

audite

Basevi Codex

Music at the Court of Margaret of Austria

Dorothee Miels
Boreas Quartett Bremen

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- Anonymus: Ave Maria* 1:31
 Johannes Ghiselin (~1455-1511): Fors seulement 2:51
 Pierre de la Rue (~1452-1518): Plorer gemier / Requiem* 4:05
 Jacob Obrecht (1457-1505): Requiem 3:23
 Pierre de la Rue: Il viendra le jour désiré* 1:58
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 Loyset Compère (~1445-1518): Scaramella fa la galla* 2:33
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 Antoine Brumel (~1460-1513): James que la 2:27
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 Matthaeus Pipelare (~1450-1515): Fors seulement 1:55
 Johannes Ockeghem (~1420-1497): Fors seulement* 2:11
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 Kyrie* 1:46 • Sanctus* 2:31 • Osanna* 4:37
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 Heinrich Isaac (~1450-1517): La mi la sol* 2:10
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Dorothee Mields, soprano* • Boreas Quartett Bremen, recorders

The Basevi Codex. Music at the Court of Margaret of Austria

About the Basevi Codex

The Basevi Codex is a music manuscript created during the early sixteenth century within the orbit of Margaret of Austria's court in Mechelen. It was produced in the famous music scribing workshop of Pierre Alamire and constitutes one of the most important sources for Franco-Flemish secular music, which was also sung and played at court. The chansons and chanson motets it contained were so popular that at the beginning of the sixteenth century a noble family in faraway Italy commissioned a copy as a precious, beautifully designed collection. During the nineteenth century, an Italian collector named Abramo Basevi acquired the codex and eventually donated it to the music conservatory at Florence, in whose library this famous musical manuscript is today preserved, bearing the shelfmark FlorC 2439.



The image from the middle of the Basevi Codex shows a young woman standing in a meadow looking up at the sky, possibly at three stars, and below her the Roman she-wolf feeding Romulus and Remus. The following page bears the coat of arms of the Italian patrician family Agostini of Siena, depicting three stars on a blue and red background. The Tuscan city of Siena, like Rome, has the she-wolf as its emblem, and on one of the first pages of the codex the coat of arms and the she-wolf are in fact connected. Was the codex commissioned by a member of the Agostini family and his wife (as musicologists assume)? Or perhaps a father had it made for his music-loving young daughter? Or a groom as a precious gift for his bride? We can but speculate. It is perfectly conceivable, however, that this chansonnier, which contains the popular Franco-Flemish music of the time in a convenient landscape format, indeed served a noble lady for social music-making.

The Basevi Codex contains 87 mostly secular works in French, Dutch, Latin and Italian in two sections, presenting firstly the four-part songs and then the three-part songs. As in many codices of the time, the collection opens with a motet honouring the Mother of God: this one is set for five voices.

The composers' names are inscribed at the heads of the pieces, but often only the beginnings of the texts are noted below the music; a table of contents was added at a later stage. All this points towards a practical use of the book. The commissioner had clearly sought a representative, but also readily usable, collection of the "hits" of the era.

The music scribing workshop of Pierre Alamire

Pierre Alamire (the musical alias of Peter Imhoff of Nuremberg) was a highly versatile personality. Not only was he a member of the Burgundian court chapel, procuring instruments, singers and new musical works, possibly occasionally also composing himself, but he was also the entrepreneurial mastermind behind a flourishing music scribing workshop. In addition, he acted as a courier and also carried out diplomatic missions on his many journeys between the European courts (including, on occasion, espionage assignments...).

Magnificent and precious music manuscripts were produced in Alamire's scriptorium. These collections of sacred music and chansons (chansonniers) were still written by hand, since the complex art of printing polyphonic music with movable type was only just being developed in Italy at the time. The production of such musical manuscripts was very expensive, and only princes, members of the nobility and rich patricians could afford to order such works of art. Margaret of Austria herself commissioned several codices for her princely relatives. Often the codices also served as valuable diplomatic gifts to other rulers.

Margaret of Austria

Margaret of Austria (1470-1530), the only daughter of the Habsburg emperor Maximilian I and Duchess Mary of Burgundy, was a highly educated, art-loving and culture-promoting princess who experienced many lows and few highs in her life. She was married three times: as a child to the heir to the French throne who went on to dissolve the marriage; then to the heir to the Spanish throne, who died after a short marriage; and finally to Duke Philibert of Savoy. Philibert left the administration of his duchy to his wife, which she carried out with interest and competence; however, he too died after only a few years. A fourth marriage, this time to the English king, was refused by her.

Emperor Maximilian, who held his daughter Margaret's abilities in high esteem, instead appointed her regent of the rich Burgundian Netherlands in 1507. She held this office, later also as governor for her nephew, Emperor Charles V, with wisdom and diplomatic skill for a quarter of a century until her death.



The Court of Mechelen and the Burgundian Court Chapel

As Duchess of Savoy, Margaret was already promoting the arts and collected valuable books and musical manuscripts. As regent of the Burgundian Netherlands, she attracted musicians, painters, master builders, sculptors and scholars to her court in Mechelen. When the Burgundian court chapel, which employed distinguished singers and composers, was not travelling with the ruler, Margaret could also draw on them to supplement her own chapel, especially for performing daily church services. New compositions were always needed, especially mass settings. Secular music, mainly chansons and chanson motets (songs in several languages, usually above a Latin cantus firmus), on the other hand, served to entertain at court and was also used informally by the aristocrats, since their education included playing several instruments. Several works in Margaret's chansonniers attest to the fact that she also wrote poetry and composed music herself.

Probably the most important composer of the Burgundian court chapel was Pierre de la Rue (c.1452-1518); a considerable number of his works is preserved in the Basevi Codex and in Margaret's chansonniers. Alongside Pierre de la Rue, Alexander Agricola, Johannes Ghiselin, Johannes Prioris and Jacob Obrecht are the names we find most frequently in the Basevi Codex, and some works by the two most famous composers of the time, Josquin des Prez and Johannes Ockeghem, were also included. The fact that most of the composers are named is a further indication that the Italian patrons had a particular interest in possessing the most beautiful and famous Franco-Flemish chansons.

From the codex to performance

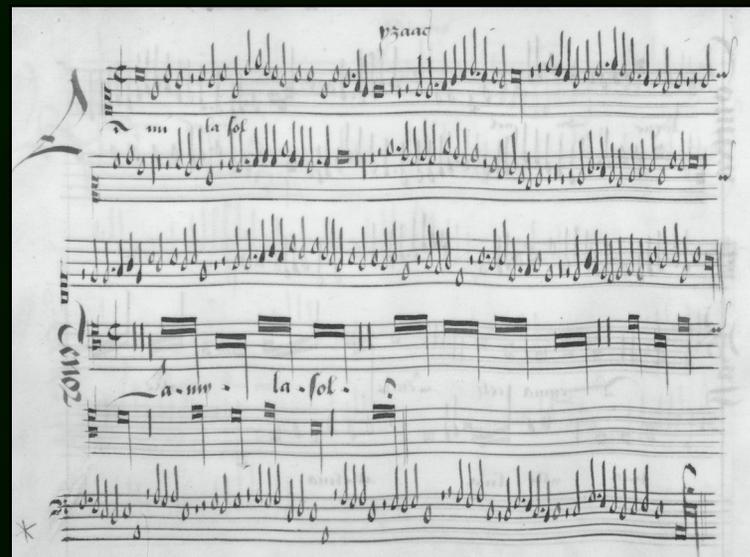
“After a concert in Antwerp, the promoter gave us a beautiful facsimile of the Basevi Codex. In order to make this old codex sound after 500 years, we had to solve a number of questions, for instance regarding notation and texts. In these pieces the texts are often incomplete or not underlaid at all, so a lot of research was necessary.

In the choice of instrumentation and distribution of voices, renaissance performance practice allowed us great freedom. For example, it was equally common to have purely vocal, purely instrumental or mixed performances by singers as well as instrumentalists; in addition, ornamentation and improvisation could be added, according to the moods and characters of the pieces. We decided to add a vocal part to our quartet: the wonderful soprano Dorothee Miels. The human voice is the model for all instruments in renaissance music, and we therefore today also try to play our recorders as narratively and rhetorically as possible.

The funeral motet *Plorer, gemir / Requiem*, which Pierre de la Rue probably composed upon the death of Johannes Ockeghem, is a very moving work. While the tenor and bass parts use the Introit of the Gregorian requiem mass (*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine*) as the cantus firmus, the two upper parts tell of grief and sorrow in French. For this work we chose our largest and lowest recorders. The soprano first sings the Latin cantus firmus, switching to French in the top part in the repeat. In the calm triple time middle section, only the instruments speak; the voice remains silent.

The Basevi Codex contains some songs that were widely known at the time in settings by several composers, such as the chanson *Fors seulement* in eight different versions, including by Johannes Ghiselin, Johannes Ockeghem and Pierre de la Rue. In our interpretations, we use the entire colour palette of our instruments. Thus each of these pieces appears as an individual miniature: Ghiselin’s *Fors seulement* as an instrumental, Ockeghem’s three-part (original) version with voice and high recorders, and Pierre de la Rue’s composition with virtuoso ornamentation for the soprano recorder.

As was common in the sixteenth century, many texts were not, or were only partially, notated in the Basevi Codex, since both melodies and texts were familiar to the listeners. In the case of Loyset Compère’s song *Scaramella*, we took two text stanzas from an eponymous composition by Josquin des Prez, telling of Scaramella’s entertaining experiences. Accompanied by cheerful recorders, Dorothee Miels sings of Scaramella going to a party and warbling to himself: ‘la zombero bero berombetta la zombero berombetta’. In the second stanza, Scaramella goes to war. The subsequent triple metre invites numerous ornaments that clarify the text in the style of a *battaglia*, the imitation of a battle tumult.” (Boreas Quartett Bremen)





To. vylmit

Ben vrouwele wessin

The first system of musical notation. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line with square neumes on a four-line staff. The lower staff is a lute line with square neumes on a five-line staff. The text "Ben vrouwele wessin" is written in Gothic script between the two staves.

The second system of musical notation, continuing from the first. It features a vocal line and a lute line with square neumes. A large asterisk-like symbol is visible below the lute line.



DOROTHEE MIELDS soprano

Dorothee Miels is one of the leading interpreters of 17th and 18th century music and is admired for her unique timbre and moving interpretations.

She appears regularly with the Collegium Vocale Gent, Netherlands Bach Society, L'Orfeo Barockorchester, Freiburger Barockorchester, RIAS Kammerchor, Lautten Compagny Berlin, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra Toronto, The English Concert, Early Music Vancouver, Gli Angeli Genève and Holland Baroque, under conductors such as Michi Gaigg, Paul Goodwin, Philippe Herreweghe, Emilio Pomàrico, Hans-Christoph Rademann, Shunske Sato, Andreas Spering and Masaaki Suzuki.

Dorothee Miels is a welcome guest at international festivals, including Leipzig Bach Festival, Thüringer Bachwochen, Bachwoche Stuttgart, Musikfest Erzgebirge, Musikfest Bremen, Heinrich-Schütz-Musikfest, Festival of Flanders, Styriarte Graz and Boston Early Music Festival.

As a devoted chamber musician she partners with Stefan Temmingh, Hille Perl, Salagon Quartett, Hathor Consort or the G.A.P. Ensemble.

A steadily growing discography with several award-winning recordings documents her artistic achievements. The album "War & Peace" with the Lautten Compagny Berlin was awarded with the Opus Klassik 2019. Equally well received was "Handel's Tea Time" with the Freitagsakademie Bern, released in 2020.



BOREAS QUARTETT BREMEN recorder consort

Since its inception in 2009, the Boreas Quartett Bremen has dedicated itself to the core repertoire of the recorder quartet: music from the renaissance and the modern era. The ensemble possesses a collection of over 40 recorders in various models and sizes, including a twelve-piece renaissance consort by Peter van der Poel, built after original instruments of the sixteenth century.

The Boreas Quartett Bremen has been invited by festivals including Musikfest Bremen, MDR-Musiksommer, Tage Alter Musik Saarbrücken, Boston Early Music Festival (USA), Music Before 1800 New York (USA), Musica Antica Urbino (Italy), Taiwan International Recorder Festival, Concentus Moraviae (Czech Republic), baroque muerz (Austria) and AMUZ Antwerp (Belgium). The four musicians have been praised in the press for their “tonal mastery”, their “lively, great expressiveness, outstanding technique, perfect intonation and incredible precision in their music-making”.

Jin-Ju Baek, Elisabeth Champollion, Julia Fritz and Luise Manske studied recorder from 2004 to 2009 with Han Tol at the Early Music department of the University of the Arts Bremen.

In 2014, the ensemble was accepted into Germany’s 59th Federal Selection of Young Artists’ Concerts, and in 2012, the quartet won the Saarländischer Rundfunk’s Early Music Advancement Prize and the Audience Award. The musicians have also been able to gain the support of foundations for numerous projects, including the foundations “Laudate, Cantate”, Heinz Peter and Annelotte Koch, Waldemar Koch, Dr. Christiane and Bernd Rogge and the Mariann Steegmann Foundation. From 2020 to 2023, the Boreas Quartett Bremen will be supported by the Bremen culture senator’s ensemble programme.

DAlou seul plaisir ma douce dore

MAlou seul plaisir ma douce dore

Je ne soy quel propos tenu



recording:

August 6-9, 2020

recording location:

Bassum, Stiftskirche St. Mauritius & St. Viktor

executive producer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

recording producer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Simon Böckenhoff

recording engineer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer

recording format:

PCM 96kHz, 24bit

literature:

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The treasury of Petrus Alamire. Music and art in Flemish court manuscripts 1500–1535. Ed. by H. Kellman. Ghent & Amsterdam: Ludion 1999.

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photos:

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Anonymus

Ave gracia plena

Ave Maria gracia plena
Dominus tecum
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
Alleluia

Gegrüßet seist du Maria voll der Gnade,
Der Herr ist mit dir.
Du bist gepriesen unter den Frauen.
Halleluja

Hail Mary full of grace
The Lord is with thee
Blessed art thou amongst women
Alleluia

Pierre de la Rue

Il viendra le jour désiré

Il viendra le jour désiré
Il viendra ce que je demande
De la faulte Dieu me deffende
Cest grant paine destre abusié.

Der erwünschte Tag wird kommen,
Wonach mich verlangt, wird kommen.
Vor Irrtum bewahre mich Gott,
Getäuscht zu werden ist ein großer Schmerz.

The longed-for day will come
What I long for will come
The Lord protect me from error
To be deceived means great pain

Pierre de la Rue

Puis que je suis hors du compte

Puis que je suis hors du compte
Des amoureux dont on raconte
Sans espoir ou entretenue
Je demande quant je margue
Si ce mest grant honneur ou honte.

Da ich nicht zu den Liebenden gehöre,
Von denen erzählt wird,
Dass ihre Liebe hoffnungslos oder nicht von Dauer war,
So frage ich mich, wenn ich darüber nachdenke,
Ob mir das zu großer Ehre oder zur Schande gereicht.

As I do not belong to the lovers
Of whom we hear
That their love was hopeless or did not last
I ask myself when I think about it
Whether it is to my great honour or shame

Pierre de la Rue

Fors seulement lactante

Fors seulement lactante que je meure
En mon las cueur nul espoir ne demeure
Car mon maleur si tresfort me tourmente
Quil nest douleur que par vous je ne sente
Pource que je suis de vous perdre bien seure.

Außer der Erwartung, dass ich sterben werde,
Bleibt meinem müden Herzen keinerlei Hoffnung,
Denn mein Unglück quält mich über alle Maßen.
Es gibt kein Leid, das ich Eurewegen nicht empfinde,
Weil ich ganz sicher bin, Euch zu verlieren.

Apart from the expectation that I shall die
No hope remains to my tired heart
For my misfortune is torturing me beyond measure
There is no grief that I do not feel because of you
As I am totally certain to lose you

Johannes Ockeghem

Fors seulement lactante

Vostre rigueur si tresfort me court seure
Quen ce parti il fault que je masseure
Dont je nay bien qui en riens me contente

Eure Härte beschwert mich so sehr,
Dass ich in dieser Sache nun überzeugt bin,
Nichts daraus kann mich zufriedenstellen.

Your intransigence weighs so much on me
That in this matter I am now convinced
That there is nothing therein to satisfy me

Fors seulement lactante que je meure
En mon las cueur nul espoir ne demeure
Car mon maleur si tresfort me tourmente.

Außer der Erwartung, dass ich sterben werde,
Bleibt meinem müden Herzen keinerlei Hoffnung,
Denn mein Unglück quält mich über alle Maßen.

Apart from the expectation that I shall die
No hope remains to my tired heart
For my misfortune is torturing me beyond measure

Alexander Agricola***Sonnes muses melodieusement***

Sonnes muses melodieusement,
Chantes de voix et joues dinstrument
Par doux acors et joieuse armonie
Et queung chascun a ce faire estudie
Pour resjouir tout lor entendement.

Lasst schöne Melodien erklingen, ihr Musen,
Singt und spielt auf euren Instrumenten
Mit süßen Akkorden und froher Harmonie,
Und jedermann möge dies erlernen,
Um jedes verständige Gehör zu erfreuen.

Let beautiful melodies resound ye muses
Sing and play on your instruments
With sweet chords and harmony
And may everybody study this
To please the sensitive ear

Loyset Compère***Scaramella fala galle***

Scaramella fa la gala
Con la scarpa e la stivalla
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Scaramella geht aus zum Vergnügen
In Schuh und Stiefel
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Scaramella goes out to enjoy himself
In elegant shoe and boot
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Scaramella va alla guerra
Con la lancia e la rotella
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Scaramella zieht in den Krieg
Mit Lanze und Schild
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Scaramella goes to war
With lance and shield
La zombero bero berombetta
La zombero berombetta.

Jacob Obrecht***Fortuna desperata***

Fortuna desperata
Iniqua e maledecta
Che de tal dona electa
La fama hai denegrata.

Verzweifertes Schicksal,
Ungerecht und verflucht
Du hast den Ruf verdunkelt
Einer auserwählten Dame.

Desperate, unjust and cursed fate
Thou hast tarnished the reputation of
a chosen lady

Johannes Prioris***Dueil et ennuy / Quoniam tribulacio***

Dueil et ennuy soussy regret et paine
Ont esloignié ma plaisance mondaine
Dont a par moy je me plains et tourmente
Et en espoir nay plus ung brin dactante
Veez comment fortune me pourmaine.

Trauer und Leid, Sorge, Weh und Qual
Haben mir die Freude aus der Welt vertrieben.
Darüber muss ich klagen und mich quälen;
Und als Hoffnung habe ich nicht die geringste
Erwartung mehr;
Seht, wie schlimm das Schicksal mit mir umgeht.

Grief and distress, pain and torture
Have chased my joy out of the world
I must moan about that and torment myself
And as to hope I have not the least
expectation left
See how cruelly fate is treating me

Pierre de la Rue***Plores gemer crier / Requiem eternam***

Plores gemer crier et braire

Me convient en grant desplesier.

Requiem eternam dona eis domine

Weinen, seufzen, heulen und schreien

Muss ich in großem Jammer.

Gib ihnen die ewige Ruhe, Herr.

Cry, sigh, howl and scream

I must in great misery

Give them oh Lord eternal peace

Johannes Prioris***Royne du ciel / Regina celi letare***

Royne du ciel / Regina celi letare

Alleluia

Himmelskönigin freue dich,

halleluja.

Queen of Heaven rejoice

Halleluja

Johannes Ghiselin***Anima mea***

Anima mea liquefacta est

Ut dilectus meus locutus est

Quesivi et non inveni illum

Vocavi et non respondit mihi

Invenerunt me custodes civitatis

Percusserunt me et vulneraverunt me

Tulerunt pallium meum custodes murorum

Filie Ierusalem nunciate dilecto

Quia amore langueo.

Meine Seele war außer sich,

Als mein Geliebter redete.

Ich suchte ihn, aber ich fand ihn nicht,

Ich rief ihn, aber er antwortete mir nicht.

Die Wächter der Stadt fanden mich,

Sie schlugen mich, und sie verletzten mich,

Die Wächter an der Mauer nahmen mir meinen Mantel.

Ihr Töchter Jerusalems, sagt meinem Geliebten,

Dass ich krank bin vor Liebe.

My soul was beside itself

When my lover spoke

I looked for him but did not find him

I called him but he did not answer

The guards of the town found me

They beat me and injured me

The guards of the walls took my coat

Ye daughters of Jerusalem tell my lover

That I am sick with love

Anonymus***Amours mon fait***

Amours mon fait de desplaisier mainte heure

Et de couroux mon povre cueur labeure

Car chasque jour me pourchasse a oultrance

Jen ay tel dueil et telle desplaisance

Car cest par elle si convient que je meure.

Die Liebe hat mir manch trauervolle Stunde gebracht,

Und Kummer muss mein armes Herz ertragen,

Denn alle Tage verfolgt sie mich im Übermaß.

Ich habe durch sie solches Leid und solche Traurigkeit,

Dass ich ihretwegen sterben werde.

Love has given me many a mournful hour

And grief my tired heart must bear

For it persecutes me in excess day in and day out

It has caused me so much suffering and sadness

That I shall die because of it

Übersetzung der mittelfranzösischen Texte:

Sibylle Schwantag

translation: Hartmut Gembries

