



Early Music • Alte Musik

DDD

8.553311

LASSUS

Lagrimae di San Pietro

Spiritual Madrigals

Ars Nova

Bo Holten



Orlande de Lassus (Orlando di Lasso) (1532 – 1594)

Lagime di San Pietro

1	Il magnanimo Pietro	2:18
2	Ma gli archi	2:30
3	Tre volte haveva à l'importuna e audace	2:17
4	Qual' à l'incontro di quegli occhi santi	2:32
5	Giovane donna il suo bel volto in specchio	2:25
6	Così tal'hor	2:06
7	Ogni occhio del Signor lingua veloce	2:16
8	Nessun fedel trovai, nessun cortese	2:54
9	Chi ad una ad una raccontar potesse	2:17
10	Come falda di neve	2:45
11	E non fu il pianto suo rivo ó Torrente	2:13
12	Quel volto	2:44
13	Veduto il miser quanto differente	2:55
14	E vago d'incontrar chi giusta pena	2:54
15	Vattene vitav vâ	2:13
16	O vita troppo rea	2:30
17	À quanti già felici in giovinezza	2:36
18	Non trovava mia fe sì duro intoppo	2:22
19	Queste opre e piu	2:20
20	Negando il mio Signor	2:22
21	Vide homo	4:11

Orlando di Lasso was born in Flanders in 1532. A brilliant singer and apparently something of a musical prodigy, he had already performed throughout Sicily and Italy as a youth and was made choirmaster at the important Church of St. John Lateran in Rome when he was only nineteen. In 1556, however, he settled down in Munich as head of the ducal chapel at the court of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria and his successor Wilhelm V, where he remained for the rest of his life. Lasso died in 1594.

Lasso was one of the most prolific and versatile composers of the sixteenth century, composing in all of the sacred and secular forms of the time (masses, motets, madrigals, frottole, villanelle, chansons and Lieder). This period saw the flowering of music printing, and at least one of Lasso's compositions appears in one half of all the music printed between 1555 and the time of his death. Although attached to a court in Germany, he travelled frequently and was in great demand throughout Europe, setting texts in five languages. His international prestige is reflected in the spelling of his name in the publications of his works: Orlando Lasso, Orlandus Lassus, Orlando di Lasso and Roland de Lassus. Lasso is also one of the few composers of the Renaissance who left any significant body of correspondence. A group of letters to Duke Wilhelm, written often in several languages at once, reveals a person with a lively sense of humour and a warm relationship with his patron.

The *Lagrima di San Pietro* was the last of Lasso's enormous output, finished only six weeks before his death. The work is a group of twenty spiritual madrigals (*madrigali spirituali*) representing the remorse of St. Peter for having denied Jesus. Penitential and pessimistic in tone, the *Lagrima* are both an emblem of the religious severity of the Counter-Reformation and possibly a reflection of the composer's realisation of his own impending death. The text is taken from a longer, but fragmentary, work by the poet Luigi Tansillo (d.1568), written in the classic ottavo rime of Italian narrative poetry (rhyme scheme ABABABCC). In adapting Tansillo's poetry, Lasso, like most of his contemporaries, composed settings for already existing poems. As a form, the *madrigale spirituale* flourished during the Counter-Reformation and is a cross between the purely liturgical Latin motet and the secular madrigal. Written in Italian on contemplative and religious themes, the *madrigali spirituali* were freely composed (i.e. not based on pre-existent plain chant). Their musical style was often more restrained and less florid than that of their secular counterparts. Biblical texts were sometimes set in the vernacular as were secular love poems, reworked to substitute the Virgin Mary for the beloved lady of the original. Lasso's selection of Tansillo's verses creates a small drama that builds to an intense emotional climax. The twenty *madrigali spirituali*, with a concluding Latin motet, represent different stages of St. Peter's unrelenting remorse and self-recrimination, even as an old man. The initial verses (I - VI) portray the saint as an old man. Remembering his terrible failure, he

imagines the eyes of Jesus, as he hangs on the cross, accusing him in an exquisite variety of ways. Verses VII and VIII “quote” Christ’s unspoken diatribe as imagined by the saint. Verses IX - XIV are Peter’s contemplation of the crucifixion and Christ’s suffering. In verses XV - XX, the saint cries out in utter despair, praying for his own death, even though he doubts he deserves salvation. The concluding motet is no more hopeful in spirit; Christ calls from the cross on us to look up on his suffering, which is, nevertheless, far less painful than mankind’s ingratitude. All of the madrigals are composed for seven voices, a fairly unusual combination for the period, but one that allowed the composer to vary the musical texture of this long work to adapt to the meaning of the text. Sometimes he splits the chorus into two antiphonal groups, a technique that was particularly popular in Venice in the works of Lasso’s contemporary, Giovanni Gabrieli. Other passages are composed in homophonic or chordal style. Lasso achieves musical unity in this long work by creating a tonal arch, or unifying system of tonal relationships among the 21 separate madrigals. The music represents the height of Lasso’s intricate contrapuntal style. As in many of the composer’s works, and the works of Italy’s so-called “Mannerist” composers, certain melodic and contrapuntal figures were codified to represent devices used in rhetoric and oratory. During the late Renaissance, the system of imbuing musical patterns with textual and affective meaning, known as *musica reservata*, was, even at the time, a highly refined process, decipherable only by the most learned musicians and cognoscenti. There was even a treatise on the topic of rhetoric in music by Joachim Burmeister. This was a period when composers were increasingly concerned with issues relating to the combination of music and poetry. In its intense, dramatic, psychological portrait, the complex contrapuntal “rhetoric” of the *Lagrime* reflects Lasso’s particular care in conveying the meaning and demotion of each line of text through the music. In addition, the setting of the text is generally syllabic with each phrase repeated several times. There are none of the long, flowing melismata that characterize secular madrigals of the period. Clearly, understanding the words is critical. For some of Lasso’s younger contemporaries, most notably Claudio Monteverdi, the idealised wedding of music and poetry would bear fruit in a totally different direction, in the development of monody (recitative over a simple basso continuo) and the birth of opera.

© 1995 Elizabeth Kahn

Ars Nova

The vocal group Ars Nova is one of the most distinguished chamber choirs in Scandinavia in the field of early and new music. The twelve singers of the choir and the director Bo Holten have produced a series of internationally acclaimed compact discs and have given more than 650 concerts and broadcasts in Scandinavia, the rest of Europe, Israel and Japan. The group was founded in 1979. Since 1990 Ars Nova has been the first professional choir in Denmark fully financed by private sponsors and foundations. These are Bikuben Bank and the Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Foundation of Culture.

Ars Nova has been a pioneer in the performance of the work of Renaissance composers and in the field of modern music has concentrated its attention on compositions of the last 25 years, with work by distinguished Scandinavian composers as well as performing some 120 new works by composers such as Górecki, Pärt and Takemitsu. In 1991 the choir won the Danish Grammy Award for its recording of sacred music by Nicolas Gombert and in 1992 a Diapason d'or gold medal in France for the best classical compact disc, a recording of motets and chansons by Josquin des Prez.

Sopranos:

Bente Vist • Helle Pedersen • Hilde Ramnefjell • Tine Gaardsdal • Tine Jarl • Signe Asmussen

Altos:

Anette Simonsen • Christa Brix Hauser

Countertenors:

Ivan Hansen • Palle Jensen

Tenors:

Villy Nielsen • Poul Emborg • Hans-Henrik R.Olsen • Henrik L. Petersen

Basses:

Thomas Kiørbye • Claus K. Hansen • Jens B. Hansen

I

Il magnanimo Pietro, che giurato
 Havea tra mille lancia, e mille spade
 Al suo caro Signor morir à lato,
 Poi che s'accorse vinto da viltade
 Nel gran bisogno haver di fe mancato.
 Il dolor, la vergogna, e la pietade
 Del proprio fallo, e de l'altrui martiro
 Di mille punte il petto gli ferio.

II

Ma gli archi, che nel petto gli avventaro
 Le saete più acute, e più mortali,
 Fur gli occhi del Signor quando il miraro;
 Gli occhi fur gli archi, e i sguardi fur gli strali
 Che del cor non contenti seri passaro
 Fin dentro à l'alma, e vi fer piaghe tali,
 Che bisognò mentre che visse poi
 Ungerle col licor de gli occhi suoi.

III

Tre volte haveva à l'importuna e audace
 Ancella, al servo, ed à la turba rea
 Detto e giurato, che giamai seguace
 Non fu del suo Signor, ne'l conoscea:
 E'l gallo publicato contumace
 Il di chiamato in testimon v'havea,
 Quando del suo gran fallo à pena avvisto
 S'incontrar gli occhi suoi con quei di Christo,

I

When noble Peter, who had sworn
 that midst a thousand spears and a thousand swords
 he would die beside his beloved Lord,
 saw that, overcome by cowardice,
 his faith had failed him in his great moment of need,
 the grief and shame, and contrition
 for his own failure and Christ's suffering,
 pierced his breast with a thousand darts.

II

But the bows which hurled
 the sharpest and most deadly arrows into his breast
 were the Lord's eyes, as they looked at him;
 His eyes were the bows and His glances the arrows
 which, not content with piercing Peter's heart alone,
 entered his very soul, there inflicting such wounds
 that for the rest of his life
 he had to anoint them with his own tears.

III

Three times had he sworn - to the bold, insistent
 maid,
 to the servant, and to the cruel throng -
 that he had never been a follower
 of his Lord, nor did he know Him:
 then the persistent cock announced the day,
 called to bear witness;
 and now aware of his great failure,
 Peter looked at Christ and their eyes met.

IV

Qual' àl'incontro di quegli occhi santi
Il già caduto Pietro rimanesse
Non sia chi di narrario hoggi si vanti,
Che lingua non saria, ch'al ver giungesse,
Parea che'l buon Signor cinto di tanti
Nemici, e de' suoi privo dir volesse:
Ecco che quel, ch'io dissi, egli è pur vero,
Amico disleal, discepol fiero.

V

Giovane donna il suo bet volto in specchio
Non vide mai di lucido cristallo,
Come in quel punto il miserabil vecchio
Ne gli occhi del Signor vide il suo fallo:
Ne tante cose udir cupido orecchio
Potria, se stesse ben senza intervallo
Intento à l'altrui dir cento annl e cento,
Quante ei n'udio col guardo
in quel momento,

VI

Così tal'hor (benche profane cose
Siano à le sacre d'agguagliarsi indegne)
Scoprir mirando n'ltrui le voglie ascose
Suole amator, senza ch'à dir le vegne.
Chi dunque esperto sia ne l'ingegnose
Schole d'Amor, à chi nol prova insegne,
Come senza aprir bocca, ò scriver note
Con gli occhi anchora favellar si puote.

IV

The encounter with those holy eyes
had such an effect upon the fallen Peter
that nobody today could claim to describe it,
nor could any tongue approach the truth.
It seemed as if the good Lord, surrounded by so many
enemies, and bereft of His friends, were saying:
"Behold, that which I prophesied has come to pass,
O disloyal friend, cruel disciple".

V

No young woman ever saw her beautiful face
reflected in the mirror with such clarity
as in that instant the miserable old man
saw his guilt reflected in the Lord's eyes:
nor could an eager ear,
listening intently and without pause
for a hundred years and yet a hundred more,
hear all that the glance told Peter
in that moment.

VI

Thus, at times (though profane things may be
unworthy of comparison to things sacred)
a lover discovers his beloved's hidden desires
simply by looking, without need for words.
Likewise, experts in the ingenious game of love
can teach the apt but untried novice
how, without speaking or writing a word
one can yet communicate with eyes alone.

VII

Ogni occhio del Signor lingua veloce
Parea, che fusse, ed ogni occhio de' suoi
Orecchia intenta ad ascoltar sua vocc.
Piu fieri (parea dir) son gli occhi tuoi
De l'empie man, che mi porranno in croce;
Ne sento colpo alcun, che si m'annoï
Di tanti, che'l reo stuolo in me ne scocca,
Quanto il colpo, ch'usclo de la tua bocca.

VIII

Nessun fedel trovai, nessun cortese
Di tanti c'ho degnato d'esser miei;
Ma tu, dove il mio amor via più s'accese,
Perfido e ingrato sovra ogn'altro sei:
Ciascun di lor sol col fuggir m'offese,
Tu mi negasti; ed hor con gli altri rei
Ti stai à pascer del mio danno gli occhi,
Perche la parte del piacer ti tocchi.

IX

Chi ad una ad una raccontar potesse
Le parole di sdegno e d'amor piene,
Che parve à Pietro di veder impresse
Nel sacro giro de le due serene
Luci, scoppiar faria chi l'intendesse:
Ma se d'ochchio mortal sovente viene
Virtù, che possa in noi, ch'il prova pensi,
Che puote occhio divin ne gli human sensi.

VII

Each of the Lord's eyes seemed to be a swift tongue,
and each of Peter's eyes was as
an ear listening intently to His voice.
"More cruel", He seemed to say, "are your eyes
than the godless hands that will put Me on the cross;
of the many injuries inflicted on me
by the abusive throng, non grieves me more
than the one which came from your lips."

VIII

"None faithful did I find, none kind
among those I had deemed worthy to be my followers;
but you, in whom my love burned so brightly,
are treacherous and unkind above all the others.
Each of them hurt me only by his desertion,
but you denied me; and now with the other guilty ones
you feast your eyes on my adversity,
having chosen for yourself the easy path."

IX

He who could recount one by one
the words full of anger and love
that Peter seemed to see written
on the serene, holy eyes of Christ,
would cause a listener to burst into tears.
For if, as one can experience, mortal eye
can often be a source of goodness,
what then may the divine eye instil into human senses.

X

Come falda di neve, che agghiacciata
 Il verno in chiusa valle ascosa giacque,
 A primavera poi dal sol scaldata
 Tutta si sface, e si discioglie in acque:
 Così la tema, che entro al cor gelata
 Era di Pietro allhor, che'l vero tacque,
 Quando Christo ver lui gli occh rivolse
 Tutta si sfece, e in pianto si risolse.

XI

E non fu il pianto suo rivo ó Torrente.
 Che per caldo stagion giamai seccasse:
 Che, benche il Re del Cielo immantenente
 A la perdita gratia il ritornasse,
 De la sua vita tutto il rimanente
 Non fu mai notte che ei non si destasse,
 Udendo il gallo à dir quanto fu iniquo,
 Dando lagrime nove al fallo antiquo.

XII

Quel volto, che era poco inanzi stato
 Asperso tutto di color di morte,
 Per il sangue, che al cor se n'era andato,
 Lasciando fredde l'altre parti e smorte:
 Dal raggio de'santi occhi riscaldato
 Divenne fiamma; e per'l'istesse porte,
 Ch'era entrato, il timor fuggendo sparve
 E nel suo loc la vergogna apparve.

X

Like a snowflake which, having lain frozen
 and hidden in deep valleys all winter,
 and then in springtime, warmed by the sun,
 melts and flows into streams;
 thus the fear which had lain like ice
 in Peter's heart and made him repress the truth,
 now that Christ turned His eyes on him,
 melted and was changed into tears.

XI

His weeping was no brook or river
 such as may be dried up by hot weather;
 for, although the King of Heaven immediately
 restored his fallen grace,
 for the remainder of his life
 never a night passed that he did not awake
 on hearing the cock sing of his iniquity,
 and weep new tears over the old guilt.

XII

That face which shortly before
 had taken on the colour of death
 (for the blood had all rushed to his heart,
 leaving the other parts cold and pale),
 was now heated by the rays from those holy eyes
 and became a flame; and by the same doors
 where it had entered, fear fled and disappeared,
 leaving shame in its place.

XIII

Veduto il miser quanto differente
Dal primo stato suo si ritroeava,
Non bas tandogli il cor di star presente
A l'offeso Signor, che si l'amava;
Senza aspettar se fiera, ò se clemente
Sententia il duro Tribunal gli dava,
Da l'odiato albergo, ove era all hora
Piangendo amaramente usci di fuora.

XIV

E vago d'incontrar chi giusta pena
Desse al suo grave error, poi che paura
Di maggior mall'ardita man raffrena,
Per l'ombre errando de la notte oscura
Ne va gridando ove il dolor il mena:
E la vita, che dianzi hebbe si à cura:
Hor piu, ch'altro, odia, e sol di lei si duole,
Et, perche lo fè errar, piu non la vuole.

XV

Vattene vita vâ (dicea piangendo)
Dove non sia chi t'odii, ò chi ti sdegni:
Lasciami: so che non è ben, che, essendo
Compagnia cosi rea, meco ne'vegni:
Vattene vita vâ, ch'io non intendo,
Che un'altra volta ad esser vil m'insegni:
Ne vò per prolungar tue frali tempore,
Uccider l'alma nata à viver sempre.

XIII

Wretched Peter, when he saw how different
from his former self he had become,
Lacking enough courage to stay in the presence
of his wronged Lord, Who loved him so,
not waiting to hear if the dread Tribunal
imposed a harsh or merciful sentence,
from the loathsome place where he was,
weeping bitterly, he fled outside.

XIV

And longing to find someone who would justly punish
his grievous sin - because afraid of
even greater ill he restrains his own bold hand -
roaming about in the darkness of the night
he goes crying aloud wherever his suffering leads him;
and life, that before was so dear to him,
he now despises above all, suffering only because of it
and, because it made him sin, he no longer wants it.

XV

Leave me, life, begone (he wept),
go where you are not hated and scorned.
Leave me, for I know it is not right
for you to be in such sinful company.
Leave me, life, begone, for I will not let you
teach me such cowardice yet another time,
nor shall I, to prolong, your frail existence,
kill the soul born to live forever.

XVI

O vita troppo rea, troppo fallace,
Che per fuggir qua giù si breve guerra,
l'erder m'hai fatto in cielo eterna pace:
Chi piu desia goderti in su la terra
Piu tosto senza te schermito giace:
E chi vorria lasciarti, e gir sotterra,
Non vuoi, malgrado suo, giamai lasciarlo
Vaga di sempre anuovo duol serbarlo.

XVII

A quanti già felici in giovinezza
Recò l'indugio tuo lunghi tormenti;
Che se inanzi al venir de la vecchiezza
Sciolti fusser del mondo, più contenti
Morti sarian; poi che non ha fermezza
Stato alcun, che si temi, ò si paventi;
Onde io vita à ragion di te mi doglio
Che stessi meco, e stai piu che non voglio.

XVIII

Non trovava mia fe sì duro intoppo
Se tu non stavi sì gran tempo meco:
Se non havesser gli anni e il viver troppo
Portato il sennon e la memoria seco,
Pensar dovea, ch'io vidi dar al zoppo
I pie, la lingua al muto, e gli occhi al cieco,
E quel che piu maravigliar fe l'ombre
Render l'anime à i corpi, onde eran sgombre.

XVI

O wicked, deceptive life;
so that I might escape one brief struggle on earth,
you caused me to lose eternal peace in heaven.
He who most desires to enjoy you here on earth
is abandoned, rejected by you,
and he who would leave you, and lie beneath the earth
you never release, despite his wish,
fondly preserving him for new torments.

XVII

To how many lives, once happy in youth,
has your persistence brought prolonged torments,
when, if before reaching old age
they had been released from this world, they would have
died content; for a life of fear and trembling
has no validity at all;
thus, life, on your account I grieve,
because you persisted and have out stayed your welcome.

XVIII

My faith would not have met such an obstacle
if you had not stayed with me for so long.
If the many years and too much living
had not taken away my sense and memory with them,
I should have remembered that I saw Him give
feet to the lame, a tongue to the mute, and eyes to the blind;
and that, most marvellous of all, He made the
Kingdom of Death return souls to lifeless bodies.

XIX

Queste opre e piu, che'l mondo ed io sapea,
Ramentar mi dovean che il lor fattore
Fontana di salute esser doveva,
E sgombrar del miu petto ogni timore:
Ma come quel, che per l'età c'havea,
Era di senno e di me stesso fuore,
Nel gran periglio ricercando aita
Per tema di morir negai la vita.

XX

Negando il mio Signor, negal quel che era
La vita, onde ogni vita si deriva:
Vita tranquilla, che non teme ò spera,
Ne puote il corso suo giunger à riva:
Poi che dunque negai la vita vera
Non è, non è ragion, che unqua piu viva:
Vatten, vita fallace, e tosto sgombra;
Se la vera negai, non chiedo l'ombra.

XXI

Vide homo, quae pro te partior,
Ad te clamo, qui pro te morior.
Vide poenas, quibus afficior.
Vide clavos, quibus confodior!
Non est dolor, sicut quo crucior?
Et cum sit tantus dolor exterior,
Intus tamen dolor est gravior,
Tam ingratum cum te experior.

XIX

These works, and more that the world and I witnessed,
should have reminded me that He who performed them
was the very Fount of all well-being,
and thus free my breast of fear.
But as an old man, timorous with age,
out of my senses and beside myself ,
looking for help in that moment of great peril,
from fear of dying, I denied life.

XX

By denying my Lord, I denied
life itself, from which each life springs:
a tranquil life that neither fears nor desires,
whose course flows on without end:
because then I denied the one true life,
there is no reason, none at all, to continue living.
Go then, vain life, quickly leave me.
Since I denied the true one, I seek no mere illusion.

XXI

Behold, oh man, what I suffer for you,
I who am dying for you call to you.
Behold the pains with which I am afflicted,
behold the nails by which I am pierced.
Is there any pain equal to mine?
And though my body suffers greatly,
yet my heart suffers even more
because of your ingratitude.

Translation by Sylvia Dimiziani

Lassus wrote his setting of Tansillo's *Lagrime di San Pietro* at the end of his life. The seven-voice madrigals express the remorse of St Peter at his final betrayal of Christ.

8.553311

STEREO

LASSUS

Orlando di Lasso

1532 – 1594

Lagrime di San Pietro
Spiritual Madrigals: Tears of St Peter

Ars Nova

Bo Holten

DDD

Playing
Time:
54'44"

1 - 21 Lagrime di San Pietro

54:44

Recorded at Grundtvigskirken, Copenhagen,
from 20th to 22nd June, 1994.

Producer / Engineer: Jesper Jørgensen

Music Notes: Elizabeth Kahn



Cover Painting: The Tears of St Peter by Orazio Guercino

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE,
BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THIS COMPACT DISC PROHIBITED.
© 1995 HNH International Ltd.
© 2016 HNH International Ltd.
Made in Germany.

IC 5537

