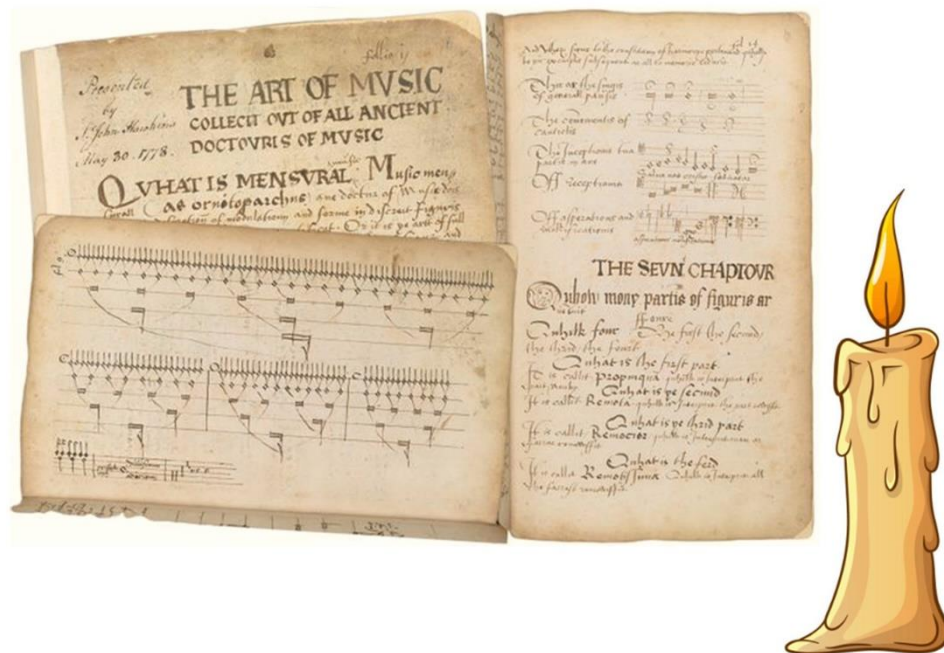


Advent Concert

The Art of Music



Eglise de Strassen

Sunday, 1 December 2024

www.artofmusic.lu

Programme

Plainchant - Rorate caeli

Spee - O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf (a3)

Guillaume Dufay (c. 1400-74) - Conditio alme siderum (a3)

William Mundy (c. 1529-91) - Sive vigilem (a5)

Plainchant - O sapientia

Antoine de Mornable (fl. 1530-53) - O clavis David (a6)

Plainchant - O Adonai

Jacques de Wert (1535-96) - Vox clamantis in deserto (a6)

Interludes for Nyckelharpa:

Alfonso el Sabio (1221-1284) - Cantiga 7 Santa Maria amar

Alfonso el Sabio (1221-1284) - Cantiga de Santa Maria 353 (c. 1275)

Alfonso el Sabio (1221-1284) - Sempr'a Virgen gloriosa Cantiga 377

From the Llibre Vermell de Montserrat

Anonymous (late 14th c.) - Stella splendens in monte (Dance)

Anonymous (late 14th c.) - Cuncti Simus (Dance)

Plainchant - Veni Emmanuel

Traditional - Maria durch ein Dornwald ging (a4)

Traditional (melody: Cologne, 1608) - Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen (a3)

Boris Ord (1897-1961) - Adam lay ybounden (a4)

Peter Warlock (1894-1930) - Bethlehem down (a4)

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525-94) - Canite tuba (a5)

The Art of Music are:

Soprano: Jennifer Schofield and Magdalena Mateńko

Alto: Marita Thomas

Tenor: Mick Swithinbank

Baritone and Nyckelharpa: Vincent Soubeyran

Bass: Achim Holz

Musical Director: Mick Swithinbank

The Collection after the concert will be donated to the Charities selected by the Advent Bazaar team – Parkinson Luxembourg ASBL and Fondation Maison de la Porte Ouverte.

Welcome to the Art of Music's Advent concert, kindly hosted by the Advent Bazaar team of the Oeuvre Paroissial de Strassen with the support of Strassen commune and church.

With Christmas in prospect, Advent is naturally a time of eager anticipation. It also has its own repertoire of music, distinct from that for Christmas, although the latter is of course more extensive. Particularly on the first day of Advent, when this concert is taking place, it is good to have the opportunity to focus on the appropriate music.

Ever since its formation in 1993, the Art of Music's primary interest has been in Renaissance music, albeit not to the complete exclusion of other repertoire. Gregorian chant, which, despite its origins in the Middle Ages, was still an integral part of church music in the 15th and 16th centuries and which – from the artistic point of view – is an excellent source of contrast to the music for multiple voices (polyphony), has always featured in the group's programmes too.

All of that early-music repertoire was usually Latin-texted. In today's concert, we have decided also to include music with English and German texts, and would probably have included something in French if we had succeeded in finding anything appropriate.

The programme includes some notable Advent plainchants. The best-known is probably *Veni Emmanuel* (O come, o come, Emmanuel), about which more will be said later. *Rorate Caeli* is another chant associated with the season. In the run-up to Christmas – the traditional dates for this being the seven days from 17 to 23 December – a series of chants known as the 'O antiphons' used traditionally to be sung. These were antiphons in the sense that they were sung as a prelude to the Magnificat in the important daily evening service of Vespers. They were quite ancient, probably dating from the 6th century.

Each of the O antiphons had a different text but was set to the same plainchant. Each was structured similarly, starting by addressing the Messiah (Christ) by a different name each day – for example, *O Sapientia* (Oh wisdom), *O Oriens* (O radiant dawn) – and then using the word 'Veni' to urge him to come, as he duly did at Christmas. Two of these plainchants are included in today's programme.

In Paris, an extra two O antiphons were sung (the series started on 15 December, therefore), although they were only superficially alike, being addressed to the Virgin Mary and St Thomas rather than the Messiah. In 1534, the leading music publisher in Paris, Pierre Attaingnant, published

polyphonic settings of all nine of the antiphons used in the Paris tradition. These were by various French composers, including Antoine de Mornable, whose O clavis David (O key of David) features in this programme.

Below you will find some more information on the music you will hear:

Plainchant - Rorate caeli desuper et nubes pluant Justum

This plainchant has a refrain which translates as “Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One.” This is based on the passage from the Old Testament book of Isaiah reading: “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness”, but adjusted so as to refer (slightly) more clearly to the coming of the Messiah.

In between the refrains come passages based on the Old Testament: “Do not be angry, Lord ... we have sinned ... see, Lord, the suffering of thy people”. Classic litany verses, in fact.

Spee - O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf (a3 - SAB)

The words, by Friedrich Spee (1591-1635), are based on the same verse from Isaiah as Rorate Caeli. The text was first printed in 1622 and the melody to which we are singing it (authorship unknown) in 1666. But originally, Spee’s text was sung to the plainchant that had traditionally been used for the Advent hymn Conditor alme siderum, which follows in our programme.

Translation:

O Saviour, tear open the heavens,
flow down to us from heaven above;
tear off heaven’s gate and door,
tear off every lock and bar.

O God, a dew from heaven pour;
in the dew, O Saviour, downward flow.
Break, you clouds, and rain down
the king of Jacob’s house.

O earth, burst forth, burst forth, O earth,
so that mountain and valley all become green;
O earth, bring forth this little flower;
O Saviour, spring forth out of the earth.

Therefore, we all want to thank you,
our Redeemer, for ever and ever.

Therefore we also want to praise you
at all times, always, and forever. Amen.

(Translation from trueconcord.org)

Guillaume Dufay (c. 1400-74) - Conditor alme siderum (ATB-a3)

(Advent hymn)

From the Middle Ages onwards, hymns like “Conditor alme” were sung in Latin to plainchant. In the 15th century it became common for composers – Dufay being a prime example – to write polyphonic settings, taking the plainchant and paraphrasing it, before composing – typically – two lower voice parts to accompany it. Dufay’s middle voice simply parallels the melody, while the bass – rhythmically rather independent from it – provides a counterpoint.

To create the paraphrase in the top voice, it was necessary to impose a rhythm on the plainchant, and in many cases the melody became an alternation of long and short notes (before being further jazzed up with some additional ornamentation), so that it was presented in triple time. The hymn would be sung as an alternation of plainchant verses and harmonised verses. As a rule, there was only one polyphonic setting, repeated as often as necessary.

Here is a sample of the text in English verse translation (verses 1 and 2):

Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting light,
O Christ, thou saviour of us all,
We pray thee, hear us when we call.

To thee the travail deep was known
That made the whole creation groan
Till thou, Redeemer, shouldest free
Thine own in glorious liberty.

William Mundy (c. 1529-91) - Sive vigilem (SATBB - a5)

A note on the composer, by Stephen Barber: "William Mundy is not nowadays considered one of the big names of English Renaissance church music, such as Taverner, Tallis or Byrd, but he was highly esteemed in his own time. He lived through the most tumultuous period in English religious history, starting with the change from the Latin to the English rite under Edward VI, going on to the restoration of the Latin rite under Mary and the return to the English rite under Elizabeth I. The changes were not simply those of language but of musical style as well: the florid writing of early Tudor composers, with the frequent use of melismas (several notes to a syllable) were disapproved of by Protestants, who wanted their English words to be clearly audible to the congregations, and so preferred more straightforward settings with one note to syllable."

Sive vigilem is set in a relatively sober style, but masterfully combines polyphony with more chordal writing.

Translation:

Whether I keep watch or sleep, whether I eat or drink,
always I seem to hear the sound of the trumpet
and the voice of an angel calling out and saying:
Rise up, ye dead, and come to the judgement.
Let us watch and pray, for we know neither
the day nor the hour when the Lord will come.

Plainchant - O sapientia

"O antiphon" for 17 December.

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things, come and teach us the way of prudence.

Antoine de Mornable (fl. 1530-53) - O clavis David (SSATBB - a6)

“O antiphon” for 20 December. The little-known Mornable creates some astringent harmonies, some of which involve suspensions whose last moments coincide with the note of resolution – the note to which the suspension must lead – already being sung in a lower voice part, creating a deliberate dissonance.

One curiosity in the settings of these antiphons published by Attaignant is that at the end of each the music continues with an untexted section, a “neuma”. This was intended to be sung to a vowel.

Translation:

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel –
you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open –
come and lead the prisoners from the prison house,
those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Plainchant: O Adonai

“O antiphon” for 18 December.

Translation:

O Adonai and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the
fire of the burning bush, and gave him the law on Sinai,
come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

Jacques de Wert (1535-96) - Vox clamantis in deserto (SSATBB - a6)

De Wert, particularly known as a madrigal composer, although also a church musician, engages in the kind of word-painting associated with the secular part of his repertoire. You may be sure that any reference to “high / mountain” or “low / valley” will be illustrated in the music: indeed, as extremely as the human voice permits. Even the rough places can be made plain or smooth by descending an octave. The contrast, at least, is there in the music as well as the words. Some other concepts lend themselves less well to this approach, and are simply handled by music of great variety.

Translation:

A voice crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord:
make straight in the desert a path for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low;
and the crooked shall be straight, and the rough places plain, and all flesh
shall see God's salvation.

Plainchant - Veni Emmanuel

This popular plainchant is less ancient than the O antiphons, and the words are in fact a combined summary of those now rather forgotten antiphons. The music is, of course, quite different from that used for the antiphons, as they comprised prose texts whereas the summary is in verse form, like a hymn. According to Wikipedia, the music has its origins in 15th-century France.

Traditional - Maria durch ein Dornwald ging (SATB - a4)

Both the text and the melody are anonymous. The earliest known source is a collection of songs published by August von Haxthausen in Paderborn in 1850. It may have come from an earlier tradition or else been written in a deliberately somewhat archaic, folk style. Somewhat mysteriously, the Virgin Mary, already pregnant, is seen walking through a thicket of thornbushes which have been dead for the emotionally resonant period of seven years. The bushes respond to her by flowering with roses.

Maria durch ein Dornwald ging. Kyrie eleison.

*Maria durch ein Dornwald ging,
der hat in sieben Jahrn kein Laub getragen. Jesus und Maria.*

Was trug Maria unter ihrem Herzen? Kyrie eleison.

*Ein kleines Kindlein ohne Schmerzen,
das trug Maria unter ihrem Herzen. Jesus und Maria.*

Da haben die Dornen Rosen getragen. Kyrie eleison.

*Als das Kindlein durch den Wald getragen,
da haben die Dornen Rosen getragen. Jesus und Maria.*

Traditional - Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen (SSA - a3)

(melody: Cologne, 1608)

The melody, of unknown authorship, was first printed in Cologne in 1608. Today's performances use a new harmonisation for three women's voices.

A little more is known about the text, which was printed in 1626 in a collection of religious songs compiled by Daniel Sudermann, of Strasbourg. He stated that it was a modernised ('more readily comprehensible') version of a poem written by the Strasbourg mystic Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), which has not itself survived. The ship is an image of the Virgin Mary, with Jesus as its cargo. Moreover, the sail represents love and the mast the Holy Spirit.

*Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen
bis an sein höchsten Bord,
trägt Gottes Sohn voll Gnaden,
des Vaters ewigs Wort.*

*Das Schiff geht still im Triebe,
es trägt ein teure Last;
das Segel ist die Liebe,
der Heilig Geist der Mast.*

*Der Anker haft' auf Erden,
da ist das Schiff am Land.
Das Wort will Fleisch uns werden,
der Sohn ist uns gesandt.*

*Zu Betlehem geboren
im Stall ein Kindelein,
gibt sich für uns verloren:
Gelobet muss es sein.*

*Und wer dies Kind mit Freuden
umfassen, küssen will,
muss vorher mit ihm leiden
groß Pein und Marter viel,*

*danach mit ihm auch sterben
und geistlich auferstehn,
das ewig Leben erben,
wie an ihm ist geschehn.*

Boris Ord (1897-1961), Adam lay ybounden (SATB - a4)

The text is thought to date from around 1400. It appears in a manuscript from East Anglia, possibly Norfolk. It was clearly intended to be sung, although no original music for it survived. In the 20th century, various composers set it to music, but the best-known setting is that by Boris Ord, who was organist and choirmaster at King's College Cambridge from 1929 to 1957. Remarkably, it is his only published composition.

The text alludes to the third chapter of the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve ate the apple in the Garden of Eden. The fall of Man was in one way fortunate, as it led to the redemption through Jesus.

Text with modernised spelling:

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond. Four thousand winter thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple, an apple that he took, as clerkes finden written in their book.

Ne'er had the apple taken been, the apple taken been, then had never Our Lady a-been heaven's queen.

Blessed be the time that apple taken was! Therefore we moun (may) singen Deo gracias.

Peter Warlock (1894-1930), Bethlehem down (SATB - a4)

(Words by Bruce Blunt)

Strictly speaking, this is a Christmas carol rather than a song for Advent, but we hope you will forgive us for including it in this programme.

Some notes about this piece by Mike Leuty:

By 1927 Warlock was in financial difficulty, due in part to a fall in the demand for his songs. He struck up a friendship with Bruce Blunt, a journalist, poet and "bon viveur". The first record of their association was a press report about them being arrested "drunk and disorderly" in Chelsea. Running short of money, the two friends wrote Bethlehem Down to submit to the Daily Telegraph's annual carol contest. They duly won the prize, which was used to finance an "immortal carouse" on Christmas Eve 1927. (...) Warlock was found dead of gas poisoning in his Chelsea flat in December 1930 at the age of 36.

Text:

“When He is King we will give him the King's gifts,
Myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown,
Beautiful robes,” said the young girl to Joseph,
Fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight,
Winds for the spices, and stars for the gold,
Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe him in grave-sheets,
Myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown,
He that lies now in the white arms of Mary,
Sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.

Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming,
Close huddled oxen to keep him from cold,
Mary for love, and for lullaby music
Songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525-94), Canite tuba (SSATBB - a6)

Palestrina needs no introduction, and the text of this motet should be self-explanatory.

Translation:

Blow the trumpet in Zion for the day of the Lord is nigh.
Lo, He comes for our salvation. The crooked shall be made straight and the
rough ways plain. Come, Lord, and do not delay. Alleluia.

Interludes for Nyckelharpa

Alfonso el Sabio (c. 1221-84)

The life of Alfonso X covers the 63 years that run from 1221 to 1284, the very heart of the thirteenth century. Alfonso was King of Castile and Leon and elected to head the Holy Roman Empire; he was a legal reformer and promoter of science and culture. The impact of the political and intellectual activity of which he was the driver during the three decades of his reign was felt far beyond the frontiers of the Peninsula in a way that was unmatched for any medieval Iberian monarch either before or after, to the point that he became a key figure in the epoch of beginnings and endings that was thirteenth-century Christendom. A brief overview of his life and work cannot but leave the impression that Alfonso was at the core of all of the major developments left to us by that century.

The Llibre Vermell de Montserrat

The Llibre Vermell de Montserrat is a manuscript collection of devotional texts containing, amongst others, some late medieval songs. The 14th-century manuscript was compiled in and is still located at the monastery of Montserrat outside Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain.

The manuscript was prepared in approximately 1399. It originally contained 172 double pages, of which 32 have been lost. Six folios contain music. The title "The Red Book of Montserrat" describes the red binding in which the collection was placed in the 19th century. No composer is identified for any of the songs it contains.

The monastery holds the shrine of the Virgin of Montserrat, which was a major site of pilgrimage during the time it was compiled.

The songs, therefore, were written for the pilgrims to have something appropriately "chaste and pious" to sing and dance to (circle dances). While the collection was written near the end of the 14th century, much of the music in the collection appears from its style to originate earlier.