Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents

Thursday, February 25, 2021 1:15 pm
Live streamed from The Church of the Transfiguration in New York City
to midtownconcerts.org, YouTube, and Facebook

The New Consort
Madeline Apple Healey  Pamela Terry  Nathan Hodgson
Brian Mummert  Jonathan Woody

Arianna/Jeremiah: Voices in Lamentation

Lamento d'Arianna, "Lascatemi morire"
from Il sesto libro de madrigali, 1614
Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Lamentations of Jeremiah a5
Robert White (1538–1574)

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Gotham Early Music Scene, 340 Riverside Drive, Suite 1A, New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-0468
Joanne Floyd, Midtown Concerts Manager  Paul Arents, House Manager  Toby Tadman-Little, Program Editor
Live stream staff: Paul Ross, Dennis Cembalo, Adolfo Mena Cejas, Howard Heller  Christina Britton Conroy, Make-up Artist
Gene Murrow, Executive Director

www.gemsny.org
Program Notes by Brian Mummert, artistic director

A half-century ago, when Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced her model of the five stages of grief, she could hardly have known that most of the world would spend the last year careening wildly among them – plus a few more of our own invention (the “ironic fatalism” stage seems to be where Twitter, at least, has spent the majority of the pandemic). In a world accustomed to ever-increasing interconnectedness, we have found ourselves suddenly cut off – from the touch of our loved ones, from opportunities for spontaneous in-person interaction, from the chance to make music together without concerns for risk mitigation. Each of these becomes its own small grief, with a mourning process that seems to begin anew each time regulations change or new viral variants emerge.

In the face of these challenges, and as we move into Lent, I’ve been listening nonstop to versions of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, which text forms the backbone of Christian Tenebrae services surrounding the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus during Holy Week. The setting we present today by Robert White, in particular, is full of unexpected cadences and tonal shifts, capturing my sense of constantly-deferred relief. White knew this feeling all too well: he was killed in 1574 by one of the many waves of plague that swept through London in the 16th century.

Looking outside the sacred tradition, I knew nobody was equipped to evoke an ever-shifting emotional landscape like Claudio Monteverdi. His Lamento d'Arianna, first created as an operatic aria but published in a five-voice arrangement in 1614, feels in moments like the furious Facebook post we’ve all written and deleted this year. Whether the targets of our ire are friends flying mask-less to Puerto Vallarta or politicians deferring blame for their failures, I can’t help seeing reflected in all of us the series of cruel realizations that Ariadne undergoes after being abandoned by her lover Theseus on the island of Naxos.

A final note: while eliminating all risk is impossible even under normal circumstances, The New Consort has endeavored through a combination of masking, distancing, and testing to ensure the safest possible environment for our singers. We hope that you, as we have, find some catharsis in engaging with this music, and that next season we can look around and feel inspired to sing again music of rebirth, reconnection, and joy.

About the Ensemble

Winners of the American Prize in Chamber Music, THE NEW CONSORT, a project-based, solo-voice ensemble directed by baritone Brian Mummert, was founded in 2015 and has quickly made embracing stylistic contrasts an integral part of the ensemble's identity: from Renaissance polyphony to contemporary & non-classical works, nothing is off-limits. By drawing diverse works into conversation, The New Consort attracts new audiences to classical music and encourages them to forge connections with unfamiliar genres of musical expression. The ensemble has appeared in venues including Trinity College, Cambridge; The Walters Art Museum's First Fridays series; The Bach Store, an New York City pop-up concert hall; Music Under the Stars (Connecticut); Spectrum New York City; and at churches and schools throughout the Northeast. Members of The New Consort have appeared as soloists and conductors with some of the world’s best-respected ensembles from Carnegie Hall to Kuala Lumpur, but relish the opportunity that the ensemble presents to collaborate as chamber musicians. Forthcoming projects include the release of Subtler Than Light, the ensemble’s debut recording featuring music of the Dow Partbooks and the world premiere recording of Rossa Crean's Watchtower Psalms; The Arch Sessions, a set of videos and pop-up concerts presented under bridges in New York City's public parks; and the North American recorded premiere of Ben Rowarth's The Turn, a piece that grows out of and recontextualizes Monteverdi's Lamento d'Arianna, for Pegasus Early Music in May. More information at www.thenewconsort.org, and follow us: @thenewconsort
Lamento d'Arianna
Poetry: Ottavio Rinuccini
Lasciatemi morire!
E chi volete voi, che mi conforte
in così dura sorte,
in così gran martire?
Lasciatemi morire.

O, Teseo mio
si che “mio” ti vo’ dir,
che mio pur sei,
benchè t’involi, ah! crudo, a gl’occhi miei
volgiti, Teseo mio –
O Dio, volgiti indietro,
a rimirar colei
che lasciato ha per te la patria e’l regno,
e’n questa arena ancora
(cibo di fere dispietate e crude)
lascierà l’ossa ignude!
O Teseo mio,
se tu sapessi, O Dio,
oimè, come s’affanna
la povera Arianna:
forse pentito
rivolgeresti ancor la prora al lito;
ma con l’aure serene
tu te ne vai felice – ed io qui piango.

A te prepara Atene
liete pompe superbe; ed io rimango,
cibo di fere dispietata e crude,
in solitarie arene.
Tu l’un’ e l’altro
tuo vecchio parente stringerai lieto;
ed io più non vedrovi
o madre, o padre mio.

Arianna’s Lament
Translation: Robert Hollingworth
Leave me to die!
For even if you wanted to, how could you comfort me
in such harsh misfortune,
in such great suffering?
Leave me to die!

O my Theseus,
yes, I still want to call you mine
for mine you still are,
even though you have turned, (ah, cruel one)
away from my eyes.
Turn back, my Theseus,
(ah heavens), turn back
to look again upon she
who abandoned for you her homeland and her throne,
and is still on this shore,
the prey of wild beasts, harsh and cruel,
who will leave her bones laid bare.
O my Theseus,
if you knew, (ah heavens)
 alas, how suffers
your poor Ariadne,
perhaps you would repent
and turn back the prow of your ship to the shore:
but with fair winds
you sail joyfully away – and I remain here weeping.
For you Athens is preparing
festivities with great ceremony; and I am left
as prey of wild beasts, harsh and cruel
on these lonely shores.
You will happily embrace
both your aged parents
while I will never again see
my mother and my father.
Dov’è la fede
che tanto mi giuravi?
Così ne l’alta sede
tu mi ripon de’l’avi.
Son queste le corone
onde m’adorni il crine?
Questi li scettri sono?
Queste le gemme e gl'ori?
Lasciarmi in abbandono
a fera che mi stracci e mi divori?
Ah, Teseo mio: lascierai tu morire
(in van piangendo aita)
la misera Arianna, ch’a te fidossi
e ti die’gloria e vita?

Ah! che non pur risponde!
Ah! che più d’aspe sord’a miei lamenti!

O nembi, o turbì, o venti
sommergetelo voi dentro a quell’onde!
Correte Orchi e Balene,
e de la membra immonde
empiete le voragini profunde!
Che parlo? ah! che vaneggio misera?

Oimè, che chieggio?
O Teseo mio -
non son quell’io
che’l feri detti sciolse:
parlò l’affanno mio,
parlò il dolore,
parlò la lingua sì – ma non già’l core.

Where is the faithfulness
which so strongly you swore to me?
Where is the lofty throne
on which you swore to seat me?
Are these the wreaths
which were to adorn my head?
Are these the sceptres?
Are these the jewels and golden ornaments?
You abandon me
for wild beasts to tear and devour.
O my Theseus, are you leaving to die
(vainly crying for help)
the wretched Ariadne, who trusted you
and to whom you owe your fame and your life?

Alas, he does not even reply.
Alas, he is deafer than a snake to my complaining.
O thunderclouds, tempests, winds,
drown him in the waves!
Rush to him, sea-monsters and whales
and with his foul limbs
fill the chasms of the deep.
What am I saying? Ah, am I raving, wretched woman?
Alas, what am I asking?
O my Theseus,
I am not myself
while wild beasts threaten me:
It was my deprivation that spoke,
my pain.
My tongue spoke, yes – but not my heart.
Lamentations of Jeremiah

Text: Lamentations 1:8-13

HETH.
Peccatum peccavit Hierusalem, propterea instabilis facta est: omnes qui glorificabant eam spreverunt illam: quia viderunt ignominiam eius: ipsa autem gemens et conversa retrorsum.

TETH.
Sordes eius in pedibus eius: nec recordata est finis sui. Deposita est vehementer: non habens consolatorem. Vide Domine afflictionem meam: quoniam erectus est inimicus.

IOD.
Manum suam misit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia ejus, quia vidit gentes ingessas sanctuarium suum, de quibus præceperas ne intrarent in ecclesiam tuam.

JERUSALEM, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

CAPH.
Omnis populus ejus gemens, et quærens panem; dederunt pretiosa quæque pro cibo ad refocillandam animam. Vide, Domine, et considera quoniam facta sum vilis!

LAMED.
O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus! quoniam vindemiavit me, ut locutus est Dominus, in die iræ furoris sui.

MEM.
De excelso misit ignem in ossibus meis et eruvit me: expandit rete pedibus meis: convertit me retrorsum: posuit me desolatam tota die maerore confectam.

JERUSALEM, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Translation: King James Version

HETH.
Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

TETH.
Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself.

IOD.
The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

JERUSALEM, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.

CAPH.
All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.

LAMED.
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

MEM.
From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaleth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

JERUSALEM, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.
NEXT WEEK: Four Nations Ensemble

Vivaldi in Paris