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Orlandus Lassus
The Alchemist Volume 3
MAGNIFICAT
THE CITY MUSICK

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The Alchemist

Orlandus Lassus (1530/32–1594)

Magnificats based on polyphonic models
Volume 3: Chansons

MAGNIFICAT
THE CITY MUSICK
PHILIP CAVE director

Volume 1

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2. **Magnificat Tant vous allez doux** Lassus 7:32
3. **Si vous estes m'amie** Lassus 2:33
4. **Magnificat Si vous estes m'amie** Lassus 8:18
5. **Las je n'iray plus** Lassus 3:16
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Total Running Time 65:54

The Alchemist

Magnificats based on Chansons

In this third and final instalment of our survey of Orlandus Lassus's Magnificats based on polyphonic models, we turn to those that take their inspiration from chansons. The chanson – born in medieval France and given polyphonic life in the hands of figures such as Guillaume de Machaut – began as the vehicle of courtly love, composed in *formes fixes* and woven from intricate melodic lines. By the Renaissance the genre had widened its expressive palette: the Parisian chanson in particular moved toward clearer declamation, dance-like rhythms, catchy homophony and vivid text-painting, and its subjects range from refined amour to the everyday and even the ribald. As both courtly entertainment and popular fare, the chanson provided a rich, flexible repertory that composers could borrow, parody or transform.

Lassus's Magnificats based on chansons reveal his unique compositional 'alchemy': he mines secular tunes and gestures for melodic and rhythmic kernels, then transmutes them into sacred discourse by retexturing, reworking motives imitatively, shifting modal focus, and enlarging or compressing phrase-structures to suit the Latin Magnificat text. Where a chanson's clarity or earthy directness might suggest homophonic simplicity, Lassus often deploys subtle contrapuntal development and chromatic inflection to create works of surprising intimacy, wit or splendour. The result is not mere quotation but metamorphosis – secular idioms reshaped into liturgical rhetoric – an effect we aim to illuminate here through varied scorings and expressive contrasts that highlight both the original chanson character and Lassus's brilliant transformation.

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Listening *to* Magnificats, listening *through* Magnificats

In the sixteenth century, only one composer seriously explored the genre of the model-based Magnificat, and that was Orlandus Lassus. Time and again, Lassus returned to the task of writing a Magnificat that openly quotes from another musical work. Fourteen of his Magnificats draw on madrigals; eight more are based on motets; the remaining thirteen, recorded here, grow out of chansons. Whatever the model might be, however, Lassus's intentions are always the same: as we listen to the Magnificat, memories of the model are meant to flood back through our minds. The experience is magical, but it comes with a prerequisite. If it is to work, the listener must first get to know the model – not just its identity, but its actual sound.

Lassus never explained why he wrote these unique and fascinating works, but we can hazard some guesses. First, he must have relished the creative stimulus of moulding a new work out of an older one, not merely by transferring content from one to the other, but by *transforming* that content as he worked. Second and probably more importantly, Lassus surely chose his models with his local audience in mind. From 1556 up to his death in 1594, he worked for the music-loving dukes of Bavaria in Munich, and we can be fairly sure that Lassus, when choosing a model for a new Magnificat, picked ones his listeners would know. His choices therefore link with his target audience – the dukes themselves, their wives and families, their household and court, and the visitors who spent time with them.

We might step further, and imagine a likely reality. The scene is the ducal chapel, and the Bavarian court is assembled for the service of Vespers, late in the afternoon. Men and women stand or sit in separate groups; members of the clergy lead the service from the front; and the choir is gathered round a lectern, on which stands a copy of a new Magnificat, freshly composed. Its music quotes from a model, but the model's identity has not been announced. Instead, Lassus wants his congregation to *listen through* the music, and find the

model for themselves. As the choir starts to sing, some of them quickly do so. This new Magnificat is based on the chanson *Beau le cristal*.

Probing this imaginary scene further: *Beau le cristal* is a chanson by Lassus that extols the virtues of peace. Its text, however, does not specify what 'peace' signifies, and its interpretation might change according to context. For instance, it could signify peace after warfare or conflict. It could signify the reassurance of living in a peaceable land. It could refer to resolution of a personal dispute. Any of those thoughts, and indeed others, could come to the listener's mind when, at Vespers, the assembled company hears the new *Magnificat Beau le cristal*. But there may be other factors in play. For instance, *Beau le cristal* may be a favourite song of the duke's, and the matching Magnificat written for him as a gift. Or perhaps ambassadors from a visiting court are in residence. Was *Beau le cristal* sung to them over wine, and the matching *Magnificat Beau le cristal* then sung at Vespers? These are guesses, but they are viable guesses.

Sometimes Lassus's choice of a model is easy to understand. One of them is his own chanson *Susanne un jour*. It tells the biblical story of Susanna resisting the lascivious advances of two old men. Clearly a song praising the virtue of female chastity transfers well to a Magnificat, the text of which was itself spoken by the Virgin Mary who, according to Luke 1:34, 'knew not a man'. Here, model and Magnificat fit together like hand into glove.

Other chansons may have been chosen because they admit more than one interpretation. An example is *Mort et fortune*, a sombre chanson by Nicolas Gombert, the text of which laments a love shattered by death. Obviously a Magnificat based on this song would be fit for use at times of mourning and remembrance, but might it also have been sung in Lent and Holy Week? That idea is encouraged by another model-based work by Lassus, his *Missa Puisque j'ai perdu mon ami* (Because I have lost my love), which quotes a sad song by Johannes Lupi. In a manuscript copy of this Mass made for Lassus's choir, someone has written: 'we use this Mass on Ash Wednesday'.

These thoughts lead to a broader question: might Lassus sometimes have chosen a model in order to summon a specific mood or emotional state? Here we could turn to his *Magnificat Helas, j'ay sans mercy*. Its model chanson, composed by Lassus himself, puns on the words 'soucy' and 'pensée', which at face value signify two species of flowers, marigold and pansy; but these words also have the meaning of 'worries' and 'concerns'. Are those the mental states Lassus wanted to summon in his matching Magnificat? Does he then evoke the opposite mood in his *Magnificat Las je n'iray plus*? Its model chanson again speaks of choosing between flowers, but this time they are 'fleurs d'amour' (flowers of love). Transformed into a Magnificat, the model becomes emblematic of a carefree mood, not a troubled one.

None of this prepares us for Lassus's most perplexing Magnificats, which are the ones modelled on chansons whose texts are erotic or describe sexual encounters. Some of these chansons are stuffed with euphemisms and *double entendres*; some are voyeuristic narratives in which an onlooker describes the scene; some are miniature dialogues in which the lovers speak for themselves; and all these chansons became Magnificat models. At the merely erotic end, *Si vous estes m'amie* evokes playful banter between potential partners, *Il est jour* is scornful and jesting about an impotent husband, and *Dessus le marché d'Arras* uses nonsense syllables to tease us with innuendo. At the other end of the spectrum, there are chansons that leave little to the imagination. Thus the *Magnificat Si par souhait* cites a song that is graphic bordering on the obscene, and the *Magnificat Tant vous allez doux* catches the lovers in intimate play.

Inevitably the question is 'why?'. Why invoke the sexual in music that is firmly sacred? There are no easy answers, but two aspects of context may be relevant here. First, we know much about Lassus's sense of humour, thanks to a series of letters he wrote to his employer's son, the future Duke Wilhelm V, between 1572 and 1579. Reading these letters, the following words come to mind: quick-witted; jesting; convivial; alert; absurd; Rabelaisian; ribald; sometimes bawdy. It takes little effort to align these qualities with

Lassus's choice of saucy songs, such as *Si par souhait* and *Tant vous allez doux*. We can also be sure that Wilhelm, as recipient and reader of Lassus's flow of letters, shared his sense of humour. Viewed in that light, these 'risky' Magnificats now make a little more sense.

Second, we should remember that the meaning of a song can transcend the meaning of its words if, in the listener's mind, that song becomes symbolic of an event or a person or a time. For instance, any one of these model chansons could once have formed part of a memorable entertainment or a play, having been sung or staged on a special occasion such as a birthday or a feast. It could have been delivered by cherished performers, perhaps acted out or danced, perhaps in costume. If so, then treasured memories of that event could be triggered by hearing the song again, not only when performed intact, but also when cited in a Magnificat. Put another way, the perceived meaning of a model may lie more in its topical associations than in the song's actual words. It is an alluring theory, but it cannot be verified here, for a simple reason: no records survive to explain how these model songs were used at the Bavarian court. For that reason, the truths behind Lassus's most 'risky' Magnificats almost certainly lie forever locked within those works, with the keys thrown away.

In the remainder of this booklet note, we guide you through the tracks by briefly introducing each of the chanson-Magnificat pairs. Our hope is that these cameo introductions will enrich your listening, and cast at least dim shafts of light into the cultures to which these works once belonged. For listeners who choose this route, the following steps are recommended. First, read the cameo introduction to one of the chanson-Magnificat pairs. Study the chanson's text and translation; search for its meaning, which would have mattered to Lassus and his listeners. Next, listen to the chanson, text in hand; listen often enough for everything to be familiar. Finally – and only now – turn to the Magnificat, listen *through* it, and experience the alchemy.

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Volume 1

1. Ebran: **Tant vous allez doux** (a4)
2. Lassus: **Magnificat Tant vous allez doux** (a6)

About twenty chansons survive by a composer named Ebran, Abran or Hebran; his identity is unknown. Lassus probably found his cheeky little *Tant vous allez doux* in a collection printed in Paris in 1565, which includes four chansons by Lassus himself. Ebran's song is almost annoyingly memorable – the word 'earworm' comes to mind – and it is also delightfully saucy. In his Magnificat, Lassus dresses it up in six-voice polyphony with two soprano parts, generating a work that is far grander than its little model. The outcome perfectly demonstrates Lassus's capacity for developing his material. Notice in particular how the chanson's opening is reworked in all manner of ways.

Tant vous allez doux, Guillemette,	*You're taking it really slow, Guillemette,*
Tant vous allez doux.	*You're taking it really slow.*
Pour un baiser doux, Guillemette,	*For a gentle kiss, Guillemette,*
M'escondirez vous?	*Would you send me away?*
Et Guillemette, avez-vous desjeuné?	*Tell me, Guillemette, have you eaten?*
Nennin, dit-elle, car je n'ay point mangé.	*'No', she said, 'I haven't had anything'.*
Prenez cinq sous en ma joli' boursette.	*Then take five sous from my lovely little sack.*
Tant vous allez doux …	*You're taking it really slow …*
Et Guillemette, coucheray j'avec vous?	*Well, Guillemette, shall I lie with you?*
Mon doux amy, je m'en rapport' à vous.	*'My sweet love, it's up to you.*
Mais que vouliez lever la chemisette.	*But you'd better take off my shirt.'*
Tant vous allez doux …	*You're taking it really slow …*

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Magnificat anima mea Dominum.	*My soul doth magnify the Lord:*
Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo, salutari meo.	*and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:	*For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden.*

ecce enim ex hoc beatam	*For behold, from henceforth:*
me dicent omnes generationes.	*all generations shall call me blessed.*
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:	*For he that is mighty hath magnified me:*
et sanctum nomen eius.	*and holy is his Name.*
Et misericordia eius a progenie	*And his mercy is on them that fear him:*
in progenies timentibus eum.	*throughout all generations.*
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:	*He hath showed strength with his arm:*
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.	*he hath scattered the proud in the imagination*
Deposuit potentes de sede,	*of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty*
et exaltavit humiles.	*from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.*
Esurientes implevit bonis:	*He hath filled the hungry with good things:*
et divites dimisit inanes.	*and the rich he hath sent empty away.*
Suscepit Israel, puerum suum,	*He remembering his mercy*
recordatus misericordiae suae.	*hath holpen his servant Israel:*
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,	*as he promised to our forefathers,*
Abraham, et semini eius in saecula.	*Abraham and his seed, for ever.*

Gloria Patri, et Filio,	*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,*
et Spiritui Sancto.	*and to the Holy Spirit;*
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,	*as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,*
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	*world without end. Amen.*

3. Lassus: **Si vous estes m'amie** (a6)
4. Lassus: **Magnificat Si vous estes m'amie** (a6)

The story of *Si vous estes m'amie* begins in 1530, when the Parisian printer Pierre Attaingnant published an unattributed four-voice setting of this text, and placed it alongside Adrian Willaert's chanson *Dessus le marché d'Arras*. Fifty years later, this pair of pieces evidently caught Lassus's eye and ear, because he composed six-voice reworkings of them both, then used those reworkings as models for Magnificats. His *Si vous estes m'amie* is a busy and garrulous chanson that repays careful and repeated hearings, since much thematic content is packed into a short space. As for the matching Magnificat, it rarely strays far from its model, but you need to listen hard to follow all the transfers and transformations.

Si vous estes m'amie, Je vous donneray bon tems.	*If you are my sweetheart,* *I'll show you a good time.*
Nous estions trois filles, Touttes trois d'un ranc, Nous allions esbatre Au long d'un eau courant.	*We were three girls,* *All three together,* *We went out to have fun* *By the banks of a flowing stream.*
Si vous estes m'amie, Je vous donneray bon tems.	*If you are my sweetheart,* *I'll show you a good time.*
Nous allions esbastre Au long d'un eau courant Et par la passoient Trois gentilz gallans.	*We went out to have fun* *By the banks of a flowing stream.* *And there passed by* *Three gallant young lads.*
Si vous estes m'amie.	*If you are my sweetheart.*
Moy, qui suis la plus jeune, Les suivis courant.	*I, being the youngest,* *Ran after them.*
Si vous estes m'amie, Je vous donneray bon tems.	*If you are my sweetheart,* *I'll show you a good time.*

5. Lassus: **Las je n'iray plus** (a5)
6. Lassus: **Magnificat Las je n'iray plus** (a5)

Lassus's five-voice chanson *Las je n'iray plus* has a distinctly popular quality, and possibly quotes pre-existing material; it was first published in 1576. It insistently explores two distinctive rhythms, one for the refrain, the other for the intervening verses. The derived Magnificat was in existence by 1578, so was composed soon after the chanson. It significantly changes the character of its model by having two soprano parts. The outer verses enjoy the 'Las je n'iray plus' rhythm, especially at 'Sicut erat' and 'et in secula'. The Magnificat's interior focusses more on the rhythms of the chanson's verses.

Las je n'iray plus, je n'iray pas, Las je n'iray plus jouer au bois.	*Alas, I'll go no more, I will not go,* *Alas, I'll go no more to play in the woods.*
Hier au matin my levay, En nostre jardin entray, Las je n'iray plus …	*Yesterday morning I got up,* *I entered into our garden,* *Alas, I'll go no more …*
En nostre jardin entray, Trois fleurs d'amour j'y trouvay, Las je n'iray plus …	*I entered into our garden,* *There I found three flowers of love,* *Alas, I'll go no more …*
Trois fleurs d'amour j'y trouvay, Une en pris, deux en laissay, (He)las je n'iray plus …	*There I found three flowers of love,* *I took one, left two behind,* *Alas, I'll go no more …*
Une en pris, deux en laissay, A mon amy l'envoyray, Las je n'iray plus …	*I took one, left two behind,* *I'll send it to my beloved,* *Alas, I'll go no more …*
A mon amy l'envoyray, Qui sera joyeux et gay, (He)las je n'iray plus …	*I'll send it to my beloved* *Who will be joyful and gay,* *Alas, I'll go no more …*

7. Lassus: **Si par souhait** (a4)
8. Lassus: **Magnificat Si par souhait** (a4)

Lassus's *Si par souhait* sounds very much like a popular song dressed up in polyphony, though this may be an illusion; its catchy refrain 'La tricque baubin' could equally be Lassus's own invention. The chanson was later converted into a compact Magnificat for low voices, in which recollections of the song's opening are given priority. It takes some effort for the listener to hear echoes of the refrain 'La tricque baubin' in the Magnificat, though they are in fact there. Duet texture is used for the verses 'Fecit potentiam' and 'Sicut locutus est', which completely shun the model chanson.

Si par souhait je vous tenoye	*If, as desired, I held you*
Secretement, belle brunette,	*Secretly, beautiful brunette,*
Joyeusement vous monstreroye	*Joyfully I would show you*
Un tour joly par amourette,	*A pretty little trick out of love.*
La tricque baubin, gentil' fillette,	*Lips on the rod*, gentle little girl,*
La tricque baubin et puis devant.	*Lips on the rod, then from the front.*
Je sçay bien qu'en avez disette,	*I know well that you're starving for it*
Et si n'en fait' aucun semblant,	*And if you make no pretense,*
Tout est à votre joly command,	*Everything is at your loving command.*
La tricque baubin, gentil' fillette,	*Lips on the rod, gentle little girl*
La tricque baubin et puis devant.	*Lips on the rod, then from the front.*

** The French is slightly more equivocal, but the sense can be derived from the combination of the terms 'trique' = club/rod or erection; and 'baubin' (babin) = lip.*

9. Claudin de Sermisy: **Il est jour** (a4)
10. Lassus: **Magnificat Il est jour** (a4)

Claudin de Sermisy's *Il est jour* was half a century old when Lassus used it as a Magnificat model. His choice here is puzzling, because this particular chanson was barely one of Claudin's international 'hit' songs, and Lassus makes surprisingly little direct reference to it in his Magnificat. A clue may lie in his opening verse, 'Et exsultavit', which emphatically recalls Claudin's opening three words, 'Il est jour' (it is day). Did Lassus choose this model to bring precisely those three words to mind, for topical reasons his Munich audience would have understood? This is a tight little Magnificat, shorter than any other by Lassus based on a polyphonic model.

Il est jour, dit l'alouette,	*It's daytime, says the lark,*
Susbout, susbout,	*Get up, get up,*
Allons jouer sur l'herbette!	*Let's go play in the grass!*

Mon pere m'a mariée	*My father married me off*
A ung ort vieillart jaloux,	*To a nasty jealous old man,*
Le plus let de ceste ville,	*The ugliest in this town,*
Et le plus mal gratioux.	*And the most ill-mannered.*
Qui ne scet, qui ne peut, qui ne veult	*Who doesn't know, who cannot,*
Faire la chosette,	*Who doesn't want to do the thing,*
Voire da, voire da, voire da,	*Yes indeed, yes indeed,*
Qui est si doulcette.	*Even the thing that's so lovely.*

11. Lassus: **Helas, j'ay sans mercy** (a5)
12. Lassus: **Magnificat Helas, j'ay sans mercy** (a5)

Lassus probably composed *Helas, j'ay sans mercy* and its matching Magnificat around 1580. The model chanson is related to a setting by an obscure contemporary called De Bussy; Lassus's version has a catchy canzona-like refrain that alternates with contrasted verses, but with few direct repetitions. The process is subtle, so it pays to listen closely to the chanson several times before turning to the Magnificat. The latter stays close to its model, relishing in particular its refrain 'Helas, j'ay sans mercy', which resurfaces in all manner of guises and contexts. Notice especially the closing 'Sicut erat', which is lengthy and full of transformations. This Magnificat would be apt for use in Spring and Summer, on account of the chanson's subject-matter.

Helas, j'ay sans mercy	*Alas, I have unceasing*
Le soucy et la pensée.	*Worries and concerns*.*
Helas, j'ay sans mercy	*Alas, I have unceasing*
La pensée et le soucy!	*Concerns and worries!*
Quand la saison verdoye	*When the season turns green*
Et produit toute fleurs,	*And brings forth every flower,*
On prend plaisir et joye	*It is a pleasure and a joy*
De choisir les couleurs	*To choose the colours,*
Et de cueillir aussi	*And to pluck the flower*
La fleur plus avancée.	*That has most fully bloomed.*

Mais moy, j'ay sans mercy	*But me, I have unceasing*
Le soucy et la pensée.	*Worries and concerns.*
Mais moy, j'ay sans mercy	*But me, I have unceasing*
La pensée et le soucy!	*Concerns and worries!*
L'un pour sa fleur deslite	*One, for his favoured flower,*
La Rose veut choisir,	*Wishes to choose the Rose,*
L'autre la Marguerite	*Another finds the Daisy*
Plus propre à son desir.	*More to his liking.*
C'est ceste fleur sans si	*It is this faultless flower*
Qui est tant pourchassée.	*That is so sought after.*
Mais moy, j'ay sans mercy	*But me, I have unceasing*
Le soucy et la pensée.	*Worries and concerns.*
Mais moy, j'ay sans mercy	*But me, I have unceasing*
La pensée et le soucy!	*Concerns and worries!*

** Both terms have a double significance as types of flowers and emotions: 'soucy' = marigold or worry; 'pensée' = pansy or concern.*

Volume 2

1. Lassus: **Beau le cristal** (a4)
2. Lassus: **Magnificat Beau le cristal** (a4)

Lassus's exquisitely crafted chanson *Beau le cristal* was new when it was first published in 1576. Its words value peace above all precious things; notice how Lassus, when setting the closing line, underscores the word 'paix' with a subtle harmonic shift. The partner Magnificat was probably composed a decade later, to judge from a Munich manuscript copy of it dated August 1585. Lassus draws material from the chanson only in the Magnificat's outer verses, quoting it literally at the start, with greater development at the end, where the 'paix' music returns. The remainder of the Magnificat is freely composed to music of quite exceptional invention, as if to convey the idea that it too is full of precious things. This Magnificat is significantly more polyphonic than its model chanson.

Beau le cristal, beau l'albastre et l'ivoyre,	*Beautiful is crystal, beautiful are alabaster and ivory,*
Beau le porphire et le jaspe luisant,	*Beautiful are porphyry and shining jasper,*
Et beau est l'or: des beaux metaux la gloire.	*And beautiful is gold: the glory of precious metals.*
Beau le rubis aux doigtz hautains duisant,	*Beautiful is ruby, which pleases haughty hands,*
Beau de la terre est le fruict et plaisant:	*Beautiful and pleasant is the fruit of the earth;*
Beau est le vaincre ou tant d'honneur habonde,	*Beautiful is victory, where so much honour abounds,*
Mais des vainqueurs les debats appaisant:	*Yet in soothing the strife of conquerors,*
Belle la paix, seulle embellit le monde.	*Beautiful is peace – it alone beautifies the world.*

3. Sermisy: **Vous perdez temps** (a4)
4. Lassus: **Magnificat Vous perdez temps** (a5)

Claudin de Sermisy's four-voice chanson *Vous perdez temps*, setting a text by Clément Marot, was first published in 1538. It became widely popular, and was often played on the lute, a preference reflected in this recording, in which a lute accompanies the chanson's tenor voice-part. Claudin's song was already more than 40 years old when Lassus developed it into a Magnificat in the early 1580s. He significantly modifies his model's sound-world by expanding the number of voices from four to five, topped by a soprano part that rides high above the chanson's texture. In this brief Magnificat, Lassus transforms the model more than he directly quotes from it, and indeed the chanson is often hard to discern within the music. The outcome emphatically sounds more like Lassus than Claudin.

Vous perdez temps de me dire mal d'elle,	*You're wasting your time speaking ill of her to me,*
Gens qui voulez divertir mon entente:	*You people who want to foil my desires.*
Plus la blasmez, plus je la trouve belle.	*The more you disparage her, the more beautiful I find her.*
S'esbahit on, si tant je m'en contente?	*Why are you so astonished that I'm happy with her?*
La fleur de sa jeunesse	*The flower of her youth,*
A vostre advis rien n'est ce?	*Is this nothing, in your opinion?*
N'est ce rien de ces graces?	*Do her graces mean nothing?*
Cessez voz grandz audaces,	*Stop it with your insolence!*
Car mon amour vaincra vostre mesdire:	*For my love will conquer your smears:*
Tel en mesdit, qui pour soy la desire.	*You liars just want her for yourselves.*

5. Lassus: **Dessus le marché d'Arras** (a6)
6. Lassus: **Magnificat Dessus le marché d'Arras** (a6)

Lassus's saucy six-voice *Dessus le marché d'Arras*, first published in 1584, reworks a three-voice chanson by Adrian Willaert composed more than 50 years earlier, which itself may quote a popular song. By then building a Magnificat out of his own setting, Lassus adds a new outer shell to a Russian doll of songs-within-songs. The Magnificat sounds significantly more monumental and spacious than its model, especially when instruments accompany the singers. It is also one of Lassus's longest chanson-based settings. The diddle-dum rhythm of the chanson's refrain 'Mire li', first brought into play at 'Quia fecit', is significantly developed in the Magnificat's closing verse at 'Sicut erat' and 'saeculorum'.

Dessus le marché d'Arras,	*By the market of Arras,*
Mire li, mire la, bon bas.	*Mire li, mire la, bon bas.*
J'ay trouvé un espaignart.	*I met a Spaniard.*
Sentin, senta, sur la bon bas.	*Sentin, senta, sur la bon bas.*
Mire li, mire la, bon bille,	*Mire li, mire la, bon bille,*
Mire li, mire la, bon bas.	*Mire li, mire la, bon bas.**
Il m'a dit fille escouta.	*He said to me: 'Girl, listen'*
Mire li, mire la, bon bas.	*Mire li, mire la, bon bas.*
De l'argent on vous donra.	*'They'll pay you good money.'*
Sentin, senta, sur la bon bas.	*Sentin, senta, sur la bon bas.*
Mire li, mire la, bon bille,	*Mire li, mire la, bon bille,*
Mire li, mire la, bon bas.	*Mire li, mire la, bon bas.*

** While these phrases can partially be understood as nonsense syllables, or even the indistinct cries of vendors in the market ('look here! look there! good stockings!'), they also evoke a barely disguised bawdy subtext. 'sentin/senta' (sentir) = to feel, touch; 'bas' = stockings or female genitals; 'mire li / mire la' (mirer) = to look; 'mireli' = female genitals; 'bille' = little ball or stick/erection.*

7. Nicolas Gombert: **Mort et fortune** (a4)
8. Lassus: **Magnificat Mort et fortune** (a5)

Nicolas Gombert's four-voice chanson *Mort et fortune*, first published in 1536, addresses the subject of bereavement. Half a century later, Lassus based a Magnificat on it. Why he did so is unknown, but the work could commemorate a death, and this Magnificat would certainly be suitable for use at times of mourning and remembrance. In terms of thematic ideas and polyphonic textures, Gombert's *Mort et fortune* is by far the richest of Lassus's chanson models, and the Magnificat fully exploits this. At the same time, Lassus steps significantly beyond Gombert's sound-world, partly by using a five-voice ensemble with prominent soprano parts, partly by drawing his harmonies through expressive regions that leave Gombert far behind.

Mort et fortune, pourquoy m'avez vous laissé	*Death and fate, why have you left me*
Seul en ce monde despourveu de liesse?	*Alone in this world, bereft of joy?*
Pourquoy si tost hors du monde getté	*Why, so soon, did you cast out from this world*
Celle par qui je languis en tristesse?	*Her for whom I languish in sorrow?*
Helas ma mye! Puisque la mort m'y presse,	*Alas my love! Since death presses upon me,*
Et que ne puis mectre a fin mez douleurs,	*And I cannot put an end to my pains,*
Reprens la vie ou mort prendre me laisse.	*Take back your life, or let death take me.*

9. Lassus: **Susanne un jour** (a5)
10. Lassus: **Magnificat Susanne un jour** (a6)

No composition by Lassus was more famous in his lifetime than *Susanne un jour*. First published in 1560, this five-voice chanson tells the biblical story of Susanna and the elders, using verses by Guillaume Guéroult. Lassus's setting draws musically on the celebrated *Susanne un jour* by Didier Lupi that spawned a large family of imitations, so his reworking of it is correctly just one among many. Later in life, Lassus returned to it by composing not only a *Magnificat Susanne un jour*, but also a Mass based on the chanson. The Magnificat, for six voices, has two soprano lines where the model has only one, an expansion that significantly changes the music's character. Direct quotations from the model are teasingly rare in the Magnificat before the end; often only the tenor voice refers to it; but at 'Sicut erat' the chanson's whole

substance sings through clearly, as if to assert the work's identity. This is by far the longest of Lassus's chanson-based Magnificats.

Susanne un jour d'amour solicitée,	*Susanne, one day, solicited for love*
Par deux vieillars convoitans sa beauté,	*By two old men who coveted her beauty,*
Fust en son cœur triste et desconfortée,	*Felt sorrow and distress in her heart*
Voyant l'effort fait à sa chasteté.	*From the assault upon her chastity.*
Elle leur dict: si par desloyauté	*She said to them: 'if, by deceit,*
De ce corps mien vous avez jouissance,	*You take pleasure in this body of mine,*
C'est fait de moy; si je fay resistance,	*I am ruined; if I resist,*
Vous me ferez mourir en deshonneur.	*You will make me die in disgrace.*
Mais j'aime mieux perir en innocence,	*But I prefer to perish innocent,*
Que d'offenser par peché le Seigneur.	*Than to offend the Lord by sin.'*

11. Lassus: **Margot labourez les vignes** (a4)
12. Lassus: **Magnificat Margot labourez les vignes** (a4)

Lassus probably took the words of *Margot labourez les vignes* from the setting by Jacques Arcadelt, although the two works are not closely related musically. Lassus's version, first published in 1564, has the quality of a popular song, with a chordal texture that lends itself well to performance on a lute. The derived Magnificat is a much later work, composed nearer to 1585. Its opening instantly recalls the model, but latterly the Magnificat is either subtler in its allusions, or sets the chanson aside altogether. Like its model, this Magnificat is declamatory and brief.

Margot labourez les vignes,	*Margot, tend to the vines,*
Vigne, vigne, vignolet,	*The vine, the vine, the little vine,*
Margot labourez les vignes bien tost.	*Margot, tend to the vines soon!*
En revenant de Lorraine, Margot,	*Returning from Lorraine, Margot,*
Rencontray troys capitaines.	*I met three captains.*

Vigne, vigne, vignolet,	*The vine, the vine, the little vine,*
Margot labourez les vignes bien tost.	*Margot, tend to the vines soon!*
Ilz m'ont salué vilaine, Margot,	*They greeted me rudely, Margot,*
Je suis leurs fievres quartaines.	*A pox upon them!*
Vigne, vigne, vignolet,	*The vine, the vine, the little vine,*
Margot labourez les vignes bien tost.	*Margot, tend to the vines soon!*

13. Lassus: **Mais qui pourroit** (a6)
14. Lassus: **Magnificat Mais qui pourroit** (a6)

Lassus's six-voice chanson *Mais qui pourroit* and its matching Magnificat were probably written late in life, since they make their first appearances in sources dating from around 1584. The chanson, which could well have been written for a courtly entertainment, instantly evokes the lighthearted world of the villanella, villotta and mascherata, Italian genres that were fashionable at that time, and which were well known to Lassus. Only the outer verses of the Magnificat directly quote the chanson. Note especially the closing 'et in saecula', which makes excellent use of the model's chattering refrain.

Mais qui pourroit estre celuy	*But who could it be*
Qui me fait cercher mon oyseau?	*Who makes me search for my bird?*
Est-ce point ce meschant Daluy?	*Is it not the wicked Daluy?*
C'est un faux petit larronneau,	*He's a lying little thief,*
Il me fait à tous cous cercher	*He's always making me search*
Tout cela qu'il me peut cacher.	*For all the things that he can hide from me.*
Qui me la pris,	*Whoever took it from me,*
Qu'il le remette ou il la pris.	*May he put it back where he found it.*
Si mon gentil Francin sçavoit	*If only my gentle Francin knew*
Qui ma fait un si lasche tour	*Who did me such a cowardly turn,*
M'avoir prins ce qui nous avoit	*Who took from me what had*
Enflammé tout le coeur d'amour	*Set our hearts all ablaze with love,*

Et qui nous a par ses doux chants
Retins cent fois emmy les chams!

Qui me la pris,
Qu'il le remette ou il la pris.

Helas, mon Francin, mon mignon,
Je crain et me doute bien fort
Que nostre petit compagnon
N'ait enduré un grand effort,
Car j'ay veu nostre gros chat roux
Qui le guignoit a tous les coups.

Qui me la pris,
Qu'il le remette ou il la pris.

And had, with its sweet songs,
Kept us a hundred times among the fields!

Whoever took it from me,
May he put it back where he found it.

Alas, my Francin, my dear,
I fear and I strongly suspect
That our little companion
Has suffered greatly.
For I saw our big ginger cat
Eyeing him at every chance.

Whoever took it from me,
May he put it back where he found it.

TRANSLATIONS: JOSEPH GAUVREAU © 2026 (CHANSONS)
BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, 1662 (MAGNIFICAT)

A NOTE ON THE INSTRUMENTS

When, in 1556, Lassus left Antwerp for Munich to join the court choir at the invitation of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria, he was joining a vibrant and expanding musical establishment, including many other newly recruited Flemish singers and Italian instrumentalists. The size and excellence of the instrumental ensemble was at its greatest in the late 1560s, and in Hans Muelich's exquisite series of miniatures of 1570 there is a unique commemoration of the instrumentalists and singers of the Bavarian court retinue which displays the richness of instrumental timbres available to Lassus.

Amongst the group are several string players placed at the front, and within the singers placed behind are several players of wind and brass: two cornetts (one curved and one straight 'mute'), a quart trombone, transverse flute, bass recorder, crumhorn and rackett. A mixed consort of woodwind, brass and reeds such as depicted here was typical of the sound of civic and court wind ensembles throughout Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and manifestations of mixed groups can be heard in several of the instrumental and choral items on this recording, in both secular and devotional contexts. The 'whole' consort of recorders, the solo lute and the mixed ensembles here represent the vivid soundscape available to Lassus at the Bavarian court.

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'Orlando of Lasso directs the Court of Bavaria orchestra'

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PHILIP CAVE director

Philip Cave is a conductor, educator, singer and the director of Magnificat. His musical training began as a chorister at the age of seven, leading to studies at Oxford University under Simon Preston and David Wulstan and a career performing as soloist and with ensembles including the Clerkes of Oxenford, The Tallis Scholars and the Choir of New College Oxford.

Now based in the USA, Philip directs choral ensembles at Duke University Chapel and is Executive Director of Chorworks, a non-profit organization that provides singers and conductors with the opportunity to study and perform choral music from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and is still trying to understand the difference between a biscuit and a scone.

MAGNIFICAT

Magnificat is one of the world's leading vocal consorts, admired for the variety and expressive detail of its interpretations of Renaissance and Baroque choral works. The ensemble performs in a predominantly one voice per part configuration, celebrating the character and colour of each singer's voice while uniting them in an exceptional chemistry. Recording exclusively for Linn Records, Magnificat's discography has been recognized with award nominations from *Gramophone*, the International Classical Music Awards, the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik and *Scherzo*, among others.

Magnificat's work is notable for projects developed in close collaboration with musicologists: from reconstructing lost or fragmentary works to commissioning new critical editions and applying performance-practice scholarship in rehearsal and recording. Its multi-volume 'The Alchemist' series exemplifies this approach, taking inspiration from David Crook's scholarship on Lassus's Magnificats based on madrigals, motets and chansons. Similarly, the group's 'Scattered Ashes' recording brings to life Patrick Macey's work on the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola and his influence on the musical and devotional climate of his time.

magnificat-consort.uk

THE CITY MUSICK

The City Musick was formed by William Lyons to explore the diverse repertoire of civic and court wind bands in early modern Europe and is now firmly established as the premier Renaissance wind band in the UK.

The City Musick made its BBC Proms debut in 2012 with a performance of Venetian music in collaboration with the vocal ensemble I Fagiolini. The Decca recording of this and that of the Striggio Mass, also involving the ensemble, have both met with great critical acclaim as was its first recording in 2017 of music of the London Waits, 'The Topping Tooters of the Town'. The ongoing collaboration with I Fagiolini continued with a recording of the magnificent *Missa Tu es Petrus* by Benevoli which garnered five-star reviews when released in 2023, followed in 2025 by the release of the second instalment of this project.

tcmusick.com

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MAGNIFICAT

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Emma Walshe

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TENOR
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