

Iberian Polyphony

AN EVENING OF MEDIEVAL TO MODERN CHORAL MUSIC
CORAL UNIVERSITAT DE LES ILLES BALEARS



Cathedral of Mallorca, Balearic Islands

**THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, MILLENNIUM STAGE**

Sunday, April 12, 2009

6 pm

2700 F St. NW • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20566

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

1 pm

1047 Amsterdam Avenue • NEW YORK, NY 10025

FOUNDATION FOR IBERIAN MUSIC

Thursday, April 16, 2009

7 pm

Elebash Recital Hall

The Graduate Center • The City University of New York • 365 Fifth Avenue • NEW YORK, NY 10016

Sunday, April 12, 2009 6 pm

Thursday, April 16, 2009 7 pm

*Introductory Remarks by Candice Agree host of weekend evening music
on WQXR, the Classical station of the NEW YORK TIMES*

Program

Medieval to Modern Iberian Polyphony

I. Sacred Music

Cant de la Sibil·la (Medieval Melody)

Solo: Margalida Arbona / Choral Interludes by Antoni Riera (1911-1966)

Mariam matrem (from *Llibre Vermell* of Montserrat [13th & 14th c.])

Salve regina (two choirs) Joan Cererols (1618-1680)

Ave Maria (two choirs) Tomás Luis de Victoria (ca. 1548-1611)

Salve regina Joan M. Thomàs (1896-1966)

O vos omnes Pau Casals (1876-1973)

Ecce quomodo Albert Alcaraz (1978)

Pulchra es, et decora (three choirs) Alejandro Yagüe (1947)

Sanctus-benedictus Josep Vila (1966)

II. Secular Music

Què farem del pobre Joan?

(from *Cancionero de Uppsala* [16th c.]) Mateo Flecha (the elder)

Teresica hermana

(from *Cancionero de Uppsala* [16th c.]) Mateo Flecha (the elder)

III. Traditional Music

O voso galo comadre (Galicia) Miguel Groba (1935)

Eres alta y delgada (Castile) Ángel Barja (1938-1987)

Sagastipean (Basque country) Javier Busto (1949)

Sardana de les monges (Catalonia) Enric Morera (1865-1942)

Escolta es vent! (Minorca) *Music:* Jesús Ortega Monasterio (1918-2004)

Lyrics: Cristòfol Mus Reynés (1943)

Choral arr.: B. Llompart (1938)

Roqueta, sa meua roca (Ibiza) *Music and Lyrics:* Joan Gamisans

Choral arr.: Raymond Andres

Aubada (Mallorca) *Music:* Miquel Tortell (1802-1868)

Lyrics: Marian Aguiló (1835-1900)

Choral arr.: Joan Maria Thomàs (1896-1966)

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 1 pm

Program

Medieval to Modern Iberian Sacred Polyphony

I. The Western Tradition

Immortal Bach Arr.: Knut Nystedt (1915)

Ubi caritas M. Duruflé (1902-1986)

II. The Iberian Tradition

Cant de la Sibil·la (Medieval Melody)

Solo: Margalida Arbona

Choral Interludes by Antoni Riera (1911-1966)

Mariam matrem

(from *Llibre Vermell* of Montserrat [13th & 14th c.])

Salve regina (two choirs) Joan Cererols (1618-1680)

Ave Maria (two choirs) Tomás Luis de Victoria (ca. 1548-1611)

III. The Modern Iberian Tradition

Salve regina Joan M. Thomàs (1896-1966)

O vos omnes Pau Casals (1876-1973)

Ecce quomodo Albert Alcaraz (1978)

Pulchra es, et decora (three choirs) Alejandro Yagüe (1947)

Sanctus-benedictus Josep Vila (1966)

Regaining the Soul through a Choral Tradition

Choral singing is without a doubt one of the most essential forms of music-making. Through its vocal traditions—and, in this particular case, via its choral arrangements—one can grasp the gist of a culture, its history, and essence. The rich and diverse history of Spain—at times, multiracial, multi-linguistic, and varied in its religious faiths—presents, as one could suspect, a truly kaleidoscopic musical history. From the austerity of medieval monastic chants to the complexity of church polyphony; from the high-spirited and sophisticated texture of Flecha’s madrigal-like works to the oral traditions of every Spanish region, the program offered tonight by the Coral Universitat de les Illes Balears (University Choir of the Balearic Islands) aims at presenting many of these facets of Iberian culture.

The *Cant de la Sibyl·la* (The Song of the Sibyl) is one of the oldest liturgical dramas preserved in Western civilization. As it is nowadays performed, it involves a boy or a girl dressed as a Sibyl, a pagan prophetess who heralds the coming of the new faith. Sung on Christmas Eve for more than six hundred years in Mallorca, as well as intermittingly in a few other places including Catalonia, Toledo, and Alghero in Sardinia, it was often banned because of its pagan resonances, but its popularity brought it back each and every time. The song’s verses, performed originally in strict monophony, are normally punctuated by musical interludes in a current musical language, sometimes involving an improvised organ episode, sometimes (as it is the case tonight) intermingling a number of choral passages by Antoni Riera (1911-66).

Within the fourteenth-century compilation of assorted religious texts known as the *Llibre Vermell* (The Red Book), there is a magnificent musical treasury: a collection of ten pilgrim songs dedicated to the “black” Virgin of the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat located a few miles off Barcelona and, incidentally, the holy place that inspired *Parsifal*’s Monsalvat. The compiler, in a prologue to the collection, explained that pilgrims often got bored and needed appropriate songs and dances. He hoped this collection would fulfill these needs. Most of the songs are beautiful, sophisticated examples of *Ars nova* music—canons or rounds, dances, motets, and so on. At the end of the collection there is a heartrending surprise: “Ad mortem festinamus” (We hasten towards death) is a repetitive, powerful, and fear-provoking *danse macabre*—the first in Western civilization. The fourth song, “**Mariam matrem**” (Praise Mary), is a *virelai*, one of the standard and most refined musical forms in European *Ars nova*, structured essentially around a repeated refrain.

The importance of the Montserrat Abbey as a learning and musical center in Catalonia is also reflected in the the musical output of **Joan Cererols** (1618-1680), one of its earlier chapel masters. “**Salve Regina**” (Praise the Queen of Heavens) is a sobering song for two choirs in the typical effect-seeking late-Renaissance, early-Baroque fashion. Cererols music is characterized by a serious use of the polyphonic techniques typical of the Roman school of Palestrina and its Spanish counterpart, **Tomás Luis de Victoria** (ca. 1548-1611). His “*Ave Maria*,” includes a slow, lush, imitative polyphonic texture from which emerges an austere and somber musical fabric creating a simultaneously sensuous and luxuriant effect. Another song dedicated to the Virgin Mary follows, “**Salve Regina**” by the Mallorcan composer **Joan Maria Thomàs** (1896- 1966), a scholar and composer, who with his subtle use of dissonance and his friendship with Manuel de Falla helped introduce modernism in Spanish music. **Pau Casals** (1876-1973), on the other hand, is world-wide known as a cello virtuoso and as a humanist. Less known is his work as a composer. His “**O vos omnes**” (All you), yet, is one of the greatest pieces of world choral literature and it is often performed around the world. Its grave and solemn character, as well as the thickness of the harmony, reflects the seriousness of the words: “All you who pass along this way, behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”

Many contemporary Spanish composers still cultivate with eagerness the repertory of sacred choral literature. “**Ecce quomodo**” (Behold) by **Albert Alcaraz** (1978) sets to music some *Tenebrae* responses from *The Book of Lamentations*. These texts are usually read during the Easter season in a ceremony that involves the gradual extinguishing of light by putting out candles

one after another. The score calls for “several different styles from SSAA sections to TTBB parts only, then full 8 part writing and even a small piece of vocalization at the section ‘se obmutuit’ where the choir should use the sound ‘ssshhh.’” The words could not be more powerful: “Behold how the righteous man dies and no one understands.” “**Pulchra es, et decora**” (Thou art beautiful and graceful) by Salamanca composer **Alejandro Yagüe** (1947) uses with elegance the resources of three choirs and “**Sanctus-benedictus**” by **Josep Vila** (1966), conductor of the venerable Orfeó Català, sets in a subtle modern musical language the well-known part the ordinary of the Roman mass.

Renaissance secular music is represented in this concert by **Mateo Flecha** the elder (1481-1553), known above all for his *Ensaladas*. These are semi-dramatic musical works that mix, like a salad, all kind of elements: polyphonic with homophonic textures, sacred and secular subject-matters, Catalan and Spanish languages, serious and comic situations. In “**Teresica hermana**” (Sister Teresica) the male speaker implores sister Teresica to let her sleep with her. Although she likes him, she is afraid of becoming pregnant. “**Què farem del pobre Joan**” (What shall we do with poor John?) tells about a “bad” wife who abandons “poor John” and their two children.

The final section in the program surveys, region by region, some of the most popular songs of Spain’s musical folklore in their choral setting. Arranged by **Miguel Groba** (1935), “**O voso galo comadre**” (What a spoilt rooster), from Galicia, tells the story of an unruly rooster, which annoyingly bothers the whole neighborhood with its singing. “**Eres alta y delgada**” (You are tall and thin), from Castile, is arranged by **Ángel Barja** (1938-1987). Appropriately, it praises the beauty of a tall and thin woman. “**Sagastipean**” (In the apple tree field), from the Basque country, in the setting by **Javier Busto** (1949) includes three programmatic sections: first, it depicts a man sleeping calmly until his dream becomes a dance; second, although saddened by the sorrows of his heart, he gradually feels happy; finally, a lovely melody takes him to a deep dream with nonsense lyrics: “Jir, jir... mi... zanka mar...”

The national dance of Catalonia, the sardana, involves slow circle steps with hands held upwards. **Enric Morera** (1865-1942), in addition to writing in conventional concert genres, composed many sardanas. The “**Sardana de les monges**” (The nuns’s sardana) is a lightly contrapuntal and imitative work, the lyrics of which, by Àngel Guimerà, tell the story of two nuns who after hearing a sardana begin to dance. Afraid of being caught by their Superior, they feel relieved, when she tells them undisturbed: “Do dance, do dance!” The Balearic Isles are represented by three songs. From Minorca, “**Escolta es vent!**” (Listen to the wind) by Jesús Ortega Monasterio (1918-2004); from Ibiza, “**Roqueta, sa meua roca**” (The rock, my dear rock) by Joan Gamisans; from Mallorca, “**Aubada**” (Sunrise) by **Miquel Tortell** (1802-1868) and lyrics by Marian Aguiló (1825-97) the Romantic poet and one of the most active figures in the Renaixença, a nineteenth-century movement intended to re-establish the Catalan language and culture. To this end he wrote:

*Cap nació pot dir-se pobra
si per les lletres reneix.
Poble que sa llengua cobra
se recobra a si mateix.*

No nation can call itself poor
if through its language it is reborn.
A people that its language recovers
regains its very soul.

One could add that it is not only through language that one regains the soul. In light of this choral presentation, obviously, the vocal traditions of a people can also do the job.

Antoni Pizà

The **Coral Universitat de les Illes Balears** (University Choir of the Balearic Islands), which celebrated its 30th anniversary two years ago, has become an important referent in the music of the Balearic Islands. Established in 1977 by conductor Joan Company, along with students and teachers, the Choir was founded on three basic pillars of training, research, and performance. They have performed in the major theaters and auditoriums of Spain and toured extensively throughout Europe.

With the discipline and commitment of hundreds of singers, the Choir has been able to attain a repertoire of more than six hundred works spanning the history of choral literature, from Gregorian chant to contemporary music, including works by composers of the Balearic Islands, a cappella music of all periods, and major works of the symphonic choral repertoire, including: Bach's *Saint John Passion* and *Saint Matthew Passion*; Händel's *Messiah*; Haydn's *The Creation*; Dvorak and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*; Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* and *Die Walpurgisnacht*; Falla's *Atlántida*; Prokofiev's *Ivan the Terrible*; the requiems of Mozart, Brahms, Verdi, Fauré, and Duruflé; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; Mahler's Second Symphony, and masses of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Bruckner.

The Choir has performed with many renowned conductors and singers, including: Edmon Colomer; Franz P. Decker; Salvador Mas; Víctor Pablo; Trevor Pinnock; Nello Santi; Krzysztof Penderecki; Maria Bayo; Teresa Berganza; Josep Carreras; Joan Pons; and Thomas Quasthoff. The choir has worked with major orchestras of Spain, including: Orquestra Ciutat de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya; Real Orquesta Sinfónica of Seville; Joven Orquesta Nacional of España; Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife; Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia; Orquesta Ciudad de Granada; as well as major European orchestras, including: The English Concert; and Fiamminghi, Camerata Anxanum, Orpheon Consort of Vienna. The Coral Universitat de les Illes Balears has won choral competitions in Toulouse and Athens, and has been invited to important music festivals, including: Europalia 85-Belgium; Expo '92 of Seville; X Festival Mozart of Madrid; XX Festival of Ancient Music of Barcelona; Chopin Festivals of Austria, Czech Republic, and Poland; Festival of Spring of Budapest; and "46 Semana of Religious Music of Cuenca." They have also received the Premi Bartomeu Oliver of the Obra Cultural Balear (1991), the Premio Importante of Diario de Mallorca (April, 1999) and the Ramon Llull arts prize of the Govern de les Illes Balears (2002).

In December of 2006, the Choir carried out a tour of Italy interpreting the Händel's *Messiah* in Rome, Lanciano and had a memorable performance in front of Pope Benedict XVI. In 2007, the Choir, accompanied by the Joven Orquesta Nacional de España (National Youth Orchestra of Spain), participated in the "46 Semana de Música Religiosa de Cuenca." Recently, the Choir participated in the Festival of Pollença and the Pau Casals Festival of Prada (France), under the direction of K. Penderecki; and they performed Händel's *Messiah* in the cathedral of Santiago and in the Teatro de la Maestranza of Seville.

A broadcaster for over 25 years, **CANDICE AGREE** hosts weekend evening music on 96.3FM WQXR, as well as *In the Gardens of Spain* and *Chamber Music from the Kosciuszko Foundation*. Candice also is the off-camera announcer for CBS News' *Sunday Morning* and *The Early Show*. Candice has hosted benefits, galas, concerts, and fundraisers for Amnesty International, the United Nations, the Westchester Conservatory of Music, and the Philharmonia Virtuosi, among others. For the Foundation for Iberian Music, Candice has hosted *The Songs of Antoni Parera Fons* and *Carlos Suriñach and the Creation of Modern Dance in New York*.

Joan Company (Sant Joan, Mallorca) is one of Spain's most prominent choral conductors. He has arranged numerous orchestral and symphonic choral works and conducted, among others, Orfeón Donostiarra; Coro Nacional de España; Coro de Radio Televisión Española; Coro de la Comunidad of Madrid; and Coro da Camera Italiano; Orquesta Sinfónica de Asturias; Orquesta de Cámara Reina Sofía; the Symphonic Orchestra of Balears; Joven Orquesta National of España (of which he was an assistant conductor in the production of Falla's *Atlántida*); Orchestra of the University of Portland (Oregon, US); Camerata Anxanum (Italy); Orpheon Consort of Vienna; and Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia. He has premiered choral works by J. Busto; A. Martorell; A. Parera Fons; J. Vila; J. L. Turina; A. Martorell; J. Martorell. Moreover, he has collaborated with directors: Trevor Pinnock; Víctor Pablo; Salvador Mas; Edmon Colomer; Josep Pons; Franz P. Decker; Alberto Zedda; A. Ros Marbà; Cristopher Hogwood; M. A. Gómez Martínez; K. Penderecki; and Jesús López Cobos.

Since 1999 he has been the artistic director of the Coro de la Orquesta Sinfónica of Galicia (Symphonic Choir of Galicia), for which he has prepared an extensive and varied repertoire, including: symphonic choral (all Mahler symphonies); operatic (Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini, Tchaikovsky); and a cappella. But he is more recognized as the conductor and founder of La Coral Universitat de les Illes Balears (1977), with whom he has achieved important artistic recognition in the Islands, as well as in the Peninsula and abroad, including: creation of the filial choirs; prizes in choral competitions (Toulouse, Athens); performances in the main concert halls of Spain and in important festivals of Europe; collaborations with the most important orchestras of Spain and of Europe; disc recordings; presentation of the choral heritage of the Islands.

A graduate in History, Joan Company studied choral conducting with P. Cao, M. Cabero and O. Martorell (with courses in Spain, France and Belgium). He currently works at Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB) as director of the Choir and Partituroteca i Centre de Documentació Musical de la UIB. He is also founder, director, and teacher of the International Courses of Music of the UIB (1977) and of the Colònies Musicals d'Estiu a les Balears (1995). He has published numerous studies and articles about Balearic music and musicians in books, encyclopedias and specialized magazines. He has received the Rotary prize of Mallorca for Arts in 1995-96 and the Gabriel Alomar prize in 2001.

SOPRANOS

Arbona Alemany, Margalida
 Ballester Pomar, Sunsi
 Campins Bibiloni, Francisca
 Garcia Barceló, M^a Antònia
 Gili Pérez, Irene
 Guasp Mascaró, Caterina
 Melià Sobrevias, Neus
 Merino Boyle, Elena
 Oliver Roca, Concepció
 Riutort Cloquell, Joana Maria
 Sastre Santandreu, M^a Cristina
 Soto Sureda, Elisa
 Valdivieso Font, Lali

CONTRALTOS

Boyle Kennedy, Patricia
 Crespí Font, M^a Antònia
 Gómez Jaume, Maria
 Gomis Ferrer, M^a Antònia
 Matas Pastor, Maria del Mar
 Morell Quadreny, M^a Dolors
 Morey Suau, Catalina
 Pérez Pereira, Maite
 Riera Marí, Pilar
 Salvà Arróm, Bàrbara
 Sureda Colombram, Antònia M.

TENORS

Abril Pons, Gerard
 Alemany Ramis, Biel
 Amengual Vich, Pep
 Biasini, Luis
 Calle Castañeda, Rafel
 Cortès Fernández, Pere
 Moyà Borràs, Toni
 Pons Cortès, Antoni
 Ramis Ensenyat, Tomeu
 Urlaub, Christian
 Vaquer Crespí, Josep

BASSES

Arbós Tomàs, Sebastià
 Balaguer Gelabert, Gabriel
 Bonet Bonet, Pere
 Castell Salvà, Rafel
 Company Bernal, Miquel
 Matas Miró, Pep
 Oliver Koppen, Gabriel
 Portas Fuentespina, Mariano
 Rodríguez García, Alberto
 Serra Roca, Toni
 Servera Ballester, Sebastià



Naveta des Tudons, megalithic monument, Menorca, Balearic Islands



Church of Sant Llorenç de Balàfia, Ibiza, Balearic Islands



Universitat de les Illes Balears



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