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The Gesualdo Six

Josquin's Legacy

Chapter House, York Minster

Tuesday 9 July 7.30pm

The Gesualdo Six

Guy James *countertenor*
Alasdair Austin *countertenor*
Joseph Wicks *tenor*
Josh Cooter *tenor*
Michael Craddock *baritone*
Owain Park *director and bass*

Josquin's Legacy: through the shadows

Da pacem Domine **Antoine Brumel** c. 1460-1512/13
Illumina faciem tuam **Heinrich Isaac** 1450 -1517
Peccantem me quotidie **Jean Mouton** c. 1459-1522

Lamentations **Antoine Brumel**

Nymphes des bois **Josquin des Prez** 1450/55-1521

Mille Regretz **Josquin des Prez**

Secretz Regretz **Pierre de la Rue** c. 1452-1518

Tous les Regretz **Antoine Brumel**

Plaine d'ennuy / Anima mea **Loyset Compère** c. 1445-1518

Quis dabit oculis **Constanzo Festa** c. 1485/1490 -1545

Lamentations **Pierre de La Rue**

Peccantem me Quotidie **Carlo Gesualdo** 1566-1613

Illumina faciem tuam **Carlo Gesualdo**

Da pacem Domine **Shruthi Rajasekar** b. 1996
(commissioned by The Gesualdo Six)

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Courts in Renaissance Italy were meeting places for some of the greatest musicians from across Europe. The Court at Ferrara became a leading centre and a particular destination for composers from France and the Low Countries who were dubbed the 'Oltremontani' – many of the Franco-Flemish school passed through its gates and perhaps the most notable of these is Josquin. This programme contextualises some of the 'jewels in the crown' of Italian Renaissance repertoire by tracing themes of pedagogy and patronage in northern Italy over 150 years.

An Oltremontani composer, Antoine Brumel was made *maestro di cappella* at Ferrara by Duke Alfonso I in 1506 as a waning of the plague and relative peace with Ferrara's neighbours allowed for the re-formation of a large chapel choir. Brumel was a prolific composer, and several of his works were included in songbooks presented to King Henry VIII and his wives. ***Da pacem Domine*** is composed as simple canonic exercise; an intellectual working-out which magnifies the original plainchant. All the composers named by the French rhetorique poet Molinet in *Nymphes des Bois* (featured later in the programme) wrote works using the *Da Pacem* plainchant, perhaps reflecting on Europe's extremely turbulent political situation at the start of the 1500s.

The radical preacher Girolamo Savonarola was born in Ferrara and remained a popular figure at the court there until long after his death, evidenced by the choice of texts by Ferrara-linked composers, most famously Josquin's epic setting of Psalm 51, *Miserere mei, Deus*. ***Illumina faciem tuam*** is a text taken from Psalm 31, *In te, Domine speravi*, the subject of Savonarola's incomplete second meditation from prison. Heinrich Isaac's setting from 'Choralis Constantinus' exemplifies his mastery of polyphonic writing, with cascading melismas propelling the work forwards.

Jean Mouton is known to have been at Ferrara alongside Brumel in the 1510s. His ***Peccantem me quotidie*** contains a rare and impressive canon at the seventh, reflecting the seven sins of its title, and culminating in a Savonarolan call for mercy: 'Miserere mei, Deus'. Mouton's sensitive treatment of text and melody invites listeners into a contemplative journey, exploring themes of repentance and redemption.

Antoine Brumel's sole surviving set of Lamentations, renowned for its beauty in the repertoire, is also notably sombre. It creates a rare mood of desolation through low scoring and slow harmonic movement. In line with tradition, the Hebrew letters (here, 'Heth' and 'Caph') are set apart from the main body of the text.

However, what is less typical is the use of triple time in the final section, which complements the accents in the word 'Jerusalem' remarkably well.

The emotional core of our programme is centred around Josquin's ***Nymphes des bois*** (subtitled 'Déploration sur la mort de Johannes Ockeghem'), a beautiful and personal work which echoes Ockeghem's own deploration for Binchois, extending Ockeghem's musical 'genealogy' to Josquin.

Josquin sets Molinet's *Art de rhétorique*, which employs techniques that might feel more suited to twenty-first-century French rap: 'Car Atropos, très terrible satrappe, / A vostre Okgem, atrape en sa trape' ('Because Atropos, such a terrible satrap, / has caught your Ockeghem in her trap').

Molinet's ***Nymphes des bois*** is itself responding to Guillaume Crétin's significantly longer poem 'Déploration ... sur le trépas de Jean Okeghem', which calls upon a host of famous composers such as Agricola, Prioris and Verbonnet to lament the passing of their 'bon père' Ockeghem. Molinet opts to mention a more select group of only four: 'Acoutrez vous d'abitz de deuil; / Josquin, Brumel, Pierchon, Compère' ('Put on your mourning clothes; / Josquin, Brumel, La Rue, Compère')—we follow this line of composers in our programme today.

Recent work by Dr Jeannette Jones suggests that *Nymphes des bois* could well date from 1502/3, immediately before Josquin's arrival in Ferrara from Lyon. In early sources *Nymphes des bois* is written in black notation to signify mourning, and Josquin uses the *Requiem aeternam* text as a cantus firmus in the tenor part, with the chant stretched out in long notes underpinning almost all of the work. He transposes this chant, the introit for the Office of the Dead, down a step into the Phrygian mode, giving the chant an unearthly quality.

The next section of our programme features pieces from a group of works called 'Regretz Chansons'. The most famous, ***Mille Regretz*** by Josquin, became so after flourishing in print during the middle of the sixteenth century. Whilst there is some debate as to whether the work can be firmly attributed to Josquin, its undeniable beauty and evocative sighing final bars make it one of our favourites. Pierre de La Rue's ***Secretz Regretz*** looks beyond some of the text's typical personal angst and calls for the support of the poet's 'loyaux amis' ('loyal friends'). La Rue uses duets and simple syllabic statements which then overflow to pour out the grief of the text into long, sobbing melismas. We close this section with Brumel's ***Tous les Regretz***, set to the poetry of Clement Marot, it paints a vivid picture of longing and yearning in matters of love. Through a series of intertwining vocal lines, Brumel weaves a

tapestry of emotion, capturing the complexities of human desire with sensitivity and nuance.

Loyset Compère was a Franco-Flemish composer and regular correspondent with Josquin, and it is even thought he swapped benefices with Josquin to enable him to spend a year in Ferrara. **Plaine d'ennuy / Anima mea** is one of several motet-chansons in Queen Margaret of Austria's chansonnier. Here the upper parts duet in French verse above the bass part's Latin text in a manner similar to chant.

Costanzo Festa was one of the few Italian composers of his time considered the equal of the Oltremontani Franco-Flemish composers. His **Quis dabit oculis?** is one of two known settings of a text lamenting the death of Anne of Brittany in 1514, the other being by Jean Mouton. Festa's setting survives under Senfl's name as a reworking for the death of Anne's first husband, Maximilian I. Restored with the original text, Festa's harmony pours out lamentation for the twice-queen of France, and culminates in particularly heartbreaking manner with 'Anna, Anna, requiescat in pace'.

We move to another setting of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, this time by Pierre de La Rue. Each biblical verse in the original Hebrew text of the Lamentations opens with a letter of the alphabet. Composers setting the text may have encountered these as ornate illuminations in the manuscript – strange symbols which had some obscure, mystical meaning. Pierre de La Rue follows suit, preceding t/he Latin verses with settings of a Hebrew letter; taken together, they form a series of musical tableaux that have a special, more melodic compositional style. These are predominantly kept separate, acting as moments of relief and solitude. At times the Latin verses feel like string-writing, with the words presented in an almost conversational fashion.

The music of Carlo Gesualdo has always been a cornerstone of our repertoire, starting with his extraordinary *Tenebrae Responsories for Maundy Thursday*, which we performed at our first concert. Gesualdo's music is well known for its extreme style, with chromatic melodies creating dissonant and disjointed harmonic progressions that illuminate the most melancholy aspects of the dark texts he set. The opening subject in **Peccantem me quotidie** has an intervallic compass of a seventh (reflecting the seven sins, as Mouton evidenced earlier), although he presents it with a twist: consisting of a falling sixth briefly touches on that elusive seventh sin. The motet **Illumina faciem tuam**, with its startling harmonic shifts and expressive word-painting, is typical of the composer: listen for the gradual build-up between 'salvum me' ('save me') and 'quoniam invocavi te' ('for I have called upon thee'), as the tension grows through ever more insistent repetitions.

Da pacem, Domine is an ageless appeal for peace which links Binchois to Josquin, Brumel, La Rue and Compère, and thence to Gesualdo and onwards to Stravinsky and Arvo Pärt. This setting by Shruthi Rajasekar takes its inspiration from music that has been lost over time and begins in a place of feeling forsaken, bringing this tradition right up to our present moment. But the sense of being lost is transformed upon the acknowledgement of 'Deus noster' – our God. In embracing the Divine, peace is found.

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Da pacem, Domine

Music by Antoine Brumel

Da pacem, Domine
in diebus nostris,
quia non est alius
qui pugnet pro nobis,
nisi tu Deus noster.

Give peace, O Lord
in our days,
because there is none other
that fighteth for us,
but only thou, our God.

Illumina faciem tuam

Music by Heinrich Isaac

Illumina faciem tuam super servum tuum,
et salvum me fac in misericordia tua:
Domine, non confundar,
quoniam invocavi te.

Shew thy servant the light of thy
countenance:
and save me for thy mercy's sake.
Let me not be confounded, O Lord,
for I have called upon thee

Peccantem me quotidie

Music by Jean Mouton

Seventh Respond at Matins for the Dead

Peccantem me quotidie et non
penitentem,
Timor mortis conturbat me.

I who sin every day and am not
penitent,
the fear of death troubles me.

[Responsum]

Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio.
Miserere mei, Deus, et salva me.

[Responsum]

For in hell there is no redemption.
Have mercy upon me, O God, and save
me.

Lamentations

Music by Antoine Brumel

Heth. Cogitavit Dominus dissipare murum filiæ Sion; tetendit funiculum suum, et non avertit manum suam a perditione: luxitque ante murale, et murus pariter dissipatus est.

Teth. Defixæ sunt in terra portæ eius, perdidit et contrivit vectes eius; regem eius et principes eius in gentibus: non est lex, et prophetæ eius non invenerunt visionem a Domino.

Ierusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

The Lord thought to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: He stretched out a line, He did not withdraw His hand from destruction: therefore, He made the rampart lament; and the wall was equally destroyed.

Her gates are sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and broken her bolts: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; and her prophets find no vision from the Lord.

Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God.

Nymphes des Bois

Music by Josquin des Prez

Nymphes des bois, deéesses des fontaines,
Chantres experts de toutes nations,
Changez voz voix fort clères et haultaines
En cris tranchantz et lamentations.
Car d'Atropos tres terrible satrape
Vostr'Okeghem a trape en sa trape,
Le vray tréssoir de musique'et chief d'œuvre,
(Qui de tréspas désormais plus n'eschappe,)
Dont grant doumaige'est que la terre œuvre.
Acoutrez vous d'abitz de deuil,
Josquin, Perchon, Brumel, Compère,
Et plorez grosses larmes d'œil;
Perdu avez vostre bon père.

Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains,
singers renowned across all nations,
turn your voices most clear and high
to piercing cries and laments.
Because Atropos, such a terrible satrap,
has caught your Ockeghem in her trap,
the true treasure and masterpiece of music,
who from death no longer escapes,
for whom great mourning covers the earth.
Put on your mourning clothes;
Josquin, Perchon, Brumel, Compère,
and weep heavy tears from your eyes;
you have lost your good father.

Mille Regretz

Music by Josquin des Prez

Mille regretz de vous habandonner
Et d'eslonger vostre fache amoureuse.
J'ay si grand dueil et paine douloureuse
Qu'on me vera brief mes jours definer.

A thousand regrets to leave you
and to be far from your loving face.
I suffer such deep sorrow and grievous
pain
that soon I will end my days.

Secretz Regretz

Music by Pierre de La Rue

Secretz regretz de nature enemis,
Par grief tourmens mon penser ont
transmis
De tout plaisir en deuil et desplaisance;
Si de brief temps je n'ay resjouissance
Par le secours de mes loyaux amis.

Secret regrets at hostile nature,
by tormenting grief my mind has been
turned
from all pleasure to misery and
unhappiness;
if in a short time I have no joyfulness
through the help of my loyal friends.

Tous les Regretz

Music by Antoine Brumel

Tous les regretz quonques furent au
monde,
Venez a moy quelque part que je soie.
Prennez mon cueur en sa dolleur par
fonde
Et le fendes que madame le voye.

All regrets there have been in the
world,
come to me wherever I may be.
Take my heart in its grief profound
and break it so my lady sees it.

Plaine d'ennuy / Anima mea

Music by Loyset Compère

Plaine d'ennuy de longue main atteinte
De desplaisir en vie langoureuse,
Dis a par moy que seroit bien heureuse
Se par la mort estoit ma vie estainte.

Filled with boredom at long waiting,
with unhappiness at idle life,
tell me how I might be happy
if by death were my life to be ended.

bassus

Anima mea liquefacta est.
Filie Jherusalem,
nuntiate dilecto meo quia amore
languo.

bassus

My soul melted.
Daughters of Jerusalem,
tell my beloved that I languish from love.

Quis dabit oculis?

Music by Constanzo Festa

Quis dabit oculis nostris fontem
lacrimarum?
Et plorabimus die ac nocte coram
Domino?
Britannia, quid ploras?
Musica, sileat.
Francia, cur deducta lugubri veste
maerore consumeris?
Anna requiescat in pace.

Who will give to our eyes a well of
tears?
And shall we weep day and night before
the Lord?
Brittany, why do you lament?
Music, let it be silent.
France, why dressed in clothes of
mourning
do you waste away in sorrow?
May Anne rest in peace.

Lamentations

Music by Pierre de La Rue

Ghimel. Ad Dominum levemus, levemus corda nostra cum manibus ad
Dominum in coelos. Nos inique egimus, et te ad iracundiam provocavimus.

Daleth. Haec recolens in corde meo, ideo sperabo. Misericordiae Domini qui a
non sumus consumpti: non defecerunt miserationes ejus. Novi diliculo, multa
est fides tua. Pars mea Dominus, dixit anima mea: propterea exspectabo eum.

He. Bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum, animae quaerenti illum. Bonum est
praestolari cum silentio salutare Dei. Bonum est viro, cum portaverit jugum ab
adolescentia sua.

Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens. We have
acted unjustly and have provoked you to anger.

Remembering this in my heart, therefore I will hope. The mercies of the Lord
that we are not consumed: his compassions do not fail. They are new every
morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul;
therefore I will hope in him.

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of God. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God

Peccantem me quotidie

Music by Carlo Gesualdo

Peccantem me quotidie,
et non me poenitentem,
timor mortis conturbat me,

I who sin every day
and am not penitent
the fear of death troubles me:

Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio.
Miserere mei, Deus,
et salva me.

For in hell there is no redemption.
Have mercy upon me, O God
and save me.

Illumina faciem tuam

Music by Carlo Gesualdo

Illumina faciem tuam super servum tuum,
salvum me fac in misericordia tua:
Domine, non confundar, quoniam
invocavi te.

Shew thy servant the light of thy
countenance:
save me for thy mercy's sake.
Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for
I have called upon thee.

Da Pacem Domine

Music by Shruthi Rajasekar

Da pacem, Domine, in diebus nostris
Quia non est alius
Qui pugnet pro nobis
Nisi tu Deus noster.

Give peace, Lord, in our time
Because there is no one else
Who will fight for us
Other than you, God.

Gesualdo Six

The Gesualdo Six is an award-winning British vocal ensemble comprising some of the UK's finest consort singers, directed by Owain Park. Praised for imaginative programming and impeccable blend, the group formed in 2014 for a performance of Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories* in Cambridge and has gone on to perform at numerous major festivals around the world.

Notable highlights include a concert in the distinguished Deutschlandradio Debut Series, performances at renowned venues including Wigmore Hall, Miller Theatre (New York), the Sydney Opera House, and their debut at the BBC Proms in 2023. In 2024, The Gesualdo Six made its South American debut in Colombia, and will appear in Japan, China and Singapore for the first time. The ensemble has collaborated with Fretwork, the Brodsky Quartet and Matilda Lloyd, and toured a work of concert-theatre titled *Secret Byrd* with Director, Bill Barclay.

The Gesualdo Six is committed to music education, regularly hosting workshops for young musicians and composers. The ensemble has curated two composition competitions, with the most recent edition drawing entries from over three hundred composers worldwide. The group recently commissioned new works from Shruthi Rajasekar and Joanna Marsh, alongside *coronasolfège for 6* by Héloïse Werner.

The ensemble has harnessed the power of social media to make classical music accessible to millions worldwide, creating captivating videos from beautiful locations while on tour. The group released a debut recording *English Motets* on Hyperion Records in early 2018 to critical acclaim, followed by six further albums (*Christmas, Fading, Josquin's Legacy, Gesualdo's Tenebrae Responsories, Lux Aeterna, William Byrd's Mass for five voices*), and most recently *Morning Star*. Their latest album, *Queen of Hearts* was released at the end of June.

thegesualdosix.co.uk

Owain Park

Owain Park was born in Bristol in 1993. As well as directing The Gesualdo Six, Owain is Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers, and maintains a busy schedule of conducting projects with ensembles including Southbank Sinfonia, Ensemble la Sportelle and Cappella Cracoviensis.

Owain's compositions are published by Novello and have been performed internationally by ensembles including the Tallis Scholars and the Aurora Orchestra. While at Cambridge University he studied orchestration with John Rutter, before undertaking a Masters degree in composition. He is composer-in-residence for the London Choral Sinfonia, and was one of BBC Radio 3's 31 under 31 Young Stars. The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge recorded an album of his compositions which was nominated for the *BBC Music Magazine Awards*. In 2023, *Battle Cry*, a collaborative album from Helen Charlston (mezzo-soprano) and Toby Carr

(theorbo) featuring Owain's composition as the title track, won the *Gramophone* Award for Best Concept Album.

Owain is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO), and was awarded the Dixon Prize for improvisation, having been Senior Organ Scholar at Wells Cathedral and Trinity College Cambridge. He was a Tenebrae Associate Artist for two seasons, and has worked with ensembles including The Sixteen, Gabrieli Consort and Polyphony. Owain is a keen gardener, and when he's not on stage he can be found raking, pruning, or picking cherry tomatoes.

owainpark.co.uk

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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