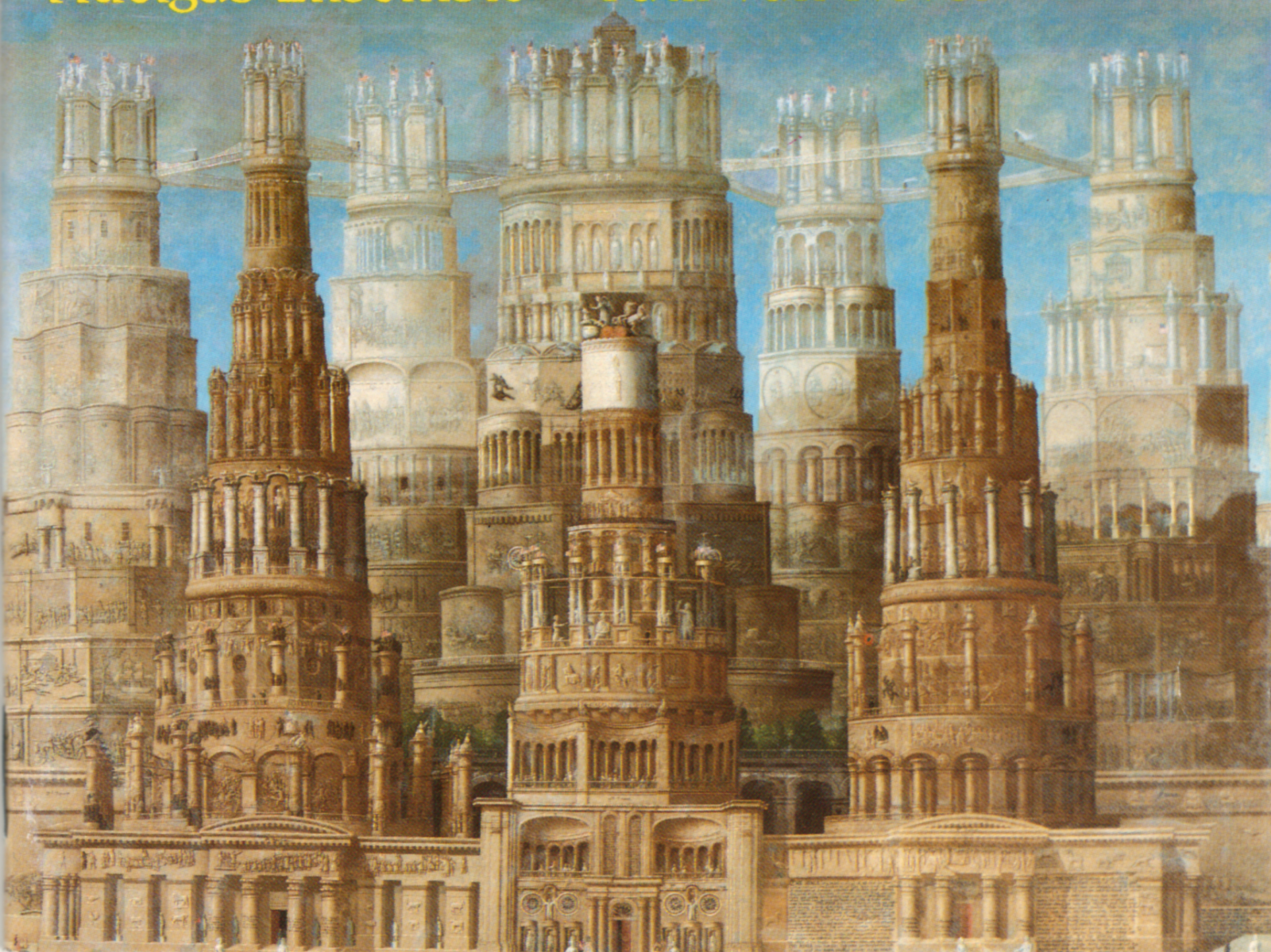
Utopia Triumphans

Huelgas Ensemble · Paul Van Nevel



UTOPIA TRIUMPHANS

The Great Polyphony of the Renaissance

SK 66 261
DDD
DIGITAL RECORDING

THOMAS TALLIS **Spem in alium**
COSTANZO PORTA **Sanctus · Agnus Dei**
JOSQUIN DESPREZ **Qui habitat**
JOHANNES OCKEGHEM **Deo gratias**
PIERRE DE MANCHICOURT **Laudate Dominum**
GIOVANNI GABRIELI **Exaudi me Domine**
ALESSANDRO STRIGGIO **Ecce beatam lucem**

Huelgas Ensemble
Paul Van Nevel

Total time: 52'46

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Super Bit Mapping

For this recording 20-bit technology was used for "high definition sound".

Producer/Recording Supervisor: **Wolf Erichson.**
Recording Engineer/ Editing: **Markus Heiland** (TRITONUS).

Recorded at St. Barbara Church, Gent, Belgium, September 9 & 10, 1994.

Cover Design: C. C. Garbers.
Cover Painting: Erastus Salisbury Field: Historical Monument of the American Republic.

5 099706 626121

Distribution Sony Music.
01-066261-10
Manufactured in Austria.
Printed in Holland/ Imprimé en Hollande.

CB 841 | CDK | CF

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Huelgas Ensemble
Paul Van Nevel

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Made in Austria
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LC 6868

VIVARTE
SONY CLASSICAL™

TALLIS: 1 Spem in alium · PORTA: 2 Sanctus · Agnus Dei
DESPREZ: 3 Qui habitat · OCKEGHEM: 4 Deo gratias
MANCHICOURT: 5 Laudate Dominum
GABRIELI: 6 Exaudi me Domine
STRIGGIO: 7 Ecce beatam lucem

Utopia Triumphans

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THOMAS TALLIS (*c.*1505–1585)

1 **Spem in alium** 10'02
Forty-part motet / 40stimmige Motette / Motet à 40 voix

COSTANZO PORTA (*c.*1529–1601)

2 **Sanctus · Agnus Dei** (from the "Missa Ducalis") 9'15
For thirteen parts / 13stimmig / à 13 voix (Sanctus)
For fourteen parts / 14stimmig / à 14 voix (Agnus Dei)

JOSQUIN DESPREZ (*c.*1440–1521)

3 **Qui habitat** (Psalm 90) 5'48
Twenty-four-part motet / 24stimmige Motette / Motet à 24 voix

JOHANNES OCKEGHEM (*c.*1410–1497)

4 **Deo gratias** 6'02
Thirty-six-part canon / 36stimmiger Kanon / Canon à 36 voix

Time:

PIERRE DE MANCHICOURT (*c.*1510–1564)

5 **Laudate Dominum** 6'15
Six-part motet / 6stimmige Motette / Motet à 6 voix

GIOVANNI GABRIELI (*c.*1553–1612)

6 **Exaudi me Domine** 6'07
Sixteen-part motet / 16stimmige Motette / Motet à 16 voix

ALESSANDRO STRIGGIO (*c.*1535–1592)

7 **Ecce beatam lucem** 9'17
Forty-part non-liturgical motet / 40stimmige nichtliturgische Motette
Motet non-liturgique à 40 voix

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Huelgas Ensemble · Paul Van Nevel

PAUL VAN NEVEL

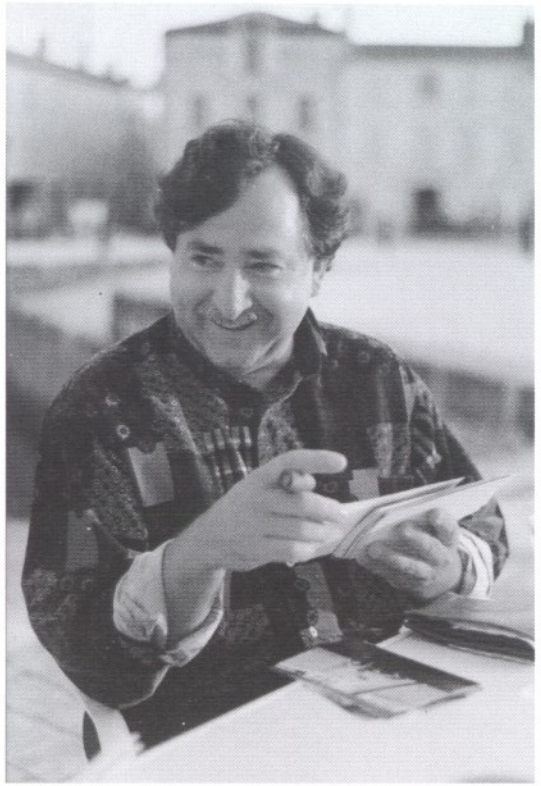

Photo: Sallie Wood

VIVARTE

SONY CLASSICAL

Utopia Triumphans

The Great Polyphony of the Renaissance

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HUELGAS ENSEMBLE

Superius

1. Barbara Borden
2. Annemie Buyle
3. Cathérine Joussellin
4. Uta Kirsten-Went
5. Marie-Claude Vallin
6. Dineke van der Sman
7. Ellen van Ham
8. Francisca Van Herle
9. Lize van Jaarsfeld
10. Els Van Laethem
11. Machteld van Woerden

Altus

12. Peter de Groot
13. Irene Heuvelmans
14. Brigitte Le Baron
15. Cecilia Roovers
16. Consuelo Sanudo
17. Arno Tabertshofer

Tenor

18. Christopher Kale
19. Lucien Kandel
20. Eric Mentzel
21. Philip Pooley
22. Jasper Schweppe
23. Eitan Sorek
24. Lieven Termont
25. Marius van Altena
26. Harry van Berne
27. Marc Van Daele
28. Stéphane van Dijck
29. Ibo van Ingen
30. Sjef van Leunen
31. Matthew Vine
32. John Vredeveldt

Bassus

33. Conor Biggs
34. Job Boswinkel
35. Willem Ceuleers
36. Lieven Deroo
37. Herman De Winné
38. Erik Hermans
39. Paul Mertens
40. Mitchell Sandler
41. Dirk Snellings
42. Dirk Van Croonenborch
43. Harry van der Kamp

Paul Van Nevel, Conductor

HUELGAS ENSEMBLE / PAUL VAN NEVEL

Photo: Luk van Eeckhout

ARRANGEMENT OF SINGERS

1 THOMAS TALLIS

8 Five-Part Choirs

Choir I	1 · 3 · 28 · 22 · 40
Choir II	4 · 8 · 23 · 25 · 36
Choir III	6 · 14 · 26 · 19 · 41
Choir IV	7 · 5 · 29 · 31 · 35
Choir V	11 · 12 · 20 · 18 · 34
Choir VI	10 · 13 · 27 · 24 · 39
Choir VII	9 · 15 · 21 · 38 · 42
Choir VIII	2 · 16 · 17 · 30 · 43

2 COSTANZO PORTA

3 Four-Part Choirs, 1 Cantus-Firmus Voice (Sanctus),
2 Cantus-Firmus Voices (Agnus Dei)

Cantus firmus	20 · 23
Choir I	9 · 16 · 28 · 25
Choir II	6 · 15 · 29 · 36
Choir III	5 · 31 · 26 · 35

3 JOSQUIN DESPREZ

4 Six-Part Groups

Group I (superius)	10 · 9 · 1 · 7 · 6 · 5
Group II (altus)	28 · 29 · 20 · 23 · 27 · 31
Group III (tenor)	26 · 25 · 22 · 18 · 21 · 24
Group IV (bassus)	35 · 41 · 43 · 34 · 36 · 40

4 JOHANNES OCKEGHEM

4 Nine-Part Groups

Group I (superius)	10 · 1 · 9 · 6 · 7 · 11 · 3 · 8 · 5
Group II (altus)	31 · 21 · 28 · 20 · 23 · 18 · 27 · 17 · 29
Group III (tenor)	25 · 26 · 22 · 24 · 19 · 37 · 32 · 30 · 40
Group IV (bassus)	43 · 34 · 35 · 36 · 39 · 33 · 41 · 42 · 38

5 PIERRE DE MANCHICOURT

6 Parts, Each with Two Singers

Superius	9 · 10
Contra I	5 · 3
Contra II	16 · 12 · 15
Tenor I	20 · 23
Tenor II	25 · 26
Bassus	35 · 36

6 GIOVANNI GABRIELI

4 Four-Part Choirs

Choir I	10 · 5 · 25 · 35
Choir II	9 · 28 · 23 · 34
Choir III	16 & 28 · 29 · 18 · 39
Choir IV	20 · 31 · 26 · 43

7 ALESSANDRO STRIGGIO

10 Four-Part Choirs

No one choir ever sings alone and the parts are severally combined.

Choir I	9 · 8 · 31 · 34
Choir II	4 · 27 · 24 · 41
Choir III	6 · 15 · 18 · 37
Choir IV	11 · 16 · 20 · 38
Choir V	1 · 17 · 26 · 36
Choir VI	5 · 25 · 19 · 42
Choir VII	2 · 13 · 21 · 22
Choir VIII	7 · 12 · 28 · 35
Choir IX	10 · 14 · 23 · 40
Choir X	3 · 29 · 39 · 43

The works were recorded with the singers standing in a circle.

Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) was a musician, humanist, philosopher and Florentine. In a letter of September 13, 1492, he wrote, "No one who considers the outstanding discoveries of our time can have the slightest doubt that we are living in a golden age. Indeed, this period has seen the rediscovery of arts and sciences that had once disappeared: grammar, poetry, rhetoric, painting, sculpture, music, old songs in harmony with the lyre of Orpheus [...] Knowledge now goes hand in hand with the art of public speaking."

In his letter, Ficino points out developments both evolutionary and revolutionary that affected the cosmology, arts and science of the Renaissance. The new, more strongly extroverted and less dogmatic spirit that moved through Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was striving toward a harmonic balance between man, nature and science.

Despite occasional setbacks caused mostly by the unceasing pursuit of new horizons or by attempts at putting into practice plans that were feasible only on paper, it was a time of discoveries, dreams, utopias and challenges, of experiments and triumphs, and of new scientific laws. Above all, the time was permeated with humanism modeled on the classic ideal: the ideal of creating a "harmonic" man by realizing every facet of his being.

The word *umanista* appeared for the first time in Italy in the same magical year that Ficino wrote his letter. It was also in 1492 that Granada, the last Moorish bastion in Europe, was regained by the Reconquista, and before year's end, Christopher Columbus was rewarded in his tireless search with the discovery of the Americas.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) can be seen as the archetype of the "new European." He was all things: painter, architect, sculptor, mathematician, researcher, inventor, engineer, writer. He even appears as a musician: he was a singer and lutist, and friend of the Milanese choir director Gaffurius. As stage designer, he produced the decorations for Poliziano's musical play *Favola d'Orfeo*. Above all, he was an eccentric: his dreams were to slumber between the pages of his notes for many years before their prophecy was recognized. Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) describes and celebrates Leonardo's masterpieces in his work *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani*... Of Leonardo's unusual ideas he writes, "One is safe in assuming that Leonardo's colossal and more than superb intellect was hindered by his strong determination, and that this was because he

always wanted to add something even more superb to the already superb, wanted to make the perfect even more perfect; and so finally, his will stood in the way of its own realization."

Yet Leonardo was only one of many. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) set the world on its ear both figuratively and literally. In 1530 he completed his treatise *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* in which he set an end to the Ptolemaic conviction that the earth was the center of the universe: since then, man has lived with new horizons.

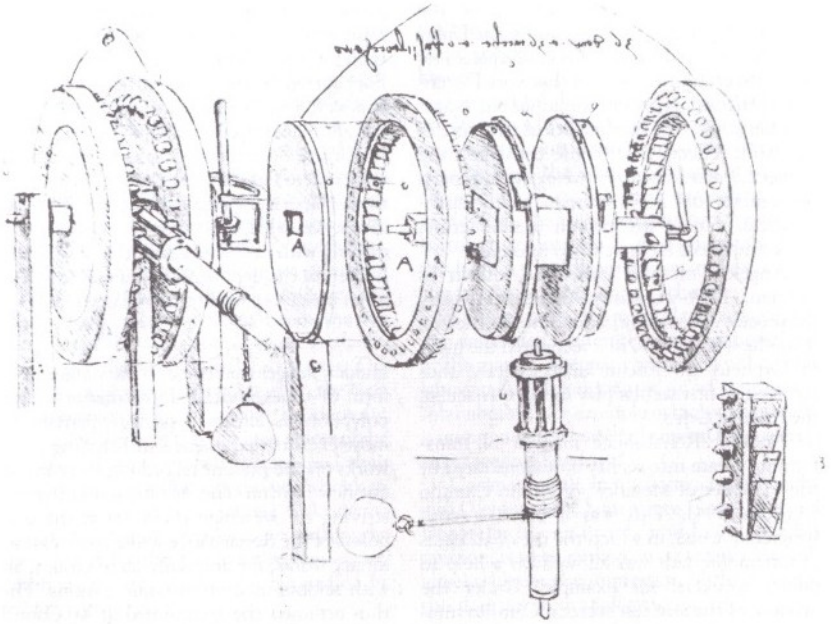
Johannes Gutenberg (c.1397–1468) astonished Europe with his invention of printing from movable type. For music, too, the repercussions cannot be underestimated. in 1501, the first polyphonic music was printed by Ottaviano Petrucci (1466–1539) in Venice. Henceforth, music was no longer the preserve of a small circle of professionals gathered around a manuscript: the new medium made it accessible to all.

Abraham Zacuto (c.1450 – c.1515) not only compiled accurate astronomical tables, tables that Columbus was to use on his voyages, but, in 1496, he produced the first *almanach perpetuum*: from that time, man could look into the future.

In 1516, Sir Thomas More (1477–1535) created the word "utopia" from the Greek words οὐ τόπος (no place) and εὐ τόπος (good place). In his book *Utopia*, More presents an imaginary reality which he uses *inter alia* to criticize the capitalistic tendencies of the Renaissance. More important, however, is that More's work created a new yearning, a search for the realization of (yet) inexistent dreams.

Painting and architecture, too, provided images of the ideal. Antonio di Pietro Averlino, known as "Filarete" (c.1400–c.1469), created the ideal city Sforzinda in his *Trattato d'architettura*. It reveals a futuristic city with a fully equipped iron foundry, and a treasury protected against intruders by an alarm system that actuated rattles.

Francesco di Giorgio (1439–1502) and Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) transformed the depiction of sensory perception in art with their discovery of modern perspective. Francesco used this concept when, in his *Trattato di architettura civile e militare*, he presented the plan of a utopian city of perfect geometrical construction in a new, horizon-widening perspective. Though Brunelleschi was a goldsmith and the inventor of hydraulic devices, he is mainly remembered for an architectural design: that of the dome of Florence's famous cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore. The plans both for the dome itself and for the methods and machines necessary to build it set new standards for the building techniques of the day. The dome demonstrates an elegance and lightness all its own. All these achievements and the currents of thought on which they were built prepared the ground for novel visions of space, movement, clarity, elegance and plasticity in art. This atmosphere was to furnish important impulses for the development of music as well.



LEONARDO DA VINCI: A MOTOR WITH GRAVITY WEIGHT
From: Codex Atlanticus, fol.8 verso–b. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana
Photo: Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin

It is no coincidence that one of the first Renaissance composers, Guillaume Dufay (c.1400–74), wrote one of his masterpieces for the consecration in 1436 of that very Florentine cathedral, an isorhythmic motet, *Nuper rosarum flores*. The mathematical structure of the work reflects that of the cathedral: the numerical relationship between the four parts of the motet (6:4:2:3) corresponds to the mathematical plan of the church. Architecture, space and music are here fused into one.

Angelo Poliziano, otherwise known as Politian, (1454–94) was one of the first to carry the process of democratization into the theater. It was he who in 1480 first recounted the myth of Orpheus in Tuscan dialect. Italy thus received its first secular play in the vernacular, the *Favola d'Orfeo*.

Another Renaissance manner of transforming dream into reality is demonstrated by the "Theater of Memory" of Giulio Camillo (c.1480–1544). This was a building constructed of wood, in which the use of all kinds of mnemonic aids was allowed: as a help to public speakers, for example. Under the promise of the strictest secrecy, Camillo himself revealed his dream, which had become reality, to Vigilius Zuichemus, who himself exchanged letters with Erasmus. Zuichemus was utterly amazed, and wrote to his correspondent, "This man has built a sort of amphitheater, an impressive witness to that of which human reason is capable. Each spectator gaining admission is enabled to speak on any topic with the eloquence of a Cicero. At first I thought the whole thing a fairy-tale until Baptista Egnatio revealed further details to me. It is said that this architect has assembled at certain places every imaginable theme found in Cicero. Selected principles and hierarchically ordered figures of speech are arranged in these places using every eloquence and almost divine knowledge, so that the spectator sees directly with his own eyes all that is otherwise hidden in the depths of the human intellect." – An imaginary world that became reality!

*

Hidden images that come to the surface in the form of tones and combinations of tones – polyphonous effects – provide perhaps the most exciting experience in listening to the works on the present recording. By searching out new horizons and, having found them, in striving to overcome them anew, the composers of the Renaissance wrote some extraordinary works, for unusually large groups, and with seldom-used voice combinations. They thus attained the goal aimed at by Camillo with his Theater of Memory: to build up an unusual setting to astonish the listener.

For example, Josquin Desprez's motet *Qui habitat* ([3]) interweaves four canons. In this way, four "rooms" are created simultaneously. At the end, the constantly repeated ostinato bass produces a bell-ringing effect. The work

contains so many simultaneous "experiences" that one notices new free dissonances and other rhythmic confrontations among the twenty-four voices with every new hearing. The work resembles a Gothic cathedral which the light of morning illuminates in ever greater detail.

The canon *Deo gratias* ([4]), attributed with some uncertainty to Johannes Ockeghem, is relatively simple in structure: compared to Josquin's work, the degree of elaboration in the four nine-voice canons is slight. Nonetheless, the work's thirty-six voices alone are enough to give it a monumental quality. *Deo gratias* begins with the superius canon; before it ends, the dux ("leader") of the alto canon begins, gradually unfolding to display all nine of its voices. The tenor canon begins at this point, then the bass. The theme of this last group, incidentally, enters at the moment the eighteen voices of the superius and alto canons have reached their final note; here, the first superius voice holds its final c for thirty breves (measures). Ockeghem's work is a canonic kaleidoscope: within the limits posed by the thirty-six voices, many combinations are possible, each justified by the canon principle itself.

In this recording, the nine-voice superius canon is first sung alone. In the repetition, the eighteen voices of the tenor and bass canons join in; a further repetition combines the alto, tenor and bass voices, ultimately developing into a canon of the four groups as Ockeghem wrote it. On the way to this final point, constantly varying tonal structures come to the fore. Ockeghem's canon repeats the same chord progression (f - f - c) in each three-part breve.

Comparing the two pieces, we find that it was Josquin who developed his harmonies into more layers; contributing to this effect were the rests between the sections of each of the four duces. The bell-ringing effect toward the end is produced as the basses sing the text "perambulante" on an ostinato c - d - c - d; we also hear this later in the closing passage, in the constant alternation between F and C chords.

Josquin's motet is a magical *tour de force* that also demanded masterful counterpoint writing by the master. The many ways of handling text (the peculiar alto motif a - e' - c' - f' on the text "obumbrabit", for example, which incidentally is imitated in the bass) only reveal their secrets after repeated hearings.

Cosimo Bartali, in his *Ragionamenti accademici* (Venice, 1567), mentions Ockeghem and Donatello in one breath; and Josquin, in his opinion, is to be ranked on a par with Michelangelo. Under the impression of these works, this does not seem at all exaggerated.

*

The fame of Costanzo Porta is inversely proportional to the enormous volume of work that he bequeathed to us. He studied with Adriaan Willaert and others, and himself taught numerous Italian composers, including Diruta and

Viadana. Porta was a legend in his lifetime, particularly in conservative circles, for he was a committed defender of Palestrina's style up to his death on the threshold of the seventeenth century. Porta's entire work demonstrates a confident mastery of classical counterpoint (even including mensuration canons), very regularly constructed and with great melodic elan. Costanzo Porta was accepted into the Congregazione Romana dei Musici di Santa Cecilia, members of which also included Palestrina, Lasso and Zacconi.

In his *Missa Ducalis*, of which the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei are presented on this recording, Porta combined two different styles into one whole. He uses here the *cori spezzati* (divided choirs) technique, juxtaposing three groups of four voices. However, his counterpoint retains its debt to Palestrina; only seldom does he use homophony or block harmony. The result is a starkly linear classicism, of which Porta was one of the last proponents. The twelve voices of the three choirs are united and bound together by a thirteenth voice which sings a *cantus firmus* in long note values on the melody f - a - c - d - c - a - f. Here, Porta includes words of homage to his patron in the actually "untouchable" text of the mass – another archaic trope. In the Agnus Dei, the *cantus firmus* becomes two voices in canonic form so that the total number of voices is raised to fourteen. This last passage, especially, has an atmosphere all its own, with the *cantus firmi* contrapuntally – and cabalistically – entwined with the voices of the other three choirs.

*

Giovanni Gabrieli has gone down in history as *the* composer of sacred music for the Basilica di San Marco in Venice. He is also the most prominent proponent of the *cori spezzati* technique (though he applied it in a completely different way than Porta). Compared with Porta, Gabrieli's musical idiom is much more strongly marked by homophony and by rich harmonies. In addition, it has been colored by the madrigal, and is full of dramatic elements. The motet *Exaudi me Domine* (6) is a typical example. The composition is for four four-part choirs, and begins with the unusual sequence 1 - 2 - 4 - 3. Beginning at the words "dum judicium," Gabrieli combines the choirs in every imaginable way. To accompany the text "movendi sunt," he introduces hocket figures, first in the voices of one choir, then in the others: in this way, a majestic climax is constructed. Here, polychorality is no longer limited to an architectural role but contributes dramatically to the listener's experience of the text. Thus, though written in the same period and within the same Northern Italian cultural context, the works of Porta and Gabrieli are miles apart. Michael Praetorius explained with abundant clarity the conflict between the two stylistic factions in part three of his treatise *Syntagma musicum*: "There are those who admit no mixing of motet and madrigal style within one composition. I do not share this opinion, for it gives motets and concertos a particular charm when some few measures at the beginning are played with pathos and slowly, followed by several quick passages; then again slow and grave; then alternating, mixed in with quicker ones; so that one does not have always the same key and tonal color."

*

This CD begins and ends with two legendary triumphs of Renaissance polyphony: Alessandro Striggio's *Ecce beatam lucem* and Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium*. Each is elaborated to the astounding total of forty voices. The two are connected, moreover, by history as well as form.

Striggio worked predominantly in Florence and Mantua, cities which had always cultivated luxury and opulence in their secular music. Striggio wrote madrigal cycles and intermezzi for concerts and celebrations that evidently took place on a weekly basis. As he began writing music to Latin texts, the richness of his intellect found its expression in an almost utopian number of voices: one Sanctus, since lost, comprised sixty voices.

Striggio composed the motet *Ecce beatam lucem* for the visit of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to Florence in 1561. The prelate was on his way to France, where he hoped to curb the expansion of Protestantism. The text of this motet, a glorification of Catholicism, is an indirect allusion to this mission. At first glance, the forty voices seem to be arranged in ten groups of four voices each. The resulting sound, however, shows that Striggio did not think in terms of single choirs, but that he always had other combinations of voices in mind. This capriciousness in arranging the groups led to great confusion: Massimo Troiano, a member of the Court Choir in Munich who heard the work when Lasso performed it in 1568, mentioned it as being composed of four choirs!

Striggio gives the individual groups different and alternating functions. At times, groups serve merely as a harmonic foundation for the melody lines of other choirs: thus in the "Virtus alma et maiestas" passage, Choirs 1 and 2 lend quiet support to the imitative counterpoint occurring in Choirs 5 and 6. In other cases, virtually all the voices participate in detailed, almost pointillistic counterpoint, as for example at "Cantans sonans adhuc aeternum Deum", with high points of the massive homophony found at the "hic David" and "nos hinc attrahunt" passages. The work ends almost mystically with the repetition of the words "in paradisum," a good place in which, as far as the Italians were concerned, Protestants had no place!

In 1567 Striggio voyaged to England: in his baggage was this motet. London greeted him with boundless enthusiasm. *Ecce beatam lucem* rendered the English speechless – so much so that they began searching for an "answer." It

was presumably a request by Thomas Howard, fourth duke of Norfolk (executed in 1572) that prompted Tallis to save England's honor with his *Spem in alium* ([1]). Tallis's composition, written between 1567 and 1572, makes several tongue-in-cheek references to Striggio. The number of voices is of course the most obvious similarity; but the base key, G, is also the same. Further, Tallis exploits the effect produced by the unexpected arrival of forty-voice polyphony, and does this at a very subtle moment: the fortieth breve!

The similarities stop here, however. Tallis's work has an unmistakably sacred quality with clearly structured imitations at the beginning that (excepting the forty voices at "praeter in te") progress through all eight five-voice choirs. For example, the text "qui irasceris," in imitation form, starts with the bass of the eighth choir and proceeds to the superius of the third choir. From the passage "Domine Deus," Tallis uses *cori spezzati* technique with changing combinations of scoring and voice. This climaxes in the mighty forty-voice A chord at the word "respice." This last section departs further and further from homophony and ends in complex, polyphonic "detailism." The tonal color of the work could not be more English. Where Striggio used many semi-minims and *fusa* movements in his melodic lines, Tallis's rhythmic structure is characterized by quiet semibreve and minim configurations. False relations also occur frequently, at times somewhat submerged in the middle voices, at times conspicuously in the superius voices.

After this bravura piece by Tallis, England could heave a sigh of relief: the composition was found – naturally – to be better than Striggio's model. In any event, it is a great shame that Striggio did not challenge any further countries with his composition!

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The motet *Laudate Dominum* ([5]) in a mere six voices by Pierre de Manchicourt does not represent an error on our part, either of typography or of planning. We thought it wise to provide a bridge from our many-voiced euphoria to the daily reality of sixteenth-century polyphony. After the fifteenth century had seen the customary three voices expand into four, composers began the search for yet more perspective and relief in their compositions. The result was a continuous rise in the number of voices. By the sixteenth century, five and six-voice works had already become standard. In *Laudate Dominum*, Manchicourt used detail work with a refinement possible only in a musical environment where the primary focus was not on lush, many-voiced polyphony. One very special feature of *Laudate Dominum* is its refrain – recurring at the word "Alleluia" – that is always slightly varied: this is a phenomenon unique in the through-composed motet style.

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We will end our tale with the man with whom we began it, Marsilio Ficino. He compared music with the plastic arts, and so approached quite closely the ideal of the humanists. In his *Epitomae* I, 17 he writes, "The soul perceives the softest of harmonies and intervals through the ears. By means of these images, it is put in mind of this divine music, and is spurred on to ponder upon it, aided by the subtle and perspicacious intellect. In the darkness of its bodily imprisonment, our soul uses the ears as though they were messengers; and through these, it receives the images of the incomparable music."

Paul Van Nevel