

Palestrina: Prince of Music

Thursday, October 28, 2022 at 8 o'clock p.m. Lecture by Dr. Raymond Erickson at 7 o'clock p.m.

The Choir of Saint Luke in the Fields David Shuler, *Director of Music*

Sopranos: Danielle Buonaiuto, Melissa Fogarty, Ava Pine Altos: Donna Breitzer, Elizabeth Merrill

Tenors: Nathanial Adams, Peter Gruett, Christopher Preston Thompson, David Root Basses: Phillip Cheah, Daniel Fridley, Constantine Novotny, Christopher Seefeldt

Solve jubente Deo/Quodcumque ligaveris

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)

Missa Papae Marcellus *Kyrie Gloria*

Jubilate Deo

Missa Papae Marcellus Credo

Surge Petre

Missa Papae Marcellus
Sanctus & Benedictus

Sicut cervus/Sitivit anima mea

Missa Papae Marcellus *Agnus Dei*

Tu es Petrus/Quodcumque ligaveris

LECTURER

Raymond Erickson, Professor Emeritus of Music at Queens College (where he lectured on medieval and renaissance music, among other things) and the CUNY Graduate Center, has been a frequent pre-concert lecturer for many New York musical organizations, including Lincoln Center and St. Luke in the Fields, and has written program notes for Carnegie Hall. A well-traveled harpsichordist and pianist who has taught historical performance practice for more than forty years, he is the author or editor of four books. In 2014, he performed the first solo harpsichord recitals on major stages in Beijing and Wuhan, and in 2017 he had a six-city tour of performances, lectures, and master classes in China and Taiwan, including a sold-out all-Bach recital in Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall, a program he repeated later that year as a benefit for the music program at St. Luke in the Fields. His current research focuses on the performing history of Bach's violin Ciaccona, on which subject he has published several articles.

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PROGRAM NOTES

The whole plan of singing should be constituted not to give empty pleasure to the ear, but in such a way that the words be clearly understood by all. And thus the hearts of listeners be drawn to the desire of heavenly harmonies in the contemplation of the joys of the Blessed. They shall also banish from church all music that contains whether in the singing or in the organ playing things that are lascivious or impure.

Council of Trent (1545-1563): Canon on Music to be used for the Mass.

Little can be added to the exhaustive research already undertaken into Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. He was the most celebrated Roman composer of his day and stands with Byrd, Victoria, and Lassus as one of the preeminent voices of late 16th-century church music. Though often credited as the "savior of church music," what he did remarkably well was to reconcile Tridentine liturgical reforms with the artistic elements of polyphonic church music. In the end, the stories surrounding his adherence to the dictates of the Council of Trent and the ultimate salvation of polyphony are more legend than fact. The committee to which Palestrina was invited indeed reviewed music for use in the church, but his appointment had more to do with his unmatched skill as a composer than as a pious, dogmatically driven adversary of polyphonic music. The specific directives regarding music were left to the individual provinces. A close examination of the breadth of style in Palestrina's music reveals a composer of considerable technical range, sensitivity, and spirituality. Although the directives from the counter-reformers certainly impacted his music, he was equally influenced by the rich musical heritage of the

Franco-Flemish composers of a generation before. Palestrina was also significantly inspired by the first glimmerings of the Baroque, particularly in his polychoral works. He influenced later generations, traces of which can be seen in the works of composers like Gregorio Allegri in the 17th Century and even in the motets of Alessandro Scarlatti in the 18th Century.

Palestrina was born around 1526 in the town with which he shares his name. He received his early musical training as a choirboy at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. His first position was as organist at the Cathedral of St. Agapito in Palestrina. The first twenty years of Palestrina's life were unremarkable; only a single record of his marriage to Lucrezia Gori in 1547 survives. Palestrina was unusual for his time, a devoted husband and father, while most of his musical colleagues had at least taken minor religious orders. He was appointed to the Cappella Giulia, the choral institution resident in Saint Peter's Basilica, in 1551. The Cappella Giulia was the musical institution created in 1512 by order of Pope Julius II to serve as a training and educational institution for the boy singers who had been replaced by castrati in the Cappella Sistina. In his first tenure, Palestrina was primarily responsible for the musical direction, administration, and the musical education and training of the choristers. He was appointed to the Cappella Sistina in 1551. His patron Julius III died in March of 1555, and his papal successor, Marcellus II, of Missa Papae Marcelli fame, died only twenty-two days into his reign. His successor, Paul IV, quickly enforced the long-standing but overlooked prohibition against married members of the papal chapel, which rendered Palestrina and all of his married colleagues unemployed. He was granted a small pension for the brief time he had served.

Over the next several years, Palestrina worked at San Giovanni Laterano, at Santa Maria Maggiore, and one in the private service of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. He was appointed maestro at the Seminario Romano in 1566, one of the benefits being free education for his three sons. In 1567 he was approached by representatives of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II to succeed Jacob Vaet as music director of the Hofkapelle in Vienna. Unfortunately for Palestrina, Maximilian's ambassador felt that Palestrina's terms were too extravagant, and the post went to Philippe De Monte instead. Palestrina returned to the Cappella Giulia as maestro de cappella in 1571 and remained there until his death in 1594. Despite his dismissal from the Cappella Sistina in 1555, he was appointed papal composer in 1565. Palestrina remained in service to the Holy See for the rest of his life.

The *Missa Papae Marcelli* is Palestrina's most famous work, and at the same time, one of the least performed. It has been decades since the first recordings of Renaissance sacred music were released. In the ensuing years, attention has been primarily refocused to bringing the less famous but equally worthy masses by Palestrina, such as the recently released CD of the *Missa Tu es Petrus* by this choir in 2018, to the concert stage. We owe an enormous debt to those pioneers of historically informed performance for showing us a way forward, but it is time to reexamine this repertoire through a new lens. The *Missa Papae Marcelli* is an unusual work for Palestrina; it is one of the only six *sine nomine* masses, those which are freely composed as opposed to being constructed as a parody or paraphrase on a pre-existing work. The legend surrounding this particular Mass as being the single composition that saved polyphony from the zeal of the Counter-Reformation was dubious even by the 17th Century. On December 17, 1562, the seemingly interminable Tridentine Council issued a revised decree, and the only one to mention music specifically. It softened an earlier statement and, in the end, only implied that lascivious or

impure element in liturgical singing or organ pieces was to be avoided. (see quote above) The Mass was copied into Sistine Chapel Codex 22 in 1565 and published in Palestrina's *Liber Secundus Missarum* in 1567. In a spectacularly astute political move, Palestrina dedicated the collection to that monumental figure of the Counter-Reformation, Phillip II of Spain.

The *Kyrie*, *Sanctus et Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei* I and II are filled with flowing counterpoint and beautiful arching phrases that illustrate the influence of Palestrina's Franco-Flemish and Spanish mentors in Rome. The *Kyrie*, lushly polyphonic in the first and third sections and composed more transparently in the *Christe*, is luscious and beautiful. It establishes the two musical themes, a leap of a fourth in the opening treble part and the interweaving cadential sequence that appears on the word *eleison*, which permeate the rest of the Mass.

The *Gloria* and the *Credo* are indeed set with interest to the clarity of text. Interestingly, in Palestrina's capable hands, their musical integrity is never sacrificed to the text. It is a testament to Palestrina's abilities as a composer to take these wordy texts and give them a buoyancy that is often missing from other composers' efforts. Palestrina creates here, and in several other instances throughout his compositions, the illusion of antiphonal choirs by employing reduced forces of three or four voices singing alternating phrases. He uses groups of mixed, high, or low voices to significant effect. His inventive manipulation of contrasting vocal colors minimizes the musical traps inherent in pedantic texts. The resulting lightness is engaging and allows the listener to comprehend and fully engage with the words. As in much of his writing, Palestrina uses all of the voices together to emphasize or punctuate carefully selected sections of the *Gloria* and *Credo* texts. The *Gloria* is the most straightforward; there are no sections for reduced voices. It is in two parts divided at the text: *qui tollis peccata mundi*. The setting of *Jesu Christe* stands beautifully framed by a double petition of the invocation.

The *Credo* is perhaps the more musically interesting of the two. It is in four distinct sections. The *et incarnates est*, while not explicitly indicated in the original manuscript as separate from the body of the first section, is rendered in long notes, making a change of character an almost necessary adjustment. The *Crucifixus* is set for SATB and combines a plaintive section with a more forward-driven musical account of the resurrection and ascension. The final section beginning with *et in Spiritum Sanctum* brings the movement to an exciting conclusion with a glorious Amen. Musicologist Richard Taruskin describes the *Credo* as "a strategically planned series of cadential 'cells' ... each expressed through a fragment of text declaimed homorhythmically by a portion of the choir ... and rounded off by a beautifully crafted cadence". In the dedication of the *Liber Secundus*, Palestrina mentions that the masses represent "a new genre of musical modes". The exact meaning is not clear, but the dedication to Phillip II, that most vehement of Counter-Reformational monarchs, was probably not a coincidence.

The Sanctus et Benedictus, lovely and sweeping, moves smoothly through the cascading and overlapping repetitions of Sanctus. The pleni sunt caeli, often set as a separate section for reduced voices, emerges directly from the Sanctus text with a forward feel. The Hosannas are short and succinct, and when taken at a faster tempo, quite thrilling. The Benedictus, set for SATT, offers an extended meditative section placed between the vocal pyrotechnics of the Hosannas.

The *Agnus* I returns to the spirit of the *Kyrie*, and Palestrina almost immediately expands, after a brief appearance of the original motif, his musical palette with engaging variations on the original sequence of notes. The *Agnus* II expands into seven voices and changes the overall vocal distribution to SSAATBB. Palestrina incorporates a mathematically complex double canon between the first bass, second alto, and second soprano. Ironically, this sort of Renaissance musical puzzle is precisely the sort of musical device that might have aroused the suspicions of the Tridentine critics of church music, music composed for the sake of music, not the servant of the liturgy and text. It might even have been considered to be lascivious. It certainly is a lovely bit of musical excess, but what a joyful excess it truly is. It reveals the extent of Palestrina's abilities as a composer, and one has to wonder if, in the end, the shimmering beauty of the *Agnus* II ultimately won over the critics.

Palestrina published most of his motets during his lifetime. Though slow to gain momentum, the frequency of the prints in Rome and the subsequent Venetian rereleases suggest that they were both ultimately popular and financially rewarding. His motets also made their way into anthologies both in Italy and northern Europe. The selections heard this evening represent a cross-section of his collections and include *Solve jubente* (1569), *Jubilate Deo* and *Tu es Petrus* (1575), *Surge Petre* (1584), and *Sicut cervus* (1587). Most of his motets are derived from antiphon and responsory texts and, to a lesser extent, include motets based on sequences, prayer or devotional texts, and psalms.

Palestrina's interest and skill in composing polychoral works reveal that despite his reputation for conservatism, he was also a man of his era, eager and willing to speak with a modern voice. Many people are not aware that he immersed himself in this style. He composed fifty-six works for two choirs, four mass ordinaries, three sets of Lamentations, seven Litanies, and one Magnificat. There are also ten twelve-voice motets. The total number is more than either Orlande de Lassus or Andrea Gabrieli, almost as many as Giovanni Gabrieli, each of whom is more well-known for polychoral music. The exuberant *Jubilate Deo* was printed in the Jubilee Year of 1575 and is believed to have been performed by the *Cappella Giulia* during the ceremonial opening of the Porta Sancta in St. Peter's Basilica. It is every bit as exciting as the polychoral music composed for San Marco in Venice. The very existence of so much available repertoire suggests that Roman church music at the end of the 16th and well into the 17th centuries is more lavish and exciting than its undeserved reputation as a conservative musical body overly influenced by Tridentine Reform. Palestrina had his sights on the emerging style of the Baroque, and nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the multi-choir works.

The motet *Tu es Petrus* is a magnificent work for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. The motet is in respond form (ABCB) with the text *et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum* (and to you I will give the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven), and its associated music repeated at the end of both the first and second parts. It is masterfully crafted and grand, with an overarching sense of joyfulness. It is a fitting offering for St. Peter's Basilica and the *Cappella Giulia* for which it was probably composed. The motet is set for six voices, and as in the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Palestrina doubles the bass parts rather than using the more conventional SSATTB voicing. Palestrina deploys his choir with great skill. With some strikingly creative musical reconfiguration, he creates antiphonal passages beginning with two choirs of three voices, high voices in the first section and low voices in the second. The sections develop with alternating high and low voices,

and by keeping some voices singing all the time, he achieves an effect mimicking an actual eight-voice polychoral texture. The full choir sections that follow each of the antiphonal sections effectively punctuate each musical and textual thought. Palestrina's text setting shows his particular flair; the grand, expansive *tutti* chords on the text about the keys (*clavis*) followed by lovely word-painting employing soaring ascending lines sung by the trebles on *caelorum* (heaven).

The motets *Solve jubente Deo* and *Surge Petre* are intended for use on the Feast of S. Pietro ad Vincula – St. Peter in Chains (August 1). The story told in Acts of the Apostles, 12: 3-19, tells of the rescue of St. Peter from his imprisonment by an angel. Neither motet is strictly biblical, and the texts are cobbled together using bits of responsory text, scripture, words from the propers of the feast, and other devotional texts. It is interesting to note that the text from Matthew's gospel, found in both *Tu es Petrus* and *Solve jubente: Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis, et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis* ("Whatever you bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you release upon earth shall be released in heaven") is inscribed in the North (right) wall of the nave of St. Peter's Basilica. While the narrative of the biblical story is relatively short, the event inspired numerous paintings, sculptures, and musical compositions.

Palestrina sets Solve jubente Deo for nearly the same deployment of six voices as Tu es Petrus and tonight's mass. Published in the 1569 First Book of Motets, Solve is a somewhat unusual piece. Like the more complex canon in the Agnus II of the mass, Palestrina composes a running canon first stated in the quintus (first bass) indicated as canon joined by the alto marked as resolutio, a third lower. Unlike the later Surge Petre and Tu es Petrus, each employing skillful vocal deployment, Solve is nearly completely through-composed for all six voices hearkening back to the Missa Papae Marcelli and the more pervasively imitative early- to mid-century style of northern composers. The second half of the motet shares some of the same text as Tu es Petrus, but the last line in Solve is the last line of the Alleluia from the propers of the mass.

Surge Petre is found in Palestrina's fifth book of motets (1584). In his later motets, Palestrina was exceptionally skilled at his use of word-painting, and this offering, like his other collection of 1584, the Fourth Book of Motets (Song of Songs), does not disappoint. He creatively wields sweeping ascending lines in both appearances of the word surge (arise). It is seen to significant effect in the opening lines of the piece and then later even more lavishly applied to surge velociter "Arise, quickly" toward the end. For much of the rest, we see Palestrina taking exceptional care to make the most of the five voices, employing different configurations to create high and low choirs and semi choirs in three and four voices. The entire array is rarely heard singing together and typically appears at the end of a sentence or musical phrase, offering well-planned musical punctuation.

In 1853 Karl Proske, a cleric and vicar choral of Regensburg Cathedral, released the first of a four-volume collection of 16th-century polyphonic music. Proske was part of a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that began around the turn of the 19th century to edit and preserve Gregorian chant and masterworks of polyphony that Proske called *vere musica ecclesiae* - "the true music of the Church." He traveled throughout Germany and Rome to collect music for his anthology, eventually spending his entire personal income on the project that includes music not

only by Palestrina but Anerio, Handl, Lassus, Marenzio, Victoria, and many others. He often hosted musical gatherings of the best local singers to note-check his editions, and when he died, he left as many as 30,000 pages of music. *Sicut cervus* performed this evening with its less familiar second part, *Sitivit anima mea*, is included in the second volume of the collection. Beloved of 21st-century church choirs, *Sicut* remains a staple of Catholic and Anglican Easter Vigil services. Palestrina sets his elegant and surprisingly poignant and gentle take on the first two verses of Psalm 42 with beautiful aqueous lines of counterpoint that rise and fall in easygoing peaks and valleys, evoking images of flowing water and a sense of longing for the presence of the living God. While recent research may view these early musicological efforts, as antiquated, it is vital to acknowledge the work of these early musicologists such as Proske who played such an essential role in the early efforts to rescue and preserve this repertoire.

John Bradley

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Solve jubente Deo, terrarum Petre, catenas: qui facis ut pateant coelestia regna beatis.

Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis, et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis, qui facis, ut pateant coelestia regna beatis.

Kyrie eleison Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Loosen by God's command, Peter, the chains of the earth: you who opens the kingdom of heaven to the blessed. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound also in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will be released also in heaven. You who so causes the heavenly realms to open to the blessed.

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

1,

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. Ouoniam tu solus sanctus. Tu solus Dominus. Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria

Dei Patris. Amen.

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra; servite Domino in laetitia. Introite in conspectu ejus in exsultatione. Scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus; ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos: populus ejus, et oves pascuae ejus. Introite portas ejus in confessione; atria ejus in hymnis:confitemini illi. Laudate nomen ejus, Ouoniam suavis est Dominus: in aeternum misericordia ejus, et usque in generationem et generationem veritas ejus. Gloria Patri et Filio: et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper: et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen..

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you, and we give thanks to vou for your great glory. Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. You that take away the sin of the world: receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the Father: have mercy on 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.

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with a song. Be ye sure that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name. For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth from generation to generation. *Glory be to the Father and to the Son:* and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, now, and will be for ever: world without end. Amen.

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilum omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum. Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine: Et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio Pilato passus, et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas.

Et ascendit in coelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos: cujus regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem. Qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Surge Petre, indue te vestimentis tuis, accipe fortitudinem ad salvandas gentes, quia ceciderunt catenae de manibus tuis. Angelus Domini astitit et lumen refulgit in habitaculo carceris, percussoque latere Petri excitavit eum, dicens: Surge velociter, quia cediderunt catenae de manibus tuis.

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Arise, Peter, and put on your garments; receive strength for the salvation of the nations, because the chains have fallen from your hands. The angel of the Lord stood beside him, and a light shone in the prison cell, and he struck Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying: Arise quickly, because the chains have fallen from your hands.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fontem vivum: quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei? Fuerunt mihi lacrymae meae panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie: Ubi est Deus tuus?

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.

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevalebunt adversus eam: et tibi dabo claves regni coelorum.

Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis; et quodcumque solveris super terram erit solutum et in coelis.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty. 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.

As the hart longs for the water brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.

My soul is athirst for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while all day long they say to me, "Where now is your God?"

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

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it: and I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound also in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will be released also in heaven.

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