, confidently written, with the motif of the falling minor third, usually followed by upward movement by step, appearing very regularly. This happens not only at the beginning of most movements, but frequently during them, for instance in the remarkable sequence in all the parts to the word 'Amen' in the Credo. This interval alone goes some way to explain the unusually subtle cohesion which the Missa Brevis displays on close acquaintance, where a casual glance might judge it to be disparate. The music is for SATB, increasing to SSATB for the beautiful second Agnus Dei. The phrase at the beginning of the first Agnus – an ascending scale – is inverted at the beginning of the second, which rounds off the music in the most satisfying way.”

We’ll also present a selection of Palestrina’s motets (two for five voices and one for six voices), as well as another six-voice work, an Agnus Dei from Palestrina’s 1562 parody mass Missa Benedicta Es. This early work is based on a motet by Josquin; Josquin in turn based his motet on the plainchant sequence of the same title. This elegant chain of musical recycling found its way to me in the mid-1980s, as a recording of this mass by the Tallis Scholars became one of the first choral recordings available on compact disc. We hope you’ll find it as glorious and sublime to listen to as we find it to sing.

– Notes assembled by Thomas Edward Morgan

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te; benedicimus te; adoramus te;
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Qui sedes ad dextram Patris, miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Credo in unum Deum; Patrem omnipotentem,
Factorem coeli et terrae,
Visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Credo in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
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 coelis; 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 coelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris,
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
Judicaret vivos et mortuos;
Cujus regni non erit finis.

Credo 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.
Credo in unam
Sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confitor unum baptisma, in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum
Et vitam venturi saeculi.
Amen.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

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

Glory be to God in the highest.
And on earth peace to men of good will.
We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we worship Thee; we glorify Thee.
We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.
Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.
Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art Holy, Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art the Most High, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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 begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God, light of light, true God of true God,
Begotten, not made; of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made.
Who for us and for our salvation
Descended from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
Of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
Died and was buried.
And on the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
And ascended into heaven. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
And He shall come again with glory
To judge the living and the dead;
And His kingdom shall have no end.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified;
As it was told by the prophets.
And I believe in one
Holy catholic and apostolic church.
I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
And I await the resurrection of the dead
And the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
Grant us peace.
Surge amica mea

Surge amica mea, speciosa mea, et veni.
Columba mea, in foraminibus petrae, in caverna maceriae,
ostende mihi faciem tuam, sonet vox tua in auribus meis:
vox enim tua dulcis, et facies tua decora.

Diffusa est gratia

Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis:
propterea benedixit te Deus in aeternum.

Accepit Jesus calicem

Accepit Iesus calicem postquam coenavit, dicens:
Hic calix novum testamentum est in meosanguine:
hoc facite in meam commemorationem.

Agnus Dei (from Missa Benedicta Es)

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

John Tavener, Exhortation

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.
– the fourth verse of the poem “For the Fallen” by Laurence Binyon. The full poem was published by The Times newspaper in September 1914 to address the outbreak of World War I.

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Special guest Kathryn Harms, harp.

Friday, December 10, 7:30pm – St. Paul’s Community of Faith, Denver
Sunday, December 12, 4:00pm – United Church of Christ, Longmont
Thursday, December 16, 7:30pm – St. John’s Episcopal Church, Boulder
Friday, December 17, 7:30pm – First United Methodist Church, Boulder