

A Prospectus for the New Season

For the coming season, we have once more put together an exciting selection of new programmes for the **Huelgas Ensemble**. Our artistic director **Paul Van Nevel** has drawn on his wealth of repertoire expertise and unearthed a wide range of themes. In addition to well-known names - one programme is entirely dedicated to the great humanist Desiderius Erasmus - we also present the experimental innovations found in the Cypriot avant-garde of the late Middle Ages. We follow in the footsteps of the outstanding printer Petrus Phalesius; we illuminate the subject of counterpoint in all its aspects; and, after the great celebrations for the 500th Josquin Anniversary, we explore some of his equally revered contemporaries.



Fresco by Luca Signorelli (ca. 1450 - 1523) in the cathedral of Orvieto

In addition we will be repeating certain programmes that are particularly close to our hearts. These “**revivals**” are somewhat cheaper than the new productions due to the shorter rehearsal times required.

At the end of the prospectus you will also find a small selection of the vast **repertoire** that Huelgas has built up over the 50 years of its existence.

All programmes can be booked at any time, i.e. dates do not need to be tied. Should you be interested in hosting a **concert series** then please contact us for possible dates.

It goes without saying that any **specific programme requests** or themes are also welcomed. Our artistic director Paul Van Nevel, with his extensive knowledge of the repertoire, is always happy to tailor programmes to specific concepts and needs.

New programmes

The Music Publisher Petrus Phalesius (Leuven ca. 1510 - Leuven ca. 1575)

Petrus Phalesius belonged to the elite of famous music publishers of the Renaissance. He was even known in the farthest corners of Europe. Phalesius worked in the university city of Leuven (today the home of the Huelgas Ensemble). His editions of polyphonic music include unpublished works by composers such as Cipriano de Rore, Orlandus Lassus, Clemens non Papa, Thomas Crecquillon, Georges de la Hèle and Pierre de Manchicourt, as well as compilations of motets (eight volumes in one year!), chansons and madrigals.

Of particular interest are his editions of anthologies of madrigals by Italian composers who until then had been virtually unknown in northern Europe (Marenzio, Stabile, Gastoldi, Felis, Macque, etc.). It was only thanks to these editions that this important, innovative repertoire became known north of the Alps.

The diversity of the repertoire that Phalesius published is particularly impressive. Aside from masses and motets there are a large number of volumes of French chansons (in which he called himself "Pierre Phalèse") and instrumental music, including the famous collection of dance music *Liber Primus leviorum carminum* from 1571.

In this concert we present a highly varied kaleidoscope of the Phalesius catalogue.

Line-up: mixed instruments and singers

The Colleagues of Josquin Desprez (ca. 1455 - 1521)

We are delighted that in 2021, despite the Corona crisis, we were able to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Josquin Desprez's death! Due to the extensive attention that Josquin Desprez received in 2021 - and rightly so! - in concerts, recordings and colloquia, however, one might have developed the impression that he was an exceptional phenomenon of his generation. The truth, of course, is much more finely nuanced. There are more than a few of his colleagues who composed equally breathtaking polyphony, but who, for one reason or another, were considerably less in the limelight. In part, the environment in which they worked was simply one of lesser political or religious interest. Often, music printers in Europe saw no commercial gain in publishing the works of lesser-known names, meaning that these names remained unknown in a *circulus vitiosus*. Accidental circumstances (e.g. lost manuscripts, instrumentations unsuitable for smaller choirs) also played a role.

So there exists a number of composers who wrote equally adventurous, innovative and very personal polyphony. Now that the "Josquin year" has passed the Huelgas Ensemble would like to concentrate on precisely these works and help them achieve the high status they deserve. Therefore, among others, the work of Antoine Brumel will be explored in detail. There is also the case of Noël Bauldeweyn, whose compositions were often mistaken for works by Josquin during his lifetime due to their great contrapuntal mastery. Ludwig Senfl also deserves to be placed alongside Josquin as evidenced by several of his motets and secular odes. Alexander Agricola could certainly be described as a role model for Josquin. It is no coincidence that Agricola's works are found side by side with Josquin's in many late manuscripts.

Line-up: a cappella

COUNTERPOINT !

This programme could also be called "The Musical Offering avant la lettre", as we present, in the most striking way possible, a broad spectrum of contrapuntal ideas and polyphonic techniques. The listener can marvel at the impressive virtuosity as the most seemingly unsolvable musical "problems" are revealed. At the same time, however, one can be intoxicated by the immense splendour of sound that the great polyphonists were forever reinventing despite tricky constructive challenges.

The programme contains examples of polyphonic composition based around the hexachord. This medieval scale of *ut re mi fa sol la* spawned an astonishingly rich seam of repertoire. We hear how the hexachord was used variously as a cantus firmus or as a melodic motif not only in ever-changing forms, but also in a surprisingly versatile and contrapuntally virtuosic manner. In addition we explore the complex architectural structures built upon various Gregorian chant cantus firmi. To finish we present compositions in the so-called *floridus style*, in which all contrapuntal voices consist of ornamented melodies.

Our programme includes: movements from Antoine Brumel's Hexachord mass and Josquin Desprez's mass based on *Malheur me bat*, six-part chorale motets by Pierre de Manchicourt, and also secular and sacred works by Ludwig Daser, Michael des Buissons, Constanzo Porta, Robert de Févin, Johannes Ghiselin and anonymous composers. A programme full of gobsmacking creativity and unexpected twists!

Line-up: mixed instruments and singers

New programmes

The Cypriot Avant-garde (ca. 1380 - ca. 1420)

Thanks to a royal wedding, a magnificent and highly extensive musical manuscript has survived. The tome in question is of the greatest importance for our understanding of late medieval French musical culture. The protagonists of this wedding were Louis of Savoy (1413 - 1465) and Anne de Lusignan (1418 - 1462), daughter of Janus II de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia.

The dowry that Anne de Lusignan brought with her to the court of Savoy in Chambéry included a luxurious Cypriot music manuscript, which is of extraordinary importance for the knowledge of the repertoire and the transmission of the European avant-garde around 1400.

The manuscript contains 334 compositions - all sacred and profane forms of the time are represented: monophonic Gregorian chorales, ballads, virelais, rondeaux, ceremonial motets, isorhythmic motets and mass movements.

All the music is anonymous and is written in a very personal Ars subtilior style. In the vocal texts there are regular references to local conditions at the Cypriot court and its noble personnel, as well as references to the regional features of Cyprus. The musical style is rhythmically highly complex, the number of voices changes regularly and is by no means standardized. Both the harmonic and melodic shaping is highly individual and varies greatly across the different pieces.

A breathtaking programme that reveals a hitherto unknown facet of western music.

Line-up: mixed instruments and singers

The Ear of Desiderius Erasmus (Rotterdam 1469 - Basel 1536)

Desiderius Erasmus was one of the most influential humanists in Europe. In addition to his work as a theologian, philosopher, writer and translator of Greek and Latin texts, Erasmus was above all a close observer and critic of social developments in general and of the tensions within the Catholic Church in particular.

From 1493, after Erasmus was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, he undertook numerous journeys in Europe. This resulted in him becoming a famous (and, for many, feared) figure in both secular and ecclesiastical circles of the European intelligentsia. This was in part due to his many critical writings, philosophical works and translations.

One of his many friends was the famous Swiss music scholar Heinrich Glareanus, who wrote the most important musical treatise of humanism, the *Dodecachordon*. Glareanus also mentions in his treatise that Erasmus had been a pupil of Jacob Obrecht, an important Franco-Fleming.

This programme presents the variety of aural experiences Erasmus must have had during his stays in, among other places, the Vatican, the royal court in Paris, the English court of Henry VIII, the Burgundian court in Brussels and the humanist milieus in southern Germany and Basel. Basel was also the last city in which Erasmus settled for good.

The listener is served a veritable smörgåsbord that includes anonymous compositions from humanist songbooks as well as works by famous contemporaries of Erasmus, including Josquin Desprez, Jean Mouton, Antoine Brumel, Sixt Dietrich, Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Thomas Stolzer.

Line-up: a cappella or mixed instruments and singers



Fumeux fume – Innovations and Experiments in Vocal Polyphony

Time and again across the history of vocal polyphony there have been groundbreaking innovations and downright daring contrapuntal experiments that have left their mark on music history. Here we present a compilation of important works that stood out and inspired new developments.

The programme spans a wide range beginning with the earliest two-part organa of the Winchester Troper from the 10th century all the way up to the 17th century - a fascinating overview of the diversity of polyphony. Strokes of innovative genius such as mass movements from Guillaume de Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame*, or the extraordinary *Viderunt omnes* by Magister Perotinus as well as the Sanctus from the *Missa Faisant regretz* by the famous Josquin Desprez stand alongside nowadays completely unknown works such as a virtuoso, anonymously transmitted Cypriot motet in the Ars subtilior style, a likewise anonymous, melodious English Gymel from ca. 1320 and the almost psychedelically enraptured Old French chanson *Fumeux fume* by Solage.

This never-ending creativity is also found in works by Cipriano de Rore, Pierre de Manchicourt, and Jacobus Clement. Our programme also includes the insanely chromatic *Stravagante pensiero* by the Neapolitan Scipione Lacorcia, in which not one phrase sounds "normal".

Line-up: a cappella

Extreme harmonies

This programme consists of works that, in one way or another, threw out the rulebook regarding tonality and melodic form in a highly creative way.

In the polyphony of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance the use of modality, i.e. keys, was bound by strict laws. The basis for the tonality of the compositions was the eight church modes, or modi (Dorian, Phrygian, etc.). The works in this programme, however, display an element of daring in the way these keys were metaphorically attacked with hitherto completely unknown forms of chromaticism, both linear and vertical.

The late works in the programme by Luca Marenzio (1553 - 1593), Scipione Lacorcia (c. 1580 - after 1620), Giovanni de Macque (c. 1548 - 1624), Giuseppe Palazzotto e Tagliavia (c. 1583 - after 1653) and Michelangelo Rossi (c. 1601 - 1656) gave and still give audiences goose bumps. They are examples of an eccentric madrigal art in which the use of chromaticism had become the norm.

But the programme also includes two compositions by Antoine Brumel (1460 - 1512) and Pierre de Manchicourt (c. 1510 - 1564) that do not contain extreme chromatic harmonies at all. They are extreme in a different way: with their melodic inventiveness, the ever-breathtaking sequences and imitations, they achieve the feeling of *Stravagante pensiero* in a completely different way!

Line-up: a cappella

The Landscape of the Franco-Flemish

In the summer of 2018 Paul Van Nevel's book "Het landschap van de Polyfonisten – De wereld van de Franco-Flamands" was released. In his book Van Nevel traces the hypothesis that the melancholic and imitative style of Franco-Flemish composers was shaped by the character of the landscapes, which they would have experienced in their childhood (stillness, a safe environment, melancholia). Together with the photographer Luk Van Eeckhout Paul Van Nevel spent over twenty years journeying through the Franco-Flemish scenery to produce a fascinating and substantial work with no fewer than 168 magnificent photos.

In this concert the audience is presented with this hypothesis head-on: for each of the thirteen works performed the landscapes of each composer's childhood will be projected for all to see. Listeners will be swept away to another Franco-Flemish world by a total of twenty-four photographs of landscape and pictures of Franco-Flemish cathedrals, whilst the Huelgas Ensemble performs works by Antoine Busnois, Nicholas Gombert, Johannes Ockeghem, Josquin Desprez and Pierre Manchicourt, to name but a few. Audience members will experience the interplay between landscape and music in the most arrestingly intimate way.

This programme was recorded for a CD release by Sony Music in spring 2021.

Line-up: a cappella

Revivals

Ludwig Daser: Missa Preter rerum seriem à 6

Ludwig Daser is probably the most underrated German Renaissance composer. He was born in Munich around 1526 and was associated with the Munich court chapel from an early age - one of his teachers was Ludwig Senfl. He was appointed court director of music in 1552 and court composer in 1554 until he left Munich in 1571.

Ludwig Daser was highly respected in the German music world. The Wittenberg printer Georg Rhau published many of Daser's works, and the Bavarian State Library still holds a whole series of choirbooks containing works exclusively by him. One of these manuscripts contains his six-part parody mass *Preter rerum seriem*, one of the most remarkable masterpieces of the German Renaissance.

In 1558, Cipriano de Rore visited the Munich court chapel, and it is almost certain that the two composers knew each other well. Cipriano de Rore also wrote a mass based on the same material.

The style of Daser's mass rests entirely on two foundations: the Gregorian melody of the Marian antiphon *Preter rerum seriem* and the six-part motet on the same theme by Josquin Desprez. Counterpoint, original voice combinations (including a two-part bicinium for two bass voices in the Credo) and an extremely rich harmonic treatment of the theme make this mass an extraordinary listening experience.

The fact that Daser swapped Munich in 1572 for a position as court director of music at the Württemberg ducal chapel in Stuttgart had nothing to do with competition from Orlandus Lassus, as some believe, but with the fact that Daser could no longer hide his sympathy for Protestantism in Catholic Munich. He died in Stuttgart in 1580 leaving behind an oeuvre that was extensive in both quality and quantity.

Line-up: a cappella

Rome vs Naples

This programme subtly illuminates the profound musical changes that took place around 1600. It is especially in Italy that one finds a curious juxtaposition of preserving and continuing traditional polyphonic techniques with, at the same time, revolutionary innovations, all taking place pretty much side by side. Our focus here is on showcasing two grand cities divided by barely 250 km: Rome and Naples. We present composers whose names nobody will have heard of today, but who wrote musical history in the most headstrong manner, at the highest level.

The Roman composer Francesco Soriano (1548 - 1621), a pupil of Palestrina, enfant terrible and yet highly esteemed, represents here the *prima prattica*. His elaborate *Missa ut re mi fa sol la* - undoubtedly a highlight of late Renaissance polyphony - forms the centrepiece of our programme.

Between the mass movements we place works from Naples, where at the same time an extravagant avant-garde movement had established itself. From this significant set we have chosen three composers: Scipione Lacorcia (c. 1580 - after 1620), Giovanni de Macque (c. 1548 - 1624) and Gioseppe Palazzotto e Tagliavia (c. 1583 - after 1653). Their highly expressive madrigals break all the then established rules of harmony and open up completely new worlds of musical expression. A programme full of magnificent music that entices the audience with a fresh insight into (music) history.

Line-up: a cappella

En Albion de fluns environen - English music of the 14th century

Thanks to key manuscripts, such as the Chantilly Codex, continental music of the 14th century has already been rediscovered and become relatively well known. The same, however, cannot be said of the "crazy" 14th century in England, that is very much overdue the attention it deserves. With this programme the Huelgas Ensemble unlocks a completely unknown, yet highly impressive repertoire found in manuscripts from the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Worcester, York and London. It is clear, from the selection of isorhythmic motets, mass movements, conducti, gymel and secular songs, that here we are dealing with a highly idiosyncratic art form. The source of this music is often rooted in local traditions, which might go some way to explaining why this culture was, and indeed is, so little known in the rest of Europe.

This programme was recorded for Sony Music. The CD was released in July 2021.

Line-up: a cappella

Repertoire

The following selection presents a small but representative range of repertoire that the Huelgas Ensemble has been building up since 1971.

Josquin Desprez !

Missa Faisant regretz, Missa Malheur me bat, Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales

In the midst of life we are in death - Simone de Bonifont: Missa pro mortuis cum quinque vocibus (1556)

A real gem of the 16th century: a Requiem by a completely unknown composer (CD Cypres, 2020).

The Mirror of Claudio Monteverdi (1567 - 1643):

Missa da Capella a sei voci fatta sopra il motetto in illo tempore del Gomberti

Monteverdi's epic work in the *prima prattica* style sharply contrasted with progressive madrigals of his predecessors (CD Sony, 2016)

The Eton Choirbook (c. 1480 - 1505)

The choirbook from Eton College, Windsor: the sublime sounds of the Tudor period (CD Sony, 2012)

The Art of the Cigar

A tongue-in-cheek program all about cigar smoking. Music from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century. (CD Sony, 2011)

Wolfgang Rihm (* 13. 3. 1952): Et lux (2009)

For doubled-up vocal quartet, and string quartet: Huelgas Ensemble & Minguet Quartett (CD ECM, 2015)

The cycle: The Ear of...

In this series of programmes the Huelgas Ensemble ask the question: what would certain figures or groups of people have heard musically...

These programmes can be performed separately, and there is also the possibility of a combined "Ear Programme" as one cycle.

The Ear of Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400 - 1464)

The Ear of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 - 1553)

The Ear of Francisco de Zurbarán (1598 - 1664) (CD Cypres, 2014)

The Ear of Pieter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640)

The Ear of the Huguenots (CD Sony, 2017)

The Ear of Theodoor Van Loon (1581/82 - 1649) (CD Cypres, 2018)

The Ear of Bernard Van Orley (c.1490 - 1541)

The Ear of Christopher Columbus Kolumbus (before 1451 - 1506) (CD Sony, 2019)

Monographs

- Nicolas Gombert (ca. 1495 - ca. 1560)
- Cipriano de Rore (1515 - 1565)
- Jean Richafort (ca. 1480 - ca. 1547)
- Pierre de Manchicourt (ca. 1510 - 1564)
- Michelangelo Rossi (ca. 1601 - 1656)
- Jacobus De Kerle (1531/1532 - 1591)
- Jacob Clement (ca. 1510/15 - 1555/56) alias Clemens non Papa
- Alexander Agricola (1446 - 1506)
- Robert White (ca. 1538 - 1574)
- Firminus Caron (ca. 1440 ? - ca. 1495)



Huelgas Ensemble

Groot Begijnhof 16
3000 Leuven
Belgium

Paul Van Nevel
artistic director

Silke Jacobsen
general manager
+32 (0) 468 12 89 10
sales@huelgasensemble.be

Geert Thyssen
office and finance manager
+32 (0) 471 22 82 40
office@huelgasensemble.be

Tom Phillips
production manager
+44 (0) 7496 77 71 76
production@huelgasensemble.be

www.huelgasensemble.be