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CREATE CHANGE

A thousand beautiful and graceful inventions

The glorious age of medieval and renaissance canons

The University of Queensland Chamber Singers
Graeme Morton, *Director*
Denis Collins and Jason Stoessel, *Artistic Directors*

Program

Anonymous artist, Portrait of an unknown humanist or musician, c.1510–1515. Credit: Galleria Nazionale CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Anonymous canons from Tournai

1. *Kyrie*
2. *Sanctus*

Matteo, Du Fay, Okeghem

3. Matteo da Perugia, *Gloria Spiritus et alme*
4. Guillaume Du Fay, *Gloria Ad modum tube*
5. Johannes Okeghem, *Prenez sur moi*

Three chansons by Jean Mouton

6. *En venant de Lyon*
7. *Qui ne regrettroit*
8. *Adieu mes amours*

Prioris, Josquin and Willaert

9. Prioris*, Ave Maria, gratia plena*
10. Josquin Des Prez, *Se congié prens*
11. Adrian Willaert, *Christi Virgo dilectissima*

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Sacerdotes Domini*

12. *Sanctus – Pleni sunt coeli – Osanna – Benedictus – Osanna*
13. *Agnus Dei*

Paolo Agostini, *Missa Pro vigiliis ac feriis in canone*

14. *Kyrie*
15. *Sanctus – Osanna - Benedictus – Osanna*
16. *Agnus Dei*
17. *Sit nomen Domini*

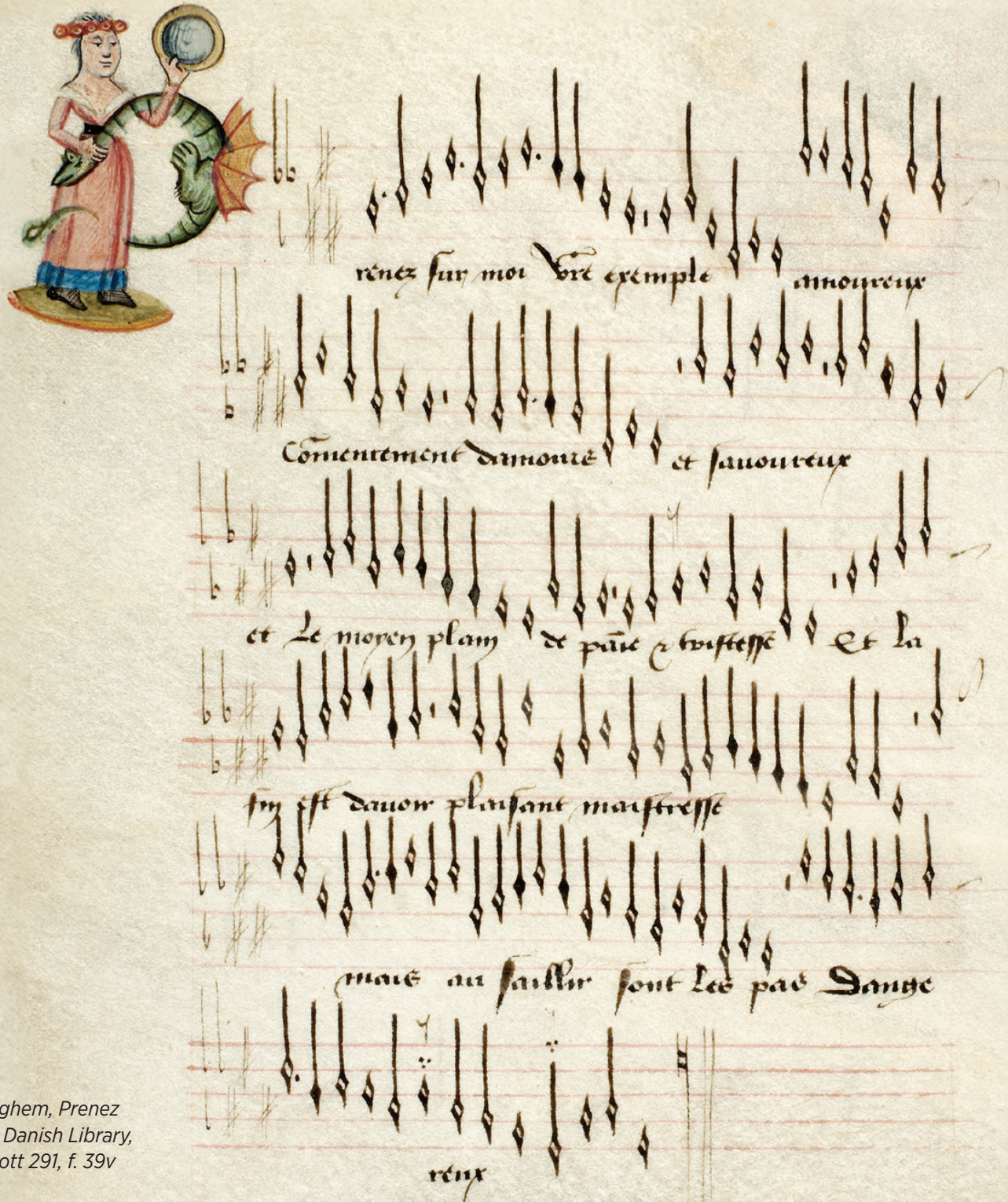
“One can hear daily many compositions by the most excellent Adrian Willaert which, in addition to being full of a thousand beautiful and graceful inventions, are eruditely and elegantly composed.”

Gioseffo Zarlino, Le istitutioni harmoniche (1558),
trans. Guy A. Marco and Claude Palisca

Musicians have always delighted in music that demonstrates ingenuity, grace and skill. Listeners are all familiar with how melodies may be shared, exchanged or tossed around between voices and instruments, from the mighty fugues of Bach to the simple rounds such as Frère Jacques (Are you sleeping) that are so beloved of children and the adults around them.

A common approach running through many centuries of music is the canon – a composition that is based on voices starting one after the other with the same melody and managing to sing the same notes and rhythms but with each voice beginning at different times. Composers exploited the attractiveness and potential of canon in myriad ways: from experimenting with different time distances separating voice entries to manipulating how high or low the first voice's melody can be in relation to the following voices. Some composers even went so far as to write two or three canons that could be performed at the same time as part of a single composition (the result is called a double or triple canon). All of these techniques have remained staples of a composer's training even to the present day. Yet, the golden age of canonic composition was the late Middle Ages and Early Modern era. From the early fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries, musicians explored canon's every permutation. Moreover, they used canons as vehicles for many of the most expressive artistic creations in the entire history of music. Canons formed the bedrock not only of music created for use in church, but they were also used for setting texts of secular, and sometimes quite earthy orientation. The present recording offers a tour of the magnificent world of graceful canonic inventions, from anonymous works only recently rediscovered to masterpieces for large and small combinations of voices that rigorously or playfully apply the musician's art to texts for prayer, relaxation, and amusement.

The first two pieces, a ***Kyrie*** and ***Sanctus*** point to the precarious nature of canons in early sources. Composed by an unknown musician, both canons lay unrecognised until recently in a famous mid-fourteenth-century manuscript originally written for the cathedral of Tournai. Nestled between sections of the famous "Tournai Mass," an international team of musicologists recognised that two melodies set to the words of the Kyrie and Sanctus were in fact three-part unison canons. The clear projection of the sacred text requires the voices to sing the same text at the same time even when their canonic melodies are intertwined in diverse ways.



Johannes Okeghem, Prenez sur moi. Royal Danish Library, Manuscript Thott 291, f. 39v

Matteo da Perugia was active at the turn of the 15th century in Milan and is well known today for his intricate polyphonic textures and adventurous rhythms. His ***Gloria Spiritus et alme*** involves setting the standard text of the Gloria with occasional interpolations or tropes in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Matteo captured the spirit of animation and supplication that is commonly found in prayers and musical works from this time in his setting. The two lowest sounding voices are in canon in relatively long notes while the upper two voices have free melodies that contrast with the lower voices by using faster rhythms and different melodic directions. The overall effect, with its deliberately grating melodic clashes, is startlingly fresh.

Guillaume Du Fay (c.1397–1474) was born near Brussels and trained at the cathedral of Cambrai where he was employed for much of his life, although he frequently visited and worked in Italy, including in the papal chapel. He left an impressive range of sacred and secular compositions. His ***Gloria Ad modum tube*** sets the same text as in the work by Matteo da Perugia but without tropes. Du Fay's work features two canons heard simultaneously: the soprano and tenor lines form a brisk and melodious pairing while another tenor and a countertenor imitate each other in an ostinato-like pattern before gradually coming together with a variety of alternating and colourful effects that bring this double canon to a lively close.

Johannes Okeghem (c.1410–1497) had a posthumous reputation as a master of musical puzzles thanks to some of his more cryptic works that perplexed and sometimes awed following generations of musicians. Consequently, his care for beautifully crafted and expressive musical textures using the compositional resources of his time, including canon, has often been overlooked. The chanson ***Prenez sur moi*** is a canon for three voices where the second and third voices each enter at an equally higher distance from the immediately preceding voice. This "stacking" of the voices leads to all sorts of challenges for the composer. Ockeghem's choice of text in the conventional vein of courtly love lyrics provides a glimpse into a cultural world where elegantly fashioned poetry and ingenious compositional techniques came together in combinations of witty and polished craftsmanship.

Jean Mouton (c.1459–1522) also wrote a "stacked" canon but this time for four voices. In his ***En venant de Lyon***, Mouton combines artful compositional technique with a text that was part of a long tradition of mischievous reflections on the rustic theme of Robin and Marion. The final word of this poem also provided the composer with an opportunity to pun on his name. A more contemplative aspect can be observed in Mouton's setting of a poem in remembrance of the French composer Antoine Févin (c.1470–c.1512).

Qui ne regrettroit is a double canon where the tenor and cantus form one canonic pair and the alto and bass the other pair. This setting conveys a sense of professional brotherhood among the leading composers of the time in commemorating the passing of one of their own. Mouton's ***Adieu mes amours*** is another double canon, this time with the upper two voices and the lower two voices forming canonic pairs.

The identity of the composer **Prioris** (fl.1490–c.1514) remains elusive. Even working out the first name of this composer has been a challenge, with scholars in recent years suggesting that it might have been Denis. A superb example of canonic artistry can nonetheless be found in Prioris's ***Ave Maria, gratia plena***. This work is written for eight voices comprising four canons for two voices each. The graceful result of Prioris's virtuosic interweaving of multiple levels of melodic activity belies the level of invention that this composer must have carefully worked out before assembling all eight voices into a harmonious whole.

The greatest champion of musical canons in the Renaissance was **Josquin Des Prez** (c.1450–1521). Josquin is thought to have been born in what is today Belgium before serving as singer and composer in the papal choir in Rome, the private chapel of the Duke of Ferrara, and at cathedrals and collegiate churches in France.

Canons pervade the music of Josquin to an extent hardly seen with any composer before or since his lifetime. In ***Se congié prens***, the composer places a canon at the fifth in the two middle voices of this six-part work. The soaring phrases of the altus line, which often conclude with a delightful triplet phrase, contrast to the other free voices which make ample reuse of musical ideas contained in the two canonic voices.

The excellent training that **Adrian Willaert** (c.1490–1562) received at the French court ensured his patronage by the Italian nobility and the rapid advance of his career to the position of maestro di cappella at St Mark's Basilica in Venice, the most prestigious musical post in Europe at that time. Willaert's ***Christi virgo dilectissima*** is another double canon: two pairs of voices working in different time distances to each other, this time in a setting of a text that is in two sections.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525–1594) composed a great many canons throughout his distinguished career as the leading Roman composer of the late sixteenth century. Most of the sections of his ***Missa Sacerdotes Domini*** feature six voices, three of which are generated from stacked canons with the other three voices in free counterpoint. This is the case in the settings of texts for the ***Sanctus***, ***Osanna***, and ***Agnus Dei.*** By contrast, the ***Pleni sunt coeli*** is a three-voice stacked canon for two tenors and a baritone.

At times Palestrina set aside canon, as in the setting of the ***Benedictus*** where four voices engage in various combinations of freely imitative counterpoint.

The most active exponent of canonic technique in early seventeenth-century Rome was **Paolo Agostini** (c.1583–1629) who finished his career as maestro di cappella at St Peter's Basilica. Agostini published six books of music in 1627 that signal the culmination of his achievements as a composer of great craftsmanship and ingenuity, especially of different kinds of canon. The ***Missa Pro vigiliis ac feriis in Canone*** is the opening work in the first book published in 1627. The compact and ingenious musical textures demonstrate great canonic invention, from a terracing effect where all four voices enter from highest to lowest in the ***Kyrie*** and from lowest to highest in the ***Agnus Dei***. The **Sanctus**, by contrast, enjoys a to-and-fro effect by alternating voice entries amongst high and low registers. A similar approach is used in the ***Osanna*** to provide an exuberant affirmation of heavenly splendour. The ***Benedictus*** involves a musical puzzle because it can be sung in two ways. The first version for three voices can be changed into a second version, again for three voices, by moving the soprano melody down so that it can be sung by the bass. The tenor and alto melodies remain the same in each version.

Agostini included a setting of the text ***Sit nomen Domini***, a customary pontifical blessing at the end of the Mass. Here, a fifth voice moves in parallel thirds with the bass, lending further sweetness and ingenuity to the canonic interplay of the bass with the other three voices.

The music presented in this recording is part of the repertoire that was the focus of two Discovery Projects awarded to Denis Collins and Jason Stoessel by the Australian government through the Australian Research Council's Discovery Project funding scheme (project numbers DP 150102135 and DP180100680). We are also grateful for the generous support of The University of Queensland School of Music and the University of New England for making this recording and the collaboration underpinning it possible.

Program Notes © Denis Collins and Jason Stoessel (2024)

Texts and translations

Anonymous, *Kyrie* from the Tournai Manuscript

Original	Translation
Kyrie Eleison – Christe Eleison – Kyrie Eleison	Lord have mercy – Christ have mercy – Lord have mercy

Anonymous, *Sanctus* from Tournai Manuscript

Original	Translation
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus	Holy, holy, holy,
Domine deus sabaoth.	Lord God of Hosts.
Pleni sunt celi et terra gloria tua.	Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Osanna in excelsis.	Hosanna in the highest.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini.	Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord.
Osanna in excelsis	Hosanna in the highest.

Matteo da Perugia (fl. c.1400–16), *Gloria Spiritus et alme*

Original

[Gloria in excelsis Deo]

Et in terra pax hominibus bone voluntatis

Laudamus te, Benedictus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te,

gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam,

Domine Deus, Rex celestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jhesu Christe,

Spiritus et alme orphanorum paraclite.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,

Primogenitus Marie virginis matris

qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;

qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. *Ad Marie Gloriam*

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, *Mariam sanctificans,*

tu solus Dominus, *Mariam gubernans*

tu solus Altissimus, *Mariam coronans*

Jhesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu:

in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen

Translation

[Glory to God in the highest]

And peace on earth to men of good will.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee.

We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.

Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty.

O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ

O Spirit and comforter of orphans

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

First-born of the Virgin Mother Mary.

Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer, *to the glory of Mary.*

Who sits at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For Thou only are holy, *sanctifying Mary.*

Thou only are the Lord, *ruling Mary.*

Thou only art most high, *crowning Mary,*

O Jesus Christ.

Together with the Holy Ghost

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Guillaume Du Fay (c.1397–1474). *Gloria Ad modum tube*

[Text as above but without interpolations in italic font]

Johannes Ockeghem (c.1410–1497), *Prenez sur moi*

Original

Prenez sur moi vostre exemple amoureux
Commencement d'amours est savoureux
et le moyen plain de paine et tristesse.
Et la fin est d'avoir plaisant maistresse
mais au saillir sont le pas dangereux.

Translation

Take me as your example in love:
the beginning of love is delicious,
in the middle it is full of pain and sadness,
and the outcome is to have a pleasing mistress;
but getting free of it is a dangerous path.

Jean Mouton (c.1459–1522), *En venant de Lyon*

Original

En venant de Lyon, bon, bon, bon, bon
Trouvai en un buisson
Robin et Marion.
Il lui levait son pelisson, bon, bon, bon, bon,
Mais je ne sais qu'ils font.
Robin a dit à Marion: "bon, bon, bon, bon,
Voici bien gardé mouton."

Translation

When coming from Lyon, hey, hey, hey, ho!
I spied in a thicket
Robin and Marion.
He hitched up her dress, hey, hey,
hey, ho!
But I know not what they do.
Robin said to Marion: "hey, hey, hey, ho!
Here is well kept mutton."

Jean Mouton, *Qui ne regrettroit*

Original

Qui ne regrettroit le gentil Févin?
Très habile, il était doux et bénin;
Donc, en notre endroit prions de cœur fin
Qu'en paradis soit;
Où souvent pensait parvenir enfin.

Translation

Who will not miss the gentle Févin?
So skilful, he was also sweet and kind;
So, from the depth of our heart let us pray
That he be in paradise;
Where often he thought he would end up.

Jean Mouton, *Adieu mes amours*

Original

Adieu, mes amours, adieu [je] vous commande.
Adieu, je vous dis, jusques au bon temps.
Je suis en souci de quoi je vivrai.
La raison pourquoi je la vous dirai:
Je n'ai point d'argent.
Vivrai-je du vent?
Si l'argent du roi ne vient plus souvent.

Translation

Adieu, my loves, I must say Adieu.
Adieu, I tell you, until good times return.
I am worried about how I will live.
The reason for this I will tell you:
I have no money.
Will I live on wind?
If the king's money comes not more often.

Prioris (fl.1490–c.1514), *Ave Maria gratia plena*

Original

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.
Amen.

Translation

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art Thou amongst women
and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.
Amen.

Josquin Des Prez (c.1450–1521), *Se congié prens*

Original

Se congié prens de mes belles amours,
Vrays amoureulx, ne m'en veuillez blasmer,
J'en ay souffert de plus griefves douleurs,
Que ne font ceulx qui naigent en la mer.
Car tant l'aymer, m'est toujours tant amer,
Qu'avoir ne puis delle ung tout seul regard
Fors que rigueur pour mon cueur entamer,
Si prens congié avant qu'il soit plus tard.

Translation

If I take leave of my fair dalliances,
True lovers, don't blame me for it,
I have suffered more grievous pains
Than those who swim in the sea;
For to love her so much is still so bitter for me
Since I cannot get even one glance from her
Save for a harsh one for breaking my heart;
So I take leave before it's too late.

Adrian Willaert (c.1490–1562), *Christi virgo dilectissima*

Original

Christi virgo dilectissima,
Virtutum operatrix,
Opem fer miseris.
Subveni, Domina,
Clamantibus ad te jugiter

Translation

Virgin most dear to Christ
Worker of virtues
Bring aid to the poor.
Assist, Lady, those
crying out to you perpetually.

Quoniam peccatorum mole premimur
Et non est qui adjuvet.
Idcirco te petimus:
Subveni Domina
Clamantibus ad te jugiter

Since we are oppressed with our iniquity
And there is no one else who can help.
Therefore we beseech thee:
Assist, O Lady, those
crying out to you perpetually.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525–1594), *Sanctus and Agnus Dei from Missa Sacerdotes Domini*

Texts as above for:

Sanctus – Pleni sunt coeli – Osanna – Benedictus - Osanna

Original	**Translation**
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis,	Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis,	Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi dona nobis pacem.	Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Paolo Agostini (c.1583–1629), *Missa Pro Vigiliis ac Feriis in Canone*

Texts as above for:

Kyrie – Sanctus – Osanna – Benedictus – Osanna – Agnus Dei

Original	**Translation**
Sit nomen Domini benedictum.	Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Notes on performers and artistic directors:

The University of Queensland Chamber Singers
Graeme Morton, *Director*
Denis Collins and Jason Stoessel, *Artistic Directors*
Kathryn Morton, *Producer*
David Spearritt, *Recording Engineer*

Graeme Morton, AM

Graeme Morton is a Choral Performance Fellow at The University of Queensland, Australia, and he is Director of Music at St John's Cathedral in Brisbane, and Founder-Director of the Brisbane Chamber Choir.

The University of Queensland Chamber Singers

The UQ Chamber Singers is one of several programmes offered with Ensemble Studies in the UQ School of Music. Open to students from throughout the university, its members and alumni can be found in ensembles across Australia, in music teaching positions, and in a wide variety of non-musical fields.

SINGERS:

Soprano
Emma Bunzli
Jaimee Dowsett
Alexandra Dunk
Taylor Holmes
Naomi Jowett
Eliza King
Sarah Longford
Jada Love
Libby Lynch
Jessie Madsen
Taisha Paterson-Burr
Thalia Prakash
Madeleine Short

Tenor
Daniel Dempster
Gus Fowler
Isaac Holtby
Nicholas Hughes
Aidan Nosenzo
Alexander Voltz

Alto
Alexandra Bartetzko
Talia Garrett-Benson
Gabrielle Cassard
Beth Cave
Karina Diaz
Dinelli Gurullawela
Rachel Hoey
Anna Madrigal
Hannah McNamara
Grace Rackemann

Bass
Ben Anderson
Paul Conrad
Davis Dingle
Lachlan Guilfoyle
Dominic Retschlag
Zachary Vella

Denis Collins

Denis Collins is an associate professor of musicology at The University of Queensland, Australia.

Jason Stoessel

Jason Stoessel is an associate professor of musicology and digital humanities at the University of New England, Australia.

Performances were guided by editions by

Jason Stoessel [1–3, 5], Marco Gozzi [4], Frank Dobbins [6-9, 11], Patrick Macey [10], Lino Bianchi [12-13], and Alana Blackburn, Denis Collins and Jason Stoessel [14-17].

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Back inside cover image: Giovanni da Verona and workshop, intarsia from the choir stalls of the cathedral basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lodi. Villanova sul Sillaro/Lodi, 1523–25. Licensed Image: age fotostock Spain S.L. The musical notation in this image was identified by Jason Stoessel as a new source for Jean Mouton's *En venant de Lyon*.

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