

OBERLIN COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

THE COLLEGIUM MUSICUM

The Wisdom of Ecclesiastes



Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas

FAIRCHILD CHAPEL

1977

4:30 P.M.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

I. PROLOGUE: ALL IS VANITY

PROCESSIONAL: *Simfonie from Contemptus mundi*

Giacomo Carissimi
(1605-1674)

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

I: 2

CANON: *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*

Jan Pieterzon Sweelinck
(1562-1621)

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

Magen Solomon, Nancy Freitas,
Vera Kochanowsky, Tami Levitt, *sopranos*

I: 1, 2

I: 10

The words of Koheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem: vanity of vanities, saith I. Koheleth, all is vanity! There is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said: see, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.

I: 12-14

I was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit! Havel havelim, hakol havel!

La Vanité des hommes

Carissimi

Daniel III:
1-7

Daniel III:
31-34

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! There was a most powerful king of the Assyrians who erected a statue of gold of immense size.

To the sounds of the cithara and flute, he ordered people to worship: "Come, run, fly, people, and with submissive voice and humble face give praises and scatter prayers to this formidable image." But, behold, suddenly at that place the famed statue was shattered into a thousand pieces by a rock split from the mountainside. Tell, tell, where is now the gold, where is now the contrivance of such great weight? It has melted away into mud, into dust, into shadow, into nothingness! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Our hope, divine love, perpetually kindles us. And while in the darkness of mortal life, in pain and evil we stagger in agitation, we seek You alone with our hearts.

Cheryl Wampler, Nancy Freitas, *sopranos*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

II. VANITY AND LIFE

V. *Symphonia aus dem C*

Samuel Scheidt
(1587-1654)

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

V: 10

He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; and he that loveth abundance, with increase. This also is vanity!

Man lauft, man rennt

Ludwig Senfl
(c. 1490-1543)

Cf. V: 10

One walks, one runs, one rides, one jumps, all of one's senses look after gold. In rain and snow, on land and sea, one only wishes to gain gold! Gold, gold is his only life; gold is his god, early and late. How can it become any worse?

David Caldwell, Derek Ragin, *tenors*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Quid prodest stulto

Orlando di Lasso
(c. 1532-1594)

Proverbs XVII:
16, 20

Why does a fool strive to have riches in order to gain wisdom for which he has no heart? He who exalts his house, seeks ruin; and he who avoids learning, falls into evil. He who is perverse of heart, does not find any good. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

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Possedi servos et ancillas

Di Lasso

II: 7—9

I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. Also I had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep — more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem. I amassed silver and gold for myself and also the wealth of kings and provinces. I procured for myself male and female singers, also the delights of the sons of men, and cups for wine and the pitchers for pouring it out. And I stored up more than all others before me who were in Jerusalem. My wisdom, too, remained with me.

David Caldwell, Derek Ragin, *tenors*
INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Et omnia quae desideraverunt oculi mei

Di Lasso

II: 10-11

And all that my eyes required, I did not deny them. Nor did I deny my heart any joy, for my heart rejoiced in that which I had done, and this was my portion for all of my labor. Then I looked upon all of the works that my hands had done and upon the work that I had labored so in vain. Behold, in all was vanity and affliction of spirit! And there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Cheryl Wampler, Carolyn Halsted, *sopranos*
Douglas Benecke, Derek Ragin, *tenors*; John Zerbe, *bass*
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V. Symphonia aus dem G dur

Scheidt

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

II: 24

There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and than that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw that it was from the hand of God.

Iss dein Brot mit Freuden

Heinrich Schütz
(1585-1672)

IX: 7;
III: 12;
VIII: 15;
and III: 13

Eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for now God accepts your works. I know that there is no good in them, save for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life. Then I commended mirth, because a man has no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry; for that shall abide with him of his labor during the days of his life which God has given him under the sun. For every man who eats and drinks and has good enjoyment in his work, that is a gift of God.

Cheryl Wampler, *soprano*; David Gere, *baritone*
INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

IV. Symphonia aus dem D

Scheidt

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

XI: 7-8

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. But if a man lives for many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity!

Siehe an die Werk Gottes

Johann Hermann Schein
(1585-1630)

VII: 13-14

Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight which He has made crooked? In prosperous days be in good spirits, and adverse days take also for good, for these God has created one against the other so that man should not know the future.

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III. VANITY AND DEATH

IV. *Symphonia aus dem E*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Scheidt

V: 15
(Cf. Job
VIII);
III: 19-20

As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry in his hand. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth also beasts. Even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast, for all is vanity! All go to one place, all turn to dust again.

Cheryl Wampler, Nancy Freitas, *sopranos*
Tami Levitt, *alto*; David Caldwell, *tenor*
Mark Robson, John Zerbe, *basses*

Deutsche Sprüche von Leben und Tod

Leonard Lechner
(1550-1606)

Cf. I: 5-11

II. *Auch Sonn, Mond, Sterne*

Also the sun, moon, stars, and weather, along with the seasons, prove inconstancies.

Ana Maria Waisman, *mezzo-soprano*
INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

III. *Wir Menschen reisen*

Cf. IX: 12 and
VIII: 7

We mortals travel like poor orphans who are with fears unknowing about tomorrow.

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IV. *Heint frisch*

Cf. IX: 9-10

Tonight: fresh, strong, healthy, beautiful and splendid.
Tomorrow: decaying, dead, and dying.

Ana Maria Waisman, *mezzo-soprano*
INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Homo natus de muliere

Job XIV: 1-2

Man born of woman lives but a short time, and his days are full of misery. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down. He flees also as a shadow and continues not.

Elizabeth Knowles, *soprano*; Tami Levitt, *alto*
Richard Sobak, *tenor*; Mark Robson, *bass*

Di Lasso

Contemptus mundi

I: 2
Cf. also
I: 11 and
IX: 5-6

All is vanity and shadow! Where are the famous kings who gave laws to the world? Where are the leaders of the people, the founders of cities? They are dust and ashes! Where are the seven wise men and those who honored learning? Where are disputing lawyers? Where are the master craftsmen? They are dust and ashes! Where are the strong giants standing like oaks? Where are the invincible warriors, the conquerors of barbarians? They are dust and ashes! Alas, alas! We are wretched ones! Like water poured out and like leaves which the wind tears away, we are undone, we are cast off. Deceived by our desires, betrayed by time, deluded by death, we therefore pray anxiously and petition solicitously, for all is vanity and shadow. Vanity of vanities, all vanity!

Lisa Rotsky, Jillon Stoppels, *sopranos*
Douglas Bencecke, Derek Ragin, David Caldwell, *tenors*
David Gere, *baritone*
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Carissimi

Heu mihi, Domine

Cf. III: 16-17
and VIII: 6

Alas for me, Lord, that I have sinned exceedingly! What shall I do, a wretched one? Where shall I fly but to You, my God? When You come to that last day, have mercy upon me!

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Schütz

Aus tiefer Not

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Matthäus le Maistre
(C. 1505-1577)

	<i>Aus tiefer Not</i>	Schein
Psalm 130: 1-3	Out of deep despair I cry to You, Lord God, hear my call! Your gracious ear bend to me, and my prayer receive. For if You shall mark what sin and injustice is done, who can before You, Lord, remain?	
	Magen Solomon, Nancy Freitas, <i>soprano</i> INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE	

	<i>Aus tiefer Not</i>	Scheidt
	INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE	

XII: 6-7	Ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern: then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
XII: 8	Havel havelim, amar Koheleth, hako! havel! Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu Dir, Herr Gott, erhöre mein Rufen. Denn so Du willst das sehen an was Sünd und Unrecht ist getan, wer kann, Herr, vor Dir bleiben? Dein gnädig Ohren kehr zu mir, meine Bitt' sie öffnen.
Psalm 130: 1-3	
XII: 8	Vanity of vanities, saith I, Koheleth, all is vanity!

IV. EPILOGUE

RECESSIONAL: <i>Simfonie from Contemptus mundi</i>	Carissimi
INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE	

<i>Deutsche Sprüche von Leben und Tod</i>	Lechner
XIII. <i>Sein Gnad und Güten</i>	
Cf. Psalm 130: 4, 7, 8	Your mercy and goodness will protect us and redeem us from our sins.
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PROGRAM NOTES

Ecclesiastes, a title retained from the Septuagint, is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Koheleth*. The meaning is usually expressed in English as "preacher" or "orator." Solomon was long assumed to be the author of the book, and the prestige of his name undoubtedly accounted for acceptance of the work as part of the canon of the Old Testament. It is now generally believed, however, to date from a much later time, probably during the Hellenistic period. The anonymous author, clearly a man of leisure, after having attained power and riches and having tasted the various pleasures of life, found all in the end to be only *havel*. This word, translated as *vanitas* in the Vulgate and subsequently as "vanity" in English, is closest in meaning to "puff of breath" or "nothing." Man's only recourse, the writer concludes, is to eat, drink, be merry, and enjoy his work, for these are the gifts of God. Numerous emendations have crept into the original text over the years to soften these words and to permit additional interpretations, but the disquieting thrust of the writer's appraisal of life still remains. His disavowal of materialism and worldly prominence as matters of any consequence is particularly sobering when viewed against the excesses of our own time. Modern writers such as Melville, T. S. Eliot, and Thomas Wolfe attest to the continuing relevance and the influence of the preacher's words. *Ecclesiastes* has, indeed, throughout the centuries, remained a mirror held up to mankind, truthfully reflecting and identifying the perpetual weaknesses and vanities of the human spirit.

I. Prologue: All Is Vanity

The words of Koheleth, son of David . . .

Simfonia implies an instrumental prelude, often to a section of an opera or oratorio. The *Simfonie* for our processional were extracted and compiled from various portions of Carissimi's oratorio *Contemptus mundi*. The composer was associated with the Jesuits at the Collegium Germanicum in Rome. Sweelinck was organist at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam and was the teacher of Samuel Scheidt. The canon *Vanitas vanitatum* for equal voices serves in our concert as the background for the opening words of Ecclesiastes. Throughout this program, the text in bold type represents either the words spoken by the narrator or fragments taken from my own choral work *Koheleth*.

The first of Carissimi's two oratorios developed around the text *Vanitas vanitatum* from Ecclesiastes is for two soprano voices and continuo. The recitative section, stressing the impermanence of earthly fame, is paraphrased from Daniel. It recounts the destruction of the golden image Nebuchadnezzar beheld in his dream and also of that golden idol the same king built to be worshipped at the sound of musical instruments. In the oratorio, the two images are fused into one. The words are eerily prophetic of Carissimi's own subsequent fate. The composer was held in high esteem during his lifetime, and Pope Clement X deemed the original manuscripts of the master to be of such value that he expressly forbade their rental or sale to any person. When the Jesuits fell into disfavor during the 18th century, the autographs, along with a picture of the composer, were pillaged and sold for wastepaper.

II. Vanity and Life

*He that loveth silver, shall not
be satisfied with silver . . .*

Scheidt's *Symphonien* were written as short instrumental preludes to precede the singing of motets. The composer intended them to set the mood and key for the longer work or works to follow. That function is retained in our program, and it is for this purpose also that the fragments from my own work are presented.

Man's insatiable desire for gold is brilliantly expressed in Senfl's *Man lauft, man rennt*, the final strophe of his lied *Was wird es doch*. The text is very much in the spirit of Ecclesiastes. Di Lasso wrote several motets based directly upon the words of the preacher. *Quid prodest stulto* presents *Vanitas vanitatum* eleven times as a tenor ostinato while selections from Proverbs, a book also long believed to be by Solomon, appear in the other voices. The Munich master's *Possedi servos et ancillas* and *Et omnia quae desideraverunt* conclude a three-part motet cycle upon words taken from Chapter II. The music abounds in descriptive madrigalisms.

*There is nothing better for a man than that
he should eat and drink . . .*

Scheidt's *V. Symphonia aus dem G* is presented here in an expanded antiphonal version for two choirs of instruments. Schütz's *Iss dein Brot* compiles together those portions of Ecclesiastes which affirm food, drink, and good labor to be all that is worthwhile in life. The work displays brilliant writing for voices and instruments. All of the thematic materials derive essentially from the same motive, which is subjected to ingenious variations of meter and rhythm.

*Truly the light is sweet . . . yet let him
remember the days of darkness . . .*

The literary style of Ecclesiastes utilizes contrast for dramatic effect. Light and darkness, good and evil, and straight and crooked are frequently juxtaposed. Schein's *Siehe an die Werk Gottes* sets the preacher's words concerning the mixture of good and bad days that man must face in life. Parallel lines repeatedly underline the word *schlecht* ("straight"); a curving motive in rapid notes points up *erkrümmet* ("has made crooked"); and shifting, unpredictable harmonies accompany the phrase *dass der Mensch nicht wissen soll was künftig ist* ("in order that man should not know what is coming").

III. Vanity and Death

*As he came forth from his mother's womb
naked shall he return . . .*

The attitude toward death of Ecclesiastes parallels, in word and thought, much that is expressed in the Book of Job. Neither of the original writers exhibits much interest or belief in the immortality of the human soul. The preacher somberly concludes: "As the beast dies, so dies the man, for all is vanity. Who shall bring man to see what shall be after him?" The drama and power inherent in these words, whether they be considered challenge or truth, has long fascinated writers and composers. Lechner's *Deutsche Sprüche von Leben und Tod*, written during the late years of the composer's life, shares much of the mood and spirit of Ecclesiastes. The series of fifteen miniature poems, which may have been written by the composer himself, unfolds mostly in terse, irregular couplets that are remarkable for the period. *Auch Sonn, Mond, Sterne* sets the word *Unb'ständigkeiten* ("inconstancies") to a melodic figure that is repeated 23 times in ever-changing rhythmic patterns—a musical affirmation, perhaps, that the more things change, the more they remain the same. *Wir Menschen reisen* dramatically expresses man's uncertainty about the future. *Heint frisch* in a study in stark contrast that recalls the admonition of Ecclesiastes to remember always the days of darkness.

Di Lasso's *Homo natus est* is an excerpt from a cycle of motets set to the words from Job that appear as Lessons in the Office of the Dead. The final pages of Carissimi's oratorio *Contemptus mundi* combines *Vanitas vanitatum* from Ecclesiastes with the familiar *Ubi sunt* theme. The text, attributed to an anonymous Jesuit priest, warns that all the great of the past are now but dust and ashes but concludes that prayer and divine mercy may provide an alternative to vanity and shadow. Schütz's *Heu mihi, Domine* is a setting of a text that appears as a Responsory to Job's words *Homo natus est* in the liturgy of the Office of the Dead.

Luther spent many years perfecting *Aus tiefer Not*, his metrical paraphrase of Psalm 130. The text recognizes, as does Koheleth, the evil and injustice in all men, but the despair is tempered by faith in a merciful and forgiving God. The psalm epitomizes the conflict, central to the final portion of our concert, between the cool resignation of Ecclesiastes and the passionate yearning that God will seek man out for his redemption. The four versions of *Aus tiefer Not* that conclude our concert span four centuries. Le Maistre's setting presents the chorale melody in the highest voice while the tenor moves in melodic diminution. Schein breaks the familiar melody into fragments, which are repeated extensively to gain dramatic intensity. Scheidt's version explores highly chromatic and expressive harmonies. The final measures of my own work attempt to extract the chorale melody from a complex 12-tone serial environment and restore it gradually to the Phrygian mode. The persistent and unsettling words of Koheleth are pitted directly against the petition of the psalmist. The conflict is left unresolved.

Epilogue

The concluding stanzas of Lechner's *Deutsche Sprüche von Leben und Tod* reaffirm that a merciful and loving God shall provide man comfort and redemption. The eloquent *Sein Gnad und Güten* provides an optimistic postscript to our concert.

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COLLEGIUM MUSICUM

L. D. NUERNBERGER, *DIRECTOR*
SANFORD SHEPHARD, *NARRATOR*

SINGERS

Douglas Benecke
David Caldwell
Nancy Freitas
John Fulweiler
David Gere
Constance Greene
Robert Greene
Carolyn Halsted
Richard Hensold
Tami Levitt
Laurie Lichtenstein
Elizabeth Knowles
Vera Kochanowsky

Daniel Pritchett
Derek Ragin
Mark Robson
Richard Rogers
Lisa Rotsky
Richard Sobak
Magen Solomon
Jillon Stoppels
Ana Maria Waisman
Cheryl Wampler
Lawrence Yurman
John Zerbe

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Elizabeth Franklin, *recorders*
John Furweiler, *violin*
Gail Gillespie, *lute*
Avery Gosfield, *recorders*
Richard Hensold, *recorders, shawm*
Eileen Jones, *sackbutt*
Mark Meadow, *recorders*
Russell Paige, *viola da gamba*

Michael Manderen, *lute, chitarrone*
Eric Nagel, *viola da gamba*
Thomas Payne II, *lute*
Daniel Pritchett, *recorders, lute, shawm*
Sarah Rabinowitz, *recorders*
Richard Ruotolo, *sackbutt*
Jennifer Steiner, *violin*
Marcy Zimmermann, *viola da gamba*