

OBERLIN COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

THE COLLEGIUM MUSICUM

Man and the Birds

A MUSICAL STUDY



FAIRCHILD CHAPEL

1980

4:30 P.M.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

PROLOGUE

PROCESSIONAL HYMN: *Magnae Deus potentiae*

Most powerful God, you return part of those born of the water to the depths and a part into the air. You set down in the sea those plunged in the waters and raise to the heavens those inundated, so, though offspring from one common element, they both find their separate homes. Amen.

Domine, Dominus noster

Orlando di Lasso
(1532-1594)

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all of the earth! You have exalted your majesty above the heavens. With glory and honor you have crowned man, and you have given him dominion over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth! (Psalm 8: 1; 5-9)

COLLEGIUM

I. MASTERS OF SONG

THE CAGED SPARROW

A Tune for the Sparrow

Avery Gosfield, *recorder*

The Bird Fancier's Delight
(18th century)

Of all the birds that I do know

Charlotte Bacon, *soprano*
Richard Earle, *lute*

John Bartlet
(fl. 1600)

Dainty fine bird, that art encaged there

CHORUS

Orlando Gibbons
(1583-1625)

THE NIGHTINGALE

MESSENGER OF LOVE:

Imitatione del rossignolo

David Arcus, *organ*

Alessandro Poglietti
(d. 1683)

O rossignuol (Il terzo libro de madrigali)

Claudio Monteverdi
(1567-1643)

O nightingale, who in the green bushes on the banks above the flowing river, perhaps induced now by some weariness, how sweetly you sing to the sound of the rushing waves! Another with you in the deep, dark night sings, your companion, by whom you are consoled. But me, although I am consumed with desire and tears and sad songs constantly, no one ever answers, nor for my loss so sighs or laments. And if a grief weighs upon you, one alive can restore another joy. But I am robbed and deprived of every joy.

Barbara Borden, Charlotte Bacon, *sopranos*
Alison Bleick, *alto* Jeffrey Mead, *tenor*
Peter Gibeau, *bass*

Quell' angellin che canto

Luca Marenzio
(c. 1560-1599)

That little bird which sings so sweetly and flies so sprightly first from the fir tree to the beech and then from the beech to the myrtle, if he had a human spirit he would say: "I burn with love, I burn with love!" Indeed his heart says it, and he speaks in his own language so that the sweet object of his desire hears him. Listen, Silvio, his beloved answers him: "I, too, burn with love, burn with love!" (Guarini, *Il pastor fido*, I, 1)

CHORUS

Ma trédol rosignol

Borlet
(late 14th century)

TRIPLUM:

My sweet and gentle nightingale, why do you say, "Kill, kill, kill?" Become more gentle, I beg you! Come to me, sweet lady! I say this in my enchantment, your song of "Oci, oci, oci," could steal my heart.

Skylark who flies so high and so brightly sings its sweet song: "Liry, liry, liry," go flying to my love, to him go from me singing your sweet song: "Liry, liry," which goes leaping out from my heart.

TENOR:

O nightingale from the delightful woods, bestow a curse upon that wretched man, and then (bestow) death!

Lisa Helmelt, *soprano* Daniel McCabe, *baritone*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

MYSTICAL SYMBOL:

A Tune for the Nightingale

Bird Fancier's Delight

Liana Laughlin, *recorder*

Sanctus from *Missa Philomena praevia*

Nicholas Gombert
(c. 1490-1556)

CHORUS

Philomena praevia

Jean Richafort
(c. 1480-1548)

Nightingale, herald of the pleasant season, announcing the departure of rain and mire while soothing men's souls with your gentle song, most delightful bird, I beseech you, come to me! (John Pecham)

CHORUS

THE LARK

Tune for the Lark

Bird Fancier's Delight

Leila Charaf, *recorder*

Can vei la lauzeta mover

Bernart de Ventadorn
(c. 1125-c. 1180)

When I see the lark spread its wings for joy and fly toward the sun, forget itself, and fall in the bliss that rushes to its heart, alas, I greatly envy seeing such happiness! I marvel that my heart does not melt right then with longing!

Daniel McCabe, *baritone*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Tune for the Lark

II. MASTERS OF FLIGHT

THE SPARROW-HAWK

A Sparrow-Hawk proud

CHORUS

Thomas Weelkes
(c. 1575-1623)

THE EAGLE

Aquila altera

Peter Gibeau, *portative*
Anne Sellitti, *vielle*

Faenza MS
(early 15th century)

Kein Adler in der Welt so schön

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Ludwig Senfl
(c. 1486-1543)

Aquila altera / Creatura gentile / Uccel di Dio

Jacopo da Bologna
(fl. c. 1350)

Bird of God, banner of the just, you have above all else radiant glory, for in great deeds you triumph! Therein I saw the shadow, therein the true essence!

Daniel McCabe, *baritone*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Kyrie from Missa Kain in der Welt

Thomas Crecquillon
(d. 1557)

No eagle in the world lives or soars that is as beautiful as you, although he be adorned with feathers carried like a crown sparkling all over, you sweet, precious, beautiful fruit [of the tree of Jesse]! You soar and live above all other women by virtue of your beautiful Child, fame, honor, and breeding! Thereby you must remain with me.

CHORUS

III. BIRDS OF BEAUTY

THE SWAN

Il bianco e dolce cigno

Jacob Arcadelt
(c. 1450-1505)

The beautiful white swan is singing of death. While I, weeping, arrive at the end of my life, a strange and different departure, which would be a comforted death. I die blessed, a death which does not kill but rather fills me all with joy and desire. If in such death I do not feel any other grief, with a thousand deaths I would be content.

Clara Shaw, *soprano* Jeffrey Mead, David Arcus, *tenors*
David Freyling, *baritone* Peter Gibeau, *bass*

Der Schwanendreher

17th century

Are you not the swan-driver? Are you not the selfsame man? Then drive a swan to me so that I can believe it. And if you cannot drive a swan for me, then you are no swan-driver! Drive a swan to me!

Don't you know the swan-driver with his long nose? He has driven the swans, he has caught the roosters, he has shut in the peacocks, he has fed the swans. I don't care for a man! If I did care, I wouldn't have a good life.

MEN'S CHORUS

The silver swan who, living, had no note

Orlando Gibbons

Melissa Malde, *soprano*

VIOL QUARTET

THE PEACOCK

Der pfoben swancz (The Peacock's Tail)

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Barbignant
(fl. 1480)

Agnus Dei III from Missa Der pfoben swancz

Clara Shaw, *soprano* Jeffrey Mead, David Arcus, *tenors*
David Freyling, *baritone* Peter Gibeau, *bass*

Jacob Obrecht
(1450-1505)

IV. BIRDS OF STEALTH

THE CUCKOO

Excerpt from *Ricercare* #3

David Arcus, *organ*

Johann Ulrich Steigleder
(1593-1635)

Der Kuckuck auf dem Zaune sass

Johann Stephani
(early 17th century)

The cuckoo sat on the hedge. It was raining heavily and he was wet. Afterward the sunshine came, and the cuckoo was again pretty and fine. Then he swirled his feathers and flew far across the lake.

Barbara Borden, Lisa Helmelt, *sopranos*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Der Kuckuck auf dem Dache sass

Johannes Eccard
(1553-1611)

The cuckoo sat on the roof and left the hedge. There few leaves and grass grew, yet he desired to live there the whole summer long. Still he suffered no hunger, and he carried on his song at the same time: "Cuckoo, cuckoo."

Tammy Locke, *soprano*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Der Kuckuck hat sich zu Tod gefallen

Johann Stephani

The cuckoo has fallen to his death from a hollow willow tree. Fa la la la la. Who will now this long year while away the time for us? Fa la la la la. Frau Nightingale who sits on a branch will do that. She sings and hops and is full of joy when the other birds are silent. Fa la la la la. Although my love wronged me, I don't care much. Let go away what will not stay. I have a little feeling, but it doesn't amount to very much. Fa la la la la.

Jennie McAvoy, Sandra Rose, *sopranos*

Clara Shaw, *mezzo-soprano* Wingate Greathouse, *tenor*
Thomas Lloyd, *baritone*

CHORUS

THE OWL

Of all the birds that I ever see

Tammy Locke, Sandra Rose, *sopranos*

From *Deuteromelia*
(1609)

Ich armes Käuzlein kleine

Ludwig Senfl
Caspar Othmayer
(1515-1553)

I, a poor little owl, where shall I fly at night all alone? It gives me such horror! The owl distorts its affliction many fold. The bough has disengaged me, for that I shall come to a standstill. The little leaves are all dead, my heart is full of sadness. The owl makes trickery, its sincerity is false!

MEN'S CHORUS

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Sweet Suffolk owl

Barbara Borden, Charlotte Bacon, *sopranos*
Alison Bleick, *alto* Jeffrey Mead, *tenor*
Peter Gibeau, *bass*

Thomas Vautor
(born c. 1590)

V. ASSEMBLIES OF BIRDS AT THE COURT OF LOVE

Composite of Bird Calls

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Par maintes foyz

Vaillant
(late 14th century)

Many a time I have enjoyed the sweet melody of the nightingale, but the cuckoo will not sing in tune with her. Rather envy makes the cuckoo sing against her: "Cuckoo, cuckoo," all of his life, for he chooses to disrupt the song. And so the nightingale declares: "I order you to slay him, slay and kill, slay and kill, fi on him, fi on him, fi on the cuckoo who wants to speak of love!"

"And I beg you, gentle skylark, kindly to sing your song: 'Lire, lire, liron,' that God teaches you." It is time for the nightingale to sing her song: "Kill, kill, kill!" Those who assail you will all be killed! To arms! Take up your sword, make the quail and the starling sing! Beat this cuckoo, then kill him! He is captured, captured! Now he should be killed! Now we may proceed confidently. Go and pick the tender moss to adorn yourselves. "Ami, ami, ami," I shall always pray to the God of Love.

Barbara Borden, *soprano*

INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Lady, the birds right fairly

Thomas Weelkes

CHORUS

EPILOGUE

RECESSIONAL: *Domine, Dominus noster*

Orlando di Lasso

[You have given man dominion over] . . . the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth!

COLLEGIUM

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PROGRAM NOTES

Commentaries on birds usually have tended to reveal far more about the nature of their authors than of their subject. Although the habits and life patterns of the various species have remained essentially unchanged for many centuries, man's perception and interpretation of the birds have been influenced by his own varying attitudes and ideals. Aristotle's early attempts at direct observation gave way in the 1st century A.D. to the encyclopedic compilations of Pliny where fact, speculation, and myth were reported without distinction. In the 7th century, Isidore of Seville focused on often unfounded etymological explanations for the names of birds. Medieval Latin bestiaries converted birds into moralistic Christian symbols through which man might gain insights into the divine world. Birds were rarely viewed as independent living creatures until after the Renaissance. They served rather as convenient traditional devices by which writers and poets could reflect emotions, social opinions, or moralistic concepts.

PROLOGUE

The birds were products of the fifth day of creation. God then created man on the sixth day and awarded him dominion over them and all other life on earth. The Thursday Vesper hymn, *Magnae Deus potentiae*, reminds us that water was the common element from which both birds and the creatures of the sea were formed. Lasso's *Domine, Dominus noster* incorporates words from Psalm 8. On Tuesday of Septuagesima week, a recitation of this psalm follows the reading of the account from Genesis of the fifth and sixth days of creation.

I. MASTERS OF SONG

The Caged Sparrow

The selections from *The Bird Fancier's Delight*, which introduce various birds in this section, are drawn from an 18th-century collection of recorder tunes that were specifically designed to be taught to caged birds. The English refer indiscriminately to all small grey birds as sparrows. The skill of our songster suggests that some kind of finch is more likely the bird implied throughout this section of our program. Bartlet's *Of all the birds*, set to a text of George Gascoigne, recalls the pet and earlier namesake in Skelton's poem *The Bok of Phyllpe Sparowe*. Gibbons' *Dainty fine bird* serves here as a commentary on the caged bird in Bartlet's song. The poet likens his plight as a prisoner of love to his lady to that of her confined bird. His desire only to please and serve her is assumed also to be shared by the bird.

The Nightingale

Messenger of Love: Poglietti's imaginative *Imitatione del rossignolo* is a movement from a large collection of keyboard pieces entitled *Rossignolo*. The outpouring of song imitated here recalls Pliny's account of the nightingale singing unceasingly for a fortnight early every spring. Monteverdi's *O rossignuol* contrasts the poet's laments which go unheeded with the nightingale's sad song that is answered afar by a consoling mate. The traditional melancholy in the nightingale's song stems from Ovid's version of the grisly tale of Philomela, Tereus, and Procne in the sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* and from Petrarch's sonnet *Quel rosignuol* in *Il canzoniere*. Marenzio's *Quell' augellin* borrows a portion of the opening scene from Guarini's *Il pastor fido*. The elderly Linco exhorts a young and indifferent Silvio to heed the echoing songs of a pair of birds, which we assume again to be nightingales, as symbolic of the universal power of love. Borlet's *Ma trédol rosignol* is a virelai (Abba) constructed over a recurrent ground bass. The texts entreat the nightingale and the lark to carry their songs as messages of love between the lady and her lover.

Mystical Symbol: John Pecham's 13th-century poem, *Philomena, praevia*, interprets the constant singing of the nightingale as symbolic of the Christian soul longing for heaven. Richafort's motet *Philomena, praevia* is based upon a paraphrased portion of Pecham's poem. The *Sanctus* from Gombert's *Missa Philomena praevia* borrows melodies from Richafort's work and serves here as a prelude to the motet and a musical parallel for the transformation of the nightingale from a symbol of earthly to one of divine love.

The Lark

The troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn served in the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The canzo *Can vei la lauzeta* recounts some of the misfortunes inherent in courtly love. The text contrasts the ecstasy of the lark in flight with the grief of the poet in discovering the carnality of his lady. That the poem was widely known and much admired is attested by Dante's paraphrase of it in the *Paradiso* (XX, 73-78). Curiously, however, the great Florentine never makes any mention of Bernart's name.

II. MASTERS OF FLIGHT

The Sparrow-Hawk

Chaucer, as Alanus before him, places the birds of prey highest on Nature's scale. They occupy the position closest to the Dame herself in his *Parliament of Fowls* and suggest that the author intended them as symbols of the nobility. Weelkes's *A Sparrow-Hawk proud* is an ironic miniature essay on vanity. A captive nightingale promises, if released from the hawk's grasp, to sing praises to no other bird. Unmoved, the hawk vows that he would not forego his dinner to afford a thousand other birds the pleasure of such quiet.

The Eagle

Pliny credits the eagle with being the most honorable and strongest of all the birds. Its legendary ability in old age to regain its eyesight and to restore the vigor of its plumage by flying into the sun and then plunging three times into a fountain accounts for the eagle's distinction as a resurrection symbol in the medieval bestiaries. Jacopo's tri-textual madrigal *Aquila altera/Creatura gentile/Uccel di Dio* explores much of the mystical imagery associated with the eagle. We present the work first in a later, highly ornamented adaptation found in the Faenza MS and then in the original version but with only one text sung and the other two parts performed instrumentally. The tenor melody in Senfl's *Kein Adler in der Welt* recurs note-for-note in Crecquillon's *Kyrie* from his *Missa Kain in der Welt*. The text stresses that Mary soars higher than the eagle and her crown is more resplendent. We have chosen to restore the original German words to the tenor melody of Crecquillon's *Kyrie*.

III. BIRDS OF BEAUTY

The Swan

The common belief held that no swan sings except when dying was first discredited by Pliny, who had on occasion apparently observed the vociferous Whooper Swan. During the Renaissance, the madrigalists in Italy construed death as a term for sexual gratification. The lover's death in Arcadelt's *Il bianco e dolce cigno* contrasted with that of the swan thus assumes erotic overtones. The old dance melody *Der Schwanendreher* was used by Hindemith in a viola concerto. The text provides a comic portrait of the servant who was commonly employed to care for the swans, peacocks, and other fowl that graced manors and castles in the late Renaissance. Gibbons' justly famous *The silver swan* replaces the eroticism of Arcadelt's early madrigal with British moralism. The text laments that the geese outnumber the swans in English society.

The Peacock

The plumage and tail of the peacock are unsurpassed for beauty, but its feet and voice leave much to be desired. It became recognized as a symbol of the resurrection because of the ability of its flesh to remain firm after death. Barbingnant's *Der pfoben swancz* is an appropriately ostentatious dance. The mystical and symbolic aspects of the peacock can be represented musically by noting the reappearance of Barbingnant's tenor in the *Agnus Dei* of Obrecht's mass.

IV. BIRDS OF STEALTH

The Cuckoo

Atypical behavior in birds resulted in their being stereotyped as unnatural and, as a consequence, untrustworthy and associated with forces of evil or death. The female cuckoo's parasitical nesting habits account for the derogatory terms cuckold and cuckoldry. Steigleder's *Ricerca* pre-

sents an amusing and persistent imitation of the cuckoo's limited song. Stephani's *Der Kuckuck auf dem Zaune sass* and Eccard's *Der Kuckuck auf dem Dache sass* emphasize the bird's totally erratic and unpredictable behavior. The cuckoo falling to his death as recounted in Stephani's *Der Kuckuck hat sich zu Tod gefallen* signifies that some misfortune has ended. In this instance, a young man's sweetheart has left him for another.

The Owl

The owl's unsavory reputation stems from prejudices that arose concerning its unnatural nocturnal habits. The bestiaries usually proclaim it devious, unreliable, and a harbinger of death. *Ich armes Käuzlein kleine* introduces us to the owl's feigned expressions of fear and helplessness and then cautions that the bird is not to be trusted. *Of all the birds that I ever see* was a popular 17th-century drinking song. The owl's cries of "Te whit, te whoo," identify it as the Tawny Owl encountered in Shakespeare and Drayton. Vautor's *Sweet Suffolk Owl* sketches a generally favorable and sympathetic picture of the Tawny Owl but still alludes to its role as one that sings dirges for dying souls.

V. ASSEMBLIES OF BIRDS AT THE COURT OF LOVE

Assemblies of birds serving as attendants of either Venus or the God of Love found numerous expressions in medieval and later literature. The assembly often participated in debates on some aspect of love or love poetry. In a 14th-century poem *La messe des oisiaus* by Jean de Condé Venus postpones the business of her court until after the birds sing mass. The vociferous and spiteful cuckoo flies overhead, interrupts the nightingale's singing of the *Gloria*, and then hides in a hollow tree. After the service many wish to put the cuckoo to death, but Venus forbids them. The traditional enmity between this pair finds further expression in the 15th-century poem *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, attributed to Thomas Clanvowe. The poet sides with the nightingale in a debate, and she promises that he will hear her the next May before the cuckoo. This poem influenced Milton's sonnet *O Nightingale, that on yon bloomy spray*, which warns that if the cuckoo sings before the nightingale in the spring it is an ill omen for lovers.

Vaillant's *Par maintes foyz* obviously also forms a part of this tradition. Here the nightingale's song of love is constantly being interrupted by the discordant cuckoo. In anger, the nightingale incites the other birds to beat the cuckoo to death. Then all can worship the God of Love without interruption. Weelkes' *Lady, the birds right fairly* recalls similar texts that appeared in France during the latter part of the 14th century. Choruses of birds singing of love try to rouse the lady who sleeps too late in the morning.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our special thanks to John Kane, Professor of Romance Languages, Kent State University, for his assistance in translating the two Old French texts.

COLLEGIUM MUSICUM

L. D. Nuernberger, *director*
Marilyn Carlson, *instrumental director*

SINGERS

David Arcus
Charlotte Bacon
Alison Bleick
Barbara Borden
Wendy Deputy
Adrienne Edgar
Joseph Elliott
Colin Enger
David Fryling
Peter Gibeau

Wingate Greathouse
Lisa Helm
Thomas Lloyd
Tammy Locke
Melissa Malde
Jennie McAvoy
Daniel McCabe
Jeffrey Mead
Sandra Rose
Clara Shaw

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Mark Adams, *recorder*
William Baxter, *sackbut*
Elaine Benfatto, *viol*
Leila Charaf, *recorder*
Richard Earle, *lute*
Colin Gatwood, *shawm*
Peter Gibeau, *portative, krummhorn*
Avery Gosfield, *recorder, krummhorn*
Anne Harrington, *viol, vielle*
Larry Keith, *lute*

Richard Hensold, *shawm, krummhorn*
Wynne Janis, *Gothic harp*
Liana Laughlin, *recorder*
Fumiko Matsu, *viol*
Elizabeth Motter, *Gothic harp*
Anne Sellitti, *viol, vielle*
Kenneth Sloane, *sackbut*
Jed Wentz, *flute, hurdy-gurdy*