

## Music in Secret

Sounds of the Medieval and Early Modern Convent

VIRTUAL CONCERT

PREMIERE: **FRIDAY, MAY 27 | 12pm**

## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

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### **Ave sanctissima Maria**

Ave sanctissima Maria, mater Dei, regina caeli, porta paradisi, domina mundi. Pura singularis tu es virgo. Tu concepisti Iesum sine peccato. Tu peperisti creatorem et salvatorem mundi in quo non dubito. Libera me ab omni malo et ora pro peccatis meis.

Hail, most holy Mary, mother of God, queen of heaven, gateway to paradise, ruler of the world. You are a uniquely pure virgin. You conceived Jesus without sin. You bore the creator and savior of the world in whom I do not doubt. Free me from all sin and pray for my offenses.

### **Missus est Gabriel**

Missus est gabriel angelus ad mariam virginem desponsatam ioseph, annuncians ei verbum et expavescet virgo de lumine. Ne timeas maria; invenisti gratiam apud dominum. Ecce concipies et paries. Et vocabitur altissimi filius.

The angel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary, betrothed to Joseph, announcing the word to her. The young woman became frightened by the light. Do not fear Mary; you have discovered grace before the Lord. Behold you will conceive and give birth to a child. And your son will be called Most High.

Dabit ei dominus deus sedem David patris ejus et regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum. (Et vocabitur . . .)

The Lord God will give unto him the seat of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.

### **Non auferetur**

Non auferetur sceptrum de Juda et dux de femore ejus donec veniat qui mittendus est et ipse erit expectatio gentium.

The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Pulchriores sunt oculi ejus vino et dentes ejus lacte candidiores. (Et ipse . . .)

More beautiful are his eyes than wine; his teeth whiter than milk.

### **Sicut lilium inter spinas**

Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

### **Ave generosa**

Ave generosa gloriosa et intacta  
puella, tu pupilla castitatis,  
tu materia sanctitatis,  
que Deo placuit.

Hail, nobly born, hail, honored and inviolate,  
you Maiden are the piercing gaze of chastity,  
you the material of holiness—  
the one who pleased God.

Nam hec superna infusio in te fuit,  
quod supernum Verbum in te carnem induit.

For heaven's flood poured into you  
as heaven's Word was clothed in flesh in you.

Tu candidum lilium quod Deus ante omnem creaturam inspexit.

You are the lily, gleaming white, upon which God has fixed his gaze before all else created.

O pulcherrima et dulcissima,  
quam valde Deus in te delectabatur,  
cum amplexionem caloris sui in te posuit,  
ita quod Filius eius de te lactatus est.

Venter enim tuus gaudium habuit  
cum omnis celestis symphonia de te sonuit,  
quia virgo Filium Dei portasti,  
ubi castitas tua in Deo claruit.

Viscera tua gaudium habuerunt  
sicut gramen super quod ros cadit  
cum ei viriditatem infundit, ut et in te factum est, O  
mater omnis gaudii.

Nunc omnis ecclesia in gaudio rutilet  
ac in symphonia sonet  
propter dulcissimam Virginem  
et laudabilem Mariam,  
Dei Genitricem. Amen.

### **Sancta et immaculata virginitas**

Sancta et immaculata virginitas,  
quibus te laudibus efferam, nescio:  
Quia quem caeli capere non poterant,  
tuo gremio contulisti.

### **Ego flos campi**

Ego flos campi, et lilium convalium. Sicut lilium inter  
spinas, sic amica mea inter filias. Sicut malus inter  
ligna silvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filios.

### **Amo Christum**

Amo Christum, in cuius thalamum introibo, cuius  
Mater virgo est, cuius pater feminam nescit, cuius mihi  
organa modulatis vocibus cantant, quem cum amavero  
casta sum, cum tetigero munda sum, cum accepero  
virgo sum. Annulo suo subaravit me, et immensis  
monilibus ornavit me, et tanquam sponsam decoravit  
me coronam. Alleluia.

### **Vulnerasti cor meum**

Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa  
in uno oculorum tuorum,  
et in uno crine colli tui,  
vulnerasti cor meum.  
Quam pulchrae sunt mammae tuae,  
soror mea sponsa.

O sweetest and most beautiful one!  
How deep is that delight that God received in you,  
when 'round you he enwrapped his warm embrace, so  
that his Son was suckled at your breast.

Your womb rejoiced  
as from you sounded forth the whole celestial sym-  
phony. For as a virgin you have borne the Son of  
God—in God your chastity shone bright.

Your flesh rejoiced just as a blade of grass on which  
the dew has fall'n, viridity within it to infuse—just so  
it happened unto you,  
O mother of all joy!

So now in joy gleams all the Church like dawn,  
resounds in symphony  
because of you, the Virgin sweet  
and worthy of all praise, Maria,  
God's mother. Amen.  
--(transl. Nathaniel M. Campbell)

Holy and immaculate virginity,  
I do not know how to utter your praises;  
for him whom heaven could not contain,  
you carried in your womb.

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.

I love Christ, into whose bedchamber I shall enter,  
whose mother is a virgin, whose father knows no  
woman, whose instruments sing to me with harmo-  
nious voices, whom, when I shall have loved I will be  
chaste, when I have touched I shall be clean, when I  
have received him I shall be a virgin. With his ring  
he has betrothed me, and adorned me with count-  
less gems, and with a crown he has adorned me as a  
spouse. Alleluia.

You have wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse,  
with a glance of your eyes.  
And with a hair from your neck,  
you have wounded my heart.  
How beautiful are your breasts,  
my sister, my spouse.

### **Chant: Maria Magdalena et altera Maria**

Maria Magdalena et altera Maria ibant diluculo ad monumentum. "Iesum, quem quaeritis, non est hic: surrexit, sicut locustus est, praecedet vos in Galileam, ibi eum videbitis." Alleluia.

Cito euntes dicite discipulis ejus et Petro quia surrexit dominus. Praecedet vos . . .

### **Motet: Maria Magdalena et altera Maria**

Maria Magdalena et altera Maria ibant diluculo ad monumentum. "Iesum, quem quaeritis, non est hic: surrexit, sicut dixit, praecedet vos in Galileam, ibi eum videbitis."

### **Cantate Domino canticum novum**

Cantate Domino canticum novum,  
cantate Domino omnis terra  
cantate Domino et benedicite nomini eius,  
annunciate de die in diem salutare eius.

Psallite Deo nostro,  
psallite sapienter regi nostro.  
Iubilare Deo omnis terra  
et exaltate ei cum tremore,  
quoniam suavis est Dominus.  
Cantate Domino gloriose,  
iubilare Deo Iacob  
quia ipse est Deus:  
ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb at daybreak. "Jesus, whom you seek, is not here: he has arisen, as he said. He will go before you into Galilee, you will see him there."

Go quickly and say to the disciple and Peter that the Lord is arisen. He will go before you...

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb at daybreak. "Jesus, whom you seek, is not here: he has arisen, as he said. He will go before you into Galilee, you will see him there."

O sing unto the Lord a new song,  
sing unto the Lord, all the earth,  
sing unto the Lord and bless his name,  
show forth his salvation from day to day.  
Make a joyful noise unto our Lord,  
make a joyful noise judiciously unto our king.  
Rejoice unto the Lord, all the earth,  
and exalt him with trembling,  
for the Lord is good.  
Sing gloriously unto the Lord,  
rejoice unto the Lord of Jacob,  
for he is God:  
it is he that made us, and not we ourselves.



## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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The sounds flowing from pre-modern convents constitute one of the better-kept secrets of music history. Behind cloistered walls, nuns sang Gregorian chant and sacred choral music that their counterparts in monasteries would have performed, though in their own celestial vocal range and sometimes accompanied by instruments. Although many convents lacked the wealth and resources of local monasteries and cathedrals, monastic women still collected manuscripts of plainchant and sang the music of the Mass and the Divine Office. Their active participation in the liturgy is clear from surviving liturgical books. This program brings out vocal and instrumental music from medieval and early-modern convents that has scarcely received a modern hearing. In doing so, we hope to unveil a rich sound world that has been neglected all too often.

Sonorous sixteenth-century convent polyphony and monophonic medieval chant interweave in the first part of this program. We sing two five-voice motets from the first known collection of published convent polyphony—an anonymous set of partbooks, printed in Venice in 1543, recently uncovered by musicologist Laurie Stras. These motets frame a pair of plainchants from a medieval convent manuscript. This music is from a thirteenth-century liturgical book for an Italian convent, illuminated by artist Jacobus de Salerno and now on view at the Art Institute of Chicago. We sing two responsory chants from this source, both prescribed for the feast of the Annunciation—“Missus est Gabriel” and “Non auferetur.”

It is impossible to talk about pre-modern music for the convent without mentioning St. Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth-century abbess from the Rhineland, canonized just a decade ago, who not only composed music but also authored treatises on natural science and medicine and was further known for her prophetic visions. Our program brings out Hildegard’s “Ave generosa,” a hymn in praise of the Virgin Mary. The richness of Hildegard’s poetic expression is matched by the beauty of her musical setting. With its sweeping melodic gestures and wide range, the hymn is well suited for talented female voices.

Our program continues with exploration of northern Italian convent music of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. We highlight two works by Raffa-

ella Aleotti, taken from a collection of motets for five to ten voices published in 1593. This source is remarkable for being the first known publication of polyphony by an Italian nun. Aleotti was the music director at the convent San Vito in Ferrara, which maintained a high reputation for its musical performances. Included among the eighteen motets of Aleotti’s *Sacrae Cantiones* are two motets by her teacher, Ercole Pasquini. Pasquini was born in Ferrara, and later became organist of St. Peter’s in Rome. The *Toccata in F*, situated between the two motets by Aleotti, exemplifies the kind of piece that Pasquini might have provided during the liturgy, whether to introduce singing, to accompany a liturgical procession, or to conclude the service.

Sacred music styles changed markedly in early seventeenth century Italy, with a turn towards a more intimate type of musical expression. Composers frequently used newly composed motet texts with a more personal, even sensual, devotional cast found in the biblical Song of Songs. The motets by two Italian nuns—Lucrezia Vizzana and Alba Tressina—exemplify this new style. Alongside their careful text declamation, these works contain vivid examples of musical word-painting, moments of striking vocal virtuosity, and an independent instrumental accompaniment. Vizzana’s “Amo Christum” asserts her personal commitment to Christ and the church, while Tressina’s “Vulnerasti cor meum” captures the amorous intensity and languor of its Song of Songs text. Our program also includes organ music by Adriano Banchieri, one of the composers who published choral works dedicated to Vizzana’s convent in Bologna.

In the last part of the program, we return to a chant from Art Institute’s thirteenth-century convent antiphony (“*Maria Magdalena et altera Maria*”), a resurrection text (Matthew 28:1, 6-7) recast in a two-voice motet by Sulpitia Cesis, a nun in the Augustinian convent of San Geminiano, in Modena. This work is found in a collection of her “spiritual motets” from 1619, which contained music for up to twelve parts. The program concludes with a splendid motet for eight voices (“*Cantate Domino*”) from Cesis’s spiritual motets. Its jubilant double-choir structure resounds bits of praise psalms and creates a musical space in which we can overhear the splendors of Italian convent polyphony and those talented musicians who created it.