

# The Renaissance Street Singers



Commerce Street, September 15, 1996

Gawain Beirne

## Loft Concert

3 p.m. Sundays, March 2 and 9, 1997

at the home of

John Hetland and Alan MacKinnon

135 West 17th Street, Loft 3B

New York, NY 10011

(212) 989-7606



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Since 1973, the Renaissance Street Singers have sung 15th- and 16th-century music *a cappella*, most of it sacred music, for enjoyment. Because performing for others gives the music more life and distributes the enjoyment, the group regularly performs on Sunday afternoons throughout New York City, wherever an audience can be found, always free. The current repertoire is entirely polyphonic sacred music of the 15th, 16th and early 17th centuries.

In this repertoire, the words existed before the music. Inspired by texts that expressed beliefs that deeply permeated the culture of the time, the composers created their best works. The notes and translations here are meant to increase your enjoyment of the music.

### Today's Program

**Ave Regina caelorum . . . . Nicolas Gombert (Flemish, c.1495-c.1560)**  
One of the four Marian antiphons, favored texts of composers for centuries, the *Ave Regina caelorum* is part of the mass from February 2 to the Wednesday before Easter:

"Hail, Queen of the heavens; hail, Ruler of Angels. Health to you, holy origin whence dawn has risen upon the world. Rejoice, illustrious one, beautiful beyond all. Farewell, most lovely, and ever pray for us to Christ."

#### Vox in Rama

**Jacob Clemens (non Papa) (Franco-Flemish, c.1510-c.1555)**  
Jeremiah 31:15, as quoted in Matthew 2:18, where it is applied to the mass murder of baby boys by King Herod:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and wailing: Rachel weeping for her children. She will not be consoled, for they are not."



**Alma Redemptoris Mater . . . Guillaume Dufay (French, c.1400-1474)**

Another of the Marian antiphons, this one is used from Advent to February 1. Dufay's melody, in the soprano, closely resembles the traditional plainsong melody:

"Nourishing Mother of the Redeemer, who remains the passable gateway to heaven and star of the sea, hasten to help the falling populace, which tries to rise.

"You who have borne, nature marveling, your holy Begetter, virgin before and afterward, who received that 'Hail!' from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy upon sinners."

**O vos omnes . . . . . Tomás Luis de Victoria (Spanish, 1548-1611)**

Lamentations 1:12: The prophet Jeremiah mourns the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the text is used in Christian liturgy to refer to the suffering and death of Jesus:

"All of you who pass by on the road, give heed, and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow."

**Four Psalm settings . . . . . Claude Goudimel (French, c.1514-1572)**

1. *Helas, Seigneur* (Psalm 69:1-3): "Alas, Lord, I pray you, save me, for the waters have seized my very soul, and I feel I am sinking in deep and filthy quagmire without bottom or shore. Thus immersed, the water sweeps me away, so weary from my crying that my throat is dry. And waiting for my God's solace, the strength of my eyes dries up."

2. *Jusques à quand* (Psalm 13:1): "How long, O Lord, will you forget me? Forever? Through how many ages will you turn away your face from me, alas, with anguish filled?"

3. *Quand je t'invoque* (Psalm 4:1-2): "When I call to you, alas, hear me, O God of my cause and reason! When my heart was crushed you gave me ample room. Do not turn me away from your mercy, but hearken to my prayer. How long, cruel people, will you try to destroy my glory? How long will you love and seek vain enterprises, without fruit and full of abuses?"



4. *Mon Dieu me paist* (Psalm 23:1-3): "The Lord pastures me under his great power. He is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. Well protected and secure, he makes me lie down beside the beautiful meadows, he leads me to clear shores. He treats my soul with merciful sweetness. And for his name's sake he leads me through right paths."

**Ave rosa sine spinis**

**Ludwig Senfl (Swiss, active in Germany; c.1486-c.1543)**

Homage to the Virgin Mary:

"Hail, rose without thorns, whom the Father divinely exalted to majesty, and preserved from every woe. Mary, called star of the sea, you are made famous by a birth, by the clear light of deity, you who outshine all gifts. Full of grace: the Holy Spirit perfected you when he made you a vessel of divine goodness and complete piety.

"The Lord is with you, in wondrous manner, by word made flesh in you by an act of the triune Creator: O how sweet is the vessel of love! You are blessed among women; every tribe testifies to this; the heavens declare you blessed and exalted over all. And blessed is the fruit of your womb, whereby we ever enjoy gifts through a foretaste here of eternity, and after death forever. Amen."

**Salve, Regina . . . . . Robert Fayrfax (English, 1464-1521)**

This Marian antiphon is used from Trinity to Advent. Fayrfax's complex polyphony sets additional text not part of the traditional Catholic words:

"Hail, Queen, mother of mercy: our life, sweetness and hope, hail. To you we cry, exiled children of Eve. For you we sigh, moaning and weeping in this vale of tears. Therefore look! our advocate, turn your merciful eyes toward us.

"And Jesus, blessed fruit of your womb, reveal to us after this exile.

"Virgin mother of the church, eternal gateway to glory, be for us a refuge along with the Father and Son. O merciful!

"Merciful virgin, holy virgin, sweet virgin, O Mary. Hear the prayers of all those crying piously to you. O holy one.



"Pour forth prayers to him born to you, who was crucified, wounded, and scourged for our sake, pierced by thorns, given gall to drink. O sweet Mary, hail!"

— *Intermission* —

**Gaudeamus omnes . . . . . Philippe Verdelot (French, c.1475-c.1550)**

An introit for Easter mass, partly from Matthew 28: 2, 5-6:

"Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating the feast day, for the Lord has risen. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and drawing near he rolled back the stone, and sat upon it, and said to the women: 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus. He has now risen. Come and see the place where the Lord was placed.' Alleluia."

**O vos omnes . . . . . Carlo Gesualdo (Italian, c.1561-1613)**

A different treatment of the same text from Lamentations that is set by Victoria:

"All of you who pass by on the road, give heed, and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow."

**Clamabat autem mulier . . Francisco Guerrero (Spanish, 1528-1599)**

Chromaticism is used effectively to express this text from Matthew 15:22-28:

"But the Canaanite woman cried to the Lord Jesus, saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ, son of David, help me! my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.' Answering her the Lord said, 'I was sent only to the sheep who are lost from the house of Israel.'

"But she came and worshipped him, saying, 'Lord help me.' Answering, Jesus said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.'"



**I'vo piangendo . . . . . Gioseffo Zarlino (Italian, 1517-1590)**

The text of this motet is a poem by the 14th-century poet Petrarch:

"I go lamenting my past times, which I spent in loving something mortal without rising to flight, though I have wings, to make of myself perhaps not a base example. You who see my evils, unworthy and impious, king of heaven, invisible, immortal: give aid to the soul, wandering and frail, and its defect, by your grace, correct.

"So that if I lived in war and in storm, may I die in peace and in port; and if the sojourn was vain, at least may the departure be honorable. For that short time of living left to me, and to be worthy of dying, lend your hand. You know well that I have no other hope."

**Magnificat secundi toni . . . . Duarte Lobo (Portuguese, c.1565-1646)**

The Magnificat, commemorating the Annunciation to Mary in Luke 1:46-55, is so important in the liturgy that the traditional plainsong chant occurs in a different form in each of the eight church modes. Lobo based this composition on the chant in mode two, retaining the chant in alternate (odd-numbered) verses. The plainsong melody can also be heard in many of the polyphonic verses;

1. "My soul magnifies the Lord." 2. "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior." 3. "For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden: for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." 4. "For he has done great things for me, he who is mighty: and holy is his name." 5. "And his mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him." 6. "He has shown strength with his arm: he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart." 7. "He has put down the mighty from the throne, and exalted the humble." 8. "The poor he has filled with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty." 9. "He has lifted up Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy." 10. "Just as he said to our fathers, Abraham and his seed for generations." 11. "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." 12. "As it was in the beginning, and now, and always, for generations of generations. Amen."



**Salve, Regina . . . . . Francisco Guerrero**

A more traditional treatment of this Marian antiphon than Fairfax's. Alternate (odd-numbered) sections are in the medieval chant melody:

1. "Hail, Queen, mother of mercy."
2. "Our life, sweetness, and hope, hail."
3. "To you we cry, exiled children of Eve."
4. "For you we sigh, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears."
5. "Therefore look! our advocate, turn your merciful eyes toward us."
6. "And Jesus, blessed fruit of your womb,"
7. "reveal to us after this exile."
8. "O kind, O holy, O sweet Virgin Mary."

**Intemerata Dei mater**

**Johannes Ockeghem (Franco-Flemish, c.1410-1497)**

Ockeghem's rich polyphony is a noble tribute to Mary:

"Undeclared mother of God, noble damsel, whom thousands of files of angels surround with songs, only look upon us, if we merit any consideration for raising a joyful noise. You know, seemly maiden, how much danger exiles are exposed to, and on what shoals we are everywhere tossed.

"Neither does any rest abide without you, nor hope for our hardships, nor salvation for our homeland, nor attaining the abode of the Father, over which you preside as queen. Dispensing all things with a joyful face, you sustain the pious, to whom you give sweet nectar to drink, and whom you cause to recline perpetually at sacred feasts.

"Make the Son look upon the wretched with the eye of piety; you yourself have this power. Deliver the weary upward from this place, divine maiden, by your hand, and place them safe in the citadel."

*Two rounds from the Song of Songs... John Hetland (1995)*

*And you, my beloved  
Your brain is like a flock of goats*

***Please stay for more refreshments and group singing***

# The Renaissance Street Singers

Director	John Hetland
Sopranos	Diane Brows Suzanne Flanagan Eileen Lopatin Nancy Mandel Shannon Thompson
Altos	Martha Buckwalter Gina Tlamsa Gilloon Jeannette Goya Johnson Janet B. Pascal
Tenors	Gerald Beirne Benjamin Dean Susan Katz John Bruce Rickenbacher
Basses	Richard Burger Ron Zamir