THE GREATEST CHORAL MUSIC OF PALESTRINA

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DENNIS KEENE
conductor

VOICES OF ASCENSION

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Prince of Music

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Missa Papæ Marcelli (6-part) [24:00]

1. Kyrie eleison (3:43)
2. Gloria (4:40) • *intonation: Jeffrey Johnson*
3. Credo (6:39) • *intonation: Peter Stewart*
4. Sanctus (3:09)
5. Benedictus (2:47)
6. Angus Dei I (3:01)

Motets and Offertories

7. Secundum multitudinem (6-part) (4:10)
8. Tu es Petrus (6-part) (2:32)
9. Dum complerentur (6-part) (2:33)
10. O Domine Jesu Christe (4-part) (1:50)
11. Super flumina Babilonis (4-part) (3:59)
12. Canite tuba (5-part) (2:03)
13. Rorate cœli (5-part) (*Part II of* Canite tuba) (2:48)
14. Peccantem me quotidie (5-part) (3:50)

Missa Papæ Marcelli

15. Agnus Dei II (7-part) (3:03)

Bonus Tracks

16. Alma Redemptoris Mater (4-part) (2:57)
17. Sicut cervus (4-part) (2:23)
18. Sitivit anima mea (4-part) (*Part II of* Sicut cervus) (2:13)

Voices of Ascension
Dennis Keene, conductor

Total Playing Time: 58:22

A little over 400 years ago — in 1594 — the people of Rome were mourning the death of the most famous composer of the day. The great Palestrina had died. Composer and director of music for popes and cardinals and for the great basilicas of Rome, this musical giant was laid to rest with honor in one of the side chapels of St. Peter's, the plaque on his coffin bearing the inscription, "Prince of Music."

Although music historians are not entirely certain, it seems likely that Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was born in 1525 in a town near Rome named Palestrina ("da Palestrina" means "from Palestrina"). His musical training took place at the great Roman basilica, Santa Maria Maggiore where he was a choirboy. At the age of nineteen he was appointed organist of the cathedral in the town of Palestrina. There he played the organ and taught music to the choirboys and the canons of the cathedral. In 1547 he married Lucrezia Gori who bore him three children. As luck would have it, the Bishop at the cathedral (by the name of Cardinal del Monte) was elected Pope in 1550. He had come to admire greatly the young composer during his years in Palestrina, and now, as Pope Julius III, he brought Palestrina to Rome to become the *maestro* of the Cappella Giulia, one of the two prestigious musical establishments of St. Peter's – the other being the Sistine Chapel Choir.

By 1554 Palestrina's first published compositions were appearing. The title page of his first collection of masses shows the composer kneeling in front of the Pope, presenting him with the score and getting his blessing. The printing of this first collection of masses was obviously a very important event, not just because of the papal blessing, but because it was the very first collection of masses ever published in Rome.

In 1555 Palestrina was admitted to the Cappella Sistina, the pope's official musical chapel. Palestrina's popularity with Pope Julius was made very clear with this appointment, for two reasons: first, Palestrina was married, and that was forbidden to members of that cappella; and second, the appointment came "on the orders of His Holiness Pope Julius, without any examination . . . and without the consent of the singers." Three months later Pope Julius died. He was succeeded by Pope Marcellus II, who died after only three weeks as pope, and then by Pope Paul IV, the intransigent defender of the

Counter-Reformation. In 1555 a strict enforcement of the celibacy rule of the chapel forced Palestrina – and the few other married employees – to leave their positions, with only a modest pension.

It didn't take Palestrina long to find another important position however. Less than one month later he was appointed *maestro di cappella* at the great church of St. John the Lateran. This position had recently been filled by one of the other great figures of late Renaissance music, Orlandus Lassus. Palestrina's years at St. John the Lateran were apparently unhappy, for there were never sufficient funds for the music program. Palestrina left abruptly in 1560, and also took his son Rodolfo, who was a choirboy there. In 1561 Palestrina returned to Santa Maria Maggiore, the place where he received his training. In 1564 Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este hired Palestrina to take charge of all summer musical activities at his famous country estate, the Villa d'Este. In 1571, on the death of Animuccia, Palestrina returned to his post as *maestro di cappella* of the Cappella Giulia, and remained at St. Peter's for the rest of his life.

Personal misfortune hit Palestrina severely in the 1570s. A terrible plague caused the deaths of his brother, two of his sons, and his wife. Devastated, Palestrina considered joining the priesthood. But this was not to be, for on February 28, 1581, Palestrina married Virginia Dormoli, just eight months after his first wife's death. The new bride was a wealthy widow of a Roman fur merchant. For the first time in his life Palestrina was freed from financial worries. He spent his remaining years composing, running his wife's business, and investing in real estate. He died in 1594.

Along with Byrd and Lassus, Palestrina today is considered one of the three great masters of the late Renaissance. Although he composed many secular madrigals, the bulk of his compositions are sacred choral works. And what a vast output it is! The complete works of Palestrina number somewhere around 1,000 pieces. That includes around 300 motets and offertories. Today the complete works are published in 77 volumes.

The story behind the composition of Palestrina's *Missa Papæ Marcelli* is one of the most famous – and least proven – in music history. As the story goes, the liturgical politics of the day attacked the elaborately-composed polyphonic masses that had been the norm of the great Renaissance composers. The councils of the Roman

Catholic Counter-Reformation didn't want complicated Mass compositions, where the words were hidden beneath a dense blanket of musical counterpoint. They wanted simple music where the words could be understood easily. Palestrina's Pope Marcellus Mass was written to show that classical counterpoint and clarity of text setting could live together, and thus Palestrina "saved music".

Like many music history stories this one probably has at least some elements of truth in it. It does seem that there was a movement in the church for greater textural clarity. During his three weeks as pontiff, Pope Marcellus (for whom this mass may well have been written) did indeed express his desires that the words should be clearly understood. And we have the mass itself as evidence. The two movements which would have been at issue – because of their long texts – the *Gloria* and the *Credo* – most certainly do set forth the Latin words in the most clear manner imaginable. But to say he "saved music" . . .

The mass is in seven movements. The *Kyrie, Sanctus,* and *Agnus Dei I & II* represent the highest achievement of Palestrina's serene, flowing, spiritually elevated style. They are quintessential Palestrina, each individual vocal line rising and falling on its own while at the same time combining with all the other vocal lines to create those wonderful soaring sonorities, the rise and fall of the whole ensemble of voices. The *Benedictus*, scored only for sopranos, altos, and tenors I & II, provides a delicate, tender, ravishingly beautiful interlude between the other full chorus movements. The *Gloria* and *Credo* are composed with a brilliant combination of traditional Renaissance counterpoint (each voice part independent) and chordal, block-like musical treatment of the text. In the latter style Palestrina would group together some of his six voice parts and contrast them with another group of voice parts, achieving a wonderful variety of choral textures. This technique, employed as Palestrina did, was actually quite ahead of its time, pointing to the chordal, block-like writing for varying sonorities as perfected by the Venetian school. (An interesting further similarity is a detail from the last measures of the *Gloria*: while the rest of the choir is sustaining the final chord of the *Gloria* the first basses sing a little flourish which sounds exactly like a trademark ending of Giovanni Gabrieli. Here Palestrina uses it about thirty years before Gabrieli.)

It has been the tradition to characterize Palestrina as a conservative composer, pri-

marily because one does not find in his music some of the mannerisms of late Renaissance composers, for example chromaticism or figurations. But I think this is an erroneous evaluation, and I expect the scholarly writings on Palestrina will change in the coming years. There are three aspects of his music which actually point forward to the baroque: his use of harmony, rhythm, and his use of contrasting groups or blocks of sonority. We've already discussed the last aspect. The *Gloria* and *Credo* also provide perfect examples of modern use of harmony and rhythm. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance – in broadest generalities – the harmonic language of sacred choral compositions was *modal*. In the baroque period a *tonal* language of harmony was gradually developed. This is the major-minor, tonic-dominant harmonic language of most of Western music composed between 1600-1900, roughly. Most of Palestrina's music was still written under the spell of the church modes. But much of this mass has a definite tonal feel, including dominant-tonic relationships. Likewise, this particular *Gloria* and this particular *Credo* are not written with the normal *arsis* and *thesis* (rise and fall) rhythmic feeling of most Renaissance choral music. Except for certain sections in the older style, most of these two movements have a genuine feeling of meter (regular strong and weak beats – another baroque aspect), even syncopations (accented off-beats).

Listeners who have heard the *Gloria* and *Credo* on other recordings or performances will notice a profound difference with our interpretations here. All other performances I have ever heard do these movements considerably slower, in the ebb and flow, rise and fall style common with much of Palestrina's other music. I feel these movements differently. After years of working with this music, I feel there is a completely different internal rhythm in these movements — a livelier rhythm which is married perfectly with the *natural declamation of the Latin words*. Perhaps you will agree!

From the approximately 300 motets and offertories I have chosen eight. The first, *Secundum multitudinem*, is an exceptionally beautiful work where feelings of sadness and consolation subtly mingle together. It is set for six voice parts: five of them sing continuous lines of counterpoint, imitating each other, while an independent sixth part (Alto II) sings a recurring ostinato on the words"Miserere mei, Deus" ("Have mercy on me, Lord").

Tu es Petrus is traditionally the text for ordinations of priests and for the liturgies surrounding the election of popes. When hearing this celebrated motet one can easily picture great processions and pontifical liturgies taking place amidst the splendors of St. Peter's in Rome.

Dum complerentur was composed for the great feast day Pentecost. On this day God sent the Holy Spirit — the mighty wind, the source of inspiration to all humans. Palestrina's music wonderfully depicts the text. As suddenly ("subito") a great wind comes, we find the disciples and all followers everywhere singing "Alleluias" from every corner of the world.

The simple and meditative *O Domine Jesu Christe* appears in the complete works of Palestrina, but it was quite possibly composed by someone else. In terms of style, it is similar to the *Tenebræ factæ sunt* of Ingegneri (found on our recording *Voices of Ascension — From Chant to Renaissance* DE 3174). Its pious, direct expression of the text marks it as a perfect example of Counter-Reformation music in Rome.

Super flumina Babilonis is one of Palestrina's most evocative motets. The psalm text tells of the Children of Israel who have been captured, exiled from Jerusalem, and made slaves. With great poetry Palestrina depicts them on the banks of a river, longing to return to their homeland.

The brilliant *Canite tuba* (along with its second part, *Rorate cœli desuper*) expresses with excitement the coming of the Saviour. The opening block chords exclaim "Sound the trumpet," and with a high-leaping theme the choir says, "Veni, Domine, et noli tardare." ("Come, Lord, and don't tarry!") *Rorate* begins gently ("Send down dew from heaven"), but at the words "Ostende nobis" the people fervently implore God to show mercy and send the Saviour.

Peccantem me quotidie is one of Palestrina's most unusual, remarkable motets. In fact, when I first played the work, I thought there had to be mistakes in the printed score. Some of the harmonies were so strange and a portion of the piece went so low — there had to be something wrong. Then I noticed the corresponding text, and, of course, it all made sense. The motet begins beautifully, hauntingly, as it meditates on the words, "Peccantem me quotidie, et non poenitentem" ("I have been sinning every day, without repentance.") Suddenly, the music shifts: "timor mortis conturbat me" ("and now the fear of death torments me.") Here

Palestrina uses the strangest progression of chords I have ever heard in his music. It seems confused, going nowhere, full of turmoil. What a wonderful setting of the text! Then, at the words "quia in inferno nulla est redemptio" ("because in Hell there is no redemption") Palestrina takes the voices to their lowest regions. Finally, the choir implores forgiveness ("Miserere"), and during the last plaintive measures we hear an occasional major chord, hinting at an ultimate redemption.

It seemed a good idea to end our Palestrina program with the second *Agnus Dei* from the Mass, instead of placing it after the first *Agnus Dei*. To begin with, this second setting was quite possibly not part of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, but simply included along with it in certain manuscript sources. (The first printed editions did not include the second *Agnus Dei*). An examination of the music supports that idea, for *Agnus Dei II* was composed in a different style from the movements of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli* and for different voice parts.

What it does share with the Mass is the sublime, soaring, spiritual qualities that take the listener to another world. This is truly one of Palestrina's most exceptional, transcendent works. No doubt it was music like this that inspired those Romans 400 years ago to name Palestrina the "Prince of Music."

Since I wanted this CD to represent Palestrina's greatest music, we have included three bonus track from previous Voices of Ascension recordings.

We included the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* because it is one of Palestrina's most ravishing pieces and because it is a sentimental favorite of ours: it was the first piece on our first recording, *Mysteries Beyond* (originally titled *Ave Maria* – DE 3138). It is one of the most luminous and serene pieces Palestrina ever wrote.

The *Sicut cervus* and *Sitivit anima mea* are found separately on our recordings *Beyond Chant* (DE 3165) and *Voices of Ascension: From Chant to Renaissance* (DE 3174). But since these pieces are in fact Parts I & II of the same motet, I was very happy to be able to unite them here on this recording. When you hear the two pieces together you will notice how they are obviously of the same cloth. And yet, Palestrina gently shifts the mood in *Sitivit*, corresponding beautifully with the text.

© — *Dennis Keene, 1999*

Missa Papæ Marcelli (6-part)

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men of good will. We praise Thee; we bless Thee; We adore Thee; we glorify Thee. We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. O Lord God, lamb of God, Son of the Father. Thou who takest away the sins of the world have mercy upon us and receive our prayer. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art Holy; Thou only art the Lord. Thou only, Jesus Christ, art most high. With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Credo

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem patri, per quem omnia facta sunt; qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus et sepultus est.
(continues…)

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
(continues…)

Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas. Et ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris, et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit, qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unum sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

He suffered and was buried. And the third day he rose again according to the scriptures. And ascended into heaven. And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son, together is adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe in one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the remission of sin. And I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis!

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Benedictus

Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis!

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Agnus Dei I

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem.

O lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Grant us peace.

Secundum multitudinem (6-part)

Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum, in corde meo consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam, qui Cananeam et publicanum vocasti ad pœnitentiam [Alto II: Miserere mei Deus.]

According to the multitude of my pains, your consolations in my heart have rejoiced my soul, you, who called to repentence the Caananite woman and the Publican. [Alto II: Have mercy on me, O God.]

Tu es Petrus (6-part)

Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam. Et portæ inferi, non prævalebunt adversus eam. Et tibi dabo claves regni cœlorum.

You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. — *Matthew 16:18-19*

Dum complerentur (6-part)

Dum complerentur dies Pentecostes erant omnes pariter dicentes, alleluia, et subito factus est sonus de cœlo, alleluia, tamquam spiritus vehementis et replevit totam domum, alleluia.

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place, alleluia, and suddenly a sound came from heaven, alleluia, like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, alleluia.

O Domine Jesu Christe (4-part)

O Domine Jesu Christe adoro te in cruce vulneratum; felle et aceto potatum; deprecor te ut tua vulnera sint remedium animæ meæ.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I adore you, wounded on the cross, vinegar and gall you drink. I pray you that your wounds may become the cure of my soul's ill.

Super flumina Babilonis (4-part)

Super flumina Babilonis, illic sedimus et flevimus, dum recordaremur tui, Sion: in salicibus in medio ejus, suspendimus organa nostra.

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres.

Canite tuba *and* Rorate cœli (5-part)

Canite tuba in Sion, quia prope est dies Domini, ecce venit ad salvandum nos. Erunt prava in directa, et aspera in vias planas: veni Domine, et noli tardare. Alleluia.

Sound the trumpet in Sion, because the day of the Lord draws near. Behold, he comes to save us. The crooked way will become straight and the rough ways plain. Come, Lord, and do not tarry. Alleluia.

Rorate coeli desuper, et nubes pluant justum; aperiatur terra, et germinet salvatorem. Ostende nobis Domine, misericordiam tuam, et salutare tuum da nobis. Veni Domine, et noli tardare. Alleluia.

Let the heavens send down dew from on high and the clouds rain. May the earth generously receive refreshment and bring forth a Saviour. Lord, show us your mercy and give us your salvation. Come, Lord, and do not tarry. Alleluia.

Peccantem me quotidie (5-part)

Peccantem me quotidie, et non me pœnitentem, timor mortis conturbat me, quia in inferno nulla est redemptio. Miserere mei Deus, et salva me.

I have been sinning every day, without repentance. [And now] the fear of death torments me, because in the underworld there is no redemption. Have mercy on me, Lord, and save me.

Agnus Dei II (7-part)

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem.

O lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Grant us peace.

Alma Redemptoris Mater (4-part)

Alma Redemptoris Mater, quæ pervia cœli
Porta manes, et Stella maris, succurre cadenti,
Surgere qui curat, populo: tu quæ genuisti
Natura mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem,
Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore,
Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.

Gracious mother of the Redeemer, who dost remain
The open Gate to heaven and Star of the sea,
Help those who fall and seek to rise.
Thou who, while nature stood amazed,
Gavest birth to Him who made thee,
Virgin before and after his human birth,
Thou who didst receive the greeting of Gabriel,
Have mercy on sinners.

translation: M. M. Bourke

Sicut cervus *and* **Sitivit anima mea** (4-part)

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum: ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

As the hart yearns for the water springs: so longs my soul for thee, O God! — *Psalm 42:1*

Sitivit anima mea ad Deum vivum:
quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei mei?
Fuerunt mihi per singulos dies:
Ubi est Deus tuus?

My soul hath thirsted after the living God;
when shall I come and appear before my God?
My tears have been my bread day and night,
whilst it is said to me each day:
Where is thy God? — *Psalm 42:2, 3*

DENNIS KEENE, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Voices of Ascension Chorus & Orchestra, has been recognized as "the finest young conducting talent in the choral world today" (Gregg Smith). Keene's series of highly acclaimed recordings with Voices of Ascension on Delos have secured international recognition for both conductor and chorus.

Keene grew up in Los Angeles, and began to play the organ at a very early age, holding his first church organist position at the age of nine. He moved to New York City to study at the Juilliard School under Vernon de Tar. He received the BM, MM, and DMA degrees and the Gaston Dethier Organ Prize. Dr. Keene spent the winter of 1977 in Paris, studying privately with Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, André Marchal, and André Isoir. He was active as a recitalist until an interest in conducting led him to do serious studies in conducting (at the Pierre Monteux School for Orchestral Conductors, with Charles Bruck in Paris, and with John Nelson at Juilliard). His love for professional choral music can be traced to his work as organist for Gregg Smith and Roger Wagner.

In addition to his work with the Voices of Ascension, Dennis Keene is also Organist and Choirmaster of Church of the Ascension and a member of the faculty of Manhattan School of Music. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Chorus America and has served on the Choral Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts. He regularly gives workshops and master classes on conducting and on choral music.

Dennis Keene

In 1998 he founded the Dennis Keene Choral Festival, an important new summer choral

institute centered in Kent, Connecticut. Singers and conductors come from all across the United States to study with the vocal and conducting faculty, and to sing in major choral-orchestral performances with Dennis Keene, both in Kent and at Lincoln Center, New York City.

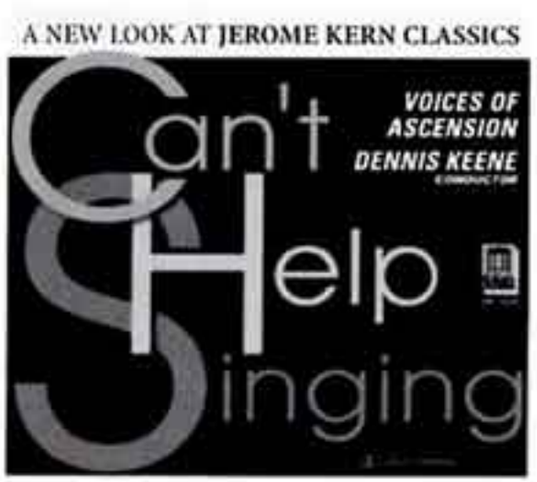
In 1993 Dennis Keene and his Voices of Ascension began their highly successful series of recordings with Delos.

VOICES OF ASCENSION is one of the premier all-professional choral ensembles in the world today. This reputation has been reinforced through their critically acclaimed recordings on the Delos label and their frequent radio broadcasts.

The group evolved from a concert series of Church of the Ascension on lower Fifth Avenue in New York City. In 1989 Dennis Keene and the Ascension choir produced a major music festival: Tribute to Duruflé, the first complete retrospective of the music of French composer Maurice Duruflé. The festival drew international attention and was later broadcast across the U.S. on American Public Radio.

The following season the group incorporated separately from the church and became the Voices of Ascension. The critical success of the ensemble was immediate, and the *New York Times* picked the group's second concert as one of the Ten Best Bets for holiday concerts. A National Endowment grant was awarded after the first application. Today their New York City concerts regularly sell out.

The chorus consists of some of the finest and most skilled ensemble singers in the United States, most of whom are active as soloists as well. The number of singers varies according to the works performed, usually averaging between 20 and 40.



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Church of the Ascension, New York City

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ARIA

1. **Flower Duet "Dôme épais, le jasmin"** • DELIBES: *LAKME* • (5:01)
2. **Chi il bel sogno di Doretta** • PUCCINI: *LA RONDINE* • (2:55)
3. **Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour** • OFFENBACH: *TALES OF HOFFMAN* • (2:57)
4. **Je veux vivre** • GOUNOD: *ROMEO ET JULIET* • (3:24)
5. **Sull' aria che soave zeffiretto** • MOZART: *LE NOZZE DI FIGARO* • (2:12)
6. **Casta Diva** • BELLINI: *NORMA* • (4:56)
7. **Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix** • SAINT-SAËNS: *SAMSON ET DELILAH* • (5:54)
8. **Seguidilla** • BIZET: *CARMEN* • (2:03)
9. **Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen** • MOZART: *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE* • (3:22)
10. **O mio babbino caro** • PUCCINI: *GIANNI SCHICCHI* • (2:14)
11. **Quando m'en vo' soletta** • PUCCINI: *LA BOHÈME* • (2:22)
12. **Notturno** • DONIZETTI: *DON PASQUALE* • (3:23)
13. **Connais–tu le pays?** • THOMAS: *MIGNON* • (4:52)
14. **Io son l'umile ancella** • CILEA: *ADRIANA LECOUVREUR* • (2:57)
15. **V'adoro, pupille** • HANDEL: *JULIUS CAESAR* • (4:34)
16. **Evening Prayer** • HUMPERDINCK: *HANSEL AND GRETEL* • (1:55)
17. **Ombra mai fù** • HANDEL: *SERSE* • (2:56)
18. **Ach, ich fühls** • MOZART: *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE* • (3:56)
19. **In quelle trine morbide** • PUCCINI: *MANON LESCAUT* • (2:27)
20. **Un bel di** • PUCCINI: *MADAMA BUTTERFLY* • (4:12)
21. **O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn** • MOZART: *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE* • (4:45)

Eugenia Zukerman, flute
Allan Vogel, oboe
Dennis Helmrich, piano

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 73:17

The aria is at the heart of what makes opera the most addictive of the musical arts. At certain intervals during the course of an opera, singers on the stage will stop, face the audience and pour out their thoughts or emotions in a flood of melody which can bring the listeners to tears. An opera boasting great arias will seldom lack an audience. The most beautifully constructed opera, conceived without arias, often languishes unperformed. Every dedicated opera lover has his or her own list of favorite arias and of the singers who performed them best... also when, and where. We cannot fulfill every person's wish list, but we think you will find a number of favorites among the arias and duets on this album.

Eugenia Zukerman, one of America's favorite flutists, has chosen twenty-one arias and duets from classic and bel canto to romantic and verismo. She is partnered in the duets by the eloquent oboe of Allan Vogel. Both "singers" are accompanied throughout by distinguished pianist/vocal coach Dennis Helmrich.

Our aria repertoire can be divided into several stylistic groups. Representing Baroque and classic opera we have two arias by George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) and four by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). The two by Handel reflect the nobility and serenity of his melodic inspiration, while the four by Mozart almost defy categorization. They are, in turn, playful, domestic, poignant, and virtuosic.

Handel's *Julius Caesar* of 1723 boasts a string of memorable arias, among them our choice, Cleopatra's meltingly seductive **V'adoro, pupille,** [15] in which she reduces Julius Caesar to a willing victim of her amorous advances. Sensuous, yet classic, the aria is a masterful example of what makes Handel's work appeal to a contemporary audience.

In contrast, the aria **Ombra mai fù,** [17] from Handel's *Serse* (1738) achieves a nobility which has destined it for use in many a stately processional. As *Serse* or *'Xerxes'* as we call him, sings it in the actual opera, it is a moving tribute to the beauty and comfort afforded by a noble shade tree.

Our earliest Mozart aria is the enchanting duet **Sull' aria, che soave zeffiretto,** [5] from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786). The countess dictates a letter to her maidservant Susanna, arranging a garden tryst in which the two intend to trap the philandering count. The music is charming, conversational and altogether lovable.

Two arias and a duet from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), his last opera, offer great variety. The duet **Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen** [9] finds Papageno and Pamina extoling the joys of married life. The music is so persuasive that we actually believe them, at least while they're singing.

Pamina's beautiful aria **Ach, ich fühls** [18] expresses her love of Tamino and her sense of hopelessness and betrayal over his seeming lack of response to her advances. One of Mozart's most poignant vocal compositions, this aria is a true test for any lyric soprano, and certainly for the flute.

One of the arias all opera fans wait to hear is the evil Queen of the Night's great entrance aria **O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn**, [21] her plea to Tamino for his help and her need for revenge on her enemies. This aria is a supreme test for any coloratura soprano, with a highly dramatic introduction and a finale which scales the heights of furious virtuosity. Great fun for the flute, too!

Turning to opera's romantic period in which the bel canto style was at its peak, we have Vincenzo Bellini's (1801-1835) *Norma* (1831) which is the source of the aria by which all others are measured, **Casta Diva**. [6] Almost every aspiring diva seems drawn to this aria like a moth to flame. The Druid priestess' invocation to the chaste goddess of the moon is a long lyric hymn with an expressive text. It demands a soprano with a wide range and a flawless control of legato.

Another romantic master, Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), composed dozens of operas ranging from grand to comic. A favorite among the latter group is *Don Pasquale* (1843), which includes a very romantic duet for the young Ernesto and his beloved bride-to-be, Norina, the **Notturno**. [12] The couple's overwhelming wish to escape the unwelcome attention of old Don Pasquale and finally consummate their love, resolves into a true bel canto duet exploiting the tenor and soprano voices to the full.

The group of arias representing the mid-to-late nineteenth century French school of opera serves to remind all of us who love them how seldom we hear most of these works, with the exception of Bizet's *Carmen*. Thomas' *Mignon* and Delibes' *Lakme* are heard infrequently. Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*, Saint Saëns'*Samson et Delilah* and Gounod's *Romeo et Juliet* are marginal cases which resurface occasionally when the right artist appears or the budget permits. All of these works share the French trademark of beautiful melody, but they also demand great refinement in style and diction.

For example, the lovely mezzo aria **Connais–tu le pays?** [13] from Ambroise Thomas' (1811-1896) *Mignon* (1866), seems deceptively simple, but in performance a great artist can make it intensely moving. Mignon, a young gypsy orphan, describes to Wilhelm Meister, in words taken from Goethe's novel, her memories of the beautiful southern countryside of her childhood.

The French treatment of Shakespeare in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliet* (1867) uses the origi-

nal play merely as a framework for an operatic display piece highlighted by coloratura and tenor solos and duets. Juliet's first aria, the famous waltz song **Je veux vivre,** [4] not only expresses the joy of being young, but is a real test of the soprano's command of all the coloratura skills, ascending and descending scales, trills and brilliant high notes.

In contrast, two more arias exploit the mezzo voice and capture the significant moment in each opera in which the mezzo heroine entraps the helpless tenor hero.

In Georges Bizet's (1838-1875) *Carmen* (1875), the gypsy prisoner, Carmen, seduces her soldier guard, poor addled Don José. She convinces him to free her by singing the seductive **Seguidilla,** [8] an irresistible invitation to a night of fun and games at Lillas Pastias' tavern.

In Saint Saëns' (1835-1921) *Samson et Delilah* (1877), the notorious Philistine temptress Delilah destroys poor Samson's resolve with her meltingly beautiful **Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix.** [7] His ultimate haircut is not far off.

The two other French selections are both duets and have remained immensely popular largely out of context with their original purpose. **Dôme épais, le jasmin,** [1] usually called the **"Flower Duet,"** from Leo Delibes' (1836-1891) *Lakme* (1883), was originally a gentle colloquy between the Indian maiden, Lakme, and her attendant servant Mallika. It now reigns supreme among TV commercials as an inducement to fly a certain airline. Perhaps women singing in thirds promote a greater sense of security above the clouds.

The other French duet, **Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour** [3] from Jacques Offenbach's (1819-1880) *Tales of Hoffman*, has been known to generations of music lovers as the one and only "Barcarolle," ideal music to listen to while sipping tea and nibbling pastries. In the opera it is sung by the notorious Venetian courtesan Giulietta, as she floats down a canal in a gondola, accompanied by Hoffman's companion Nicklausse, a role sung by a mezzo.

The duet from Engelbert Humperdinck's (1854-1921) German fairytale opera, *Hansel and Gretel* (1893) is the children's **Evening Prayer,** [16] sung by the two little ones as they ask God's protection from the evil lurking in the forest. They are lost, tired and frightened, and need all the help they can get, since the wicked witch is just offstage, waiting her turn.

The remaining six arias are all from the Italian repertoire. Five are by everyone's favorite opera composer, Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), and one is by every dramatic soprano's favorite opera composer, Francesco Cilea (1886-1950).

Puccini's first big success, *Manon Lescaut* (1893), demonstrated his great gift for melody and his dramatic flair. The aria **In quelle trine morbide** [19] shows both.

Manon, after leaving Des Grieux for a wealthy older patron, feels trapped in a loveless liaison and sings of her anguish over the loss of Des Grieux's affection. We can't help but pity her plight and forgive her fickle thoughtlessness.

Very different is the enchanting **Quando m'en vo' soletta** [11] or Musetta's Waltz from *La Bohème* (1896). This aria from Puccini's most popular opera, is sung by another tarnished heroine, Musetta, to attract her ex-lover Marcello's attention, even though she has just entered the Café Momus on the arm of her latest rich conquest, Alcindoro.

A favorite Puccini heroine, Cio-Cio San (Butterfly), sings one of the composer's most affecting arias, **Un bel di** [20] (or "One Fine Day") at a climactic moment in the opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904). She chides her maid Suzuki for losing faith in the return of Butterfly's American husband, Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton. The strength of Butterfly's love shines through with blazing intensity. True opera lovers often cry.

Our two remaining Puccini arias have both achieved popularity as recital pieces even though the operas are performed much less frequently than others by the same composer. **O mio babbino caro,** [10] from the one-act opera *Gianni Schicchi*(1918), has even been used as the theme of a motion picture — "A Room With A View." In the opera, Gianni Schicchi's daughter Lauretta pleads with her father to help her and her lover Rinuccio in their plans for marriage. Who could resist!

The beautiful melody of **Chi il bel sogno di Doretta** [2] from Puccini's one attempt at operetta *La Rondine* (1917), is one of his finest inspirations. Following an enchanting piano introduction, the sophisticated and worldly Magda helps the hesitant poet Prunier finish a song whose completion eludes him. It is the story of Doretta who dreams that the king looks upon her one day with favor.

Francesco Cilea (1866-1950) produced at least one opera *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902), which audiences and sopranos both adore, even though most critics seem to dismiss it with scant regard. Audiences love its accessible melodies and verismo melodrama. Sopranos crave the role of Adriana, especially for her entrance aria **Io son l'umile ancella** [14] in which Adriana Lecouvreur, premier actress of the Comédie Française, protests the cheers of her admirers, with studied humility, by proclaiming "I am but a humble handmaiden of the arts." Her sincerity might be questioned, but not the effectiveness of the piece.

In conclusion, these twenty one arias, if nothing else, show that in opera almost any emotion or state of mind can be projected successfully in song. Happiness, sadness, tragedy, seduction or just plain showing off,

they're all there. As long as there are operas there will be arias. As long as there are arias, opera lovers will return again and again to the works they cherish.

Harry Pack

A flutist of international acclaim, **Eugenia Zukerman** has enthralled audiences for twenty-five years with her eloquent playing and graceful stage presence. A versatile artist, Ms. Zukerman performs with orchestras, in solo and duo recitals, and in chamber music ensembles on a regular basis. She has performed in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, appearing as a soloist with the English Chamber Orchestra, Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Prague Chamber Orchestra, National Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra and Denver Chamber Orchestra, to name a few. She has toured Switzerland and Germany with the Slovakian Chamber Orchestra. Her solo recital appearances are numerous, and her many collaborations involve artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, actress Claire Bloom, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Shanghai Quartet. Festival appearances have included the Aspen Music Festival, Mostly Mozart, OK Mozart International Festival, Ravinia, Tanglewood, Edinburgh Festival, South Bank Festival in London, Spoleto Festival in Italy and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany. Ms. Zukerman also performs regularly at Yehudi Menuhin's Gstaad Festival in Switzerland and the Angel Fire Festival in New Mexico.

As a recording artist, Ms. Zukerman has embarked on a series for Delos, of which the first album, *Music for a Sunday Morning*, was released to wide acclaim. In this recording, Ms. Zukerman teams up with her frequent concert collaborators, the Shanghai Quartet and keyboardist Anthony Newman for a delightful program including music of Mozart, Bach, Beach, Foote, and Ginastera. Her next recording for Delos, *Incantation*, a personal exploration for solo flute, was also well received. She is featured on Delos' popular *Heigh Ho! Mozart, Favorite Disney Tunes in the Style of Great Classical Composers*. Once again with the Shanghai Quartet she performs the title track, "Heigh Ho! in the style of Mozart," and also "Winnie the Pooh in the style of Prokofiev." She is again featured on the follow-up to Heigh-Ho! Mozart, *Bibbidi Bobbidi Bach*, More *Favorite Disney Tunes in the Style of Great Classical Composers*. She performs with the Shanghai Quartet, guitarist Scott Tennant, and the English Chamber Orchestra on the title track, "Bibbidi -Bobbidi-Boo in the style of Bach," and also "Bella Notte in the style of

Satie" with the Shanghai Quartet. Ms. Zukerman is also featured on *The Best of Peter Pan, 1904 - 1996*. Ms. Zukerman has in the past recorded for a number of other labels including CBS Masterworks and Vox Cum Laude.

Following festival performances in the summer of 1996 at Musiksommer Gstaad, OK Mozart, and Angel Fire, highlights of Ms. Zukerman's 1996-97 season include six New York appearances: at Carnegie Hall with the New York Youth Symphony she premieres *Ophelia*, written for her by composer Teddy Shapiro; at Columbia University's Miller Theater she performs with harpist Yolanda Kondonassis and the Shanghai Quartet; with keyboardist Anthony Newman, she performs at Merkin Hall and in three concerts at the New York Public Library, celebrating their thirteenth season of popular lecture/performances. Recital performances across the United States include the Gardner Museum in Boston, the Carpenter Performing Arts Center in California, the Wisconsin Union Theatre, and the Pabst Theater in Milwaukee. Orchestral performances include the Puerto Rico Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, and the Elgin Symphony.

The multi-faceted Eugenia Zukerman also enjoys successful careers as an author and television commentator. She has been the arts correspondent for CBS SUNDAY MORNING since 1980 and has appeared on a variety of other television programs as a guest, including *The Charlie Rose Show*.. As a writer, Ms. Zukerman has been published in a number of periodicals, including *The New York Times*, *Esquire* and *Vogue*. She has had three screenplays purchased – one by 20th Century Fox, a second by MGM, and a third commissioned by Universal Pictures. She has published two novels: *Deceptive Cadence*, (Viking, 1981) and *Taking The Heat*, (Simon & Schuster, 1991), and has recently completed a non-fiction book for St. Martin Press that is slated for release in the summer of 1997.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ms. Zukerman entered Barnard College as an English major, but soon transferred to The Juilliard School, where she studied with the renowned flutist Julius Baker. In 1971, she won the Young Concert Artists Award and made her formal New York debut to rave reviews.

Hailed as "an aristocrat of his instrument, an oboe virtuoso with few equals and perhaps no superiors" (*Los Angeles Times*) and "undoubtedly one of the few world masters" (*San Diego Union*), **Allan Vogel** is one of America's leading wind soloists and chamber musicians. Principal oboist of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, he has performed concertos with orchestras throughout the country and has played at many of America's finest music festivals.

Mr. Vogel has served as guest principal oboist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for many of its concerts in the U. S. and Europe, and has also performed with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, on numerous occasions with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He has toured Japan three times as soloist and appears frequently with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City.

Composers who have written for him include Henri Lazarof, Tania Gabrielle French, Donald Crockett and Maria Newman. Most recently, Mr. Vogel premiered the Lazarof oboe concerto in performance at Alice Tully Hall with the New York Chamber Symphony and conductor Gerard Schwarz, and then in a recording with Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony.

Allan Vogel has appeared frequently on the Delos label, including a recording of Beethoven and Mozart Piano and Wind Quintets with Carol Rosenberger and the principal winds of the the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (DE 3024). Soon to be released on Delos are his recordings of the greatest Baroque music for oboe and a collection of romantic oboe masterpieces.

Mr. Vogel is on the faculty of CalArts and the University of Southern California and his former students hold many prominent orchestral and university positions throughout the country. He received a Doctorate in performance from Yale University where he studied with Robert Bloom and Ralph Kirkpatrick. He has also worked with Lothar Koch in Berlin on a Fulbright Fellowship and, while at Harvard, with oboists Fernand Gillet and Josef Marx.

Dennis Helmrich, a native of Newark, New Jersey, began his piano studies at the age of five, and he and his twin brother sang in the famous boyschoir of St. Thomas' Church on Fifth Avenue in New York City. When the family moved to western New Jersey, he came under the influence of the conductor Max Goberman, who taught him solfege and introduced him to his chief piano teacher, Eugene Helmer, with whom he studied until he left to go to college.

Helmrich graduated from Yale University with a bachelor's degree cum laude, a master's degree with honors, and prizes from the Lockwood and Ditson foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts, having studied piano with Donald Currier and theoretical and historical subjects with a numerous and distinguished faculty. After pursuing doctoral studies at Boston University under Bela Boszormenyi-Nagy, at the age of twenty-four he joined the music faculty of Antioch College in Ohio, and subsequently the faculties of the State University of New York Albany

and at Purchase, and the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, where he teaches graduate-level courses in song literature. Invited to the Tanglewood Music Festival in 1969 to aid in the musical preparation of Berg's *Wozzeck* under Erich Leinsdorf, in the following year Helmrich was appointed Vocal Music Coach of the Tanglewood Music Center, where after more than a quarter century of continuous service he is the occupant of an endowed chair in Vocal Studies. During the summer of 1996 he supervised the musical preparation of two casts of singers for the 50th anniversary performances under Maestro Seiji Ozawa of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*. In October of 1996 he served on the jury in the final round of the Leonard Bernstein Jerusalem International Music Competition.

Almost from the outset of his career Helmrich has concentrated on chamber music and the art song literature in addition to the solo repertoire. It is as a sonata partner and accompanist that he now makes most of his concert appearances, in a busy schedule which in the last few years has taken him to thirty states, Canada, Latin America, Europe, and the Far East, to stages such as Avery Fisher, Alice Tully, and Carnegie Halls in New York, the Masonic Auditorium in San Francisco, Symphony Hall in Boston, and Severance Hall in Cleveland, with artists such as Kathleen Battle, Richard Stilwell, D'Anna Fortunato, Eugenia Zukerman, Claire Bloom, Carol Wincenc, Roberta Peters, and the late, legendary Charles Holland. He was the pianist for Hermann Prey's masterclass on Schubert's *Winterreise* in the 1994 Schubertiade at Kaufman Auditorium in New York. The text of an address he delivered in the spring of 1995 at the Paris Conservatoire to the convention of the Société Nationale de Professeurs de Chant on "L'enseignement de la mélodie française aux Etats-Unis" has been published in the *Actes* of that organization.

A continuing interest in contemporary music has led Helmrich to give first performances of many American compositions. For four years he was co-director of Hear America First, a New York concert series devoted to the performance of American music. He has recorded contemporary works by Krenek, Nordenstrom, Dallapiccola, and Fennimore. He has recorded Romantic *morceaux* with the flutist Gary Schocker and, as harpsichordist, a CD of Baroque sonatas. Other recording projects have included participation in a four-disc set of the complete songs of Charles Ives, contemporary American songs with mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, the complete *36 Arie di stile antico* by Stefano Donaudy with tenor Robert Guarino and, recently, a song recital with tenor Seung-Won Choi.

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