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AMELIA LECLAIR, DIRECTOR

The Great Motets of Sulpitia Cesis

*with select members of
The Concord Womens Chorus*

Saturday, February 26th, 8pm
Episcopal Parish of the Messiah, Newton

Sunday, February 27th, 5pm
First Lutheran Church Boston



photo by Hendrik Broekman

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THE GREAT MOTETS OF Sulpitia Cesis

Amelia LeClair, Director

CAPPELLA CLAUSURA - THE ENSEMBLE:

Gail Abbey, soprano (*ga*)
Roberta Anderson, soprano (*ra*)
Christina Calamaio, mezzo-soprano (*cc*)
Lori Brannen Chang, soprano (*lbc*)
Elizabeth Mitchell, mezzo-soprano (*em*)
Janet Poisson, soprano (*jp*)
Adriana Repetto, soprano (*ar*)
Kimberly Sizer, soprano (*ks*)
Hendrik Broekman, organ (*hb*)
Mai-Lan Broekman, violone (*mlb*)
Catherine Liddell, theorbo (*cl*)

Special guests William Mack Ramsey (*wmr*) and Thomas Zajac (*tj*), trombones

MEMBERS OF THE CONCORD WOMENS CHORUS (CWC):

Susan Avery, Sara Ballard, Kathleen Chapman,
Patsy Eickelberg, Bee Fortin, Anne Hayden,
Cheryl Hayden, Jennifer Kobayashi,
Jane Luckner, Rowena Nelson, Lisa Micali,
Cynthia Nunan, Moragh Ramage, Stephanie Smith,
Cynthia Sorn, Pam Swing, Emily Teller

Please turn off cell phones and electronics

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PROGRAM

1. Stabat Mater dolorosa

ar, ga, cc, cwc
iuxta crucem lacrimosa
dum pendebat Filius.

*The sorrowing mother stood
weeping beside the cross
while her son was hanging there.*

Cuius animam gementem,
contristatam et dolentem,
per transivit gladius.

*Her grieving soul
sad and dolorous,
was pierced through as by a sword.*

O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti.

*O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed
mother of an only son.*

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Christi Matrem si videret
in tanto supplicio?

*Who is the man who would not weep
if he saw the mother of Christ
in such distress?*

Sancta Mater isud agas
crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.

*Holy Mother, hear me,
and inflict the wounds of the cross
deeply in my heart.*

Tui nati vulnerati,
iam dignatii pro me pati,
paenas mecum divide.

*Your son, covered with wounds,
desired to suffer for me;
may I share his pains.*

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
cruce hac inebriari
ob amorem filii.

*May his wounds hurt me,
may I become intoxicated with the
cross,
for the love of your son.*

Quando corpus morietur



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fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria.
*When my body dies
may my soul be granted
heavenly glory.*

2. Hic est beatissimus Apostolus

(John 21:20)

tutti

et evangelista Ioannes
qui privilegio amoris praecipui
caeteris altius a Domino
meruit honorari
hic discipulus ille quem diligebat Iesus
qui supra pectus Domini
in caena recubuit.

*This is the most blessed Apostle
and evangelist, John*

*Who by privilege of a special favor
deserved to be honored
by the Lord more highly than the rest.
That is the disciple whom Jesus loved
Who reclined upon the breast
of the Lord at supper.*

3. Quest'è la bell'e santa vincitrice

for S. Caterina

tutti

che di tenace fed armat' il petto
sprezzand'ogni diletto
e'l fral viver amico
vint'ha'l mondo la carn'e'l suo nemico
Godi dunque felice, anima bella
in mezz'al divin choro del celeste
tesoro
il ben di cui bramar maggior non lice.

*This is the beautiful and saintly
conqueror*

*who, having armed her breast with
tenacious faith,
despising any delight
and friend of fragile life,
vanquished the world, the flesh and her
enemy*

*Therefore enjoy happily, o lovely soul,
in the midst of the divine chorus of
celestial treasure,
the goodness, more than which one
should not desire.*

4. Il mio più vago Sole, morto

ga, ar, cc, wmr, tj
par che più avvampi
e più dell'alme i campi
scaldar all'ombra d'un bel tronco ei
suole;
e ben è duro sasso
d'ogn'humor privo e casso
ò pur terra spinosa e persa in tutto
quella ch'ha si bei raggi
niega il frutto.

*My loveliest Sun is dead,
and yet it seems that the more it burns,
the more it warms the field of the souls
int he shade of a lovely trunk;
and it it indeed a hard stone
deprived and extinguished of every
humor
or a thorny and completely lost land
which denies its fruits
to such beautiful rays.*

5. Dulce Nomen Jesu Christe (Psalm 98:3 and 19:8)

tutti Cappella Clausura
omnem afferens iustitiam
iocundans mentem iubilo,
confiteamur ergo et laudemus
hoc nomen magnum
quoniam terribile et sanctum est.
Hi in curribus et hi in equis,
nos autem in nomine Iesu exultabimus,
quoniam terribile et sanctum est.

*O sweet name of Jesus Christ,
bearer of all justice,
who cheers the mind with jubilation,
let us praise and laud your great name
which is awesome and holy.
Some trust in chariots, and some in
horses;
be we will exalt the name of Jesus
which is awesome and holy.*

6. Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel

(Psalm 71/76)

ra, lm, ks, cwc, hb, mlb, cl, wmr, tj
qui facit mirabilia magna solus,
quis Deus magnus sicut Deus noster,
tu es Deus qui facis mirabilia,

benedictum nomen maiestatis tuae
in aeternum replebitur
maiestate tua omnis terra fiat.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
who only doeth wondrous things,
who is so great a God as our God.
Thou art the God that doest wonders,
blessed be your glorious name
and forever with your glory
shall the whole earth be filled.*

7. Cantemus Domino

*ga, ar, cc, lm, ks, ra, cwc, hb, mlb,
wmr, tj*

gloriose enim magnificatus est.

Equum et ascensorem
proiecit in mare.

Fortitudo mea Dominus

et factus est mihi in salutem.

Iste Deus meus,

et glorificabo eum,

Deus patris mei,

et exaltabo eum.

*I will sing unto the Lord,
for he hath triumphed gloriously.
The horse and his rider
hath he thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength,
and he is become my salvation.
This is my God,
and I will praise him,
my father's God,
and I will exalt him.*

8. O crux splendidior (Antiphon for the Feast of the Holy Cross)

ra, cc, ar, ks, lm, lbc, wmr, tj

Cunctis astris,

Mundo celebris,

Hominibus multum amabilis,

Sanctorum universis,

Quæ sola digna fuisti

Portare talentum mundi;

Dulce lignum, dulces clavos,

Dulcia ferens pondera,

Salva præsentem catervam

In tuis hodie laudibus congregatam.

*O Cross,
Splendid beyond the stars,
Celebrated throughout the world,
Most worthy of the love of men,
Most holy of all things,
You who alone were worthy
To bear the ransom of the world.*

*Sweet wood, sweet nails,
Bearing so sweet a weight,
Save the present assembly
Gathered here today to sing your
praises.*

9. Salve gemma confessorum,

ar, cc, ks, jp, lm, ga, wmr, tj

Lumen Christi, vox cælorum,

Tuba vitæ, lux doctorum,

præsul beatissime.

Qui te patrem venerantur

te ductore consequantur

vitam in qua gloriantur

beatorum animæ.

Amen

*Hail, jewel of the confessors,
Light of Christ, voice of the heavens,
Trumpet of life, light of the learned,
Most blessed bishop.
Those who in you worship a father,
Having you as a guide,
May be guaranteed that (eternal) life in
which
The souls of the blessed are glorified.
Amen.*

10. Puer qui natus est nobis hodie

(Matthew, 11:9-11)

ar, lm, ra, cc, jp, wmr, tj

plusque propheta

est hic, est enim,

de quo Salvator ait:

inter natos mulierum

non surrexit maior

Ioanne Baptista.

Alleluia.

*A child is born to us today,
more than a prophet
is he, this is he
of whom the Savior spoke:
among those born of woman*

*there has risen no one greater
than John the Baptist.
Alleluia.*

11. Peccò Signor quest'alma,
lbc, cc, lm, ks, ga, jp, cl, hb, mlb
Hor piagn'e graida
Il suo grave fallire,
E tua clemenza
Tua pietà l'affida,
Che se col tuo morire
Già la tornast'in vita,
Hora gli prest'aita
Acciò disciolta dal corporeo velo
Lieta se'n voli a rivedert'in cielo.

*O Lord, this soul has sinned,
It now weeps and cries out
Its grave failings,
And entrusts itself to your clemency
And to your mercy,
For it with your death
You once returned to life,
Now come to its aid
So that, unbound by its bodily veil,
It may fly happily to see you again in
heaven*

12. Jubilate Deo (Psalm 65)
tutti (no trombone)
omnis terra:
psalmum dicite nomini eius,
date gloriam laudi eius,
benedicite gentes Deum nostrum,
et auditam facite
vocem laudis eius,
dicite Deo quam terribilia sunt
opera tua Domine,
in multitudine virtutis tuae
mentientur tibi inimici tui,
omnia terra adore te
et psallat tibi Domine.

*Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye
lands:
speak the psalm of his name,
make his praise glorious,
bless our God, ye people,
and make heard
the voice of his praise,
Say unto God: How terrible
are your works O lord,
through the greatness of thy power
shall thine enemies submit themselves*



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unto thee.

*All the earth shall worship thee,
and shall sing psalms unto thee, O
Lord.*

13. Cantate Domino canticum

novum, (psalm 95 / 99)

tutti (no theorbo)

cantate Domino omnis terra,
cantate Domino et benedicite nomini
eius.
annunciate de die in diem salutare eius.
psallite Deo nostro.
psallite sapienter regi nostro.
Jubilate Deo omnis terra
et exaltate ei cum tremore,
quoniam suavis est Dominus.
Cantate Domino gloriose,
jubilate Deo Jacob
quia ipse est Deus:
ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos.

*O sing unto the Lord a new song,
sing unto the Lord, all the earth,
sing unto the Lord and bless his name,
show forth his salvation from day to
day.*

*Make a joyful noise unto our Lord,
make a joyful noise judiciously to our
King.*

*Rejoice unto the Lord, all the earth,
and exalt him with trembling,
for the Lord is good.*

*Sing gloriously to the Lord of Jacob,
for he is God:*

*it is he that made us, and not we
ourselves.*

14. Ecce ego Ioannes (Revelation,
5:11-12)

ra, ar, lm, cc, wmr, tj
vidi et audivi vocem
angelorum multorum
in circuitu throni,
et animalium et seniorum,
et erat numerus eorum
milia milium dicentium:
Dignus est agnus,
qui occisus est,
accipere virtutem

et divinitatem et sapientiam
et gloriam et honorem
et benedictionem.

*Behold that I, John,
looked and heard the voice
of many angels
around the throne,
and the living creatures and the elders,
and they numbered myriads
and thousands of thousands, saying:
“Worthy is the Lamb
who was slain
to receive power
and wealth and wisdom
and glory and honor
and blessing.”*

15. O Domine Jesu Christe

ks, ar, cc, lbc, jp, lm, wmr, tj
adoro te,
in cruce vulneratum,
felle et aceto potatum.
Deprecor te ut vulnera tua
sin remedium animae meae
et mors tua sit vita mea.

*O Lord Jesus Christ,
I worship you,
wounded on the cross,
having drunk of gall and vinegar.
I pray that your wounds
be a remedy for my soul,
and that your death be my life.*

16. Maria Magdalena et altera Maria

(Matthew 28:1, 6-7))

ra, ga
ibant di lucolo ad monumentum.
“Iesum, quem quaeritis,
non est hic:
surrexit sicut dixit,
precedet in Galileam,
ibi eum videbitis.”

*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
went to the place of the sepulcher.
“Jesus, whom you seek,
is not here;
He is risen, as he said.*

*He goes before you into Galilee:
There you shall see him."*

**17. Sub Tuum Praesidium
tutti Cappella Clausura, wmr, tj**
confugimus,
clementissima Virgo
suscipe nos unica spes nostra
et nostris delectare laudibus
quibus indigni
omni te laude dignissima
collaudamus
aufer a nobis iniquitates nostras,
ut digni canamus tibi gloriae melos.

*Under your protection we take refuge,
most merciful Virgin,
sustain us as our only hope,
and delight in our praise
which is unworthy.
All should praise you, o most worthy,
We extol thee,
carry away from us our sins,
so that we may worthily sing
to you a glorious song.*

18. Ascendo ad Patrem meum (John
20:17 and 15:26)
ks, ra, ar, cc, ga, lm, wmr, tj
et Patrem vestrum,
Deum meum et Deum vestrum.
Alleluia.
Et cum assumptus fuero a vobis
mittam vobis spiritum veritatis
et gaudebit cor vestrum.

*I ascend unto my Father,
and your Father,
to my God and your God.
Alleluia.
And when I am taken from you,
I will send unto you the spirit of truth
and your hearts will rejoice.*

**19. Parvulus Filius hodie natus est
nobis.** (Isaiah 9:6)
tutti
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et vocabitur nomen eius
Admirabilis Deus fortis

Pater futuri saeculi.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et factus est principatus eius
super humerum eius.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

*For unto us a child is born.
Glory to God in the highest.
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, the mighty God,
the Everlasting Father.
Glory to God in the Highest.
And the government shall be
upon his shoulder.
Glory to God in the highest.*

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CLAUSURA

In 1563, the Council of Trent decided to systematically impose clausura (encloisterment) on all female religious communities, thus overriding individual rules, privileges and exemptions of each order. For obvious reasons, this was met with many years of protest from virtually every order. Nonetheless, during

the counter-reformation, it was incumbent on the Church both socially and politically to have living metaphors of an inviolate church, so the church overcame the protests with the help of

local patriarchs. In an age Michel Foucault has termed “the Great Confinement”, living saints were locked up along with prostitutes, orphans, spinsters, badly married women, poor women, begging women, abused women, and immoral women. Being a source of great anxiety to the patriarchs, controlling them became the key to social control in general, and clausura was the model for that control.

It is remarkable that, despite their confinement, so many creative voices came out of these cloisters and doubly remarkable that they managed to publish their work. We present to you this evening almost the full known opus of one of these composers, renowned in her day but ignored by history. We hope to change that as this music is not only politically correct but beautifully crafted and deserving of an audience. We are thankful that scholars such as Candace Smith of Cappella Artemisia in Bologna - whose editions we are using - continue to unearth these marvelous collections.

SULPITIA CESIS (1577-1619?)

S. Geminiano, Modena
Count Annibale Cesis and his wife Barbara gave 300 gold scudi to their daughter Sulpitia as her dowry when she took her vows at S. Geminiano in 1593, a convent which was known for its musical versatility and skill. Cesis’ musicianship thrived and she became quite a renowned lutenist and composer. Scholars have – thus far – unearthed 8 part books containing 23 motets. Cesis dedicates her *Motetti Spirituali* thus:

“...with the splendor and nobility of your name, these few musical labors may be defended against the meanness of their detractors, and also that they might be occasionally performed in the convents of nuns, in praise of our common Lord.”
Cesis writes here to Anna Maria Cesis, a relative and nun at the convent of Santa Lucia in Rome, an even more renowned musical center. Anna Maria Cesis’ nobler branch of the family held more sway in the world of music and publishing. It is always interesting to note that these nuns were not unaware of the politics of music making, and the risks they were taking, nor of the boundaries they constantly pushed.



Cesis' motets are lovely renaissance works, despite their being written in the early baroque. They are clearly written by someone whose musical thoughts are more harmonic than melodic; as such they present difficulties to the singer because some of the melodic movement is choppy and some is flat, giving preference to the harmonic movement. All of this, however, becomes moot when the final grand sonority of Cesis' motets comes to the ear. The overall sound is lush and spacious, and the text deeply spiritual, and sometimes deeply personal as with **Il mio più vago Sole**, written in Italian, as are 4 others in the collection. It is music that serves a double purpose: it is meant to be sung within the cloister walls, bouncing off all that stone and stucco, and it is meant to be heard as it soars through the walls to the public chiesa.

However, Cesis' motets were published - as were the works of most of the nuns of this era - with an eye to the market, thus for a chorus of men and women. We don't know if they ever were performed by mixed choruses, but we do know that they were performed by the women in the convent. How might that have happened? There are many choices, the most obvious being transposition upwards so that female voices might manage the low parts. But this in itself presents problems because these composers weren't restricting themselves to writing within a small range. Cappella Clausura has routinely scored tenor and bass lines up an octave; some scholars say this was the norm in these female microcosms, and that transpositions up the octave were not displeasing to the ears of the day; we of the 21st century may find it difficult to believe in a cadence without the tonic as the lowest note, but apparently it's all about being accustomed. Listen to the first phrases of the **Stabat Mater**: we've omitted the bass line altogether, to create a sort of incipit to the full hymn with full chorus.

From travelogues and records of the day we know that the wealthier musical convents sometimes had instruments, and women who played them, despite the Vatican's frequent edicts ruling them out (the frequency of these edicts suggests a healthy disregard for them). The convent of San Geminiano, during Cesis' time, was blessed with trombonists, cornetists, and string players and of course Cesis herself as lutenist. We know this because her manuscripts carry rubrics for them, eg: a trombone should play a fourth down (*per il trombone alla quarta bassa*), a singer may transpose up an octave if it pleases (*si canta all'ottava alta se piace*). Clearly, this music was written to be performed at the discretion of the performer, in whatever key worked best and with whatever forces were at hand.

Thus, we approximate tonight what might have been a performance within the walls of San Geminiano. In addition to our 8 soloists and our usual band consisting of theorbo, a portative organ (small, one manual), and a violone (a bass viol), we have two trombones and an additional 16 singers from the Concord Womens Chorus. This great number of forces and timbres has allowed me to score and arrange this music with more variety than usual. Because Cesis' motets are mostly polychoral (written for two choirs) we can juxtapose solo voices against full choirs, or have two sets of full choirs, or two sets of soloists. We can have the instruments join the voices or not - and we can choose which part they play, and in which choir they should play, and again, juxtapose one set with another, such as the brass against the strings and keyboard, or the brass with solo voices only, perhaps no brass and only strings or... the list goes on, and I hope I have incorporated just about every color that can be mixed with such a divinely large box of paints.

-Amelia LeClair



BLUE HERON

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in celebration of
Tomás Luis de Victoria (d. 1611)
and in honor of Early Music America's 25th anniversary

A program of music by Victoria and other Spanish composers to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the master's death, featuring his celebrated masterpiece, the six-voice Requiem Mass or *Officium defunctorum* of 1605.

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Alex Ross | *The New Yorker*, January 10, 2011

