



BYRD ENSEMBLE

directed by Markdavin Obenza

www.byrdensemble.com | 4722 Fauntleroy Way SW #123, Seattle, WA 98116

HAIL

CORNYSH, ISAAC, PÄRT

Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Holy Rosary Church

4139 42nd Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98116

PROGRAM

Filipe de Magalhães (c. 1571-1652)	<i>Gloria</i> from Missa O Soberana luz
Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)	The Woman with the Alabaster Box
Heinrich Isaac (1450-1517)	Tota pulchra es
Isaac	Virgo prudentissima
<i>Intermission</i>	
William Cornysh (1465-1523)	Salve regina
Cornysh	Ah Robin
Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)	Salve Regina 2

WE HEAR THE POWER OF RENAISSANCE MUSIC resonate through time to inspire the composers of today, not just abstractly but in a very direct way. Our program, "HAIL," showcases two settings of the *Salve regina* text by two English composers separated by four centuries. William Cornysh's 15-minute masterpiece serves as the direct inspiration for Gabriel Jackson's contemporary setting, both in style and spirit.

The *Salve regina* text is one of the most important texts to Christendom. It is commonly said at the end of the rosary as a prayer and one of the four Marian antiphons which have been sung since the 13th century. The text has served as the inspiration for a plethora of devotional works and some of the most profound pieces in the Renaissance period.

Accompanying the settings of *Salve regina* are equally magnificent motets by a selection of European composers, including Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, Flemish composer Heinrich Isaac, and Portuguese composer Filipe de Magalhães, a composer we are featuring for the first time in concert.

BYRD ENSEMBLE

DIRECTOR

Markdavin Obenza

SOPRANO

Margaret Obenza

Ruth Schauble

Christina Siemens

ALTO

Sarra Sharif Doyle

Joshua Haberman

TENOR

Orrin Doyle

Sam Faustine

BASS

Clayton Moser

Willimark Obenza

Matthew Peterson

Support the Byrd Ensemble by making a donation below.



This project was supported, in part, by 4Culture/King County Lodging Tax

CULTURE

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BYRD
ENSEMBLE



Photo: Willi Pixel

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Portuguese composer **Filipe de Magalhães** (c. 1571-1652) worked at the Cathedral of Évora. He moved to Lisbon to become a singer in the royal chapel and eventually the royal chapel master in 1623. We suspect that many of Magalhães's works were lost in the great earthquake of 1755, but what has survived shows us how incredibly expressive and varied his writing was. Opening the program is the "Gloria" from his mass *Missa O soberana luz* (O Sovereign Light), likely in association with one of the major Marian feast days in Portugal, *Nossa Senhora da Luz* (Our Lady of Light). The *Missa* might also have been based on a sacred villancico, a genre of Spanish song, perhaps one by Magalhães himself.

Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** (b. 1935) is one of the world's most-performed living composers and has become a seminal figure in contemporary classical music. After some time experimenting in neoclassical styles, Pärt decided to use Schoenberg's twelve-tone

technique and serialism in his compositions, displeasing the Soviet establishment enough that they banned his early works. The Soviet Union's restrictions on artistic expression, along with Pärt's dissatisfaction with his own work, sent him into several periods of contemplative silence, during which he studied choral music from the 14th through the 16th centuries. His biographer, Paul Hillier, says, "He had reached a position of complete despair in which the composition of music appeared to be the most futile of gestures, and he lacked the musical faith and will power to write even a single note." Out of this period of musical soul-searching emerged a compositional style that informed his music beginning in the 1970s—tintinnabuli (bell-like)—characterized by simple triads and scalar melodic motion. *The Woman with the Alabaster Box* (1997) is set to text from Matthew Chapter 26, recounting an incident in which the disciples reprimand a woman for anointing Jesus's head with expensive ointment instead of selling the ointment and giving the proceeds to the poor.

The Byrd Ensemble's recording of The Woman with the Alabaster Box is featured on their album "Arvo Pärt," recorded in 2013, produced by Scribe Records.

Heinrich Isaac (1450-1517) was regarded as one of the most significant contemporaries of French composer Josquin des Prez. His career spanned over 30 years and allowed him to travel far from his homeland of Flanders into Germany, Italy, and Austria. He took several positions as a professional singer before making his way to Vienna to take up the position of court composer for Emperor Maximilian I. Around 1502, Isaac traveled to Ferrara to the Este court, where he wrote the motet *La mi la sol la sol la mi* in merely two days and competed with Josquin for employment. A famous letter from the agent of the Este family compared the two composers: "[Isaac] is of a better disposition among his companions, and he will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to and not when one wants him to."

Isaac's *Tota pulchra es* and *Virgo prudentissima* are both based on chant found in the lower voice parts. *Tota pulchra* is scored for four lower voices and, through carefully balanced chordal and homophonic textures, delivers an intimate mood in this setting from the Song of Songs. Isaac's *Virgo prudentissima*, one of the grandest motets of the Renaissance, is a musical dedication to the Virgin Mary on one hand but also a tribute to his employer, Maximilian I, on the other, written for his coronation. The text is by humanist Vadian, and it expresses hope that the Virgin Mary will look mercifully on Maximilian I. The motet is one of Isaac's most complex works.

William Cornysh (1465-1523), a true Renaissance man, was a composer, dramatist, actor, and poet. He is known for his contributions to the Eton Choirbook, a collection of English motets compiled between 1500-1505. The beautifully illuminated manuscript contains 93 of the most virtuosic, florid, and complex motets from the Renaissance. Each motet is substantial, clocking in at around 15 minutes in duration, based on text dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Cornysh composed *Salve regina* for the men and choirboys who sang for the king. Cornysh's setting for five voices is regarded as one of

the best works from the Eton Choirbook and is thought to be the source of inspiration for Gabriel Jackson's *Salve regina 2*. Contrasting the devotional motet is *Ah Robin*, a short and simple madrigal about love in canon form.

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962) is one of Britain's most popular contemporary composers. Jackson is known for his choral liturgical pieces, which are sung by Britain's leading cathedral and collegiate choirs. He evokes a variety of styles to create a distinctly modern sound, parts of his music referencing Josquin, Tavener, and even Stravinsky. *Salve Regina 2* is one of his most substantial compositions and harks back to the Renaissance, specifically Cornysh's *Salve regina*. Jackson captures the florid and ornate nature of Cornysh's setting and goes a step further, sprinkling in subtle, Stravinsky-like rhythmic textures underneath smooth chordal writing. Structurally, both settings are similar, the text "Salve" denoting the end of one section and the beginning of the next. Jackson makes use of a compositional technique from 16th-century English church music called the "gimel." The gimel indicates that a single part divides to showcase complex and interesting partwriting. In *Salve Regina 2*, the gimel involves two solo sopranos and two solo altos singing the text "Lady! Thy goodness..." The effect is heightened with a change of meter and language.

-Markdavin Obenza

ABOUT THE BYRD ENSEMBLE

Described as "pure and radiant" (Gramophone), "immensely impressive" (Early Music Review), and "rich, full-voiced, and perfectly blended" (Early Music America), the Byrd Ensemble has been internationally acclaimed for its performances and recordings of chamber vocal music, particularly Renaissance polyphony. The Byrd Ensemble, directed by Markdavin Obenza, is a Seattle-based professional ensemble made up of 10 to 12 singers.

Since 2004, the ensemble has performed in the greater Seattle area and tours across the United States. In a performance in London, John Rutter described the ensemble as "a fine group that has achieved an enviable standard of tuning, blend, and ensemble."

The Byrd Ensemble signed with the Scribe Records label in 2011 and has since produced seven records which have been internationally acclaimed by *Early Music America*, *Gramophone*, and *Early Music Review*.

The Byrd Ensemble is represented by Artist Manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suono Artist Management (marianne@suonoartistmanagement.com).

ABOUT MARKDAVIN OBENZA

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARKDAVIN OBENZA is a choral director, recording producer, singer, and composer. He is also the director of Seattle-based choral ensemble Radiance, specializing in the performance of American choral music, and is the director of choral activities at Trinity Parish Church in Seattle, WA. As the creative director and producer for independent record label Scribe Records, Markdavin has produced CD recordings for over 40 choirs and soloists, of which several have been reviewed in *Gramophone*, *Early Music America*, *Early Music Review*, and *Fanfare*. Markdavin has also produced and directed a number of virtual choirs, including Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow*, which was featured on Modern Choral Masterworks, broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He has also produced "concertmentaries" and musical broadcasts in collaboration with various music ensembles and artists during the pandemic, including *Shaker Spirituals in Maine* (2021), featuring composer Kevin Siegfried and Radiance, for the Library of Congress American Folklife Center.

HISTORY OF THE BYRD ENSEMBLE

Artistic Director Markdavin Obenza shares the history of the Byrd Ensemble over the last 20 years through a series of blog articles on markdavinobenza.com.

Byrd Ensemble - III. Digital media, money, and our first break (2008-2010)

In 2008, Facebook and YouTube were new. Only the young and trendy spent time on these platforms documenting too much of their private lives—that is, until our parents joined and ruined it for all.

Read the full post via the QR code.

UPCOMING CONCERTS

HALLOCK at 100

Saturday, February 24, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 25, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Cathedral

1245 10th Ave E, Seattle, WA 98102

2024 marks the centenary of Peter R. Hallock's birth. These concerts launch a celebration of Peter Hallock and his music.

ALLEGRI MISERERE

Saturday, April 27, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Holy Rosary Church

4139 42nd Ave. SW, Seattle, WA

Sunday, April 28, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Trinity Parish Church

609 8th Ave, Seattle, WA 98104

The centerpiece of this program of Renaissance and modern music is Allegri's *Miserere*. The work was exclusively sung by the Sistine Chapel Choir, though legend says that a 14-year old Mozart visited Rome and wrote out the piece perfectly from memory after just one hearing, sending the Vatican's guarded secret out into the world.

SEATTLE BAROQUE ORCHESTRA IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BYRD ENSEMBLE – VIVALDI'S VENICE

Saturday, May 4, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Bastyr University Chapel

14500 Juanita Dr NE, Kenmore, WA 98028

Sunday, May 5, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

Trinity Parish Church

609 8th Ave, Seattle, WA 98104

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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Gloria from Missa O Soberana luz

Filipe de Magalhães (c. 1571-1652)

Glória in excélsis Deo et in terra pax homínibus bonæ voluntátis. Laudámus te, benedícimus te, adorámus te, glorificámus te, grátias ágimus tibi propter magnam glóriam tuam, Dómine Deus, Rex cæléstis, Deus Pater omnípotens.

Glory to God in the highest. And peace to his people on Earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Dómine Fili Unigénite, Iesu Christe, Dómine Deus, Agnus Dei, Fílius Patris, qui tollis peccáta mundi, miserére nobis; qui tollis peccáta mundi, súscipe deprecatióem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserére nobis.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of The Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father have mercy on us.

Quóniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dóminus, tu solus Altíssimus, Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spíritu: in glória Dei Patris. Amen

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Woman with the Alabaster Box

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, to what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them: Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me, for ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

- Matthew 26:6-13

Tota pulchra es

Heinrich Isaac (1450-1517)

Tota pulchra es amica mea, et macula non est in te, favus distillans labia tua, mel et lac sub lingua tua, odor unguentorum tuorum super omnia aromata. Iam enim hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit; flores apparuerunt, vineae florentes odorem dederunt et vox turturis audita est in terra nostra. Surge propera amica mea, veni de Libano, veni coronaberis.

You are wholly beautiful, my friend, and there is no blemish in you; your lips drip honeycomb; honey and milk under your tongue, and the smell of your fragrance perfumes everything. Now the winter has passed, the rain is over and gone; flowers appear on the earth, pruning time has come; the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land; Arise my friend, come from Lebanon, come and you will be crowned.

-Song of Songs 4:7-8

Virgo prudentissima

Virgo prudentissima, quae pia gaudia mundo attulit, ut sphaeras omnes transcendit et astra sub nitidis pedibus radiis, et luce chorusca liquit, et ordinibus iam circumsepta novenas ter tribus atque ierarchiis excepta. Supremi ante Dei faciem steterat, patrona reorum.

Dicite qui colitis splendentia culmina Olympi: Spirituum proceres, Archangeli et Angeli et almae virtutesque throni vos principum, et agmina sancta, vosque potestates, et tu dominatio caeli flammantes Cherubin, verbo Seraphinque creati, an vos laetitiae tantus perfuderit nunquam sensus, ut aeterni Matrem vidisse tonantis consessum.

Caelo, terraque, marique potentem Reginam, cuius numen modo spiritus omnis et genus humanum merito veneratur adoratur. Vos, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael testamur ad aures illius, ut castas fundetis vota precesque pro sacro Imperio, pro Caesare Maximiliano. Det Virgo omnipotens hostes superare malignos; restituat populis pacem terrisque salutem.

Hoc tibi devota carmen Georgius arte ordinat Augusti Cantor Rectorque Capellae. Austriacae praesul regionis, sedulus omni, se in tua commendat studio pia gaudia mater. Praecipuum tamen est illi quo assumpta fuisti, quo tu pulchra ut luna micat electa es, et ut sol.

Tenor cantus firmus

Virgo prudentissima, quo progredieris, quasi aurora valde rutilans? Filia Sion, veneratur adoratur. Tota formosa et suavis es: pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol.

Heinrich Isaac (1450-1517)

When the most wise Virgin, who brought holy joy to the world, passed beyond all spheres and left the stars beneath her glistening feet in gleaming radiant light, she was surrounded by the ninefold Ranks and received by the nine Hierarchies. The protector of sinners, she stood before the face of Almighty God.

You who inhabit the dazzling heights of Heaven, Leaders of the Spiritual Host, Archangels and Angels, bountiful Virtues, and you Thrones of Principalities, holy armies, Powers, Dominions of Heaven, fiery Cherubim, and Seraphim created from the Word, say whether such a feeling of joy has ever overwhelmed you as when you saw the assembly of the Mother of the everlasting Almighty.

In heaven, on land, on the sea, she is the powerful queen, whose majesty every spirit and every human being praises and adores. You we invoke, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, to pour upon her chaste ears our prayers and entreaties for the sacred empire and for Maximilian the Emperor. May the all-powerful Virgin grant that he conquer his wicked enemies, and restore peace to the nations and safety to the land.

With faithful skill Georgius, the Emperor's Precentor and chapel master, rehearses this anthem for you. Austria's Protector, diligent in everything, earnestly commends himself, Mother, to your tender joys. The highest place, however, belongs to Him by whom you were taken up, through whom you shine, beautiful as the moon, and excellent as the sun.

Tenor cantus firmus

Virgin most wise, where are you going, glowing brightly like the dawn? Daughter of Sion, we praise and adore you. Wholly fair and sweet you are; beautiful as the moon, excellent as the sun.

Salve regina

William Cornysh (1465-1523)

Salve, regina, Mater misericordiae, vita, dulcedo, et spes
nostra, salve. Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae; ad te
suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.

*Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness
and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of
Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears.*

Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte; et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, dulcis
Virgo Maria.

*Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy
toward us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed
fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin
Mary.*

Ah Robin

William Cornysh (1465-1523)

Ah, Robin, gentle Robin, Tell me how thy leman doth and thou shalt know of mine.

My lady is unkind I wis, Alack why is she so? She lov'th another better than me, and yet she will say no.
I cannot think such doubleness for I find women true, In faith my lady lov'th me well she will change for no new.

Salve Regina 2

Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962)

Salve regina, mater misericordiae: vita, dulcedo, et spes
nostra, salve. Ad te clamamus exsules filii Evae. Ad te
suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte. Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, O
dulcis virgo maria. (see translation above)

Lady! thy goodness, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
Surpass all science and all utterance;
For sometimes, Lady! ere men pray to thee
Thou goest before in thy benignity,
The light to us vouchsafing of thy prayer,
To be our guide unto thy Son so dear.

Interspersed texts:

*GEOFFREY CHAUCER (c. 1343-1400) from The Prioress's Tale,
re-written by WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)*

O gracious Lady, glory of Jerusalem,
Cypresse of Syon and Joye of Israel,
Rose of Jericho and Star of Bethlehem,
O glorious Lady, our asking not repel,
In mercy all wymen ever thou dost excel,
Therefore, blessed Lady, grant thou thy great grace
To all that the devoutly visit in this place.

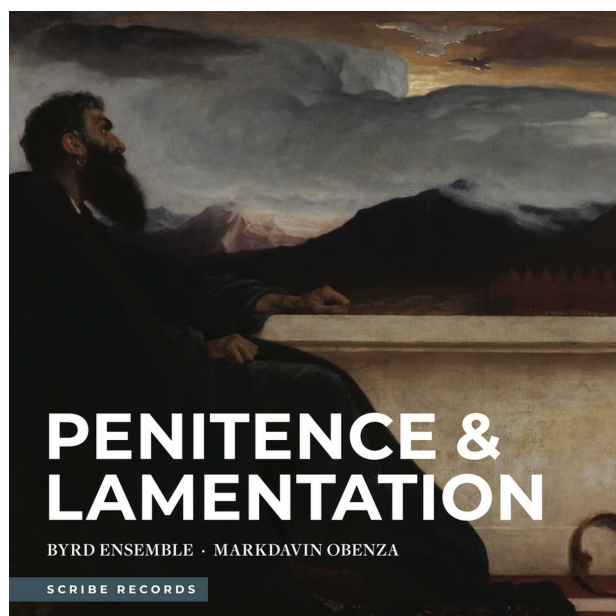
O Blessed Lady, Queen of Heaven,
Mortals' comfort, angels' love,
Golden House and Mystic Rose-
Noble field for holy seed,
Rising grain for distilling dew,
Tower of David, House of Gold-
Dayspring, daystar, blade of light,
Blessing this world's dark with dawn,
Mystic Rose and Morning Star-
Blessed Lady, mild and sweet,
Be as the dew of Heaven fallen,
Our frost-born rose, in August drought our snow.

ANONYMOUS: 'The Pynson Ballad', Verse 21

*ANONYMOUS (13th century): from Edu be thu, Hevene
Quene, re-written by PETER DAVIDSON (b. 1957)*

“PENITENCE AND LAMENTATION” IS ON SALE!

We are thrilled to announce the release of our seventh recording on the Scribe Records label, “Penitence & Lamentation.” You can listen and purchase the album on all streaming platforms. We have a limited number of CDs for sale at this concert.



- 01 Nicolas Gombert - Lugebat David Absalon
- 02 William Byrd - Domine secundum actum meum
- 03 Thomas Tallis - In jejuniis et fletu
- 04 Thomas Tallis - Absterge Domine
- 05 Thomas Crecquillon - Pater peccavi
- 06 Robert Ramsey - How are the mighty fallen
- 07 William Byrd - Emendemus in melius
- 08 William Byrd - Ye sacred muses
- 09 William Byrd - Ne irascaris Domine
- 10 Nico Muhly - Fallings **World Premiere**
- 11 Robert Carver - O bone Jesu

For our 20th Anniversary season, we are pleased to release *Penitence & Lamentation*, the album of Renaissance motets that includes the world-premiere recording of *Fallings* by American composer Nico Muhly, commissioned by the Byrd Ensemble, in honor of 400 years since the death of our namesake, William Byrd.



REVIEWS

"Although these are religious texts, you don't have to be a believer to appreciate the drama of these stories or to empathize with universal human experiences such as loss and guilt that the eleven pieces reflect."

"It is a delicate, tender and dissonant work, performed by the modeled voices of the Byrd Ensemble."

"The direction of Markdavin Obenza is excellent, guiding the exquisite and expressive singers of the Byrd Ensemble."

Bosch, Joseph. "Penitence & Lamentation." *The Byrd Ensemble, Markdavin Obenza.* Sonograma Magazine.

"To acknowledge the 400th anniversary of composer William Byrd's death, the ensemble that takes its name from him has released a terrific new album that includes four of his works... This is a beautifully performed album."

"The highlight of the album to me is the world premiere recording of *Fallings* by Nico Muhly."

Byrd, Craig. "New In Music This Week: November 3rd." *Cultural Attaché.*

"Given the sheer depth of beauty of the singing by the Byrd Ensemble, a Seattle-based early music choir that was originally formed in 2004, listeners are far more likely to feel their spirits lifted up rather than in any way pulled down."

"The program maintains a remarkably consistent sonority throughout the first nine tracks, then changing – not surprisingly given the quantum leap forward in time from William Byrd (1543-1623) to Nico Muhly (b. 1981) – but not at all jarringly so."

Nehring, Karl. "Penitence & Lamentation (CD Review)." *Classical Candor.*