

GCD 922401

New release information

March 2009

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck

The Secular Vocal Works

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)

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 Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam
 Harry van der Kamp


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Voices: Stephanie Petitlaurent, Nele Gramß, Marnix De Cat, Marcel Beekman, Harry van Berne, Kees-Jan de Koning, Harry van der Kamp

Instruments: Lee Santana, Anneke Boeke, Marion Verbruggen, Hille Perl, Frauke Hess, Juliane Laake, Sarah Perl, Lennart Spies

Glossa GCD 922401

3 CDs in slipcase, 120-page booklet

Programme

 Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)
 The Secular Vocal Works

 CD I [63:40]
 Chansons

 CD II [68:01]
 Italian Rimes
 Madrigals

 CD III [70:59]
 French Rimes
 Canons
 Works for Lute

Production details

Recorded in Renswoude, Netherlands, in December 2003 and July 2004

Engineered by Oscar Meijer

Supervised by Ted Diehl

Mastered by Stephan Schellmann

A production of the Stichting Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck in co-operation with the Nederlandse Programma Stichting (NPS)

Executive producer: Carlos Céster

Design: Valentín Iglesias

Booklet essay: Pieter Dirksen

English - Français - Deutsch - Español



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NOTES (ENG)

Harry van der Kamp and an expert group of singers and instrumentalists from the Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam have achieved what few specialist ensembles before them have even attempted: a complete survey of the vocal music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, the "Orpheus of Amsterdam".

Sweelinck's reputation has undergone a curious reversal in modern times. Today he has become best appreciated for his teaching and his keyboard works – and for having laid the foundations of the North German organ school which remained influential until the time of JS Bach. Yet, in the 17th century (he died in 1621) he was better known for his vocal output: French *chansons*, Italian madrigals as well as polyphonic settings of all 150 Psalms. Van der Kamp, a noted teacher and a celebrated soloist himself, directs here the beginning of what plans to be a fitting monument to this Dutch master.

This first release on Glossa covers the entirety of Sweelinck's secular vocal works, one of the glories of the young Dutch Republic and which occupied much of his compositional activity in the two decades around the turn of the 17th century. Here then is a tremendous opportunity to experience the forgotten works of a musician, schooled in the Netherlands Golden Age tradition, whose music developed in the first flowering of the Baroque.

NOTAS (ESP)

Harry van der Kamp y un experto conjunto vocal e instrumental, el Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam, han realizado lo que pocos especialistas se han atrevido siquiera a intentar: interpretar la integral de la música vocal de Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, el «Orfeo de Ámsterdam».

La reputación de Sweelinck sufrió un cambio curioso durante la época moderna. Hoy, Sweelinck es más célebre por su actividad pedagógica y por su música para teclado – y por haber creado las bases de la escuela organística del Norte de Alemania cuya influencia duró hasta la época de J. S. Bach. Pero en el siglo XVII (murió en 1621), el compositor era más conocido por su música vocal: chansons francesas, madrigales italianos y composiciones polifónicas sobre los textos de los 150 Salmos. Van der Kamp, destacado profesor y renombrado solista, pone aquí las primeras piedras de lo que será un monumento ideal en honor del maestro holandés.

Este primer volumen para Glossa comprende la integral de la música vocal profana de Sweelinck, una de las glorias de la joven República holandesa; este repertorio ocupó una gran parte de su actividad compositiva durante los dos decenios del paso del siglo XVI al XVII. He aquí una magnífica oportunidad para descubrir las obras olvidadas de un músico arraigado en la tradición de la Edad de Oro neerlandesa, y cuyo arte se desarrolló durante el primer florecimiento del Barroco.

NOTES (FRA)

Harry van der Kamp et un ensemble expert formé de voix et d'instruments provenant du Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam ont réalisé ce que peu de spécialistes avaient osé entreprendre : l'intégrale de la musique vocale de Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, « L'Orphée d'Amsterdam ».

La réputation de Sweelinck a souffert un curieux changement avec le temps. Aujourd'hui Sweelinck est en effet plus apprécié pour ses activités pédagogiques et sa musique pour clavier – et pour avoir créé les bases de l'école d'orgue de l'Allemagne du Nord dont l'influence dura jusqu'à l'époque de J.S. Bach. Mais au XVIIe siècle (il mourut en 1621), le compositeur était plus connu pour sa musique vocale, qui comprend des chansons françaises, des madrigaux italiens ainsi que des compositions polyphoniques sur les textes des 150 Psaumes. Van der Kamp, enseignant remarquable et soliste renommé, pose ici les premières pierres de ce qui sera un monument que mérite le maître hollandais.

Ce premier volume pour Glossa présente l'intégrale de la musique vocale profane de Sweelinck, l'une des gloires de la jeune République Hollandaise ; ce répertoire occupa la majeure partie de l'activité du compositeur durant les deux décennies au passage du XVIe au XVIIe siècle. Voici donc une opportunité formidable de découvrir les œuvres oubliées d'un musicien, appartenant à la tradition de l'Âge d'Or néerlandais, et dont l'art se développa durant la première éclosion du baroque.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Harry van der Kamp und eine Gruppe von erfahrenen Sängern und Instrumentalisten aus dem Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam haben zustande gebracht, was vor ihnen kaum ein spezialisiertes Ensemble auch nur versucht hat: einen vollständigen Überblick über die Vokalmusik von Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, dem »Orpheus von Amsterdam«.

Sweelincks Ruf hat in der Moderne einen merkwürdigen Wandel erfahren. Heute wird er am höchsten wegen seiner Lehrtätigkeit und seiner Werke für Tasteninstrumente geschätzt – und dafür, dass er die Basis für die Norddeutsche Orgelschule schuf, deren Einflüsse bis in die Zeit von J.S. Bach reichten. Im 17. Jahrhundert dagegen (er starb 1621) war er wesentlich bekannter wegen seiner Vokalwerke: französische Chansons, italienische Madrigale ebenso wie polyphone Vertonungen aller 150 Psalmen. Van der Kamp, selbst ein bekannter Lehrer und gefeierter Solist, leitet hier ein Projekt, mit dem er diesem holländischen Meister ein angemessenes Denkmal setzen will.

Diese erste Einspielung bei Glossa deckt das gesamte weltliche Vokalwerk ab, das nicht unwesentlich zum Stolz der jungen Vereinigten Niederlande beitrug und das einen Großteil kompositorischer Aktivitäten Sweelincks aus den beiden Jahrzehnten vor und nach der Jahrhundertwende ausmachte. Dies stellt eine wunderbare Gelegenheit dar, die vergessenen Werke eines Musikers kennenzulernen, der seine Ausbildung im Goldenen Zeitalter der Niederlande erhielt und der seine Musik zur ersten Blütezeit des Barock entwickelte.

A short interview with Harry van der Kamp



Not content with a career as a bass soloist (in music extending from 1300 to the present day) or as a teacher (he holds a professorship in early music in Bremen), Harry van der Kamp has for over two decades been directing the Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam, an ensemble whose repertoire encompasses the entire madrigal repertoire of the 16th and 17th centuries. Precious recording activities of the group have extended to music by Emilio de'Cavalieri, Scipione Lacorcia as well as by Carlo Gesualdo himself. Yet van der Kamp has been stirred by the fact that no fitting tribute – no monumental representation wrought in stone or metal – exists to commemorate the composer who he regards as "the greatest that we ever have had in Holland": Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck.

And so van der Kamp devised a project to set down on record all of Sweelinck's copious vocal output, both secular and sacred, untroubled by the fact that today for many the reputation of the Deventer-born composer is formed by his keyboard works for organ and harpsichord. With typical Dutch irony van der Kamp himself delights in the fact that 360 years on from the end of The Revolt of the Netherlands – an uprising which lasted for eight decades – it is the Spanish label Glossa which is developing and issuing this Sweelinck Monument, thereby conferring a great honour on the "rebellious" Dutchman.

You describe the project as "The Sweelinck Monument". What previous efforts have been made to commemorate the composer and with what level of success?

Several efforts were made to erect a statue in Sweelinck's honour but all of them were frustrated either by insufficient interest and (a consequent) lack of money or by reasons which relate to the Second World War. It was only Sweelinck's head which made it on to the front of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and in the 1930s a bronze plaque bearing his name was installed in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam, a small bronze-type sculpture being added to it

being added to it only a few years ago. The real big monument – such as the larger than life-sized classical statues put up for other, minor Dutch composers – has never been accorded Sweelinck, in my opinion, the greatest composer that we ever had in Holland. This is why I call this project a monument made of his own material, his own music. This has never been carried out before.

Has Sweelinck's reputation as a composer of keyboard music overshadowed that of his vocal music?

Sweelinck must have been an astonishing organist. Although his organ and harpsichord works were never printed during his lifetime his fame has spread throughout the greater part of Northern Europe. This situation has barely changed up to our days because whilst the concert-going public generally knows about his organ and harpsichord music it remains totally unaware of the output of his vocal works. Even experts and critics, I have noticed, have never seen the secular works. Indeed, Sweelinck's reputation as a composer of splendid organ works seems to have caused a sort of blindness for his vocal works. How this could have happened may be easily explained. To perform the keyboard works you only need the one musician, while for the vocal works at least two and at the most eight solo singers are required, and solo singers who are able to succeed as an ensemble, both in terms of intonation and doing it in a musical manner. A choir might also sing this music but I do not feel that a choir is really the appropriate vehicle precisely because this music is slightly too complicated and it calls for a high level of precision in intonation. Those are reasons, I think, why his complete works have never been performed as a group. There have been concerts with the Psalms, but these only represent something in the order of 30% of what Sweelinck composed.

What explains Sweelinck's choice of styles – and languages – for his vocal music?

Sweelinck's musical languages included Latin (the language with which he grew up as a Catholic – and he used that only in his old – fashioned church music, such as the *Cantiones Sacrae*) and then French and Italian. Funnily enough he never used Dutch. The cause of this could be linked to the activities of the publisher Phalèse in Antwerp, which was publishing a broad range of French and Italian repertoire at the time (quite a lot of repertoire that otherwise would never have appeared in Northern Europe). French was also a very popular language in Holland during Sweelinck's lifetime because of the religious wars in France with many Huguenots fleeing into Holland and coming to live in many of its cities, amongst them Amsterdam and Haarlem. So, the circle that Sweelinck was living in was probably for a greater part French-speaking. If stylistically he opted for the obvious choices for the time – *chansons* and madrigals – he also developed a special genre embracing them both in the *Rimes françoises* and *Rimes italiennes*. Having selected one name for the two genres he said that these *Rimes* could be French or they could be madrigals. Perhaps this "solution" reflected

his nature – we are still uncertain as to whether Sweelinck was a Catholic or a Protestant. Sweelinck's Psalms did not represent the old-fashioned religious music appropriate to the four-part homophonic works such as by Claude Goudimel. Rather they are written like spiritual madrigals and they were all based on existing melodies from the Geneva Psalter which Sweelinck shaped into whatever he wanted them to be.

In the process of making the recordings, how did your opinion of Sweelinck's vocal music develop? How do you feel such music compares with leading composers from the same time?

I have been familiar with the greater part of Sweelinck's vocal music for some decades, but in studying and singing the complete works I was still greatly surprised by some of the works that I had never known before. On occasion, the members of the ensemble were even moved to tears by the emotional spirit that came to us while discovering or revealing his music. That doesn't happen too often! In my opinion Sweelinck's vocal works can easily stand up against works by, for example, Marenzio or even Lassus, Nanino and many composers of the time and I think that even Monteverdi would have not been able to make a better job of Sweelinck's Psalms – which I think can be seen as his self-portrait. Some parts of the Psalms really are modern, accepting the fact that Sweelinck followed the old rules of the *prima prattica*. He did not go along with the new practice of the continuo – I think that he was too much of an old polyphonic master in this respect. He wanted to be precise and exact – this is borne out in his Psalms – and not leave things open.

In the secular works what decisions led you to make use of instruments and what do they add to the musical experience?

Sweelinck tells us both in his foreword to and on the title page of his *Chansons* published in 1594 that the option to perform these works with voices and instruments in a delicate mixture can be left open. For that reason, for a number of the *chansons* and *Rimes*, I used the option of incorporating instruments just in order to give a few examples of how this approach might sound. Since there are a few rarely-ever played lute works and I had added them to this recording, I used the instrument lute for a couple of *chansons* as a continuo instrument because it adds to their slightly-folky, spontaneous and even slightly-improvised atmosphere.

How representative of Sweelinck as a composer is his collection of all 150 Psalms which you have been recording for future instalments in The Sweelinck Monument?

I think that Sweelinck's Psalms can be seen as his self-portrait. This so-called "opus magnum" embodies his complete creative power and, I would dare to say, even more so than his organ works. Sweelinck spent a great deal of his life in composing the Psalms, to the exclusion of other forms.

by Mark Wiggins

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