



Music for an Antwerp Church

International polyphony in Antwerp around 1600

Graindelavoix

Björn Schmelzer

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B. S.

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01	KYRIE, <i>Missa Praeter rerum seriem</i> George de la Hèle (1547-1586) <i>Octo Missae</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1578	6:48
02	SANCTUS, <i>Missa Praeter rerum seriem</i> George de la Hèle <i>Octo Missae</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1578	7:21
03	AGNUS DEI, <i>Missa Praeter rerum seriem</i> George de la Hèle <i>Octo Missae</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1578	5:37
04	SANCTUS, <i>Missa Maeror cuncta tenet</i> Alard du Gaucquier (1534-1582) <i>Quatuor Missae</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1581	4:40
05	AGNUS DEI, <i>Missa Maeror cuncta tenet</i> Alard du Gaucquier <i>Quatuor Missae</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1581	5:58
06	SANCTUS, <i>Missa sine nomine</i> Matthias Pottier (c.1553-1629) <i>Selectissimarum Missarum Flores</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1599	4:34
07	AGNUS DEI, <i>Missa sine nomine</i> Matthias Pottier <i>Selectissimarum Missarum Flores</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1599	5:46
08	SANCTUS, <i>Missa Tota pulchra es</i> Pedro Ruimonte (1565-1627) <i>Missae Sex IV. V. et VI. Vocum</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1604	6:33
09	AGNUS DEI, <i>Missa Tota pulchra es</i> Pedro Ruimonte <i>Missae Sex IV. V. et VI. Vocum</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1604	5:45
10	Domine Jesu Christe Orazio Vecchi (1550-1605) <i>Missae senis et octonis vocibus</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1612	3:22
11	Lux aeterna Orazio Vecchi <i>Missae senis et octonis vocibus</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1612	2:17
12	Libera me Domine Paolo Bravusi (1586-1630) <i>Missae senis et octonis vocibus</i> , printed at Phalèse II, Antwerp, 1612	4:01
13	Magnificat sexti toni Duarte Lobo (c.1565-1646) <i>Cantica B. Mariae Virginis vulgo Magnificat quaternis vocibus</i> , printed at Plantin, Antwerp, 1605	9:19
14	Salve Antverpia Tielman Susato (c.1510-c.1570) <i>Liber Primus sacrarum cantionum quinque vocum</i> , printed at Tilemannum Susato, Antwerp, 1546	10:43



Music for an Antwerp Church is the soundtrack for the exhibition *Divine Interiors* (Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, 2016). Anachronistic? Some of the paintings of church interiors in the early Baroque show people singing in a chapel during High Mass or at Vespers, while empty church interiors devoid of staffage suggest the reverberation of sound through space. A virtual aural dimension adds to our experience of these generally Gothic spaces and their decorative interiors, but which sounds and repertoires would allow us to hear what it was like to be there? In the late sixteenth century, Antwerp's two most prominent printers, Christophe Plantin and Pierre Phalèse, published a local and international musical repertoire which in many ways matched these paintings of church interiors. These were compositions in a late style that stretched the spatial elasticity of polyphony to its limits. Just like the paintings, they suggest an affective three-dimensionality that, because of its retrospective nature, belongs as much to the Counter-Reformation programme as it does to the Baroque.

The compositions on this recording, which had never been performed or recorded previously, were published by the Phalèse and Plantin (later Plantin-Moretus) printing houses between 1578 and 1612. They coincide with the production in Antwerp of paintings of church interiors by Abel Grimmer and the Steenwijck and Neeffs families and evoke the psychoacoustics and virtual sound quality in their paintings. The composers are nowadays largely unknown or even completely forgotten; in a sense, this recording is their rehabilitation. Nevertheless, they did enjoy a certain prestige in their own time, and some of them held leading positions as chapel masters.

One such example is George de la Hèle. He may have been born in Antwerp, was first a choirboy in Madrid, and subsequently became chapel master at the cathedrals of Mechelen and Doornik, only to return to Madrid as chapel master to the court of Philip II. Alard du Gaucquier from Rijsel was chapel master to Matthias, Archduke of Austria, when he was appointed as governor of the Low Countries in 1578. Matthias Pottier was chapel master of Antwerp's Cathedral of Our Lady between 1592 and 1615. Pedro Ruimonte from Zaragoza was chapel master and chamberlain to the archdukes in Brussels between 1601 and 1614. Orazio Vecchi from Modena was chapel master at various cathedrals in northern Italy. His pupil Paolo Bravusi, who completed Vecchi's *Requiem*, also became chapel master of Modena's cathedral in the 1620s. Duarte Lobo was chapel master at the cathedrals of Évora and Lisbon.

These composers were among what we now refer to as the fifth and final generation of polyphonists who were still composing in the style of the *prima prattica* at a time when the Baroque was also making its presence felt musically. Is there a comparison to be made between this and the paintings of Gothic church interiors so often furnished with retrospective interiors and decoration previously destroyed by the Iconoclastic Fury? This retrospective element is perhaps more a sort of Baroque 'in disguise': a Baroque emerging in the guise of what had been swept away forever by the Iconoclastic Fury; the Baroque as a ruin, as a memory and survival of what had been lost for good. It is noticeable, especially in the soloist passages such as the *Benedictus* of the *Sanctus*, how the composers were very much aware of new modes of expression whether via the text or through chromaticism, the strong tonal feeling and the *chiaroscuro* opportunities afforded by the use of double choirs, as in Vecchi's *Requiem*. The way in which pieces were performed around

1600 also accentuates, through phrasing and ornamentation, the mannerism of this repertoire and as a result bridges the fine dividing line between two stylistic paradigms.

The *Missa Praeter rerum seriem* by George de la Hèle is part of the legendary first musical publication that rolled off Plantin's presses in 1578. The story is relatively well known. Plantin wanted to print an *antiphonarium* with the financial backing of Philip II. The funding was slow to materialise, but as he had already invested in special paper and the characters needed for a musical publication, he decided to print the Mass by the 31-year-old chapel master from Doornik. This Mass for six voices was based on the Christmas motet of the same name by Josquin des Prez. Twenty years earlier, Cipriano de Rore had composed a Mass using the same motet. De la Hèle's version follows the same tradition but should certainly not be considered inferior in terms of its monumentality and skill. Steenwijck and Neeffs often show choral formations next to an open triptych showing the Birth of Christ or the Adoration of the Magi, and De la Hèle's Mass seems to be entirely in keeping with those depictions.

The recording also includes the *Sanctus* and *Agnus* from three other Masses: one by Du Gaucquier, published by Plantin in 1581, and ones by Pottier and Ruimonte, published by Phalèse in the following two decades. These pieces allow us to make aural comparisons and hear the evolution of stylistic possibilities. Pottier is very special in terms of his idiosyncratic writing and affectivity. Gaucquier is simpler but compelling, and repeats motifs in a manner reminiscent of Josquin. Ruimonte is monumental, at times mannerist, but also melancholic and solid in a Mass based on a motet by the Spanish composer Guerrero.

The parts from the *Missa pro defunctis* by Orazio Vecchi appeared in Antwerp in 1612 and are symptomatic of the accumulation of published polyphonic requiem Masses in Antwerp in the early seventeenth century. Vecchi wrote the *Requiem* for two 'asymmetric' four-voice choirs, a higher and lower register choir, in the Venetian double choir tradition. His pupil Paulo Bravusi supplemented the *Requiem* with a passionate *Libera me* for two choirs with equal tessitura.

The *Magnificat sexti toni* by Duarte Lobo was published by Plantin-Moretus in 1605 and perhaps heard in Antwerp's churches during Vespers. The work has the same sober polyphonic effect as Steenwijck's paintings of Vespers.

The last piece on this recording is in fact the oldest, composed by trombone player and Antwerp music printer Tielman Susato, inaugurating his *Liber Primus sacrarum cantionum quinque vocum* of 1546, at a time when Antwerp was still in its 'golden age', unaffected by the Dutch War of Independence and the religious troubles. Written in humanistic neo-Latin, it is a grandiose ode to Antwerp, one of the wealthiest metropolises of the world, due to the fertilizing position of the river Schelde. Susato's motet is not only a very nice piece of contrapuntal craftsmanship but also succeeds in articulating the text very well, illustrating the splendour of Antwerp by alternating affective polyphonic phrases of magnificence and beauty with semi-declamatory lines probably inspired by classical rhetorics.

Björn Schmelzer







01 KYRIE

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy on us,
Christ have mercy on us.
Lord have mercy on us.

02 [04, 06, 08] SANCTUS

Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth,
pleni sunt coeli
et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis!

Holy, Lord God of hosts.
The heavens and the earth
are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Benedictus, qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis!

Blessed is he who cometh
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

03 [05, 07, 09] AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world:
grant them eternal rest.

IO DOMINE JESU CHRISTE

Domine Iesu Christe,
Rex gloriae,
libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum
de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu:
libera eas de ore leonis,
ne absorbeat eas tartarus,
ne cadant in obscurum:
sed signifer sanctus Michael
repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam:
Quam olim Abrahæ promisisti,
et semini eius.

II LUX AETERNA

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.

Requiem aeternam
dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

O Lord Jesus Christ,
king of glory,
deliver the souls of all the faithful departed
from the pains of hell and from the bottomless pit;
deliver them out of the lion's mouth,
lest hell should swallow them up,
lest they fall into the outer darkness;
but let your standard-bearer, Saint Michael,
bring them back into your holy light,
which you promised of old to Abraham
and to his seed.

May light eternal shine upon them, O Lord,
with your saints forever,
for you are merciful.

Eternal rest
grant them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

12 LIBERA ME DOMINE

Libera me, Domine,
de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda,
quando coeli
movendi sunt et terra,
dum veneris judicare
saeculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego et timeo
dum discussio venerit
atque ventura ira,
quando coeli
movendi sunt et terra.

13 MAGNIFICAT

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus
in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae,
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent
omnes generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen eius.
Et misericordia eius
a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.

Deliver me, O Lord,
from eternal death
on that dreadful day
when the heavens
and the earth shall be moved,
and you will come
to judge the world by fire.

I quake with fear and I tremble
awaiting the day of account
and the wrath to come,
when the heavens
and the earth shall be moved.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me
great things; and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis,
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum
recordatus misericordiae suae,
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.
Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio et nunc
et semper et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen.

14 SALVE ANTVERPIA

Prima pars

Salve, quae roseo decora serto
Caeteras facile antecellis urbes.
Salve Antverpia, Salve amor, voluptas
salve voluptas, salve delictum,
decus, corona florentis patriae
O beata, salve, o beata, salve.
Salve, Antverpia, gemma, flos, venustas
Europae. Te Asiae Africaeque vasti

He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered
the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and hath exalted the humble people.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy.
As he spoke to our forefathers,
to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

First part

Hail you who adorned with a string of roses
easily surpasses all other cities.
Hail Antwerp, hail love, delight
hail heart's delight, hail source of joy,
graceful crown of your flourishing country
O blessed city, hail; o blessed city, hail.
Hail, Antverpia, jewel, flower, delight
of Europe. The nations all over Asia and Africa

Mirantur populi, stupent remoto
quotquot huc veniunt ab orbe gentes.

Secunda pars

Hunc tibi ille pater potens Olympi
successum magis ac magis subinde
auctum multiplicetque sospitetque,
quo semper vireas decore semper
florenti, vigeas venusta semper
semper virginea nitens iuventa,
dum cursu ac rapido fluens recursu
Schaldes velivolo superbus amne
Belgarum herbiferos rigabit agros.

are full of admiration; whichever people come to you
from the remotest corners of the world are speechless.

Second part

The mighty father of Olympus
granted you this ever increasing success,
which he cumulated and supported,
so that you may always be young in flourishing
beauty, always strong and elegant,
always shining with unspoiled youth,
while with the fast flow of its rising and ebbing tides
the Schelde, that proud river with its speeding sails,
will irrigate the fertile fields of the Low Countries.

(translation of 'Salve Antverpia': Jeanine De Landtsbeer)

PAINTINGS

Cover: Anonymous (Hendrik van Steenwijck?), *Interior of an imaginary Gothic church without staffage*, first half of 17th century. Private collection.

Page 4: Peeter Neefs, *Interior of a Gothic church with burial*, 1606. Private collection.

Page 7: Hendrik I van Steenwijck, *Interior of a Gothic church*, c. 1585. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

Page 8: Abel Grimmer (or Hendrik I van Steenwijck), *Night chapel with singers*. The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.

Page 9: Hendrik II van Steenwijck, *Interior of Our Lady Cathedral, Antwerp*, c. 1620. Private collection.







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