
LINN
MAGNIFICAT
Orlandus Lassus
The Alchemist
Volume 1

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MAGNIFICAT

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The Alchemist

157:30

Magnificats based on polyphonic models
Volume 1: Madrigals

MAGNIFICAT
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2	—	**Magnificat Ultimi miei sospiri** Orlandus Lassus (1530/32–1594)	8:13
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The Alchemist

Magnificats based on madrigals

> The extent of the love that my father, Orlandus Lassus of blessed memory, bore toward the Virgin Mother of God may be gathered from the fact that he embellished with such great variety of voices and harmonies – more, in fact, than anyone else – that divine hymn commonly known as the Magnificat, in which the Most Holy Virgin sang the praises of God and gave thanks for all his blessings; so that it seemed that he wanted to pour out all his musical art (in which he was second to none) upon the praises of this one Lady.
> — Rudolph di Lasso, 1619 (*trans*. D. Crook)

The Canticle of Mary clearly held a special significance for Orlandus Lassus: he composed over a hundred Magnificats, more than any other Renaissance composer. All of them follow the practice of *alternatim* – that is, verses alternating between plainsong and polyphony. The majority are based on traditional psalm tones, but in more than a third of them, a polyphonic model provided inspiration to Lassus. These models include Italian madrigals, Latin motets and French chansons, composed by a veritable 'who's who' of sixteenth-century masters – Josquin Desprez, Claudin de Sermisy, Nicolas Gombert and Alessandro Striggio, to name a few – and Lassus also repurposed several of his own compositions in this way. His mastery of such a diverse range of musical styles serves to reinforce his cosmopolitan reputation.

Notwithstanding the rich variety of the models, it is Lassus's *alchemy* – the immense ingenuity with which he transformed his models into verses of the Magnificat – that animates this project. Our approach is thematic and tripartite: this first volume presents Magnificats based on madrigals, the second will comprise canticles based on motets, and the third will conclude with those inspired by chansons. Our presentation of these works is as concert repertoire, without any sense of liturgical context, for two reasons. First, we wanted to precede each Magnificat with its model, since this juxtaposition reveals the creative process and skill Lassus employed in re-working his source material. Second, these secular models, some of which are quite bawdy in their subject matter, would have had no place in services held at the Bavarian court chapel, Lassus's place of work, though they might have been heard in the Duke's private chambers. In celebrating Lassus as 'The Alchemist', we aim to illuminate a significant repertory that perhaps struggles to find place in either liturgical or concert settings, and to widen our appreciation of Lassus's imagination.

Listening *to* Magnificats, listening *through* Magnificats

The fourteen Magnificats by Lassus recorded here make special demands on the listener. Each of them intentionally quotes from a pre-existing madrigal, with the aim that, as we hear the Magnificat, we remember its model madrigal – not only its music, but also its words, which have been stripped away. Moment by moment, hearing triggers memory – or at least, it does so if we know the model madrigals. In short, we don't just listen *to* these Magnificats; we listen *through* them.

Why does Lassus do this? There may be multiple reasons. First and foremost, he reworked these models to display his wit and his compositional skill, and by extension to beguile and impress the attentive listener. When he quotes from a madrigal, he rarely does so literally. Instead, Lassus skilfully transforms his model, generating a musical surface that brims with his own personality, even when drawing on content by someone else. A second reason may be playful: almost certainly the base madrigals were known to members of the Munich court, Lassus's main audience, and a game-like relationship existed between composer and listener. As musical games go, it is an enduring one. Listening to these Magnificats, we can still play it today.

A third reason is historical. From the early sixteenth century onwards, composers across Europe busily cultivated the genre sometimes known today as the 'parody mass' or 'imitation mass' – works which, in their original sources,

would be called ‘Missa ad imitationem X’, equivalent to ‘Mass modelled on X’. These masses too draw on pre-existing compositions such as motets and chansons, and Lassus himself composed many of them. But he was the first composer to shift that principle over to the more compact genre of the Magnificat – a shrewd move, for reasons that need brief explanation.

The text of the Magnificat, used daily in the evening service of Vespers, contains twelve verses. At choral foundations where services were sung, alternate verses were presented either simply in plainchant, or chorally to more elaborate music, and all of Lassus’s Magnificats follow that convention: typically, he composed music only for the even-numbered verses, leaving the odd-numbered ones to be intoned in chant. When his Magnificats also quote from models such as madrigals, as they do here, the plainchant verses then have a fascinating effect: they create moments of repose, allowing the brain to process what it has just heard, and they clear the air, ready for more. Because of this, a model-based Magnificat is easier to follow than a model-based mass, which can simply overwhelm the listener with information.

How – and why – did Lassus choose his particular models? Firm facts are hard to find, but we can make some guesses. Possibly these were madrigals that personally interested Lassus, or offered him good material for development and expansion. A second possibility is that he chose pieces already favoured by his patrons and local audience; a cherished madrigal might make a good model for a Magnificat. Third, if the madrigal’s text honoured a woman, then it would be suitable for recall in a Magnificat, the words of which were first uttered by that most venerated of women, the Virgin Mary herself. And we might wonder if

Lassus's motives were sometimes playful, along the lines of 'If I make a Magnificat out of *this* model, will anyone identify it?'

That last idea is not so fanciful if we consider the case of the *Magnificat Quando lieta sperai*. This work's earliest source is a 14-page manuscript booklet, neatly copied by one of Lassus's fellow musicians, dated 23 December 1580, and ready for use by singers when placed on a lectern. An inscription on its front cover declares it to be a gift from Lassus to his employer, Wilhelm, Duke of Bavaria, for the New Year of 1581, 'that it be happy and favourable' – and indeed we can imagine Lassus personally handing this manuscript to his patron. What the booklet does not state, however, is the model's identity. It announces only a 'Magnificat sex vocum / Orlando di lasso autore', with no mention of *Quando lieta sperai*. Did the Duke already know this madrigal? If so, then as he listened to (and through) the Magnificat, did he remember the madrigal's words, which express hopes for the coming of Spring – apt for citation in a New Year's gift? Is that why Lassus chose it as his model?

There may be another reason – or more than one. Lassus's *Magnificat Quando lieta sperai* is in fact not the only work of its age to be modelled on this madrigal. Masses based on *Quando lieta sperai* also exist by three of his immediate contemporaries – one by Philippe de Monte, court composer to the Holy Roman Emperor; one by the Venetian Andrea Gabrieli, whose earlier career had been partly spent at the Munich court; and one by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, who was based in Rome. Of these, we know for sure that Gabrieli's *Missa Quando lieta sperai* was written perhaps ten years before Lassus's Magnificat, because it was in print by 1572, whereas Lassus's Magnificat

was new in 1580. Had the Bavarian court – and Lassus – already heard Gabrieli's mass? Could they have heard the masses by Monte and Palestrina too? By composing this Magnificat, is Lassus adding a new layer of transformation? And why *Quando lieta sperai* in the first place?

More 'known unknowns' now emerge. It transpires that *Quando lieta sperai* is itself a madrigal of disputed authorship. When it first appeared in print in 1552, placed in a supplement to Cipriano de Rore's third book of five-voice madrigals, no composer's name was given, perhaps implying that Rore wrote it himself. But behind the scenes, somebody knew otherwise. In an arrangement of the madrigal for solo lute published in 1584, *Quando lieta sperai* is attributed to 'Morales', signifying the eminent Spanish composer Cristóbal de Morales, and on stylistic grounds this does seem credible. However, we also know that Morales rarely composed madrigals; so why this one? What story lies behind it? Can any significance be read into the fact that its text – written by a woman, Emilia Anguisciola – expresses a woman's distress in the face of shattered love? How much of this was known to Gabrieli, to Monte and Palestrina, to Lassus, to Duke Wilhelm himself?

These questions resist answers, but undoubtedly they add intrigue that colours our experience. As we listen to and through these works, we catch glimpses of past lives, and sense the presence of meanings that are hard or impossible for us to grasp today. Admittedly these works still give much pleasure even when their back-stories are obscure or unknown. You can, if you like, simply sit back and let the music ravish you as it unfolds in sound – beautiful works, beautifully sung. Nonetheless, in the remainder of this booklet we offer

you a compact tour guide, in which each pair of pieces – model madrigal and Magnificat – is briefly introduced, its context probed, and the madrigal's text supplied and translated. Our hope is that these cameo introductions will enrich your listening, and cast some shafts of light into the cultures to which these works once belonged.

For listeners who choose this route, the following steps are recommended. First, read the cameo introduction to one of the madrigal/Magnificat pairs. Then study the madrigal's text and translation; search for its meaning, which would have mattered to Lassus and his listeners. Next, listen to the madrigal, text in hand; listen often enough for it to sound familiar. Finally – and only now – turn to the Magnificat, listen through it, and experience the alchemy.

The fourteen Magnificats have been arranged into two recitals that differ subtly from one another. On tracks 1–14, all seven of the model madrigals were written by composers who were older than Lassus, and who, like Lassus himself, were born outside Italy, but became immersed in Italian madrigal culture. Two of them are by Cipriano de Rore, who hailed from the region around Brussels; one is by the Frenchman Philippe Verdelot; there is one each by Anselm(o) de Reulx and Jacquet de Berchem; one is credited to the enigmatic 'Noletto' or 'Nollet'; and the seventh is by Cristóbal de Morales, Spanish by birth, who worked largely in Rome in the 1530s and 40s. This is the darker-hued of the two recitals, and some of the pieces use men's voices only.

In contrast, the sunnier second recital (tracks 15–28) features madrigals by Italian-born composers who were either direct contemporaries of Lassus, or

younger than him by a decade or more. Two are by Alessandro Striggio, and there is one each by Giovanni Maria Nanino and Orazio Vecchi. This second CD also returns to Cipriano de Rore, whose works had a profound influence on Lassus. Included here is the *Magnificat Ancor che col partire*, based on Rore's most famous madrigal, which is almost certainly the earliest of Lassus's model-based Magnificats, and therefore the progenitor of the whole genre. Placed last is the *Magnificat S'io esca vivo*, which uniquely draws on a model madrigal by Lassus himself.

1. Philippe Verdelot: Ultimi miei sospiri (a6)

2. Orlandus Lassus: Magnificat Ultimi miei sospiri (a6)

The oldest madrigal used as a model by Lassus is Verdelot's *Ultimi miei sospiri*. Composed in Florence in the 1520s, this sonorous six-voice setting belongs to the infancy of the madrigal genre, and invokes the sound-world of the late five- and six-voice chansons of Josquin Desprez (d. 1521). Lassus's way of responding to this venerable work is made clear from the opening of his Magnificat: Verdelot's madrigal may be its starting-point, but the style has been significantly updated, with harmonic twists and spicings that leave Verdelot and Josquin far behind. Lassus's choice of model here may be linked to the fact that the Munich chapel choir owned a copy of a *Missa Ultimi miei sospiri* attributed to 'El Rosso' – presumably Giovanni Maria de Rossi, *maestro di cappella* at Mantua cathedral from 1563. Verdelot's madrigal also served as the basis of masses by Philippe de Monte, Annibale Padovano and Bartolomeo Spontini.

Ultimi miei sospiri,	*My final sighs,*
che mi lasciate fredd'e senza vita:	*which leave me cold and lifeless:*
contate i miei martiri	*recount my agonies*
a chi morir mi ved'et non m'aita.	*to one who sees me die and does not help me.*
Dite: 'o beltà infinita,	*Say: 'oh infinite beauty, from your faithful*
dal tuo fedel ne caccia empio martire.'	*one drive away cruel suffering.'*
Et se questo gli è grato,	*And if this be pleasing to them,*
gitene rat'in ciel a miglior stato:	*go quickly to a better state in heaven:*
ma se pietà gli porg'il vostro dire,	*but if your words bring them pity,*
tornat'a me, ch'io non vorrò morire.	*return to me, for I do not wish to die.*

Ludovico Martelli

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.	*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.*
Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.	*And my spirit rejoices in God my saviour.*
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:	*For he has looked with favour on the lowliness of*
ecce enim ex hoc beatam	*his handmaiden: behold, from henceforth all*
me dicent omnes generationes.	*generations shall call me blessed. For he that is*
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:	*mighty has done wondrous things for me:*
et sanctum nomen eius.	*and holy is his name.*
Et misericordia eius a progenie	*And his mercy is upon them*
in progenies timentibus eum.	*that fear him throughout all generations.*
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:	*He has shown the power of his arm:*
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.	*he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*
Deposuit potentes de sede,	*He has put down the mighty from their seat,*
et exaltavit humiles.	*and has exalted the humble.*
Esurientes implevit bonis:	*He has filled the hungry with good things:*
et divites dimisit inanes.	*and the rich he has sent empty away.*
Suscepit Israel, puerum suum,	*He has sustained his servant Israel,*
recordatus misericordiae suae.	*in remembrance of his mercy.*
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,	*As he promised to our forefathers,*
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.	*Abraham and his sons for ever.*
Gloria Patri, et Filio,	*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,*
et Spiritui Sancto.	*and to the Holy Spirit.*
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,	*As it was in the beginning, is now,*
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	*and ever shall be. Amen.*

When Verdelot's *Ultimi miei sospiri* first appeared in print, at the start of a 1541 miscellany of six-voice madrigals, it was followed immediately by *Quanto in mille anni* by 'Noletto'. This adjacency could explain how Lassus encountered it, and then used it as a model for a Magnificat. Next to nothing is known about Noletto, whose name was spelled in various ways, and was also expressed as 'Nollet' and 'Noleth'. Presumably he was of French or Flemish origin, and he seems to have had links with Venice in the 1530s. *Quanto in mille anni* demonstrates the universal truth that even the most obscure composer can produce exquisite and memorable works. Evidently Lassus admired it, because his Magnificat rarely strays far from its model.

Quanto in mille anni il ciel dovea[I] mostrarne
di vagho et dolce, in voi spiegò e ripose
volendo al[II] suo diletto essempio[III] darne
delle più care sue bellezze ascose.
Chi non sa come Amor soglia predarne,
o pur di non amar seco propose;
fermasi a mirar voi sol una volta,
et fugga poi, se può, con l'alma sciolta[IV].

As much in a thousand years heaven did show of
the delightful and sweet, so did it reveal and place
in you wanting for its delight to give an example
of the dearest of its concealed beauties.
He who does not know how Love is wont to prey,
or who proposes to himself not to love;
may he stop to gaze upon you but one time,
and then flee, if he can, with an unbound soul.

Pietro Bembo, Le stanze

Anselmo de Reulx's dark four-voice setting of Petrarch's *S'io credessi per morte* dates probably from the 1530s; the sonnet speaks of frustration at unrequited love. This madrigal moves quickly through its long text in solemn declamatory fashion, and it contains few musical landmarks that would make obvious subjects for development. This may explain why Lassus, in his Magnificat, transfers relatively little from the model, paying tribute instead to its broad character. Careful listening is therefore needed to notice how Magnificat and model connect at the level of musical detail. This is the most compact of Lassus's madrigal-based Magnificats.

S'io credessi [v] per morte essere scarco	*If I thought that by death I might be unburdened*
del pensiero amoroso che m'atterra,	*from the amorous thought that binds me to the earth,*
con le mie mani avrei già posto in terra	*with my hands would I have already buried*
queste membra noiose e quello incarco;	*these tiresome limbs, and that burden;*
ma perch'io temo che sarrebbe un varco	*but since I fear that it would be a passage from*
di pianto in pianto e d'una in altra guerra,	*weeping into weeping and from one war to another,*
di qua dal passo ancor che mi si serra	*on this side of the passage that closes to me I remain*
mezzo rimango, lasso, e mezzo il varco.	*in the middle, alas, and halfway crossed over.*
Tempo ben fora omai d'avere spinto	*Surely by now it is time for the merciless bow*
l'ultimo stral la dispietata corda	*to release its final arrow already coloured*
ne l'altrui sangue già bagnato e tinto;	*and bathed in the blood of others;*

ed io ne prego Amore, e quella sorda
che mi lasciò [VI] del suo color [VII] dipinto,
e di chiamarmi a sé non le ricorda.

and I beg Love for this, and that deaf one
who left me dyed with her colour(s) [VIII],
and does not remember to call me to her.

Francesco Petrarca, RVF 36

7. Cipriano de Rore: Alma real (a5)
8. Lassus: Magnificat Alma real (a5)

In his madrigal *Alma real*, Cipriano de Rore speaks directly to his patron, Margaret of Parma; the setting probably dates from around 1560, shortly before Rore entered service at the Farnese court in Parma. Why this madrigal should then have been used by Lassus as a Magnificat model remains a complete mystery. Possibly he composed his setting as a gift to Margaret, but if so, no evidence survives to show that it reached her. Alternatively, the Magnificat might be linked in some way with the nuptials of Margaret's military son, Alessandro Farnese, who married Maria of Portugal in 1565. Margaret was definitely present at that event, and Lassus and Rore both composed madrigals that celebrate this wedding.

Alma real, se come fida stella
ch'or conduce i tre Regi al Re maggiore,
mi chiamasti a seguir vostro splendore
ond'io vi dedicai l'anima ancella;

Royal soul, if like the faithful star
that now leads the Magi to the greatest King,
you called me to follow your splendour
so that I dedicated to you my soul as servant;

se quasi palma gloriosa e bella	*if like a glorious and beautiful palm*
che sorge tosto che la luna è fuore,	*that rises as soon as the moon is full,*
uscìo mio nome a far al vostro honore	*my name went out to do you honour*
tratti da pura mano e virginella;	*drawn by your pure and virgin hand;*
e se qual fior che va girando inchino	*and if like the flower that turns inclined*
col più lucente de i celesti segni,	*toward the most brilliant of the celestial orbs,*
seguei di Margherita [IX] al chiaro suono:	*I followed the clear sound of Margherita:*
vostro altissimo cor prego non sdegni	*I pray your most noble heart not to scorn*
mio stato humile, poi che vostro sono	*my humble state, for I am yours*
et per elettion et per destino [X].	*both by choice and by destiny.*

9. Jacquet de Berchem: O s'io potessi donna (a4)

10. Lassus: Magnificat O s'io potessi donna (a4)

Berchem's *O s'io potessi donna*, composed probably in Venice in the 1530s, was one of the best known of Renaissance love-songs. It was included in an anthology marketed as Arcadelt's first book of four-voice madrigals, which appeared in multiple editions through the sixteenth century, and the piece was also popular among lutenists; a dozen arrangements of it for lute were published from 1546 onwards. For these reasons, many contemporary listeners would instantly have recognised its presence when cited by Lassus in a Magnificat. The transfers are especially apt here: citation of this madrigal brings to mind thoughts of respect for a perfect woman, ideal for recollection in the Virgin Mary's own canticle.

O s'io potessi donna,	*Oh, if only I could, my lady,*
dir quel che nel mirai voi prov'e sento,	*tell of what I feel when I see you,*
invidioso farei chiunch'è contento.	*I would make anyone who is content envious.*
Splende nel vostro viso un vivo sole,	*A living sun shines in your face,*
e da begl'occhi piove	*and from your beautiful eyes rains a fire*
foco d'amor che m'ard'e strugge 'l core;	*of love that burns and consumes my heart;*
e da gl'accesi labri un fiato move	*and from your vibrant lips a breath moves*
di si grate parole che più l'accende	*with such pleasant words that further ignite*
e fa dolce l'ardore.	*and make sweet the ardour.*
O che felice amore,	*Oh what happy love, far more than any other*
via più d'ogn'altr'il mio di foco'e vento	*is mine of fire and wind blessed*
beato viv'a rimirar v'intento.	*to live intent to gaze upon you again.*

11. Cipriano de Rore: Vergine bella (a5)

12. Lassus: Magnificat Vergine bella (a5)

Lassus's model here is the celebrated opening stanza of Cipriano de Rore's *Vergine* cycle, composed in Ferrara in the 1540s. The full cycle sets the prayers to the Virgin Mary that concluded Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, using sober and reverential five-voice polyphony. Lassus significantly alters the model's sound-world in two ways. First, he changes the vocal scoring: the texture is now topped by two high voices, where Rore had only one; and second, Lassus reduces to three-voice texture for all but the outermost sections of the Magnificat, reserving the full five-voice ensemble for the start and end alone. Thematic transfers sometimes play on rhythmic correspondences between the texts. For instance, Lassus's 'Esurientes' draws on Rore's 'giamai ti volse', which is rhythmically equivalent.

Vergine bella, che di sol vestita,
coronata di stelle, al sommo Sole
piacesti sì ch'in te sua luce ascose:
amor mi spinge a dir di te parole,
ma non so incominciar senza tua aita,
et di colui ch'amando in te si pose.

Invoco lei che ben sempre rispose
chi la chiamò con fede.
Vergine, s'a mercede
miseria extrema de l'humane cose
giamai ti volse, al mio prego t'inchina,
soccorri a la mia guerra,
bench'i' sia terra et tu del ciel regina.

Beautiful virgin, who, clothed in sunlight,
crowned with stars, so pleased the Sun
that in you he hid his light:
love urges me to speak words of you,
but I do not know how to begin without your help,
and his who, loving, placed himself in you.

I call upon her who always answered
whomever called her with faith.
Virgin, if to mercy
for the extreme misery of human things
you ever turned, bend to my prayer,
give succour to my war, though I am
mere earth and you the queen of heaven.

Francesco Petrarca, RVF 366, 1–13

13. Cristóbal de Morales: Quando lieta sperai (a5)
14. Lassus: Magnificat Quando lieta sperai (a6)

The name of Cristóbal de Morales is rarely linked with madrigals. Nonetheless, the attribution of *Quando lieta sperai* to him in a late source does seem credible, especially at moments like 'trista mi chiude' and 'Lagrime', where his distinctive stylistic voice can be sensed. Lassus's Magnificat, presented to Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria as a New Year's gift for 1581, enriches its model by using a six-voice choir with divided sopranos, where Morales

writes in five-voice texture. Lassus largely sidesteps the model's most plaintive and graphic moments, which would not be apt for recall in a Magnificat. *Quando lieta sperai* was evidently a much cherished madrigal; masses were based on it by Andrea Gabrieli and Philippe de Monte – both acquaintances of Lassus – as well as by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Ippolito Baccusi.

Quando lieta sperai [XI] sedermi all'ombra
tra bei purpurei fior del nuovo aprile,
et cantando obliar mio stato humile,
tenendo sol d'amor l'anima ingombra;

ecco Euro ecc'Aquilon [XII] che 'l mondo adombra
di nuvole et di pioggia entro a l'ovile
trista mi chiude, e 'l mio sperar gentile,
con rabbioso soffiar, subito sgombra;

tal ch'io non spero che mi s'apra mai
più chiaro il ciel o più tranquillo un giorno;
tanto di ben mi fur le stelle avare!

Lagrime dunque et sempiterni guai
statemi pur eternalmente intorno
sin ch'el fin giunga alle mie pen'amare.

When happily [XIV] *I hoped to sit in the shade*
among the beautiful purple flowers of the new
April, and singing to forget my cast-down state,
making sure to keep love blocked from my heart;

lo the east wind, lo the north wind that covers
the world with clouds and rain, pens
me unhappily in, and my gentle hope,
with raging gusts, immediately drives away;

such that I no longer hope that for me will ever
open a more clear sky or more tranquil a day;
such good was done to me by the miserly stars!

Tears, then, and woes unceasing
be eternally about me,
until I reach the end to my bitter sorrows.

Emilia Anguisciola [XIII]

15. Orazio Vecchi: O che vezzosa aurora (a6)

16. Lassus: Magnificat O che vezzosa aurora (a6)

O che vezzosa is a welcome-song to the dawn; it opens Vecchi's first set of six-voice madrigals, published in Venice in 1583. Evidently Lassus absorbed it quickly, because his *Magnificat O che vezzosa aurora* was in existence by around 1585. Here is a fascinating instance of Lassus responding to music by a composer junior to himself by two decades. *O che vezzosa aurora* itself owes a debt to the newly emerged *canzonetta* manner; its bite-sized declamatory phrases are punctuated by clear-cut cadences, but given gravitas by the sonorous six-voice texture and minor-key tonality. Lassus develops its constituent parts into a surprisingly substantial Magnificat, one that is much more varied in tone and texture than its model, even when it draws explicitly on its musical content.

O che vezzosa aurora,	*Oh, how charming the dawn,*
che con la vaga luce,	*that with a pleasant light,*
così bel sol n'adduce.	*brings forth so beautiful a sun.*
Titon sia con la tua pace,	*Tithonus*[xv]*, may it be by your leave,*
ch'una più bella aurora il cor me sface.	*that an even fairer dawn undoes my heart.*

17. Giovanni Maria Nanino: Erano i capei d'oro (a5)

18. Lassus: Magnificat Erano i capei d'oro (a5)

Nanino's *Erano i capei d'oro* sets a sonnet by Petrarch, using the variegated musical manner of the 1570s; gone is the kind of sustained recitation used in Anselmo de Reulx's Petrarch setting. The text speaks of female beauty and encouragement. Why Lassus should

then have chosen this piece as a Magnificat model can only be guessed; possibly a topical nod to a living woman blends here with the obvious alignment of Petrarch's alluring portrait with the Virgin Mary. Literal transfers from model to Magnificat occur when the rhythms of the two texts align; for instance, Nanino's 'qual meraviglia' becomes Lassus's 'et sanctum nomen'. This madrigal also served as the basis for masses by Gregor Aichinger and Antonio Mortaro.

Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi
che 'n mille dolci nodi gli avolgea,
e 'l vago lume oltra misura ardea
di quei begl'occhi, ch'hor ne son sì scarsi;

e 'l viso di pietosi color farsi,
non so se vero o falso mi parea:
i' che l'esca amorosa al petto havea,
qual meraviglia se di subit'arsi?

Non era l'andar suo cosa mortale,
ma d'angelica form'et le parole
sonavan altro che pur voce humana:

uno spirito celeste, un vivo sole
fu quel ch'i' vidi, et se non foss'hor tale,
piaga per allentar d'arco non sana.

Francesco Petrarca, RVF 90

Her golden hair was loosed in the breeze
which would turn it into a thousand sweet knots,
and a lovely light would burn immeasurable
from those beautiful eyes, that now are dimmer;

and her face would turn to the colour of pity
(I do not know whether truly or falsely) it seemed
to me: I who had the tinder of love in my breast,
what wonder is it if I suddenly caught fire?

The way she moved was not that of a mortal,
but of some angelic form, and her words
sounded different from a mere human voice:

a celestial spirit, a living sun was what I saw,
and if she were not such now, my wound
would not heal by the loosening of the bow.

This and the following Magnificat draw on madrigals by Alessandro Striggio, whose career path crossed with Lassus's on several occasions. Striggio, who was of noble birth, served the Florentine Medici court as a travelling diplomat as well as a musician. In the summer of 1567 he spent two weeks in London; his six-voice madrigal *D'ogni gratia e d'amor* must connect in some way with that visit, because it pays homage to the English queen and nation in suitably flattering terms. Why Lassus should then have based a Catholic Magnificat on this madrigal is a mystery, since it would hardly have made a suitable gift for England's Protestant Queen Elizabeth. Possibly it was written for an event at which English diplomats were present. A *Missa d'ogni gratia e d'amor* by Johannes Flori also exists, copied in a Munich court manuscript dated August 1579.

D'ogni gratia e d'amor la madr'errante
lasciato Pafo e Gnido
prese di Parda sciolta il bel sembiante,
e ratta corse al Bretanico lido,
dove il suo regno fido
lieto di gigli d'or le fa corona.
Suon'il Tamigi, suona
de l'altero suo nom'e 'l mont'e 'l piano
e 'l gran padre Oceano.

The wandering mother of all grace and of love
left Paphos and Knidos[XVI],
took on the fair guise of a nimble leopard,
and swiftly ran to the British shore,
where her faithful kingdom
joyfully makes her a crown of golden lilies.
The Thames sounds and resounds her exalted
name, as do the mountain and the plain,
and the great father, Oceanus.

Ecco ch'io lasso il core bore no composer's name when it was first printed in 1575, alongside works by Giovanni Ferretti; but an arrangement of it for lute, published in 1584, identifies Striggio as its author. This is one of Lassus's most compact models, and almost all of its music is used one way or another in the Magnificat. As so often, the transfers are at their most audible in the Magnificat's outer sections; the end in particular brilliantly expands Striggio's closing music. A mass based on this madrigal was composed by Giorgius Florio, probably for use at the imperial court of Rudolf II.

Ecco ch'io lasso il core	*Here I leave my heart*
a chi nutrisce il suo del mio dolore.	*to one who feeds their sorrow on mine.*
Deh come vivrò io	*Ah, how will I live*
lungi d'ogni ben mio?	*far from my every happiness?*
Dunque morrommi, e perché chi m'annoia	*Therefore I will die, so that the one who wearies*
viva della mia mort'in maggior gioia.	*me may live in greater joy by my death.*

The *Magnificat Ancor che col partire* occupies a special place in Lassus's output: it was probably his earliest Magnificat to be modelled on a pre-existing polyphonic work, whether it be a chanson, madrigal or motet. Certainly it was the first to become widely available, in an edition printed in 1576. Its model, Cipriano de Rore's *Ancor che col partire*, was one of the most celebrated madrigals of the sixteenth century. It dwells on the subject of parting between lovers; but here, separation gives rise to pleasure no less than sorrow, because thoughts of reunion outweigh the regrets. In his Magnificat, Lassus significantly adjusts the madrigal's sound-world by adding a second high voice where Rore had only one. *Ancor che col partire* was frequently adapted and reworked by other composers, and served as the basis of masses by Jachet of Mantua, Philippe de Monte and Balduin Hoyoul.

Ancor che col partire
io mi senta morire,
partir vorrei ogn'hor, ogni momento,
tant'è il piacer ch'io sento
de la vita ch'acquisto nel ritorno.
Et così mill'e mille volt'il giorno
partir da voi vorrei:
tanto son dolci gli ritorni miei.

Even if in parting from you
I feel myself dying, I would like
to leave you each hour, each moment,
so great is the pleasure I feel
in the life that I gain upon each return.
And so, a thousand thousand times a day
would I take my leave of you:
so sweet are my returns.

Cipriano de Rore's *Da le belle contrade* is again concerned with daybreak; but whereas Vecchi's *O che vezzosa* had welcomed it, *Da le belle contrade* resents it. The scene is a bedroom; two lovers, intertwined through the night, must separate at dawn; and the woman in particular rails against it, in an outburst of passionate protest. Clearly this madrigal's erotic subject made it a risky model for Lassus to echo in a Magnificat. His solution is largely to ignore the woman's expostulations; a few remnants do show through at 'dispersit superbos' and 'et semini eius', but otherwise Lassus tends to focus instead on the (male) narrator's content from the madrigal's opening and close. Not surprisingly, this fine madrigal seems never to have served as a model for a mass.

Da le belle contrade d'oriente
chiara e lieta s'ergea Cipriga, ed io
fruiva in braccio al divin idol mio
quel piacer che non cape' humana mente,

quando sentii [XVII] doppo un sospir ardente:
'Speranza del mio cor, dolce desio,
t'en vai, haimè, sola mi lasci? a dio!
Che sarà qui di me scura e dolente?

Ahi crudo Amor, ben son dubiose e corte
le tue dolcezze, poi ch'anchor ti godi
che l'estremo piacer finisca in pianto.'

From the fair regions of the East,
clear and joyful Venus was rising, and I
enjoyed, in the arms of my divine idol, such
pleasure that surpasses human understanding,

when I heard, after an ardent sigh:
'Hope of my heart, sweet desire, you go,
alas, you leave me alone? ah God! What will
become of me here, sombre and sorrowful?

Ah cruel Love, so uncertain and brief
are your sweetnesses, for it still pleases you
that such intense pleasure may end in weeping.'

Né potendo dir più, cinseme forte,
iterando gl'amplessi in tanti nodi
che giammai ne fer più l'edra o l'acanto.

Unable to say more, she held me tightly,
repeating her embraces in such knots
as never the ivy or acanthus could match.

27. Lassus: S'io esca vivo (a6)

28. Lassus: Magnificat S'io esca vivo (a6)

Lassus was an important and prolific madrigal composer; almost two hundred Italian-texted works by him survive, of varying genres and lengths. The question therefore arises of why, out of all these riches, he chose only *S'io esca vivo* to serve as a Magnificat model. The madrigal itself is unsettling. Its text, drawn from the end of a *sestina* by Petrarch, yearns for rescue from a life-threatening danger, expressed through the imagery of shipwreck. Did Lassus set it to music for personal reasons, or in connection with some historical event? Did he then hope its words would come to mind in a model-transfused Magnificat, as if summoning aid from the Virgin Mary? The transfer of content from madrigal to Magnificat is unusually thorough in this setting, and it is also a highly developed work, larger than any other Lassus madrigal-based Magnificat. It therefore ends this survey on an impressively high note: urgent, volatile, enigmatic.

S'io esca vivo de' dubbiosi scogli
et arrive il mio esilio ad un bel fine,
ch'i' sarei vago di voltar la vela
et l'anchore gittar in qualche porto!
Se non ch'i' ardo come acceso legno,
sì m'è duro a lassar l'usata vita.

If I escape alive from the perilous rocks
and my exile comes to a good end,
how eager would I be to turn the sail
and cast the anchor in some port!
Would I not burn like a kindled craft,
so hard I find it to leave the habits of life.

Signor della mia fine et della vita,
prima ch'io fiacchi 'l legno tra li scogli
drizz'a buon porto l'affannata vela.

Lord of my end, and of life,
before I break my vessel on the rocks,
direct my weary sail to a fair port.

Francesco Petrarca, RVF 80, 31–39

Liner notes: John Milsom, 2023
Translations: Roseen Giles

[I] B: 'devea'; see *Rime di M. Pietro Bembo [seconda impressione]* (Venice: Nicolini da Sabio, 1535; first print 1530) and *Stanze*, ed. by Alessandro Gnocchi (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina), p. 56–7.

[II] B: 'volendo a'.

[III] B: 'exempio'.

[IV] There is another variation the final two lines of Bembo's poem in some sources: 'Fermi ne' be' vostr'occhi un solo sguardo, | et fugga poi, se pò, veloce o tardo'; see Bembo, *Delle rime di M. Pietro Bembo terza impressione* (Rome: Dorico, 1548) p. 139. For sources and variations see *Stanze*, ed. Gnocchi, p. 57. The variant in Noletto's setting can be found in *Rime di M. Pietro Bembo [seconda impressione]* (Venice: Nicolini da Sabio, 1535): 'Fermisi a mirar voi sol una volta; | Et fugga poi, se pò, con l'alma sciolta.'

[V] Petrarch, *The Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, trans. by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 58; 'credesse'.

[VI] P: 'lassò'.

[VII] P: 'de' suoi color'".

[VIII] In Petrarch this is plural, see 16n.

[IX] The reference is to Rore's patron Margaret of Parma (1522–1586).

[X] The earliest print containing this piece, *Il primo libro delle fiamme a quattro e cinque voci*, ed. Giulio Bonagiunta (Venice: Girolamo Scotto, 1565) differs slightly in its text from Rore's *Il quinto libro di madrigali a cinque voci* (Venice: Antonio Gardano, 1568), upon which the given text is based.

[XI] A: 'pensai'; see 13n.

[XII] References to the winds Euro and Aquilon (i.e., Boreas) are found in Virgil (*Aeneid* VIII. 223; XII. 733; III. 687)

[XIII] This poem is a variation upon a sonnet by the sixteenth-century poet Emilia Anguisciola (or Anguissola); there are significant differences between the poetic source and the text set to music. In Francesco Trucchi's edition (*Poesie italiane inedite di dugento autori*, ed. by Francesco Trucchi (Prato: Guasti, 1847), III, p. 313) Anguisciola's text is given thus: 'Quando lieta pensai sedermi all'ombra | tra' bei purpurei fior del nuovo aprile, | e cantando obliar mio stato umile, | tenendo sol d'amor l'anima ingombra; | ecco di nubi il ciel tosto d'adombra | dal mar degl'Indi alla remota Tile, | e il mio dolce sperar alto e gentile | di noiosi pensier subito ingombra: | talchè non s'aprirà sereno mai | il sol per darmi riposato un giorno; | tanto mi fur di ben le stelle avare! | Lagrime, affanni e dolorosi guai | statemi adunque eternamente intorno, |finchè m'uccidan queste pene amare'. See also Antonio Corsaro's note in Ortensio Lando, *Paradossi*, ed. Corsaro (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2000), p. 229, 13n, and Dana Eatman Lawrence, 'Class, Authority, and the *Querelle des femmes*', PhD diss. (Texas A&M University, 2009), pp. 185–6.

[XIV] Note that the gender of the speaker in the poem is female (i.e., 'lieta', 'trista').

[XV] Tithonus, Prince of Troy and lover of Eos, the goddess of the dawn.

[XVI] Both cities of Paphos and Knidos have associations with the goddess Aphrodite (Venus), which here refers to Elizabeth I.

[XVII] Rore's partbook (*Il quinto libro de madrigali a cinque voci*, Venice: Gardano, 1566; repr. 1568) has 'senti'.

Philip Cave
director

Philip Cave is a conductor, educator, singer, and the Director of Magnificat. His musical training began as a chorister at the age of seven, leading to studies at Oxford University under Simon Preston and David Wulstan and a career performing as soloist and with ensembles including the Clerkes of Oxenford, The Tallis Scholars and the Choir of New College, Oxford.

Cave's approach to early music is fueled by curiosity and imagination, whether through the restoration of unknown or neglected works, or the reexamination of the familiar. He emphasises (actually, obsesses about) phrasing and textual expression, and with his background as a singer, encourages the use of vocal colours, timbres, and both bold and subtle nuances.

Now based in the USA, Cave directs choral ensembles at Duke University Chapel and is Executive Director of Chorworks, a non-profit organisation that provides singers and conductors with the opportunity to study and perform choral music from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and is still trying to understand the difference between a biscuit and a scone.

Magnificat

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