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ARCHIVE PRODUCTION

HISTORY OF MUSIC DIVISION OF THE DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON GESELLSCHAFT

IV. RESEARCH PERIOD

The High Renaissance

SERIES A: THE NETHERLANDERS FROM JOSQUIN DES PREZ

PATRIMONIO UC
JOSQUIN DES PREZ

Missa Pange lingua

Kyrie · Gloria · Credo · Sanctus · Agnus

8 Secular Works

N'esse pas ung grant desplaisir · Déploration de Johannes Okeghem
Fortuna d'un gran tempo · Bergerette savoyene · Parfons regretz
Scaramella · Faulte d'argent · Basiez-moy

Pro Musica Antiqua
Conductor: Safford Cape

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IV. RESEARCH PERIOD

THE HIGH RENAISSANCE

SERIES A: THE NETHERLANDERS FROM JOSQUIN DES PREZ

Josquin Des Prez:

Missa Pange lingua 8 Secular Works

The life of Josquin Des Prez — that *Prince of Music* whose towering figure dominated the last quarter of the Fifteenth Century and the first quarter of the Sixteenth — is divided into five periods: 1440—1459, French Flanders; 1459—1501, Italy; 1501—1503, France (and Belgium); 1503—1507, Italy; 1507—1521, French Flanders.

Born about 1440 in the old country of Hainault (or perhaps in Vermandois, on its southern borders) he became, probably at an early age, a choir boy at the Collegiate Church of St. Quentin. Although it seems certain that during his early youth he came into contact with Johannes Okeghem, we have nevertheless no precise knowledge of this relationship. Neither do we know the exact date of his being received into the priesthood: at all events, he was already invested with this dignity in 1479.

The greater part of his life, from 1459 to 1501 and from 1503 to 1507, Josquin spent in Italy. *Biscantor* (or adult singer) at the Milan Cathedral from 1459 onward, in 1473 he entered the chapel — at that time the most important in Italy — of the Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza, where he stayed for six years. Following this, and after a period of seven years during which he was perhaps already in the service of Ascanio Sforza, who became Cardinal in 1484, Josquin was attached to the Pontifical Chapel between 1486 and 1494 under Innocent VIII and Alexander VI while remaining in the service of the Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (1490 to 1493), from whom he acquired one of his appellations, that of Josquin *Dascanio*.

From 1501 to 1503 Josquin found himself at the court of Louis XII of France, and enjoyed close relationship with this monarch and the young Archduke Philippe le Beau. In 1501 he went to

Bruges to look for singers for the chapel of Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, and two years later he himself became the chapel master of this prince.

One loses track of the Master between 1505 and 1507, a period during which his presence was nevertheless reported in Florence. The year 1507 marked the beginning of his final return to his own country. At first, Josquin, now about 67 years old, perhaps took up residence in the household of Margaret of Austria. This princess, who held him in great esteem and affection, obtained for him from the Emperor Maximilian the priory of the Church of Notre-Dame at Condé-sur-l'Escaut.

It was there, it appears, that Josquin, ever young in spirit — as late as 1520 he offered a collection of "new songs" to Charles the Fifth — ended his days and died (according to the copy of his epitaph preserved in the Municipal Library at Lille), aged about 81, on August 27th, 1521.

Josquin composed much more sacred than secular music, and at the present time one can count 20 masses and 90 motets. The mass *Pange lingua*, written, so it would seem, after 1514, was first published by Ott in 1539. The starting point of this mass is the Gregorian music of the vespers hymn for the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, whose text we owe to St. Thomas Aquinas. Each stanza of this hymn is composed of six verses, a phrase of the Gregorian cantilena corresponding to each verse. The entire cantilena, therefore, consists of six phrases. The unity of the entire mass is assured in the first place by the appearance of the first phrase of the *Pange lingua* at the beginning of each section of the mass; and then by the constant presence (except in the passage *Et in unum Do-*

minum of the *Credo*) of the Gregorian cantilena interwoven into the entire context of the mass. The *cantus firmus* appears regularly in the tenor and in the highest voice. It undergoes the most diverse processes of figuration — processes which often make it difficult to recognize. The themes employed as counter-melodies generally originate in a detail of the given melody.

It is of the greatest interest to follow Josquin's working-out of the theme *Pange lingua* throughout the course of the mass. The masterly organisation of detail, the co-ordination of the different elements, the adaptation of the material to the various ends — liturgical, formal, expressive — demanded by the work, only serve to increase our admiration for the resplendent genius of Josquin Des Prez.

Josquin wrote about seventy secular works. These are sometimes called "minor" by comparison with the masses and the great motets. If length is the criterion, this description can be justified; otherwise it is not acceptable. In fact, in his secular works, Josquin found a field far less limited by convention than in his sacred ones. Attentive as he was to the slightest detail of expression, he was animated by a spirit which, although ignorant of nothing which contributed to the greatness and profundity of liturgical music, was certainly very much inclined towards irony and jesting. And so, thanks to the thousand facetious, picturesque or simply humorous details of the secular texts, he could give free play to the imagination of his creative genius, and so compose perfectly original works which are no less miracles of art because of their brevity, and which must be numbered among the most authentic masterpieces of the musical repertoire. Safford Cape

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