



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

487 HUDSON ST. NYC 10014

The Choir of St. Luke in the Fields
David Shuler, *Director of Music*
Arnie Tanimoto, *viola da gamba*
Hank Heijink, *theorbo*

Thursday, October 24, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.
Pre-Concert Lecture in Laughlin Hall by Dr. Lynette Bowring at 6:30 p.m.

MUSIC FOR THE NUNS OF SAN VITO

*Please silence cell phones and other electronic devices.
The concert will be performed without intermission.
Please hold your applause until the end of the concert.*

Congratulamini mihi omnes	Raffaella Aleotti (c.1570-c.1646)
Hodie nata est beata virgo Maria	Aleotti
Vidi speciosum sicut columban	Aleotti
Sancta et immaculata virginitatis	Aleotti
Missa Confitebor tibi	G.P. da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)
<i>Kyrie</i>	
<i>Gloria</i>	
Congregati sunt inimici nostri	Aleotti
Exaudi Deus orationem meum	Aleotti
Miserere mei, Deus	Aleotti
Missa Confitebor tibi	Palestrina
<i>Sanctus</i>	
Exurgat Deus	Aleotti
Ego flos campi	Aleotti
Ascendens Christus in altum	Aleotti
Missa Confitebor tibi	Palestrina
<i>Agnus Dei</i>	
Angelus ad pastores	Aleotti
Quem vidistis, pastores	Ercole Pasquini (c. 1560-between 1608 and 1619)

THE CHOIR OF ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

Soprano

Amber Evans
Melissa Fogarty
Adrienne Lotto
Ava Pine

Alto

Kate Maroney
Elizabeth Merrill

Tenor

Chris Carter
Christopher Preston Thompson

Bass

Will Berman
Phillip Cheah

“One of the city’s finest classical choirs.” (*Time Out NY*), the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields is the professional vocal ensemble in residence at the Episcopal Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. As part of the liturgy at St. Luke’s Church, the Choir regularly performs masses and motets that date from the fifteenth century to the present. The Choir has presented numerous NYC premieres, both of new works (Arvo Pärt’s *Berliner Messe* and *Missa Sillabica* and Dan Locklair’s *Brief Mass*) and older works (the North American premiere of Georg Philipp Telemann’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1746 and the New York premiere of C.P.E. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1769). The Choir is known for its historically informed performances of early music. *The New York Times* said in 2011, “Both as an ensemble and as individual soloists, the members of the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields were consistently admirable.” *Early Music America* wrote that the Choir “maintains a full schedule of early music services ... as well as concert performances known for their adventuresome programming and intimate scale.”

THE LECTURER

Lynette Bowring is Associate Professor (Adjunct) of Music History at the Yale School of Music, a position that she has held since Fall 2019. She received her PhD from Rutgers University, and also holds a masters in musicology from the University of Manchester (2011) and an undergraduate degree in violin performance from the Royal Northern College of Music in the UK. Some of her doctoral research was published in *Early Music* as “Notation as a Transformative Technology: Orality, Literacy and Early Modern Instrumentalists.” Lynette co-edited *Music and Jewish Culture in Early Modern Italy: New Perspectives* with Rebecca Cypess and Liza Malamut and is awaiting publication later this year of an edition of seven motets by Marianna Martines. She is currently working on a monograph about instrumental music in baroque Italy.

PROGRAM NOTES

Raphaella Aleotti and the Nuns of San Vito

The Este dynasty ruled the northern Italian city of Ferrara beginning in the 13th century, and already by the 1420s under Niccolò III, the city had become one of the most significant musical centers in all of Europe. In the 16th century, a unique feature of musical life at the Estense court was the renowned ensemble of virtuoso women singers known as the *concerto delle donne*. Yet other lesser-known but perhaps more remarkable female ensembles also flourished outside the realm of the court behind cloistered walls, in the Ferrarese convents of Sant’Antonio, San Silvestro and particularly San Vito. Of the numerous descriptions of musical nuns found in the chronicles of the 16th and 17th centuries, perhaps some of the most spectacular refer to the impressive *concerto grande* at San Vito, first described by Ercole Bottrigari in 1594:

“They are unquestionably women, and watching them enter the room [...], where a long table had been prepared, at one end of which was a large harpsichord, you would see them come in slowly, one by one, each carrying her instrument, be it a stringed instrument or a wind, for they play all kinds; and they take their places at that table without making the slightest noise, those sitting who must sit to play their instruments, and the others remaining standing. Lastly the Concert Mistress seats herself at the other end of the table, and with a long, slender and elegant rod which has been set before her, when she is sure that the other sisters are ready, she silently gives them the sign to begin, and then beats the time, which they obey in singing and playing. [...] There were, if I remember correctly, 23 of them who participated at that time in the large ensemble...”

The Concert Mistress conducting this ensemble may have been Raphaella Aleotti (1575-1646?), the first Italian nun to have published any music. She was one of five daughters of Giovanni Battista Aleotti, called L'Argenta, the ducal architect to the Estense court, and she is typical of nun composers in belonging to a wealthy, if not noble, family. Her collection of *Sacrae cantiones quinque, septem, octo, & decem vocibus decantande* was published in Venice in 1593, and in that same year a collection of madrigals entitled *Ghirlanda de madrigali a quatro voci* appeared by another Aleotti, Vittoria, once thought to be her sister but now more commonly accepted to be the same woman using first her secular and then her monastic name. According to the dedication in Vittoria's book of madrigals, written by her father, his daughters studied music privately with professional musicians (in this case Alessandro Milleville and Ercole Pasquini) before entering the musical convent of San Vito, as was a common practice for many well-to-do young girls. Vittoria/Raphaella entered the monastery at the age of fourteen, and had thus already taken the veil when both the madrigals and motets were published. Here she was to become prioress as well as organist and director of the magnificent “concerto grande” described above.

Giovanni Maria Artusi in his treatise *Delle imperfezioni della moderna musica*, published a few years later in 1600, recounts a royal visit to San Vito by the Archduchess Margaret of Austria, wife of King Philip III of Spain, and tells us more about the instruments which comprised the musical ensemble:

"Finally, after visiting many common areas and particular rooms, which gave Her Majesty much satisfaction, she arrived at the place usually designated for the Concert, and when everything was quiet, one heard, with great beauty and harmonic sweetness, cornetts, trombones, violins, viole bastarde, double harps, lutes, cornamuse, flutes, harpsichords and voices all at one time, and it truly seemed to be Mount Parnassus and Paradise itself opening up, and not something human.”

In Bottrigari's treatise, which adopts the form of a rhetorical dialogue between two gentlemen, one (named Alemanno) explains to the other (Gratioso) that this ensemble was not a new phenomenon but rather had been in existence for “tens and scores of years”. Moreover, these nuns were self-taught, for “neither Fiorino nor Luzzaschi... nor any other musician or living man” had provided music or given instruction. Gratioso protests that it would be “almost impossible” to learn to sing or play instruments without a teacher, especially cornetts and

trombones, which the nuns could not practice “both because of the difficulty of these musical instruments, and also because of their being women”. But Alemanno assures him that the nuns indeed play both instruments on all feast days, “and they play them with such grace, and genteel manners, and such just and sonorous intonation of the voices, that those who are considered quite excellent in this profession confess that it is incredible to anyone who has not heard or seen it...”

Bottrigari and Artusi are especially significant sources for our understanding of musical life in the convents because they not only heard but also saw the nuns perform. In this post-Tridentine period when clausura, or enclosure, was a cornerstone of the Counter-reformation, the event of a public concert performed by the nuns in the parlatory of the convent was certainly a breach of official regulations. Evidently, the nuns of Ferrara enjoyed liberties that their sisters in Bologna, Milan and elsewhere were denied.

A third treatise published some twenty years later, A. Guarini’s *Compendio storico dell’origine...delle chiese... di Ferrara*, (1621), provides us with individual names of some of the musicians themselves, boasting that the convent of San Vito counted among its nuns

“excellent composers, exceedingly sweet voices, and rare players, such as a Catabene de' Catabeni, and Cassandra Pigna, good tenors, Alfonsa Trotti, a singular and surprising bass, Claudia Manfredi and Bartolomea Sorianati, quite delicate sopranos, Raffaella de' Magnifici, and another Catabene, singular players of the cornett, who also gracefully play all kinds of instruments, [and] Olimpia Leoni, who plays a tenor viol with much lightness and sings alto with great disposition and an excellent voice. And above all of them is the most singular and unequalled organist, Raffaella Aleotti, called l'Argenta, who is also quite an expert in music, and diverse motets and madrigals of great repute have been published by her.”

Aleotti’s *Sacrae cantiones* contain sixteen motets by her, in addition to two motets composed by her teacher Ercole Pasquini. Thirteen of them are written for five voices, while the remaining few are composed for double choirs of seven, eight or even (in the case of Pasquini’s “Quem vidistis Pastores”) ten voices. All are settings of either Biblical or liturgical texts serving various occasions, especially Christmas and Marian feasts. A number of them are based on the Song of Songs, a popular source for music of the period, both inside and outside the convent walls. Aleotti’s collection of motets is like a jewelry box of precious gems: enclosed within their tiny dimensions (their length rarely exceeds 3 minutes, and many last even less) one finds a wealth of rhythmic invention, simple but attractive harmonies, a skillful use of counterpoint, incisive interaction between choirs, efficacious and even moving settings of the texts.

As is common to much of the music composed by and for cloistered nuns, these motets call for a traditional vocal ensemble of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. A great deal of evidence suggests that the nuns adapted this repertoire to their own forces, which obviously lacked male voices. Thus the lower parts would be transposed up an octave, or played by instruments (alone or doubling the voices at the written pitch), and even entire pieces might be transposed upward to better suit these female ensembles.

The musical nuns of San Vito captured the interest and admiration of some of the finest musicians of the time, including Frescobaldi, Gesualdo, Wert, Spontone, Porta and Merulo, and at least two composers, Giovanni Battista Chinelli and Lorenzo Agnelli, dedicated collections to Aleotti herself. The dedications of both of these collections mention the kindness and encouragement which Aleotti demonstrated toward the young composers (who were in their twenties).

One nun at San Vito was, surprisingly, the dedicatee of an entirely different musical genre, and one which flew in the face of the strict rules which dictated that only sacred music should be heard in the convents. In 1683, Giovanni Battista Mazzaferata (?-1691) reprinted his very successful collection of chamber cantatas to the marquise Margherita Celeste Trotti. The illustrious Trotti family of Ferrara seems to have been oftentimes associated with music: recall Alfonsa Trotti, the “singular and surprising bass” mentioned above.

The last contemporary mention of Raphaella Aleotti comes from Agostino Faustini’s *Libro delle historie ferraresi* of 1646. The author, once again praising her marvelous skills on the organ, claims that she is now “very old”. It is probably that she died in or shortly after 1646, when she would have been 71. All of Aleotti’s known publications were composed by the time she was 18, and although she would live for another 50 years, she seems to have limited her musical activities to being a practicing musician: playing the organ, directing the ensemble of the convent, and teaching music to the younger nuns. We may never know if this was a personal choice or a consequence of the increasingly draconian restrictions of clausura which governed the lives and music of these cloistered women. We can only be thankful that these few “precious gems” have survived until today, giving us the opportunity to recreate the musical splendors of the magnificent concerto grande at the convent of San Vito.

Performing Aleotti’s Motets with Women’s Voices

Aleotti’s motets for 5-8 voices present a problem common to a great deal of the repertoire written by and for cloistered nuns: they contain parts for tenor and bass voices. This fact reflects market demands rather than the musical situation within the convent, for publishers were interested in selling their prints to the largest possible public, including non-cloistered musicians. Yet, in these pieces, as in any others performed within the convents, the nuns would have adapted the music to the forces available, and in this they had a number of options. The principal ones involved transposition, whether of individual voices or entire pieces, and the use of musical instruments on the lower parts. Despite the lack of a basso continuo, which did not come into fashion until after 1600, one should not assume that these works were performed without organ. It was not unusual in the late 16th century to utilize organs in the performance of polyphonic and polychoral motets. Thus a female ensemble might transpose the lower voices up the octave to be sung by a woman, and double the parts at the written octave by instruments in order to avoid problematic harmonic inversions. And we know well that instruments of all kinds were present in Aleotti’s convent.

Moreover, we should not assume that the lower parts were always performed instrumentally. Again, recall San Vito’s “good tenors” and “singular and surprising bass”. When the entire motet

is set low enough in all the voices, the entire piece could be transposed upward to fit female voices, and this practice, too, is well documented. Though it is now believed that certain combinations of high clefs (the so-called "*chiavette*") indicated a transposition usually downward by a fourth or a fifth, it is significant to note that two important treatises which provide instructions on how to transpose up or down by more unusual intervals (Cima's *Partito de' Ricercari* of 1606 and Lorenzo Penna's *Primi albori musicali* of 1672) are both dedicated to nuns.

In short, it would appear that the choice of key and octave was left up to the performers and was probably dictated by the forces available and the effect desired. Performance practice within the convents (and elsewhere) was a matter of exploiting the available resources and overcoming any apparent obstacles presented (be they the lack of male voices in this case, or perhaps a lack of high voices in male chapels).

-- Candace Smith

Palestrina *Missa confitebor tibi*

Taking his surname from the town of Palestrina where he was probably born in 1525, Giovanni Pierluigi trained as a choirboy at St Mary Major in Rome. After a period as organist in Palestrina he was appointed *magister cantorum* at St Peter's in 1551. Four years later he spent a short time as a member of the papal choir before Pope Paul IV enforced a rule excluding married men and dismissed Palestrina and two other singers, though with a lifetime pension. He subsequently took charge of the music at St John Lateran and, after a disagreement with the canons there, moved to St Mary Major in 1561. Between 1567 and 1571 he divided his time between the newly opened Roman Seminary and service to Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este. Then, in 1571, he returned to St Peter's as *maestro*, remaining there until his death in 1594.

Palestrina's *Missa Confitebor tibi Domine* is based on his own motet. The mass was copied into one of the papal choir's manuscript choirbooks in about 1577 (when Palestrina was its official composer) and was subsequently published in 1585. The Mass is composed for two separate choirs-called *cori spezzati* in Italian-with a clear division into two equal groups and with both bass parts avoiding the fifth of the harmony, necessary if the choirs are to be physically separated. In the Sistine Chapel, however, such division was not possible since the singers occupied a single *cantoria* on the right-hand wall, but plans for publication would have led Palestrina to write it in the increasingly popular polychoral style for choirs placed on separate platforms or galleries. Like other so-called parody or imitation Masses, the six movements re-mix musical material from the motet, adapting it to the new words and adding new material where necessary.

The *Missa Confitebor tibi* is also found in a collection with another Mass à 4 by Bartolomeo Lo Roi (Roy), and the entire print is dedicated to Leonora Cibo, a Ferrarese noblewoman at the Murate convent in Florence.

-- Noel O'Regan

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Congratulamini mihi omnes

qui diligitis Dominum,
quia cum essem parvula placui altissimo,
et de meis visceribus
genui Deum et hominem;
beatam me dicent omnes generationes,
quia ancillam humilem respexit Deus.

*Rejoice with me, all you who love the Lord;
for, even when I was a little girl,
I pleased the Most High,
and from my womb
I have brought forth God and man.
All generations shall call me blessed,
because God has regarded His lowly handmaid.*

Hodie nata est beata Maria

ex progenie David
cuius vita gloriosa lucem dedit seculo;
nativitatem beatæ Virginis Mariæ
cum gaudio celebremus;
per quam salus mundi
credentibus apparuit,
cuius Dominus humilitatem respexit,
quæ angelo nunciante concepit
salvatorem mundi.

*Today the Blessed Virgin Mary was born
o the line of David.
Her glorious life gave light to the world.
Let us celebrate with joy
the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Through her the salvation of the world
appeared to believers
whose lowliness the Lord regarded;
Who conceived the Savior of the world
at the angel's announcement.*

Vidi speciosam sicut columbam

ascendentem desuper rivos aquarum,
cuius inestimabilis odor erat nimis:
et sicut dies verni circundabant eam
flores rosarum
et lilium convallium.

*I have seen her,
as beautiful as a dove,
rising up over streams of water.
The fragrance of her clothes was immeasurable.
And like in the days of spring,
she was surrounded by roses
and lilies of the valley.*

Sancta et immaculata virginitas

quibus te laudibus efferam nescio:
quia quem cæli capere non poterant,
tuo gremio contulisti.

*Virginity holy and unspotted,
I know not how to utter your praises;
For you carried in your womb
the one whom the heavens cannot contain.*

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.*

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam: Domine Deus, Rex cælestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine fili unigenite Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Congregati sunt inimici nostri et glorientur in virtute sua; contere fortitudinem illorum Domine et disperge illos ut cognoscant quia non est alius qui pugnet pro nobis nisi tu, Deus noster, disperde illos in virtute tua Domine.

Exaudi Deus orationem meam et ne despexeris deprecationem meam, intende mihi et exaudi me, contristatus sum in exercitatione mea, et conturbatus sum a voce inimici, et a tribulatione peccatoris.

Miserere mei Deus, miserere mei, quoniam in te confidit, anima mea, et in umbra alarum tuarum donec transeat iniquitas.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, and we give thanks to you for your great glory: Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. You, who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Our enemies have gathered together and they are boasting of their power. Destroy their strength, O Lord, and scatter them, that they may know that there is no one who fights for us but you, our God. Scatter them by your power, O Lord.

Hear, O God, my prayer and despise not my supplication. Be attentive to me and hear me. I am grieved in my exercise; and am troubled at the voice of the enemy, and at the tribulation of the sinner.

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me: For my soul trusts in thee, my soul, and in the shadow of thy wings may iniquity pass away.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Exurgat Deus

et dissipentur inimici eius,
et fugiant qui oderunt eum.
Sicut deficit fumus,
deficiant:
sicut fluit cera a facie ignis,
sic pereant peccatores a facie Dei.

Ego flos campi

et lilium convallium.
Sicut lilium inter spinas,
sic amica mea inter filias.
Sicut malus inter ligna silvarum,
sic dilectus meus inter filios.

Ascendens Christus in altum, alleluia,
captivam duxit captivitatem, alleluia,
dedit dona hominibus, alleluia.
Ascendit Deus in iubilatione,
alleluia.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Angelus ad pastores ait:

annuncio vobis gaudium magnum:
Quia natus est vobis hodie salvator.
Alleluia.

Quem vidistis, pastores, dicite,
annuntiate nobis, in terris quis apparuit?
Natum vidimus et choros angelorum
collaudantes Dominum.
Dicite, quidnam vidistis?
Et annunciate Christi nativitem
Natum vidimus et choros angelorum
collaudantes Dominum.

*Let God arise,
and let his enemies be scattered:
Let also them who hate him flee.
As the smoke vanishes,
so shall you drive them away:
And like wax that melts at the fire,
so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God.*

*I am the flower of the field,
and the lily of the valleys.
As the lily among thorns,
so is my love among the daughters.
As the apple tree among the trees of the woods,
so is my beloved among the sons.*

*Ascending on high, hallelujah,
Christ led captivity captive, hallelujah,
He gave gifts to men, hallelujah,
God mounts His throne amid shouts of joy,
hallelujah.*

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the
world, grant us peace.*

*The angel said to the shepherds:
"I bring you good news of great joy,
For to you is born this day a Savior."
Hallelujah.*

*Whom did you see, shepherds? Speak
and tell us: who has appeared on earth?
We saw the new-born and choirs of angels
praising the Lord.
Tell us whom you saw
and announce to us the birth of Christ.
We saw the new-born and choirs of angels
praising the Lord.*

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**The Choir of St. Luke in the Fields,
under the direction of David Shuler
Thursdays at 7:30 PM (lectures at 6:30 PM)
The Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

A French Baroque Christmas

Music of Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Messe de Minuit ('Midnight Mass')

In Nativitatem Domini, H.416

Choir of St. Luke in the Fields

with Baroque in the Fields period instrument orchestra

Lecturer: Dr. Sarah Davies

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Kings of the Earth, Queen of Heaven

Music of Pierre de Manchicourt

Missa Reges Terrae, Easter motet Regina caeli,

and other motets composed for King Philip's chapel

Choir of St. Luke in the Fields

Lecturer: Dr. Raymond Erickson

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025

Handel in Italy

Masterpieces of Latin Sacred Music

Dixit Domini, Laudeate pueri,

Corelli's Concerto Grosso No 7 in D Major

Choir of St. Luke in the Fields

with Baroque in the Fields period instrument orchestra

Lecturer: Dr. David Schulenberg

Tickets: \$40 general, \$30 students and seniors

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More information: 212-414-7440 or music@stlukeinthefields.org

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