

Orlando di Lasso's wild years



EGIDIUS KWARTET

*Peter de Groot-altus, Marco van de Klundert-tenor
Hans Wijers-baritone, Donald Bentvelsen-bass.*

When Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594) was 35 and had found himself a first-rate position at the court of Albrecht in Munich, his fame and standing were finally established by having his songs published by well-known printers such as Le Roy, Phalèse and Scotto. In that same year, he stopped writing madrigals and ten years later, he stopped writing chansons as well. The influence of the Jesuits and the counter-reformation turned the bright composer who until then had led a flamboyant life and wrote amusing and cheerful letters, into a devout, dedicated chapel master.

A thrilling and entertaining novel could be written about the first 35 years of Orlando's life. As a twelve year old boy from Mons (Bergen), he enters the service of the Viceroy of Sicily, where a couple of attempts are made to kidnap him because of his beautiful voice; he travels throughout Italy with the court and is offered posts in dynamic cities such as Milan, Naples and... Rome. There, he writes his madrigals and villanelles and astonishingly modern compositions by way of a commentary on the discussion about the 'new music'. When his parents become ill, he returns to the Low Countries, travels to England, then becomes an undercover diplomat in Antwerp, where rumour has it that he is working as a spy. He has his *opus 1* and the roguish pieces from the Italian period published by the renowned printer Susato. By this time, he is 22, and his chansons sell like hot cakes. After an unsuccessful attempt at getting into the emperor's chapel, and thanks to his personal contacts with the second most powerful man in The Netherlands after the emperor, bishop/minister Granvelle, he becomes a singer in Munich, where he shortly afterwards becomes chapel master in the enormous court chapel. He marries Regina Wäckinger, by whom he has two sons. Meanwhile, his much-loved, often immoral chansons are appropriated by the Huguenots and equipped with 'heretical' texts. Albrecht dies and is succeeded by his son Wilhelm, with whom Orlando has excellent relations. They keep up an entertaining correspondence full of wit and puns in a mixture of German, French, Italian and Spanish. As part of his job, Lassus often travels to Venice, and also to Nuremberg and Paris. Wilhelm likes Orlando's music so much that he has a series of luxury editions of his church music printed. This project turns out to be so costly that the prince goes bankrupt.

Meanwhile, Bavaria is suffering under an oppressive counter-reformatory regime. Lassus finally loses all interest in producing any more secular music. In his fifties, he adopts a distinctly devout way of life. The result is a huge, unlimited production of religious music in a reserved, almost tranquil style. He is by then the absolute master of an ingenious Apollonian counterpoint. At 62, he writes his swansong, the *Lagrime de San Pietro*. A month later, he dies.

The Egidius Kwartet's programme presents pieces written by Orlando written during his wild years and the first years in Munich. The brilliant compositions by the young buck bubble with *savoir vivre*, full of bold harmonic experiments, using many languages and pulling out all the stops from deep emotion to common fun. The programme is larded with quotes from Orlando's letters. A comparison with the brilliant and humorous mind of the later genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart cannot be ignored.

Programme

In Italy

From: Madrigals and villanelles

Bianca neve è il bel collo
Mostran le braccia sue misura giusta
Madonna mia, pietà chiam'et aita
Secchi vedransi tutt'i verdi boschi
Matona mia cara

From: Prophetiae Sibyllarum

Sibylla Europaea
Sibylla Tiburtina

In The Netherlands

The Chansons

J'ay cherché la science

Chansons sottes

Un jour vis un foulon qui fouloit
Gallans qui par terre & par mer

Chansons amoureuses

La peine dure
Las voulez vous q'une personne chante

Chansons to texts by Pleiade poets

La nuict froide et sombre

Chansons grivoises

Il estoit une religieuse
Un jeune moine est sorti du convent
Fleur de quinze ans

Chansons spirituelles

Du fons de ma pensée
Heureux qui met en Dieu son esperance

Interval

In Munich

Stately motet

Haec que ter triplici (*with Lassus' name!*)

Humanistic motet

Anna, mihi dilecta

Bicinium

Beatus vir qui in sapientia

From: German Songs:

Ein Esel und das Nussbaumholz
Annelein, du singst fein
Es thut sich als verkehren

Motet

Pulvis et umbra sumus

Preceded by the chanson of the same name by
colleague Claudin de Sermisy (1490-1562)
from the Missa super *le ne menge poinct de porcq*

le ne menge poinct de porcq
Kyrie & Gloria

Conclusion

Amen, amen, dico vobis