“LAGRIME IS A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR THE MASTER CHORALE, WHICH SANG AND ACTED BRILLIANTLY. IT’S ALSO A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR MUSIC HISTORY.”

MARK SWED, LOS ANGELES TIMES
LAGRIME DI SAN PIETRO
(TEARS OF ST. PETER)

FOR TWENTY-ONE VOICES

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE
GRANT GERSHON, KIKI & DAVID GINDLER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
JEAN DAVIDSON, PRESIDENT & CEO

ORLANDO DI LASSO, COMPOSER
GRANT GERSHON, CONDUCTOR
PETER SELLARS, DIRECTOR
JAMES F. INGALLS, LIGHTING DESIGNER
DANIELLE DOMINGUE SUMI, COSTUME DESIGNER
PAMELA SALLING, STAGE MANAGER

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LAGRIME DI SAN PIETRO
(TEARS OF ST. PETER)

From the creative mind of acclaimed director Peter Sellars comes his very first a cappella staging and most personal work to date. Orlando di Lasso knew that Lagrime was to be the last piece he would ever compose, and so he packed every measure with an emotionally charged texture that channeled all of his pain and remorse into a towering work of beauty.

Twenty-one singers transform this 75-minute sweeping a cappella Renaissance masterpiece – committed to memory and dramatically staged – into an overwhelmingly emotional performance piece. Set to the poetry of Luigi Tansillo (1510-1568), “I accept responsibility” is the fundamental theme of this work depicting the seven stages of grief that St. Peter experienced after disavowing his knowledge of Jesus Christ on the day of his arrest and prior to his crucifixion.

Sellars translates Lagrime through a contemporary lens, suggesting a powerful allegory that by taking responsibility and facing our past head-on, we can forge a more resolved and fulfilling future.
TRAILER

BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Peter Sellars and Grant Gershon discuss *Lagrima* project

First staging rehearsal

Videos will be made available for sharing and embedding from Vimeo. Presenters may request to view the entire 75-minute archival recording by making arrangements with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.
II. Ma gli archi
(The bows, however)

VI. Così tahlor
(Sometimes it happens)

VII. Ogni occhio del Signor
(The eyes of the Lord)

X. Come falda di neve
(Like a snowflake)

XI. E non fu il pianto suo
(And his weeping)

XXI. Vide homo
(See, O man)
IMAGES

The photography shown may be used for promotional materials in print and online. All photos are high res and will be made available to presenting organizations.

PHOTO CREDITS

All photos must be credited as “Courtesy of the Los Angeles Master Chorale/Tao Ruspoli.”

MEDIA CONTACT

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LAGRIME DI SAN PIETRO
(TEARS OF ST. PETER)

GRANT GERSHON
Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director
LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE

GRANT GERSHON .......................................... conductor
PETER SELLARS ............................................. director
JAMES F. INGALLS  ................................... lighting designer

Danielle Domingue Sumi, costume designer · Pamela Salling, stage manager

LEADER(S)

I. Il magnanimo Pietro
   (When the generous Peter realized)
   ♫  ♪

II. Ma gli archi
    (The bows, however)
    ♫  ♪

III. Tre volte haveva
     (Three times he had sworn)
     ♫  ♪

IV. Qual a l'incontro
    (As he encountered the gaze)
    ♫  ♪

V. Giovane donna
   (A young woman looking in the mirror)
   ♫  ♪

VI. Così talhor
    (Sometimes it happens)
    ♫  ♪

VII. Ogni occhio del Signor
     (The eyes of the Lord)
     ♫  ♪

VIII. Nessun fedel trovai
     (I found none faithful)
     ♫  ♪

IX. Chi ad una ad una
    (He who could recount one by one)
    ♫  ♪

X. Come falda di neve
    (Like a snowflake)
    ♫  ♪

XI. E non fu il pianto suo
    (And his weeping)
    ♫  ♪

XII. Quel volto
     (That face)
     ♫  ♪

XIII. Veduto il miser
    (When the wretch saw)
    ♫  ♪

XIV. E vago d'incontrar
     (And longing to find someone)
     ♫  ♪

XV. Vattene vita va
    (Go away life, go)
    ♫  ♪

XVI. O vita troppo rea
     (O life, too wicked)
     ♫  ♪

XVII. A quanti già felici
      (To how many, happy in youth)
      ♫  ♪

XVIII. Non trovava mia fé
      (My faith would have not failed)
      ♫  ♪

XIX. Queste opre e più
     (These works and more)
     ♫  ♪

XX. Negando il mio Signor
    (By denying my Lord)
    ♫  ♪

XXI. Vide homo
     (See, O man)
     ♫  ♪

Tonight’s concert will be performed without intermission.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE LOVELACE FAMILY TRUST
This production of Lagrime di San Pietro is made possible with generous underwriting from the Lovelace Family Trust and is dedicated to the memory of Jon Lovelace in honor of the special friendship he shared with director Peter Sellars.
What’s the correct way to refer to one of the most extraordinary musical minds in history: Orlande/Orlando/Roland de Lassus/di Lasso? There’s a Franco-Flemish form and an Italianized one; sometimes the two get mixed together. There’s even a Latin option intended to standardize the situation. The very profusion of variants points to the internationalism and cross-pollination across borders that marked the era of the High Renaissance in Europe.

This was a time in which a young musician born in the Netherlandish part of the Habsburg Empire (in what is nowadays Belgium) could find himself posted to positions at major courts and churches in Italy while still in his early twenties, travel back north for a brief spell (possibly in France and even England), and then be lured at around age 26 to join the ambitious court of an aristocrat in Munich (the Duke of Bavaria), where he happily settled for almost four decades until his death in 1594 — while still undertaking trips to Vienna and Italy and picking up on the latest developments in musical style.

Such, in brief outline, is the life story of Lasso. (Let’s simplify and stick to the Italian spelling, the one used on the title page of many of his published works, including the first edition of Lagrime di San Pietro.) During his long, productive years in Munich, he became an international celebrity. Lasso was born at just the right time to benefit from the new technology of printing, which disseminated his prolific output at an astonishing rate (about two publications of his music a year). Hopeful young composers traveled far and wide to learn from him — the Gabriels from Venice may have been among them — and Lasso was honored by emperor and pope alike.

“What you have is the iTunes of the High Renaissance: Everyone is hearing each other’s releases, in different languages, some in pirate versions, and mixing them together,” says director Peter Sellars. “All these versions of Orlando’s name evolved because he was active in different music centers. It feels like today, when there isn’t a single way music has to happen, and everyone is listening to everyone else.”

Lasso was particularly revered for the variety and extent of his output across vocal genres (curiously, instrumental music is missing from his vast extant oeuvre), as well as for the depth of his knowledge of the grand tradition of Renaissance polyphony that was just about to reach its end. In the century that dawned a few years after Lasso’s death, the new genre of opera would flourish, and its champion Claudio Monteverdi would pioneer a dramatically different musical language — a language from which modern Western music emerged.

Another contemporary artist, the French poet Pierre de Ronsard, raved: “The more-than-divine Orlando … like a bee has sipped all the most beautiful flowers of the ancients and moreover seems alone to have stolen the harmony of the heavens to delight us with it on earth, surpassing the ancients and making himself the unique wonder of our time.”

**VISUALIZING THE POLYPHONY** — Into his swan song, Lagrime di San Pietro, Lasso distilled all of that wisdom, experience, and complexity. “Polyphony of this kind of depth and detail is totally sculptural,” observes Sellars. He notes that Lagrime was composed only 30 years after the death of another towering artist of the High Renaissance: Michelangelo. “You also get this muscular intensity in Lasso’s writing that is reminiscent of this expressive language we know so well, visually, from Michelangelo.” Both artists convey visions of an “embodied spirituality: the muscle of spiritual energy and striving against pain to achieve self-transformation.”
These are among the qualities in Lasso’s final masterpiece that inspired Sellars to undertake his staging with the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Grant Gershon: You have all of these parts intersecting and flowering and then gradually weaving this web of emotion and moral intensity. You want to let the bodies have the power of the harmonic movement and the contours of the melody.

Sellars credits Gershon with turning him on to the potential of Lagrime. The project that is being realized by this season-opening program was prompted by a conversation five years ago, when Sellars and the Master Chorale’s artistic director were collaborating on a production of Vivaldi’s Griselda at Santa Fe Opera.

Gershon recalls that “we found ourselves talking about our shared love of Renaissance a cappella Italian music.” Because the entire score of Lagrime involves ensemble counterpoint — as opposed to a more familiar pattern of solos interlaced with choral numbers — Gershon says he sensed that programming the work “would create exciting opportunities to visualize the polyphony.”

Lasso’s creation of this complex vocal cycle clearly stands apart within his oeuvre with regard to chronology and purpose. Widely admired and imitated by his contemporaries, that oeuvre encompasses on one side sacred works that are both traditional (masses) and wildly original (the celebrated motet cycle Prophetae Sibyllarum) and, on the other, heartily profane compositions in multiple languages.

Lagrime di San Pietro comes at the very end — he completed the score with a dedication to Pope Clement VIII on May 24, 1594, and died in Munich on June 14. In that dedication, Lasso remarks the score with a dedication to Pope Clement VIII on May 24, 1594, he completed Lagrime di San Pietro compositions in multiple languages.

Most of the recordings I know seem to treat the Lagrime as liturgical music,” Gershon remarks. “What I hope to achieve through having Peter stage the work is to bring out the immediacy and spontaneity of the madrigal, with its vivid poetic imagery expressed in the music — the way we would sing Renaissance madrigals.” For Lagrime, Lasso found his text in a devotional epic by the Italian Renaissance poet Luigi Tansillo (1510-1568), who came out of the great Petrarchan tradition. (Like Lasso, incidentally, the humanist Petrarch devoted his art to secular and sacred causes — his poetry praising the Virgin Mary inspired Lasso’s contemporary Palestrina to write a famous set of madrigale spirituali.) Tansillo, curiously, had been on the Vatican’s Forbidden Index. His Lagrime obtained an official pardon from the Pope. Although Tansillo died before managing to complete the epic, the published Lagrime is a lengthy collection of eight-line stanzas in ottava rima (the rhyming scheme ABABABCC), from which Lasso chose 20 for his madrigal cycle.

Peter’s Threelfold Denial — The dramatic content centers around a topic that will be familiar to anyone who knows J.S. Bach’s Passions, where it occurs as just one episode within the long sequence of the Passion story (though it inspires one of the most moving moments in the St. Matthew Passion — the alto aria “Erbarme dich”). It’s the topic of several masterpieces in painting as well, by such artists as Rembrandt and Caravaggio. The Gospel narratives of the Passion recount the Apostle Peter’s fearful reaction to the terror of the night of Jesus’ arrest. Three times he denies knowing the accused — exactly as Jesus during the Last Supper had predicted Peter would do, “this very night, before the rooster crows.” This is of course the very Peter who would be claimed as the founder of the Catholic Church, the first in its succession of popes.

Tansillo’s poem unfolds as a highly wrought, emotional sequence of self-accusation and remorse for what cannot be undone, as the elderly Peter attempts to come to terms with his anguish. The imagery is elaborate, its references to mirrors and reflections revealing a characteristic Renaissance preoccupation, and boldly figures what transpires in the central image — the communication through Jesus’ transfixing glance on the Cross — to the unspoken knowledge shared by lovers.

The cycle Lasso fashions from this resembles a psychodrama, a kind of psychological Stations of the Cross Peter endures internally: the eternally present moment of betrayal and the recollections of a man approaching and longing for death intersect as he seeks reconciliation, realizing he can never forgive himself but can rely only on divine grace. Lasso gives

“Lagrime has one foot in this world and one foot in the next world — It’s music written by someone who is in pain”
Peter — and us — no easy answers, and no easy way out. He concludes the cycle of 20 stanzas from Tansillo’s poem with a 21st number [madrigal] from another source: a Latin motet by the 13th-century French poet Philippe de Grève representing the final word from Jesus himself (“Vide Homo, quae pro te patria” — “See, man, how I suffer for you”). Here Jesus only reaffirms what has been tormenting Peter: the knowledge that his betrayal has caused more “inner agony” for the savior than his outward suffering on the cross. Even the repetitive rhyme scheme for all eight lines enhances the sense of recursive entrapment. Through his overall tonal scheme using the old church (i.e., Gregorian) modes, Lasso further underscores the sense of irresolution by omitting some of those eight modes as he progressively cycles through them; for this final motet he shifts to a mode outside the normal system. You don’t have to understand the musicological jargon to hear the remarkably austere impact of the final number.

Structurally, *Lagrime* also reflects the kind of theological-numerological symbolism that is so all-pervasive in Bach’s masterpieces. Each stanza is written for seven separate parts. (Some performers opt to complement the voices with instruments, citing performance practice of Lasso’s era.) Seven is the number of perfection and creation, but also a number with a dark side, as in the Seven Deadly Sins. Three is the number of the Trinity, but it, too, has a negative shadow in the three times Peter denies Jesus. Lasso’s overall cycle comprises 3 x 7 stanzas (yielding 168 lines of poetry, a sum evenly divisible by 7).

**PARED DOWN SIMPLICITY** — For this staging, Gershon and Sellars decided to perform with three singers on a part (resulting in an ensemble of 21). “We wanted the size of the ensemble to balance the need for clarity and transparency of the individual voices with the idea of this also being a community coming together,” explains Gershon. “We also talked about keeping a real simplicity to the whole look and feel, without any set or props or extra performers. Peter’s work with the singers would be complemented by Jim Ingalls’ lighting and some chairs onstage; the wardrobe is basically shades of grey — clothes that look like they could come out of anyone’s closet.”

“This is music that has a real austerity,” Gershon adds. *Lagrime* is old composer’s music, like the late Beethoven string quartets or the Adagio from Mahler’s Ninth or Tenth. Things are stripped away, until there is nothing extraneous: there are very few melismatic passages.” For Sellars, *Lagrime* is composed “with an incredible concision, with sheer essence and focus. There’s a harmonic density but at the same time it’s stated as simply as possible, without a single extra note.

We know that in his final years Lasso had been ailing, seeking relief for a condition described as “melancholy,” and he even dedicated one set of his madrigals to the court physician who took care of him. “At this point in his life,” according to Sellars, Lasso “does not need to prove anything to anyone. He is [composing *Lagrime*] because this is something he has to get off his chest to purify his own soul as he leaves the world. It’s a private, devotional act of writing, but these thoughts are now shared by a community — by people singing to and for each other.”

While the *Lagrime* project represents his first time staging an entirely a cappella performance, Sellars considers it a continuation of themes he has been recently revisiting in his collaborations with conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen involving choral works by Igor Stravinsky. For the conclusion of Salonen’s tenure with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2009, Sellars staged Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms* and *Oedipus Rex* as a double-bill, and the conductor and director reprised it just last month to crown a Stravinsky series with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London.

So it’s not surprising that Sellars suggests parallels with his new staging of Lasso’s work in the “cathedral-like space” of Walt Disney Concert Hall. As in the Stravinsky double-bill, in *Lagrime* the chorus “carries the drama forward” — drama according to the ancient Greek understanding of tragedy, says Sellars, “which I could also call an African understanding, where an individual crisis is also a crisis of the community. Even though we hear one man’s thoughts, it is the community that absorbs them and has to take responsibility: a collective takes on this weight of longing and hope.”

**INNER DIALOGUE, LIGHT AND DARKNESS** — That interplay between the individual and the collective has suggested thrilling possibilities for staging. For Sellars, “the voice is not something disembodied but is part of the body which is testifying. The sheer physical intensity of the singing joins with this collective dawning through the inner dialogue of the composition, as these voices have their moments of revelation.”

And beyond the Stravinsky, *Lagrime* can be viewed as a continuation of Sellars’ engagements with the Passion story, from his acclaimed stagings of the classic Bach Passions to his work on contemporary variants by John Adams (*The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, in whose world premiere the Master Chorale and Gershon took part) and Kaija Saariaho (*La Passion de Simone*, recently reintroduced in a chamber version as part of this past summer’s Ojai Festival). *Lagrime* has one foot in this world and one foot in the next world — it’s music written by somebody who is in pain,” says Sellars. “It shares the giant discovery of lighting in Renaissance painting that was echoed in poetry and music: this understanding that light and darkness are deeply intertwined in God’s creation and are necessary for each other. Taken together, they create chiaroscuro. That’s how we perceive depth.”

As for the timing of this staging just before a historic U.S. Presidential election, Gershon remarks that “we are offering a retreat for people to come away from the divisiveness and the wall building, to share music that is very personal and humble, that is an act of self-examining with pitiless honesty.”

Through all of its pain, says Sellars, the challenge in *Lagrime* “is directed towards oneself. Instead of challenging the world, you challenge yourself — that is the real meaning of *jihad* in Islam, the war within yourself. In an analogous act to Michelangelo’s and Rembrandt’s self-portraits, Lasso has created this host of recording angels who can detail the fluctuations and razor-edge refinements of his art, his moral quandaries, and lifelong regret for failed moments. That crystal clear, relentlessly honest moment is a crisis known to every human being on earth. In the case of Lasso, he can’t forgive himself, but the music is suffused with a divine compassion and illumination that reaches the very heart of hell.”

Thomas May, program annotator for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, writes about the arts and blogs at memeteria.com.
The Los Angeles Master Chorale is the country’s largest professional chorus and one of Southern California’s most vibrant cultural treasures. Hailed for its powerful performances, technical precision, and artistic daring, the Master Chorale is led by Artistic Director Grant Gershon. It is a founding resident company of The Music Center and the choir-in-residence at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Chorister positions are highly sought-after and the professional choir is a diverse and vocally dynamic group showcasing the many voices of L.A.

Presenting its own concert series each season, the Master Chorale performs choral music from the earliest writings to contemporary compositions, striking a balance between innovation and tradition. It also regularly performs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. Praised for its definitive performances, the choir is committed to recording the choral repertoire and has also featured with Gershon on the soundtracks of many major motion pictures.

The Los Angeles Master Chorale serves more than 30,000 audience members of all ages annually and provides education outreach to some 9,000 students each year.

CANTO PRIMO
Claire Fedoruk
Elissa Johnston
Anna Schubert

CANTO SECONDO
Beth Peregrine
Zanaida Robles
Andrea Zomorodian

ALTO PRIMO
Shawn Kirchner
Niké St. Clair
Kristen Toedtman

ALTO SECONDO
Callista Hoffman-Campbell
Michael Lichtenauer
Adriana Manfredi

TENOR PRIMO
Matthew Brown
Arnold Livingston Geis
Luc Kleiner

TENOR SECONDO
John Buffett
Brandon Hynum
Jon Lee Keenan

BASSO
Scott Graff
James Hayden
Chung Uk Lee

The singers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO; Dylan Gentile, AGMA Delegate; Beth Peregrine, acting delegate.
Hailed for his adventurous and bold artistic leadership and for eliciting technically precise and expressive performances from musicians, Grant Gershon is beginning his 19th season as the Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale. The Los Angeles Times has said the Master Chorale “has become the most exciting chorus in the country under Grant Gershon,” a reflection on both his programming and performances.

During his tenure, Gershon has led more than 200 Master Chorale performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall in programs encompassing choral music from the earliest writings and pillars of the repertoire through to contemporary compositions. He has led world premiere performances of major works by John Adams, Esa-Pekka Salonen, David Lang, Louis Andriessen, Christopher Rouse, Steve Reich, Morten Lauridsen, Ricky Ian Gordon, Gabriela Lena Frank, Shawn Kirchner, Ellen Reid, and Chinary Ung, among many others.

In July 2019, Gershon and the Master Chorale opened the famed Salzburg Festival with its production of Lagrime di San Pietro, directed by Peter Sellars, which toured Europe and the U.S. throughout the 2018–19 season. The performances in Salzburg received standing ovations and rave reviews from such outlets as the Suddeutsche Zeitung, which called Lagrime “painfully beautiful” (Schmerzliche schön). In his review of the premiere of Lagrime, Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times noted that the production “is a major accomplishment for the Master Chorale, which sang and acted brilliantly. It is also a major accomplishment for music history.”

Gershon is the Resident Conductor of LA Opera, and in this capacity conducted the West Coast premiere of Philip Glass’s Satyagraha in November 2018. He made his acclaimed debut with the company with La Traviata in 2009 and has subsequently conducted Il Postino, Madame Butterfly, Carmen, Florencia en el Amazonas, Wonderful Town, The Tales of Hoffmann, and The Pearl Fishers. In 2017, he made his San Francisco Opera debut conducting the world premiere of John Adams’s Girls of the Golden West directed by Peter Sellars, who also wrote the libretto, and made his Dutch National Opera debut with the same opera in March 2019. Gershon and Adams have an enduring friendship and professional relationship that began 27 years ago in Los Angeles when Gershon played keyboards in the pit for Nixon in China at LA Opera. Since then, Gershon has led the world premiere performances of Adams’s theater piece I Was Looking At The Ceiling And Then I Saw The Sky, premiered
his two-piano piece *Hallelujah Junction* (with Gloria Cheng), and conducted performances of *Harmonium*, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, *El Niño*, *The Chairman Dances*, and choruses from *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

In New York, Gershon has appeared at Carnegie Hall and at the historic Trinity Wall Street, and has performed on the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center and the Making Music series at Zankel Hall. Other major appearances include performances at the Ravinia, Aspen, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Salzburg, and Vienna festivals, the South American premiere of the LA Opera’s production of *Il Postino* in Chile, and performances with the Baltimore Symphony and the Coro e Orchestra Del Teatro Regio Di Torino in Turin, Italy. He has worked closely with numerous conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, James Conlon, Gustavo Dudamel, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Simon Rattle, and his mentor, Esa-Pekka Salonen.

His discography includes the Grammy Award–nominated recordings of *Sweeney Todd* (New York Philharmonic Special Editions) and Ligeti’s *Grand Macabre* (Sony Classical); six commercial CDs with the Master Chorale, including *Glass-Salonen* (RCM), *You Are (Variations)* (Nonesuch), *Daniel Variations* (Nonesuch), *A Good Understanding* (Decca), *Miserere* (Decca), and *the national anthems* (Cantaloupe Music); and two live-performance albums, the Master Chorale’s *50th Season Celebration* recording and *Festival of Carols*. He has also led the Master Chorale in performances for several major motion pictures soundtracks, including, at the request of John Williams, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

Gershon was named Outstanding Alumnus of the Thornton School of Music in 2002 and received the USC Alumni Merit Award in 2017. He is a member of the Board of Councilors for the Thornton School and the Board of Directors of Chorus America.
GUEST ARTISTS

PETER SELLARS
DIRECTOR

JAMES F. INGALLS
LIGHTING DESIGN

DANIELLE DOMINGUE SUMI
COSTUME DESIGN

Peter Sellars has gained international renown for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of artistic masterpieces and for collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative artists. He has staged operas at the Dutch National Opera, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opéra National de Paris, Salzburg Festival and San Francisco Opera, among others. Recent projects include concert stagings of Pélleas et Melisande with the Berlin Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestras, the staging of Kaija Saariaho’s new opera Only the Sound Remains in Amsterdam and a revival of his production of Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms in Aix-en-Provence with Esa-Pekka Salonen. Sellars served as the Music Director of the 2016 Ojai Music Festival. He is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA, a resident curator of the Telluride Film Festival, and was a Mentor for the Rolex Arts Initiative. Sellars has collaborated locally and internationally with opera director Peter Sellars on Desdemona at CAP UCLA, The Indian Queen in Perm, Madrid and London, and The Gospel According to the Other Mary on tour with Los Angeles Philharmonic. Additionally, Danielle has recently begun work as an MFTI Art Therapist. She attended Loyola Marymount University (MA), Clark Atlanta University (BA), and The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (AA).

James F. Ingalls makes his debut with the Los Angeles Master Chorale. His work in Los Angeles includes Carmen de Lavellade’s As I Remember It (Wallis Annenberg Center), The Price and A Parallelogram (Mark Taper Forum), The Gospel According to the Other Mary, Canata Criolla, Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms, and El Niño (LA Philharmonic); and Tribu, choreographed by Melanie Rios Glaser (REDCAT). Recent designs for dance include Layla and Majnun (Mark Morris Dance Group), The Weight of Smoke, Dilly Dilly and Sullivaniana (Paul Taylor’s American Modern Dance), George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker (Pacific Northwest Ballet/Seattle), The Sleeping Beauty, choreographed by Alexi Ratmansky (Teatro alla Scala Ballet and American Ballet Theatre) and Twyla Tharp’s 50th Anniversary Tour. Recent design for opera includes Iolanta and Persephone (Opera Lyon) and the world premiere of Kaija Saariaho’s Only the Sound Remains (Dutch National Opera), both directed by Peter Sellars. Recent theatre includes The Beauty Queen of Leenane (to be seen at the Taper in November) and Waiting for Godot, both directed by Garry Hynes (Druid Theatre/Galway). He often collaborates with The Wooden Floor dancers in Santa Ana, California.

Danielle Domingue Sumi is native to New Orleans, Louisiana. Danielle’s creative expression is inspired by spirituality and humility with elements of multicultural diversity and social justice. Danielle is treasured for her creativity and leadership skills in theatrical production. For the past four years, she has worked independently with theaters and opera companies locally and internationally including Los Angeles Opera, Kirk Douglas Theater, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pasadena Playhouse, Perm Opera in Russia, Teatro Real in Madrid, English National Opera in London and Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara. She was previously assistant head of wardrobe with Los Angeles Opera. Danielle has collaborated locally and internationally with opera director Peter Sellars on Desdemona at CAP UCLA, The Indian Queen in Perm, Madrid and London, and The Gospel According to the Other Mary on tour with Los Angeles Philharmonic. Additionally, Danielle has recently begun work as an MFTI Art Therapist. She attended Loyola Marymount University (MA), Clark Atlanta University (BA), and The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (AA).
PRESS QUOTES

“Painfully beautiful” (“Schmerzlich schön”)

—REINHARD J. BREMBECK, SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

“Lagrima is a major accomplishment for the Master Chorale, which sang and acted brilliantly. It is also a major accomplishment for music history.”

—MARK SWED, LOS ANGELES TIMES

“A stunning performance ... Their voices soared to the heavens of the Melbourne Recital Centre, their choreographed moves—arms thrust into the air, collapsing to the ground—adding to drama of the work.”

—ANDREW TAYLOR, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

“Lagrimed di San Pietro (Tears of St Peter), was balm for the soul ... It’s the smaller gestures, and the Chorale’s vocal prowess, that linger in the mind.”

—INGE KJEMTRUP, THE STAGE (UK)

“Through it all, the Master Chorale sounded glorious . . . The 21 stanzas have been defined as sacred madrigals, yet Gershon made them sound as engaging as secular madrigals . . .”

—RICHARD GINELL, CLASSICAL VOICE NORTH AMERICA

“If evidence were needed that imaginative staging can provide us with access to difficult works of art, then it was offered in abundance by the Los Angeles Master Chorale in an extraordinary performance of Orlando di Lasso’s a cappella masterpiece, Lagrima di San Pietro ...”

—SIMON WILLIAMS, OPERA NEWS
Music historians have never quite known what to make of the late Renaissance composer Orlando di Lasso, or, for that matter, even what to call him. (Sometimes he’s Orlande or Roland, and sometimes De Lassus.) Musicologist Richard Taruskin calls him, simply, a loose end. Di Lasso’s style never fully conformed to the luxurious perfection of his age. His bizarre harmonic explorations, along with his attraction to lurid or mystical subject matter, could get him into trouble.

He wrote some 300 Masses, more than 2,000 compositions over all, but we don’t know how many exactly. (There has never been a complete published edition of his works.) One thing, though, has long been fairly certain: It is best to steer clear of Di Lasso’s last piece, “Lagrima di San Pietro” (Tears of St. Peter).

But when someone says, “don’t,” that has more than once told artistic director Grant Gershon what the Los Angeles Master Chorale should do. On Saturday night at Walt Disney Concert Hall, he opened a new season with 21 singers from the chorus premiering a revelatory staging by Peter Sellars of Di Lasso’s 21-madrigal cycle.

Normally, we turn to death-invoking music for its transformative powers. The final great works of Beethoven (the late string quartets), Mozart (the unfinished Requiem) or Mahler (the Ninth Symphony’s probe of dying embers) help us transcend despair. Di Lasso’s “Lagrima,” however, is by a deeply depressed composer in the days before meds, someone who only wants his misery to end. It did in 1594, three weeks after finishing the score.

Each madrigal mercilessly finds a new metaphor for punishing Peter, having denied Jesus. The spiritual anguish expressed in Peter’s remorse and Jesus’ disappointment — a gaze from divine eyes can be so severe that light waves turn into sound able to penetrate ears — piles up until the pain reaches a breaking point.

Because Di Lasso’s music is full of sublime beauty, the most convenient way to deal with the unrelenting despair of “Lagrima,” on the rare occasions it is performed or discussed (it is, for instance, treated as a mere aside in the Cambridge University Press volume of “Orlando di Lasso Studies”), is to bask in glowing religiosity. But the revelation offered by Sellars and Gershon is to avoid Revelation altogether. For them, “Lagrima” is a profoundly human contemplation of the relationship of these two men.

Dressed in peaceful mauves and grays (designed by Danielle Domingue Sumi) and warm light (by James F. Ingalls), the chorus congregates onstage, a warm-hearted community evoking “warm-hearted Peter,” who had sworn to defend Jesus amid a thousand spears and swords but was overcome by cowardice at the last minute. Now, Peter’s heart has been wounded by a thousand blows of self-reproach.

Each madrigal, set to rhymed Italian stanzas by Renaissance poet Luigi Tansillo, is a small contrapuntal masterpiece consisting of seven individual melodic lines that flow as currents, never standing alone, but ever completing and renewing thoughts. The overlaps create unpredictable harmonies that can make your hair stand on end.

Some of the lines between Peter and Jesus are exchanges of increasingly disturbing incriminations, as well as descriptions of the tolls they take on both parties. With the singers humanizing every gesture, at times, Peter and Jesus seem capable of the psychic cruelty only old lovers can inflict. Next to them, Edward Albee’s characters are children in a playground.

The 15th madrigal begins by Peter asking life to leave him. He can take no more. Nothing more can be accomplished. The chorus ends it by lying on the floor, in a position of crucifixion. For the following madrigals, the chorus gives up, as well. The singers move to either side of the stage and sit on chairs faced with music stands. Peter is no longer connected to this world. “Afraid to die,” Peter finally grasps, “I denied life.”

For the last madrigal, the dying Di Lasso turned to a 13th century Latin text in which Jesus accuses Peter of inflicting a graver internal agony than even the indescribable pain of crucifixion. For Di Lasso, Peter’s otherworldly solace may be found in a new harmonic language.

Jesus has the last scathing word: “I have experienced such ingratitude from you.” But Sellars allows us to hear it as being spoken in love, not anger. Members of the chorus, up from their chairs, hug one another. Gershon is among them. Di Lasso’s wandering harmonies have somehow wandered into our own. Sorrow and bitterness are replaced by awe.

“Lagrima” is a major accomplishment for the Master Chorale, which sang and acted brilliantly. It is also a major accomplishment for music history. The company hopes to keep this production alive, touring it, and if the music business chooses to honor the just, that will be a saint’s compensation.
IF EVIDENCE WERE NEEDED that imaginative staging can provide us with access to difficult works of art, then it was offered in abundance by the Los Angeles Master Chorale in an extraordinary performance of Orlando di Lasso’s a cappella masterpiece, Lagrime di San Pietro (1594) at the Disney Concert Hall (seen Oct. 29). A cycle of twenty-one madrigale spirituali, based on stanzas of a poem by the Italian Renaissance poet Luigi Tansillo and one motet by the medieval French poet, Philippe de Grève, Lagrime centers on the agony suffered by Peter after he denied knowing Christ three times in one day. The betrayal of one who is loved is posited as the deepest offense a human soul can commit against the world and, above all, itself. The cycle paints out the desolate spiritual landscape resulting from this betrayal, in music of breathtaking beauty, which is widely regarded as the highpoint of Renaissance polyphony.

Lagrime is not, however, an easy work to listen to and understand. To an ear such as my own, untrained in Renaissance polyphony, the subtle shifts in key and the individuality of melodies as they are passed from one voice to another are difficult to trace. Furthermore, the unrelenting focus on the guilt caused by Peter’s renunciation of Christ, is obsessive, which, in its repetitiveness, acquires a certain manic quality. But in Peter Sellars’ staging, on the bare platform of the concert hall, the music took on startling individuality and a tentative progression toward healing became apparent as the performance neared its end. This was achieved first through tripling each of the seven solo voices for which Lasso originally wrote the cycle, so that there was an ensemble of twenty-one singers. All were directed by Sellars with a stunning sense of spatial poetry. Dressed in grey and blue sweats, designed with quiet elegance by Danielle Domingue Sumi, the ensemble’s singing and choric movement was constantly accompanied by striking gestures and poses from each of the singers that were indicative of extreme sorrow and emotional turmoil. All singers performed the same pose at the same time, but this was never a uniform process; each had their own way of expressing anguish that differed from all others. As a result, we sensed the pain of the individual, but it was enlarged by its context in the mass. The eye with which we scrutinized this spectacle then tutored the ear to listen with more sensitivity to the music, to discover within it the same sort of differences that were being expressed on stage. When the ear achieved this, it heard the music with renewed intensity and fathomless depths of pathos opened up to our imagination. James F. Ingalls’ steely, often cold lighting augmented the tragic atmosphere, though for the final motet, the large platform was flooded with warm glowing colors; as ensemble members hesitantly embraced each other, some respite for the agonies we had seen enacted might be at hand.

Grant Gershon conducted. He coaxed the most mesmerizing sounds from the ensemble, who constantly moved from one rich, seeming boundless harmony to another, but never into fixed tonal combinations; the score constantly changed and one felt viscerally these waves of change moving through the ensemble. Gershon, who moved among members of the ensemble, was as much a participant in their suffering as he was the orchestrator of it. This was an evening of deeply troubling beauty, touching depths of despair that many in the audience may have recognized. It is reassuring to think that this intimate performance of emotions of such intricacy and depth may have raised hope within them.
LOS ANGELES — There are probably a few pieces less likely to kick off a concert season with a bang than Orlando di Lasso's austere, expansive last testament from 1594, Lagrime di San Pietro, but I’d be hard-pressed to name them. Yet that is precisely what Los Angeles Master Chorale artistic director Grant Gershon had in mind Sunday night (Oct. 30) as his first offering of the season — and not only that, he brought the ever-provocative Peter Sellars in to stage the thing.

At the pre-concert talk, Sellars and Gershon made it clear that they knew what they were in for. “There's not enough rehearsal time on this earth for this piece,” said Sellars with typical hyperbole. “We spent more time putting this together than anything else we've done since I came here,” said Gershon.

They were dealing with the final work of an ailing, financially strapped composer, aged 62, who channeled his pain into a setting of a devotional epic on St. Peter by the Italian Renaissance poet Luigi Tansillo. The title is literally Tears of St. Peter, with 20 stanzas devoted to an aged Peter's guilt and remorse over his betrayal of Jesus, followed by a flashback motet in which Jesus says that Peter's ingratitude hurts even more than the physical pain of being nailed to the cross.

Leave it to Sellars to extract some kind of contemporary activist allegory — his usual specialty — out of this. Step up and speak out against injustice, even at your own personal risk, whenever you see it. Gershon sees relationships with other late testaments like Mahler's Adagios from the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies, the last Beethoven quartets, the liturgical motets of Pietro, but I'd be hard-pressed to name them. Yet that is precisely what Los Angeles Master Chorale artistic director Grant Gershon had in mind Sunday night (Oct. 30) as his first offering of the season — and not only that, he brought the ever-provocative Peter Sellars in to stage the thing.

According to the Other Mary from 2012-13. So this idea didn't come completely from out of the blue.

Also, the Lasso piece was actually an extension of themes from some of the projects Gershon and Sellars had been working on before — the all-Stravinsky program of Oedipus Rex and Symphony of Psalms that closed out Esa-Pekka Salonen’s term as L.A. Philharmonic music director in 2009 (Salonen was in the audience Sunday night) and especially John Adams' The Gospel According to the Other Mary from 2012-13. So this idea didn’t come completely from out of the blue.

There are 21 stanzas in all, and the numbers three and seven determine the structure of the piece. It’s divided into three sections containing a total of 168 lines (a number divisible by seven), with seven polyphonic vocal parts throughout. The tempos are unvaried, the length is well over an hour, and the piece can be very demanding on performers and listeners alike.

Now, how do you stage this? Sellars reached into his bag of tricks and brought forth a staging very similar to what he did at the Stravinsky concert. The 21 barefooted members of the Master Chorale came onto the Walt Disney Concert Hall stage, clad in casual workers’ dress in various drab shades of gray. They were kept very busy moving around the stage, expanding and contracting in formation, gesturing, writhing, embracing, lying on their backs or lying face down. When the text said that Peter felt like he was being stabbed in the heart by a thousand darts, they all clutched their chests in agony. While this kind of mobile choral activity looked hokey, corny, and distracting in Stravinsky, it seemed to focus attention upon Lasso’s music and the text more effectively, providing visual extrapolations that weren't really out of line.

All of the singers were asked to memorize the music from stanzas 1 through 15 — no mean feat with all of that shifting polyphony going on. They retreated to chairs and music stands in No. 16 but they were back on their feet a couple of sections later. Gershon, himself barefooted as well, moved around the stage with the grace of a dance master, leading the voices from several vantage points. James F. Ingalls supervised subtle changes in lighting, from a cold wintry look in stanza 10 (which begins, “Like a snowflake …”) to fiery orange during Jesus’ speech on the cross.

Through it all, the Master Chorale sounded glorious — rich, accurate, seemingly unaffected by all of the physical contortions Sellars put them through, even when singing face-down on the stage muffled their voices. The 21 stanzas have been defined as sacred madrigals, yet Gershon made them sound as engaging as secular madrigals, with occasional passionate bursts of fortissimo out of the general texture that relieved the monotony that can set in. While Lagrime di San Pietro has been performed or recorded both with and without backing instruments — as the conditions of the Bavarian court of Lasso's time seemed to allow — the Master Chorale performed it a cappella, three singers for each of the seven parts (playing the numbers game again), needing nothing else.

Disney Hall looked virtually sold out, as it has been frequently for Master Chorale concerts in recent years under Gershon; this audience seems to trust him wherever he may lead. And he needed all of that trust Sunday night, which he was able to repay with an Italian Renaissance monument made more human and approachable, if still not entirely easy to take.

Richard S. Ginell writes regularly about music for the Los Angeles Times, and is also the Los Angeles correspondent for American Record Guide and the West Coast regional editor for Classical Voice North America.
‘IT’S ABOUT BEING A GREAT WORLD CITY’:
VALUING ARTS FESTIVALS

October 8, 2019
By Andrew Taylow

The question should have caused a riot among patrons of the Melbourne International Arts Festival.

Yet 40 per cent of the audience of the Trustees apparently agreed with the proposition that governments should stop funding the arts, according to an online poll flashed up on screens during the show.

Fake news? Perhaps.

The result is perhaps the least confronting aspect of the Trustees, a play that revels in discomfort as its performers tear strips off each other (and themselves) in a series of searing monologues. The play, directed by Natalia Kaliada and Nicolai Khalezin of Belarus Free Theatre, powerfully conveys a litany of horrors committed against Indigenous people, refugees and migrants.

Somewhat uneven, it is nonetheless a compelling, thoughtful piece of theatre that provided a startling contrast to the acrobatic high jinks taking place nearby in circus show Lexicon.

What Lexicon lacked in cohesive narrative it made up with exuberance. A skinny, bespectacled unicyclist who resembled the wayward title character in the Where’s Wally? books stole the show from his brawny counterparts. The live bandamped up the energy, occasionally overwhelming the physical feats in the circus ring with its eclectic soundtrack of folk and rock.

Jonathan Holloway, the festival’s artistic director, had a tough act to follow after staging Taylor Mac’s marathon A 24-Decade History of Popular Music at last year’s festival.

A former director of the Perth Festival, Holloway said festivals still had a place in cities like Melbourne or Sydney with busy arts calendars.

“There’s something going on every day but there is only one AFL grand final,” he said. “The job of a festival is to be that.”

He said Australia’s art scene attracted attention because of its festivals: “It creates a network to allow great commissions.”

This year’s festival received $6.3 million in government funding, slightly more than its program budget of $6.2 million. More than $3 million worth of tickets have been sold, putting the festival on track to surpass last year’s box office of $3.2 million.

Not surprisingly, Holloway said the festival provided value for money: “We give back four times that in economic impact. But the impact is bigger than that - it’s about being a great world city. That’s what you’re investing in.”

One of Holloway’s best purchases is Irish actor Barry McGovern’s theatrical adaptation of Samuel Beckett’s second novel Watt.

Beckett’s enigmatic character is expertly brought to life by McGovern on a bare stage except for a chair and moving trolley.

His 50-minute monologue pares back the complexity of Beckett’s novel to sweep up the audience in a series of encounters with the mysterious Knott, various visitors to his house and the fisher woman Mrs Gorman, who Watt has a dalliance with.

Unlike other city festivals, which happily celebrate outdoors in the heat of summer, Melbourne’s festival tends to stay indoors or deep in the bowels of the Arts Centre where Flight tells the devastating tale of child refugees.

Based on Caroline Brothers’ Hinterland, the story of two refugee brothers from Afghanistan, Kabir and Aryan, seeking a new life in London is told with tiny models that depict their epic journey.

The audience sits in individual booths, wearing headphones, as the meticulously-crafted scenes revolve past, lit up by lights and accompanied by a soundtrack that conjures the dreams and fears of the brothers.

Flight’s experiment with story-telling has divided opinion but will engage many although it was probably unnecessary for the ushers to suggest audiences might need time to cope with their feelings after the show.

The Los Angeles Master Chorale surely assuaged any doubts about the value of an arts festival with its stunning performance of the spiritual madrigal Lagrime di San Pietro.

Drawing on the Biblical tale of St Peter’s sorrowful disavowal of Jesus, the choralists expertly evoke the emotive force of the work.

Their voices soared to the heavens of the Melbourne Recital Centre, their choreographed moves - arms thrust into the air, collapsing to the ground - adding to the drama of the work.

Festivals might provide a home for the new, experimental and provocative, but this beautiful Renaissance work was a triumph.
Salzburger festspiele CONDUCTOR Grant Gershon ARTISTS Los Angeles Master Chorale; lagrime di san Pietro los Angeles master chorale c sf marco borrelli -18 (Foto: ph marco borrelli; marco borrelli)

Tränen zum Auftakt der Salzburger Festspiele: Peter Sellars inszeniert in der Kollegienkirche das grandiose Chorstück "Lagrime di San Pietro" von Orlando di Lasso.

Von Reinhard J. Brembeck


Das sind 21 dicht gewebte Stücke für einen siebenstimmigen Chor, die um den Verrat des Petrus kreisen, der, wie von Jesus vorausgesagt, dreimal vor dem ersten Hahnenschrei seine Zugehörigkeit zu dessen Revoluzzerkreis abstreitet.


Sellars lässt die Sänger stehen, herumlaufen, tänzen, tanzen und dem Publikum den Rücken kehren. In den Gesichtern der Sänger zeigt sich der Schmerz Petri, sie geben sich empathisch. Jeder der Einundzwanzig lebt die Skrupel und Selbstvorwürfe des Protagonisten für sich selber noch einmal nach. Ihr wichtigstes Ausdrucksmedium sind die Arme. Sie reißen sie hoch, sie wehren ab, sie schützen vor Unheil, sie zeichnen Kleimund und Resignation. Dann gehen die Sänger in die Hocke, springen auf, liegen allesamt auf dem Rücken. So reagieren sie genau auf die Vorgaben der Musik, die bis in die feinsten Bedeutungswinkel des Textes hineinkriecht und jede Nuance in ein Gefühl übersetzt.

Dass trotz dieser radikalen Textnähe die einzelnen Madrigale zu selbstständigen Musiknummern werden, die sich zudem zu einem stimmigen Zyklus schließen, das macht den singulären Rang dieser ganz in Schmerz gehaltenen Trauermusik aus, der selbst in dieser rituell zerdehnten Aufführung spürbar bleibt. Salzburg, oft unter Glamour-Verdacht, hat sich mit dieser Antishow wieder mal als Hochburg der Gegenreformation bewiesen.
On the day of the European parliamentary elections, to see Peter Sellars’ staged version of an a cappella Renaissance choral work, Orlando di Lasso’s Lagrime di San Pietro (Tears of St Peter), was balm for the soul. In an absorbing performance at the Barbican Centre, Sellars and the Los Angeles Master Chorale present Lasso’s masterpiece as an allegory of the necessity of confronting the pain of the past in order to face the future.

In Lasso’s 20 madrigals, set to devotional poems by Luigi Tansillo (1510-68), the painful past belongs to none other than St Peter, now an anguished old man lamenting his disavowal of Jesus. The seven-part madrigals are divided among 21 singers, whose choreographed movements illuminate the emotional landscape. Like his singers, the Chorale’s admirable artistic director Grant Gershon has memorised the score and is in motion while performing.

Choral singers are not necessarily great dancers, although they can be good actors, and this makes it all the more human. Wearing plain, earth-toned clothing, the singers fall to the floor, drop to their knees, raise their hands in despair – their movements sometimes semaphore-like in a literal depiction of the text. It’s the smaller gestures, and the Chorale’s vocal prowess, that linger in the mind. The performance is also boosted by James F Ingalls’ evocative lighting and the use of surtitles directly above the singers.

Best known in this country for his opera collaborations with composer John Adams, Sellars’ potent staging of this Renaissance masterpiece continues his long history of tapping into the zeitgeist.
PAST TOUR DATES

RAVINIA FESTIVAL
HIGHLAND PARK, IL · SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

KRANNERT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
URBANA, IL · SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA · OCTOBER 5 & 6, 2018

FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL CERVANTINO
GUANAJUATO, MEXICO · OCTOBER 11, 2018

PALACIO DE BELLAS ARTES
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO · OCTOBER 13, 2018

WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
BEVERLY HILLS, CA · OCTOBER 20 & 21, 2018

UMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR, MI · JANUARY 20, 2019

CAROLINA PERFORMING ARTS
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, NC · JANUARY 22, 2019
CAL PERFORMANCES
BERKELEY, CA · MAY 17, 2019

THE BARBICAN CENTRE
LONDON, ENGLAND · MAY 23, 2019

SAGE GATESHEAD
GATESHEAD, ENGLAND · MAY 25, 2019

CITÉ DE LA MUSIQUE
PARIS, FRANCE · MAY 27, 2019

PERFORMANCE SANTA FE AT THE
LENSIC PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
SANTA FE, NM · MAY 31, 2019

SALZBURG FESTIVAL
SALZBURG, AUSTRIA · JULY 20 & 21, 2019

CITY THEATER
INGOLSTADT, BAVARIA, GERMANY · JULY 23, 2019
TOUR REPRESENTATION

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