

Midtown Concerts
Thursday, March 16, 2023 1:15 pm
St. Malachy's Church —The Actors' Chapel in New York City
Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org and YouTube

POMERIUM

Alexander Blachly, Director

The Medieval Miracle Melodies Into Harmony

Kristina Boerger, Michèle Eaton ~ sopranos
Garrett Eucker, Michael Steinberger, Christopher Preston Thompson ~ tenors
Thomas McCargar, Peter Stewart ~ baritones

EASTER SUNDAY GRADUAL

Chant Gradual, *Hec dies* Oxford, Lat. Liturg. b. 5 (15th-century)

CLAUSULAE AND MOTETS BASED ON *HEC DIES*

Clausula, *Hec dies* (13th-cent.) W₁ (Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 628 Helmst.)
Clausula, *Hec dies* (13th-cent.) F (Forence, Bibl. Med.-Laur., Plust. 29.1)
Motet, *Dat superis inferis/Hec dies* (13th-cent.) W₂ (Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 1099 Helmst.)
Motet, *Hec dies leticie/Hec dies* (13th-cent.) W₂

CHRISTMAS DAY GRADUAL

Chant Gradual, *Viderunt omnes* Oxford, Lat. Liturg. b. 5

ORGANUM QUADRUPLUM SETTING OF *VIDERUNT OMNES*

Organum, *Viderunt omnes* (ca. 1200) Perotin (fl. ca. 1200)

NEWLY COMPOSED MELODIES SOUNDING TOGETHER IN HARMONY

Rondeau, *Hé, Diex! Quant verrai* (ca. 1270) Adam de la Halle (ca. 1230-ca. 1288)

CHANT-BASED POLYPHONY OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Motet, *Tube sacre/In arboris/Virgo sum* (ca. 1330) Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361)
Kyrie, *Messe de Nostre Dame* (ca. 1360) Machaut (ca. 1300-1377)

CHANT-BASED POLYPHONY OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Chant antiphon melisma, *[Venit ad Petrum]...caput* British Library, Harley 2942 (14th-century)
Kyrie, *Missa Caput* (ca. 1452) Johannes Ockeghem (ca. 1425-1497)
Hymn, *A solis ortus cardine* Alexander Agricola (ca. 1446-1506)

CHANT-BASED POLYPHONY OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Hymn, *Te lucis ante terminum* Thomas Tallis (ca. 1505-1585)

CHANT-BASED POLYPHONY OF THE LATE-FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Chant, *Ite missa est* (12th-cent.) Paris, Bibl. Nat. 12976
Benedicamus Domino (ca. 1400) Paolo Tenorista (ca. 1355-ca. 1436)

Today's **program** is a listening tour through the early stages of the polyphonic music of the West, starting with the birth of harmony when melodies were first arranged to sound simultaneously in harmony in the thirteenth century and extending to the sophisticated later stages of this process in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The technique of creating harmony from the careful interaction of separate melodies began with the composers Leonin, Perotin, and their colleagues in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris; it soon evolved and widened out over the course of several centuries to include all of Europe in an amazing array of different textures and effects.

Pomerium, founded by Alexander Blachly in New York in 1972 to perform music composed for the famed chapel choirs of the Renaissance, derives its name from the title of a treatise by the 14th-century music theorist Marchettus of Padua. In the introduction, Marchettus explains that his *Pomerium* (literally, "garden") contains the fruits and flowers of the art of music. Widely known for its interpretations of Du Fay, Ockeghem, Josquin, Palestrina, Lassus, and Gesualdo, the modern Pomerium is currently recording a series of compact discs of the masterpieces of Renaissance *a cappella* music, of which the sixteenth to be recorded, *Musical Games of the Renaissance*, was released in 2019.

Alexander Blachly has been active in early music as both performer and scholar since 1972. He earned his post-graduate degrees in musicology from Columbia University and is a recipient of the Noah Greenberg Award given by the American Musicological Society to stimulate historically aware performances and the study of historical performing practices. In addition to Pomerium, he directs the University of Notre Dame Chorale, the Notre Dame Schola Musicorum, and the Notre Dame Festival Baroque Orchestra.

Kristina Boerger's NYC vocal credits include Pomerium, Western Wind, Vox Vocal Ensemble, Trinity Wall Street Choir, Bobby McFerrin, and Sir Jonathan Miller's *Bach Saint Matthew Passion*, with conducting credits including Cerddorion, AMUSE, and Collegiate Chorale. Now as Augsburg University's Schwartz Professor of Choral Leadership, she has sung regularly with The Rose Ensemble, The Mirandola Ensemble, and Le Grande Bande, also enjoying guest conductorships with An Opera Theater, the Page Theater, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. National music-directing credits include the Madison Early Music Festival and Chanticleer.

Soprano **Michèle Eaton** has received critical acclaim for her "sumptuous tone, keen dramatic sense and striking agility" (Allan Kozinn, *NY Times*). She has performed frequently with Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, Pomerium, Equal Voices, the Carmel Bach Festival, and Baroque Across the River. In Julie Taymor's *Grendel* (Lincoln Center Festival 2006) she played the boy soprano role of the Child Grendel. She toured the U.S. for many years with Peter Schickele in performances of the putative music of P.D.Q. Bach, and internationally with Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, both in 1992 and 2012.

Garrett Eucker is a tenor known for his light, silvery timbre and his versatility in both early and contemporary chamber music. Garrett's love for music began at a young age when he performed in his first opera at the Metropolitan Opera at the age of four. Garrett has since established himself on the early music scene, having performed with world-renowned ensembles. This season, he has appeared with The Choir of Trinity Wall St., The St. Thomas Church Choir, Incantare, La Grande Bande, Apollo's Fire, and Piffaro, among others. He is thrilled to be joining Pomerium for the first time in this concert, and is excited about his upcoming projects, including a workshop of Paola Prestini's "The Old Man and the Sea" with Beth Morrison Projects and a tour with Apollo's Fire.

Christopher Preston Thompson, tenor and medieval harpist, has soloed in venues throughout the US, including NYC's Carnegie Hall. He is the founding director of Concordian Dawn, whose "mesmerizing" (Early Music America) debut album *Fortuna Antiqua et Ultra* (MSR Classics) was released in 2021 to critical acclaim. Cornell U. Press published a collaboration between the ensemble and Sarah Kay in July 2022, entitled *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera*. Christopher is on the voice faculty at NYU-Steinhardt and the music faculty at Lehman College-CUNY. He has given presentations on medieval vocal and instrumental repertoire and historical performance practice for institutions such as Princeton, NYU, U. Penn, and many others, and he is a resident member of Pomerium and the choir of St. Luke in the Fields.

Tenor **Michael Steinberger** began his collaboration with Pomerium in 1989. Among his many ensemble credits, which include The Waverly Consort, Musica Sacra, New York Philharmonic, The Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, and Voices of Ascension, he has been part of 6 Grammy-nominated albums including Pomerium's 1997 album *Creator of the Stars*, and 2017's *Maximillian Steinberg - Passion Week* with The Clarion Choir - in which he was a featured soloist. He was also proud to collaborate on 2021's Grammy winner for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for Ethel Smyth's *The Prison* with James Blachly and the Experiential Orchestra.

Baritone **Thomas McCargar** has been a member of the acclaimed Choir of Trinity Wall Street since 2007, where he is now also the director of the St. Paul's Chapel Choir and director of compline. He is a 15-year member of Pomerium and has also sung with Chanticleer, Roomful of Teeth, Seraphic Fire, Spire, Concordian Dawn, Yale Choral Artists, Musica Sacra, and Voices of Ascension, among others. Recent engagements include touring England and Scotland with TENET, and touring South Korea with the American Soloists Ensemble. Thomas appears in the recordings of three pieces that went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music: *Anthracite Fields* (Julia Wolfe), *Angel's Bone* (Du Yun) and *prism* (Ellen Reid). When he's not singing or conducting you will probably find him at the nearest golf course.

Bass-baritone **Peter Stewart** has been a member of Pomerium for more than 40 years. He also has toured with the Waverly Consort. Peter has been featured in many Baroque and Classical oratorios with Nicholas McGeegan, Andrew Parrott, Sir Roger Norrington, as well as Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Peter regularly works with contemporary composers. This fall he performed 'Drowning,' a chamber opera by Philip Glass. He has toured worldwide with the Philip Glass Ensemble for many years. He is developing 'La Balloniste,' a new opera by composer and former Pomerium member Lisa Bielawa. He has recorded the baritone songs of Lee Hoiby for CRI with the composer at the piano. Peter lives in New York with his wife María de Lourdes Dávila and their daughter Beatriz.



W, fol. 52 – Two-voice clausulae *Tamquam* and *Hec dies*

A NOTE ON THE PROGRAM

The timeless, exquisite melodies of Gregorian chant, which for century after century skilled singers memorized to enhance liturgical celebrations, inspired countermelodies over time that could be sung with the original chants in counterpoint. From tentative beginnings, voices in counterpoint developed a vocabulary of sonorities that showed no limit in its ability to expand for hundreds of years, both in sonic richness and rhythmic complexity. Today's program traces the early stages of this progression, beginning with several of the most striking single melodies in the chant repertoire: the graduals *Viderunt omnes* for Christmas and *Hec dies* for Easter. Our largest polyphonic work, Perotin's *organum* setting of *Viderunt omnes*, is also the earliest. It sounds the chant notes of the first two words in extremely slow motion in the bottom voice, supporting three upper voices that dance around and between each other in ever-changing rhythmic patterns. We sing just those first two words polyphonically, followed by a passage in Gregorian chant, and just this much of the setting lasts over four minutes. A fascination with very modern-sounding dissonances is only one of several striking features of this monumental work. In contrast, *clausulae* began life as short pieces often no longer than 30 seconds. They were at first excerpted from long *organum* settings, then were composed independently on the model of the originals; and when words were added to their upper voice(s), they became motets, as we hear in two thirteenth-century *clausulae* and two motets. Later in the program, the curious 101-note Gregorian chant melisma from England on the word *caput* ("head") inspired equally strange harmonies when it served as the foundation voice in three fifteenth-century Masses. Of these, Ockeghem's Mass is the strangest, positioning the *caput* melody in the bass voice, where its many notes (including the first one) on the pitch B-natural sometimes require F-sharps in the voices above that contradict the F-naturals of the prevailing Dorian mode. Our program continues with a setting in the Phrygian mode by Alexander Agricola of the ancient abecedarius hymn by Caelius Sedulius (5th century), *A solis ortus cardine*, considered by some to be the greatest hymn ever written. Starting each stanza with the next letter of the Latin alphabet, the hymn narrates the story of the Gospels in twenty-three stanzas, of which the first seven concern Christ's birth. We conclude with the Italian rhythmic roller-coaster of Paolo Tenorista's *Benedicamus Domino* ca. 1400. In every piece in today's program, except for the *rondeau* by Adam de la Halle, Gregorian chant was the starting point for textures built up from melodies interacting to create remarkably different harmonic effects, each specific to the century and country of its origin. Those textures are the miracle of the musical practice of the West—textures created by simultaneous melodies aligning to produce harmonic sonorities that from the very beginning anticipate developments we associate with music from centuries later.

Graduale, Hec dies

Hec dies quam fecit Dominus:
exultemus et letemur in ea.
Vs. Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus,
quoniam in seculum misericordia eius.

*This is the day which the Lord has made,
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Vs. Praise the Lord for He is good,
for his mercy endures forever.*

Motet, Dat superis inferis

Dat superis inferis
Gaudia pre ceteris
Vite victoria;
Rutilant insignia,
Mors fugias
Et rapias minas
Hinc impias,
Implicitum gemitum
Parias rex sideris
Etheris iam vias
Dat pervias,
Dat varias delicias
Celebris hec dies.

*He gives to us below
a joy above all others:
the victory of life.
As his wounds glow red,
you flee, O death,
grasping
the evil coins, letting
out an implicit groan.
The king of the stars
now gives us
a passageway to heaven
and various delights
on this celebrated day.*

Motet, Hec dies leticie

Hec dies leticie,
Celebris memorie,
In qua vita triumphavit,
Prevalens in acie
Mortis impie,
Cuius torcular calcavit,
Viam vite reparavit
Et spem venie
Collocans in requie
Rex glorie,
De tenebris miserie
Suos surgens vocavit.

*This is the day of joy,
honored in memory,
on which life triumphed,
prevailing in battle array
over the Devil of death,
whose press he crushed,
renewing the road to life
and the hope of mercy.
Granting them eternal rest,
the king of glory, arising,
called his [servants]
from the darkness of misery.*

Graduale, Viderunt omnes

Viderunt omnes fines terre salutare Dei
nostri: jubilate Deo, omnis terra.
Vs. Notum fecit Dominus salutare suum:
ante conspectum gentium revelavit
justitiam suam.

*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation
of our God: sing joyfully to God, all the earth.
Vs. The Lord has made known his salvation:
he has revealed his justice in the sight of the
Gentiles.*

Rondeau, Hé Diex! Quant verrai

Hé, Diex! Quant verrai
Cheli qu j'aim?
Hé, Diex! Quant verrai
De vir son cor gai
Muir tout de faim.
Hé, Diex! Quant verrai
Cheli qu j'aim?

*O God! When shall I see
her whom I love?
O God! When shall I see:
to see her pretty form
I am dying of hunger.
O God! When shall I see
her whom I love?*

Motet, Tuba sacre/In arboris/Virgo sum

Tuba sacre fidei
proprie dicta dei
preco arconorum
in theatris clamat
quod ratio hesitat
basis peccatorum.
Fatendum simpliciter
credendumque firmiter
morive necesse
deum unum in tribus
personis equalibus
et tres unam esse.
Virginem non semine
viri sed spiramine
verbi concepisse,
ipsam semper virginem;
deum atque hominum
mundo perperisse.
Sed transnaturalia
ista cum sint omnia
credentibus vita,
necis negligentibus,
nature quod gressibus
ratio potita
in premissis dubium
gignat et aururium.
Igitur nitetur
et fides per quam via
apud archana dia
clarior habetur
semper imitetur.

*The trumpet of holy faith,
God's own statements,
herald of mysteries,
sounds forth to the audiences
that Reason, the root of sin,
wavers.
One must die confessing
more simply, believing
more firmly in a God
[who is] one in three
equal persons,
and three in one.
And in a virgin conceiving not
by the seed of man but by
the spirit of the Word,
she remaining a virgin;
and in a God and man
born to the world.
But whereas all these
transcendental things are
the life of believers,
who need not fear death,
reason, acquired in nature
by steps, produces doubts
at the beginning, and
guesswork as it proceeds.
Thus, we should strive after faith,
through which we can have
a clearer road to
to the divine secrets,
and follow [faith] always.*

In arboris empiro prospere
virginitas sedet puerpere.
Mediatix fides in medio
cum stipite cecata ratio

*At the top of the tree sits virginity
pleasantly, bearing a child.
In the middle is mediating faith,
while at the root, blind reason,*

insecuta septem sororibus
sophismata sua foveantibus
hec ut scandat dum magis nititur.
Debilitas ramorum frangitur.
Petat ergo fidei dexteram
vel eternam nitetur perperam.

VIRGO SUM.

Hymn, A solis ortus cardine

A solis ortus cardine
Ad usque terre limitem,
Christum canamus principem
Natum Maria virgine.

Beatus auctor seculi,
Servile corpus induit,
Ut carne carnem liberans,
Ne perderet quos condidit.

Clause parentis viscera
Celestis intrat gracia:
Venter puellae baiulat
Secreta quae non noverat.

Domus pudici pectoris
Templum repente fit Dei
Intacta nesciens virum
Verbo concepit filium.

Enixa est puerpera
Quem Gabriel prodixerat,
Quem matris alvo gestiens
Clausus Joannes senserat.

Feno jacere pertulit,
Presepe non abhorruit,
Parvoque lacte patstus est
Per quem nec ales esurit.

Gaudet chorus celestium
Et angeli canunt Deum,
Palamque fit pastoribus
Pastor, creator omnium.

Summo parentis gloria,
Natoque laus quam maxima,
Cum Sancto sit Spiramine
Nunc et per omne seculum.

Hymn, Te lucis ante terminum

Te lucis ante terminum,
Rerum creator poscimus,
Ut solita clementia
Sis praesul ad custodiam.

Procul recedant somnia
Et noctium fantasmata;
Hostemque nostrum comprime,
Ne polluantur corpora.

Presta Pater omnipotens,
Per Jesum Christum Dominum;
Qui tecum in perpetuum
Regnat cum Sancto Spiritu. Amen.

Benedicamus

Benedicamus Domino.

*followed by her seven sisters [the liberal arts]
dwelling on their sophistries,
tries to climb in order to shine more brightly.
But [reason] is broken by the weakness of the branches.
Thus, she either asks for the hand of faith
or strives eternally in vain.*

I am the virgin.

*From that brink whence the sun rises
to the farthest edge of the earth,
let us sing of Christ our leader,
To the Virgin Mary born.*

*Of all time, the blessed author,
humble human form assumes,
that He, by sacrifice of flesh,
might free—not lose—the flesh He made.*

*Into the chaste mother's body
a grace from Heaven enters;
the maiden's womb is burdened with
secrets without precedent.*

*The home that was her modest breast,
a temple of God became,
untouched, where never man had been,
where God, from a Word, wrought a Son.*

*Done is the travail of birth
that Gabriel had foretold,
of whom, though closed in mother's womb,
John had sensed, and jumped for joy.*

*He suffered bedding down in hay,
nor manger did he despise;
with no special milk was nourish'd
one who lets no sparrow starve.*

*Celestial choristers rejoice,
and angels sing the praise of God,
to shepherds is made manifest
the Shepherd, maker of men.*

*Jesus, the glory be to you,
who were of a virgin born,
with the Father and with nurturing
Spirit, for all time to come.*

*To you before the end of light,
Creator of the World, we pray,
that with your accustomed clemency
you would our guard and keeper be.*

*Let dreams recede then far away,
and phantasms of the night;
and restrain, we pray, our enemy,
that our bodies uncorrupted stay.*

*All-powerful Father, your promise keep
through Jesus Christ our only Lord;
who with you reigns perpetually,
together with the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Let us bless the Lord.

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