



Contre le Temps

Ubi sunt mulieres

Sunday 25 May 3.00pm
The Quire, Beverley Minster

Contre le Temps
Karin Weston, Cécile Walch,
Julia Marty, Amy Farnell *singers*

Ubi sunt mulieres
‘Where are the women?’

Salve decus	Cambrai Cathedral Choirbook
Alleluia: O Maria pia	
Je me plains	Guillaume Dufay 1397-1474

* * * * *

Salve virgo virginum	British Library, Arundel 248
Alleluia V: Ave Maria	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Winchester Troper

Ave gloriosa mater salvatoris	British Library, Harley 978
-------------------------------	-----------------------------

* * * * *

O lilium convallium	Cividale del Friuli Cathedral Library
Quant voi l’erbe reverdir	Montpellier Codex
Cele m’a tolu	
Salve Virgo virginum	

* * * * *

Ma belle dame souveraine	Guillaume Dufay
--------------------------	------------------------

* * * * *

Uterus hodie virginis floruit	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale
O tu illustrata	Hildegard von Bingen 1098-1179
O Maria virgo davitica	Codex Las Huelgas

* * * * *

Toujours servir	Cyprus Codex
-----------------	--------------

This programme is a musical celebration of women in Western medieval sources from modern-day France, Spain and England. In the Middle Ages, the cult of the Virgin Mary gained immense popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and works dedicated to her emphasise sweetness, love and sensitivity. The language used to describe Mary also influenced the development of secular love poetry, where the tenderness of Marian devotion was superimposed onto the beloved woman. In the concert we explore the

sacred and secular praises of women, bringing these two realms into dialogue and showing the deep connections between religious reverence and courtly love.

Spanning the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, the programme illustrates the evolution of musical styles, from simple monophonic chant to intricate polyphony. Some sacred works, such as *Salve decus* from the Cambrai Cathedral Choirbook and *Alleluia V. Ave Maria* from the Winchester Troper, exemplify the devotion to the Virgin Mary, whose purity and grace were central themes in medieval Christian worship.

A particularly significant figure is Hildegard von Bingen, one of the few known female composers of the Middle Ages. Hildegard was not only a composer but also a mystic, writer and abbess, whose visionary works continue to resonate today. Her compositions, such as *O tu illustrata*, celebrate the divine feminine and stand out for their virtuosic beauty. Hildegard's role as a female composer in a male-dominated monastic world makes her a powerful symbol of women's creative contributions to medieval culture. Her music, alongside our own collaboration as a female ensemble, honours women's voices – both literal and figurative – throughout history.

Our work as Contre le Temps resonates with how this music may have originally been performed – by singers who knew each other well and shared a deep familiarity with the repertoire. In monastic settings, such as that of Hildegard von Bingen, nuns would have sung together daily, creating music that was not only worshipful but also reflective of their community. Similarly, we, as an ensemble of four women, work democratically and intimately, forming a close-knit relationship with the repertoire. Our process involves singing these pieces over and over, experimenting with different phrasings, tempos and vocal colours. The act of singing together, often by heart and without a single director, honours the traditions of female communal singing, blending personal sensibilities with the ancient sound world we are bringing to life.

The Marian devotion that permeates the sacred music of this programme also spills into secular songs, such as Guillaume Dufay's *Je me complains*. Here, similar language of admiration and adoration is applied to the beloved woman, showing how courtly love-poetry borrowed from religious imagery, elevating the earthly beloved to a near-divine status. Our choice of secular songs, drawn from sources like the Cyprus Manuscript and the Oxford Codex, demonstrates the complex interplay between sacred and secular themes, blurring the lines between spiritual reverence and worldly love.

By weaving these sacred and secular praises together, we celebrate not only the women who inspired these works but also our own collaborative journey as a female ensemble, continuing the legacy of women's musical and cultural contributions across centuries.

Salve decus

Salve decus puritatis
Virgo mater inclita
Radix sancta pietatis
Ex qua salus et vita
Thronus summe maiestatis
Mira dote predita
Cuius vis humilitatis
Eve solvit debita

Stella Maris spes salutis
Portus indulgentie
Sponsa regis flos virtutis
Vena potens venie.
Cerne pondus servitutis
Humane miserie
Mole criminum obrutis
Opem fer clementie.

Instat hostis urget pestis
Torquet conscientia
Servit plagit nunc infestis
Divina iustitia.
Virgo Maris
tam molestis
Occure potentia
Et te piam prece mestis
Mater plena gratia.

Eva Virgo licet gravis
Sit pressura sordium
Tua tamen mens suavis
Sistit fluctus cordium
Que salutis nostre navis
Reparas nofragium
Moribus offensum pravis
Placa nobis filium.
Amen.

F-CA MS II, ff. 1r-1v
(Cambrai Cathedral Choirbook)

Alleluia: O Maria pia

O Maria pia mater Christi
Tu post ipsum nostre robur spei
Gloriosa ubi quem fuisti
Frumenti vas mellis et olei

Hail, glory of purity,
Renowned Virgin Mother,
Holy root of piety
From whom salvation and life arise.
Throne of the highest majesty,
Endowed with a wondrous gift,
Whose humility
Has undone Eve's debt.

Star of the Sea, hope of salvation,
Harbour of forgiveness,
Bride of the king, flower of virtue,
Powerful source of mercy.
See the weight of the servitude
Of human misery,
Crushed by the burden of sins,
Bring the help of your clemency.

The enemy presses, the plague threatens,
Conscience torments,
Now the wound of divine justice
Strikes guilty souls.
Virgin of the sea,
against such trials,
Come to our aid with your power,
And in your goodness, answer the prayer
Of the sorrowful, O Mother full of grace.

Though, O Virgin, the heavy weight
Of Eve's defilement remains,
Your gentle spirit
Stills the storms of our hearts.
You, who repair the shipwreck
Of our salvation,
With your virtues, soothe our offences
And appease your Son for us.
Amen.

O Mary, devout mother of Christ,
After Him, you are our strength of hope.
Glorious, you who have been
The vessel of grain, honey, and oil.

Tibi iubilat atquem
te laudat chorus noster.

F-CA MS II, f. 1r
(Cambrai Cathedral Choirbook)

* * * * *

Je me complains

Je me complains piteusement
a moi tout seul plus qu'a nullui..
de la grieste, paine e tourment,
que je souffre plus que ne di.

Dangier me tient en tel soussi
qu'eschever ne puis sa rudesse,
et fortune le veult aussi,
mais par ma foy ce fait jonesse.

Salve virgo virginum

Salve lumen luminum,
Radius splendoris,
Salve flos convallium,
Stilla veri roris,
Nostra spes in te.

Salve virgo regia,
Orta salutaris,
Verax viri nescia
Quia Deum paris,
Ave, quia deica
Prole fecundaris,
Nostra spes in te.

Ave nostre spei
Finis et salutis,
Ave, perquam rei
Letantur cum tutis.
Ave, speciei
Decus et salutis.
Nostra spes in te.

GB-Lbl Arundel 248, f. 155r

Alleluia V: Ave Maria

Ave Maria gratia plena
Dominus tecum
Benedicta tu in mulieribus.

GB-Ccc MS 473, f. 164r (Winchester Troper)

To you, our choir sings
and praises with joy.

I lament pitifully
To myself more than to anyone else...
Of the sorrow, pain, and torment
That I suffer more than I say.

Dangier [Danger] holds me in such anxiety
That I cannot escape its harshness,
And Fortune wills it so as well,
But truly, it is youth that causes this.

Hail, light of lights,
Ray of splendour,
Hail, flower of the valleys,
Drop of true dew,
Our hope is in you.

Hail, royal virgin,
Source of salvation,
Truly you know not man
For you give birth to God,
Hail, for by the divine
Offspring you are made fruitful,
Our hope is in you.

Hail, end of our hope
And of our salvation,
Hail, through you the guilty
Rejoice with the saved.
Hail, beauty
Adorned with grace and salvation.
Our hope is in you.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with you,
Blessed are you among women.

Ave gloriosa mater salvatoris

Ave gloriosa
mater salvatoris
Ave speciosa virgo,
flos pudoris,
Ave lux iocosa,
thalamus splendoris,
Ave prociosa
salus peccatoris:

Ave vitis, via,
casta, munda, pura,
Dulcis, mitis, pia,
felix creatura,
Parens modo miro,
nova partitura
Virum sine viro,
contra legis iura.

Virgo virginum,
expers criminum,
Decus luminum,
celi domina,
Salus gencium,
spes fidelium,
Lumen cordium,
nos illumina,

Nosque filio tuo, tam pio,
Tam propicio, reconcilia,
Et ad gaudia nos perhennia
Duc prece pia, virgo Maria.

GB-Lbl Harley 978, ff. 9v–10r

Hail, glorious
mother of the Saviour,
Hail, beautiful virgin,
flower of modesty,
Hail, joyful light,
chamber of splendour,
Hail, precious
salvation of the sinner.

Hail, vine, path,
chaste, clean, pure,
Sweet, gentle, pious,
blessed creature,
Mother in a wondrous way,
a new form of childbirth,
A man without a man,
against the laws of nature.

Virgin of virgins,
free of sin,
Ornament of lights,
queen of heaven,
Salvation of nations,
hope of the faithful,
Light of hearts,
enlighten us,

And reconcile us with your Son, so kind,
So merciful, reconciling,
And lead us to everlasting joy
Through your holy prayer, Virgin Mary.

* * * * *

○ lilium convallium

○ lilium convallium,
Flos virginum, Stirps regia;
Spes omnium Fidelium,
Lux luminum, ○ filia;
Eve matri contraria,
Ave matris de gratia
Nos redimens per filium,

○ lily of the valley,
Flower of virgins, royal stem;
Hope of all people who are faithful,
Light of lights, ○ daughter!
How opposite to the mother Eve,
From woe by a mother's grace
Redeeming us through thy son,

Ave, ave, remedium
Nos eximens miseria.
Benedicamus Domino

Cividale LVI, f. 252r

Quant voi l'erbe reverdir

Triplum:

Quant voi l'erbe reverdir
Et le tans seri et cler
Et le rosier espanir
Et le rossignol chanter,
Adonc me covient penser
A amors servir;
Car la riens que plus desir
Voil amer
De cuer sans fauser,
Car tant me pleist a veir
Son vis cler,
que nus ne porroit souffrir
sanz mentir
de ses euz le regarder
ne li covenist amer.

Motetus:

Salve, virgo virginum,
Dei plena gratia
verum lumen luminum,
peccatorum venia,
salvatorem omnium
in propicia,
vera salus gentium,
regia
Dei filia,
nobis hunc propicium,
o pia,
dansque, flos convallium,
lilium,
Vera Semper Gaudia
in eterna gloria.

Tenor:

Cumque evigilasset Iacob
quasi de gravi sompnio ait

Hail! hail a remedy
Releasing us from our wretched condition.
Let us bless the Lord

Triplum:

When I see the grass turning green
And the weather becoming clear
And the rose bush blooming
And the nightingale singing,
Then I must think
of serving Love;
for nothing makes me desire more
than to love him
with a heart unbroken,
for it pleases me so much to see
his bright face,
that no one could endure
without lying
to look into his eyes,
nor would it be fitting for him to love.

Motetus:

Hail, virgin of virgins,
full of divine grace,
true light of lights,
forgiveness of sinners,
saviour of all
in your kindness,
true salvation of nations,
daughter
of the King,
be gracious to us,
O pious one,
grant us, flower of the valleys,
lily,
true eternal joys
in eternal glory.

Tenor:

When Jacob awoke
as from a deep sleep.

Cele m'a tolu

Triplum:

Cele m'a tolu la vie,
qui lonc tans m'a fet
grief maus sentir;
car pour s'amour pleur,
de cuer souspir.
C'est la riens del mont,
que plus desir,
n'ainc n'en poi joïr;
si me covendra languir
et dolour souffrir
et nuit et jour.
Et tout son plaisir
fera[i] tous jours,
que que m'en doie avenir;
si la servirai,
n'autre amie n'avrai.
Adés l'amerai,
ne ja ne m'en partirai.

Motetus:

Lonc tens a,
que ne vi m'amie;
trop me greva,
quant m'en covint partir,
car je l'aim et desir.
Trop m'aïr,
quant pour li servir
m'estuet languir,
et si ne m'en puis tenir.
Quant la remir,
de cuer souspir,
si que tout me fait fremir;
car je l'aim de fin cuer
sans mentir.
N'en puis joïr,
Dieus, ne repentir,
si m'estuet souffrir
les maus, dont ne puis garir.

Tenor:

Et sperabit.

F-MO H 196, ff. 116v-118

Triplum:

She has taken my life away,
who has long made me
feel great pains;
for her love, I weep,
I sigh from my heart.
She is the thing in the world
that I desire most,
I cannot enjoy it;
I will have to languish
and suffer pain
night and day.
And all her pleasure
will be mine forever,
no matter what may happen to me;
I will serve her,
I will have no other friend.
I will always love her,
and I will never leave her.

Motetus:

It has been a long time,
since I saw my friend;
it weighed too heavily on me,
when I had to leave,
for I love her and desire her.
I suffer too much,
when I must languish
to serve her,
and I cannot hold myself back.
When I see her,
I sigh from my heart,
so that everything makes me tremble;
for I love her with all my heart,
without lying.
I cannot enjoy it,
God, nor regret it,
if I must suffer
the pains from which I cannot heal.

Tenor:

And he will hope.

Salve Virgo virginum

Triplum:

Salve, Virgo virginum,
salve, sancta parens,
salve, lumen luminum,
salve, labe carens!
Nostrorum sis criminum
nebulas exarens!
Amen.

Motetus:

Salve, sancta parens,
salve, lumen luminum,
salve, labe carens!
Nostrorum sis criminum
nebulas exarens!
Amen.

Tenor:

Omnes

Triplum:

Hail, Virgin of virgins,
hail, holy mother,
hail, light of lights,
hail, without stain!
Be the removal of our sins,
dissipating the clouds!
Amen.

Motetus:

Hail, holy mother,
hail, light of lights,
hail, without stain!
Be the removal of our sins,
dissipating the clouds!
Amen.

Tenor:

Everyone

F-MO H 196, f. 346

* * * * *

Ma belle dame souveraine

Ma belle dame souveraine
Faites cesser ma grief dolour
Que j'endure pour vostre amour
Nuit et jour, dont j'ay tres grant painne
Ou autrement, soiés certaine
Je finneray dedens brief jour.

Ma belle dame souveraine
Faites cesser ma grief dolour

Il n'i a jour en la sepmainne
Que je ne soye en grant tristour;
Se me veulliés par vo doulcour
Secourir, de volonté plaine

Ma belle dame souveraine
Faites cesser ma grief dolour
Que j'endure pour vostre amour
Nuit et jour, dont j'ay tres grant paine

My beautiful sovereign lady
Make my great sorrow cease,
Which I endure for your love
Night and day, for which I suffer greatly.

Or else, be certain
I shall die within a few days.

My beautiful sovereign lady
Make my great sorrow cease.

There is not a day in the week
When I am not in great sadness;
If you would, with all your kindness,
Help me with your full will,

My beautiful sovereign lady
Make my great sorrow cease,
Which I endure for your love
Night and day, for which I suffer greatly.

* * * * *

Uterus hodie virginis floruit

Uterus hodie
virginis floruit
Nec matrem dum gignit
libido torruit
Que virgo permanens
virum aborruit
O partus mirabilis.

De radice lesse
virga progreditur
Et de virgule flos
Christus exoritur
Cuius in Libano cedrus extollitur
O partus mirabilis.

Hic flos
davitico signatus calamo
Et sponsus regio
procedens talamo
Celesti seculum
perunxit balsamo
O partus mirabilis.

Hic flos est in Syon
rosa nec aruit
Et in Ierusalem
lilium conduit
Utrisque genera
cruce composuit
O partus mirabilis.

F-Pn Lat 3719, f. 38v

The womb of the virgin
has blossomed today,
And lust did not burn
the mother in childbirth,
The virgin, remaining always a virgin,
has not received a man.
Oh, marvellous birth!

From the root of Jesse,
a branch springs forth,
And from that branch,
Christ has arisen,
Whose cedar is exalted in Lebanon.
Oh, marvellous birth!

This flower,
marked by the pen of David,
Comes forth like a bridegroom
from his royal pavilion,
Anointing the world
with a heavenly balm.
Oh, marvellous birth!

This flower is in Zion;
the rose has not withered.
And in Jerusalem,
the lily shines with whiteness.
And on the cross,
it has adorned the cheeks of the dove.
Oh, marvellous birth!

O tu illustrata

O tu illustrata
de divina claritate
clara Virgo Maria
Verbo Dei infusa,
unde venter tuus floruit
de introitu Spiritus Dei,
qui in te sufflavit
et in te esuxit
quod Eva abstulit
in abscisione puritatis,

O you who are illumined
by the divine radiance,
radiant Virgin Mary,
suffused with the Word of God,
whence your womb blossomed
from the entrance of the Spirit of God,
who breathed upon you
and, within you, sucked out
what Eve bore away
in the breach of purity,

per contractam contagionem
de suggestionem diaboli.

V. Tu mirabiliter abscondisti in te
inmaculatam carnem
per divinam rationem,
cum Filius Dei
in ventre tuo floruit,
sancta divinitate eum educante
contra carnis iura
que construxit Eva,
integritati copulatum
in divinis visceribus.

D-WII 2, ff. 466v-467r (Riesencodex)

O Maria virgo davitica

O Maria Maris Stella
Plena graciae
Mater simul et puella
Vas mundicie
Templum nostri redemptoris
Sol iusticie
Porta celi spes reorum
Tronus glorie
Sublevatrix miserorum
Vena venie
Audi servos te rogantes
Mater Gracie
Ut peccata sint ablata
Per te hodie
Qui te puro laudant corde
In veritate.

E-BUIh, f. 102v (Codex Las Huelgas)

through the contagion contracted
from the Devil's suggestion.

V. You wondrously hid within you
immaculate flesh
through the divine reason,
when the Son of God
blossomed in your womb,
holy divinity bringing him forth
against the laws of the flesh
that Eve built,
coupled to integrity
in the divine bosom.

O Mary, Star of the Sea,
Full of grace,
Both mother and maiden,
Vessel of purity,
Temple of our Redeemer,
Sun of justice,
Gate of heaven, hope of sinners,
Throne of glory,
Relief of the miserable,
River of pardon,
Hear your servants asking you,
O Mother of Grace,
That their sins may be taken away
Today through you,
Those who praise you with a pure heart
In truth.

* * * * *

Toujours servir

Toujours servir je veul la douce fleur
De bon vouloir, honorer et chierir,
Amer, loer, purement sans mentir,
Pour la biauté qu'en elle est et l'odeur.

D'arme, de cuer e cors par gran ferveur
Sans oblier on ques mais ne faillir,

I always want to serve the sweet flower
With good will, to honour and to cherish,
To love and to praise, purely without lying,
For the beauty she has and her fragrance.

With soul, heart, and body, with fervour,
Without forgetting or ever failing,

Toujours servir je veul la douce flour
De bon voloir, honnorer et chierir,
Que pris, biauté, bonté, toute douceur,
Tous les biens honnorer sans menrir,
Soingneusement, volentiers, par plaisir,
Et par droit hait en tous lieux
de fin cuer,

Toujours servir je veul la douce flour
De bon voloir, honnorer et chierir,
Amer, loer, purement sans mentir,
Pour la biauté qu'en elle est et l'odeur.

I always want to serve the sweet flower
With good will, to honour and cherish,
That value, beauty, goodness, all sweetness,
To honour all good things without falsehood
Carefully, willingly, with pleasure,
And by sure haste in all places
with a sincere heart,

I always want to serve the sweet flower
With good will, to honour and to cherish,
To love and to praise, purely without lying,
For the beauty she has, and her fragrance

Cyprus Codex, f. 158v

Contre le Temps

Contre le Temps is a female vocal ensemble specialising in medieval music. Emerging as a prominent force in today's medieval music landscape, Contre le Temps interprets a variety of musical genres from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, blending personal musical sensibilities with historically informed knowledge of period sources. The name Contre le Temps is borrowed from two songs – one by the French troubadour Gace Brulé and the other from an anonymous author in the Oxford manuscript – and signifies the ensemble's commitment to interpreting this timeless music in an original and fresh manner. We embody this music as only the voice used as an instrument can, moving our audience with its intrinsic emotional power, heightened by the melodic strength of four female voices in unison.

We work democratically, without a single director, taking the time to sing the music again and again, trying different phrasings, tempos and colours, embracing the slow process necessary for creating our sound. We minimise the distance between the music, ourselves, and our audience, spending time with the repertoire to internalise and memorise it. This gradual process contrasts with the current culture of speed in freelance work in the field of early music. Our approach allows us to delve deeper into the music and offers us the opportunity to rediscover a different sense of time.

Contre le Temps performs across Europe, including in France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland. The ensemble recently participated in the IYAP programme organised by the Laus Polyphoniae festival in Antwerp, and won the Audience Award and second prize from the jury at the International Van Wassenaer Competition in August 2023. As part of that competition, Contre le Temps also won the OOM Prize

which includes an upcoming concert tour during the Utrecht Early Music Festival Season 2024-2025. The ensemble's 2024-2025 season also features performances with the Voix et Route Romane Festival and AMUZ.

This concert is possible thanks to EFFEAs artist-in-residence Discovery programme, in partnership with Flanders Festival Antwerp and European Festival Fund for Emerging Artists.



BEVERLEY & EAST RIDING EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL is directed by Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation (registered charity number 1068331)

**National Centre for Early Music
St Margaret's Church, Walmgate, York YO1 9TL**

ncem.co.uk/yemcf



York Early Music Christmas Festival

Friday 5 to Friday 12 December 2025

ncem.co.uk/yemcf/

Beverley & East Riding Early Music Festival

Friday 22 to Sunday 24 May 2026

Join our mailing list to keep updated with festival
information and ticket offers

info@ncem.co.uk