



# Quadrivium

with Jan Van Elsacker - tenor

**Musical Passages: Flemings in Spain**

Ockeghem (1470), Agricola (1506) and Biesemans (2009)

# Musical Passages: Flemings in Spain

*Anno 1500 the map of Europe showed a clutter of larger and smaller nations. All over the continent dynasties of kings and dukes were involved in conquering or fighting off their enemies, as well as finding new allies. Flanders – the thriving centre of the Burgundian duchy – and the Spanish kingdoms were separated from each other by mighty, threatening France. Not only were these countries distant in miles; their cultures were as remotely apart.*

*If the conjoining of the two Spanish kingdoms of Castile and Aragon sent a ripple through Europe, the uniting of distant Spain with The Low Countries was a true landslide. These political feats were achieved through extensive diplomacy and clever arrangement of forced marriages between dynastic heirs.*

*As partakers of such grand diplomatic missions, a number of Flemish master composers visited Spain, among whom Johannes Ockeghem and Alexander Agricola. Focussing on these composers and their Spanish counterparts, this CD tells a musical story of exchange and assimilation between two traditions. In addition *Quadrivium* features a recent opus by the contemporary Flemish composer Janpieter Biesemans based on a still-famous Spanish poem from 1478.*

## Introduction

The historic bond between Spain and the Low Countries had its origin in a turbulent love story.

In the Flanders town of Lier, a young prince and princess met for the first time on a fair autumn day in 1496. They were to be married on the following day, as was previously arranged by their parents. Once they set eyes on each other they were reported to have fallen in love instantly. Ignoring all protocol, they left behind the bewildered company of their respective retinues. Out in the streets, the princess ordered the first priest they encountered to marry them on the spot. This having been settled, they withdrew into their lodgings, locking the door behind them.

The youngsters in question were Joanna, the third child of queen Isabella of Castile, and Philip the Handsome, son and heir to emperor Maximilian of Habsburg. The next day they were prepared to follow protocol and were officially married in church. A bridge collapsed under the weight of the thronging crowds.

In the course of this turmoil the future fates of The Low Countries and Spain were intertwined.

As was common practice at that time, the original aim of this royal marriage was to create an alliance – in this case against rapidly expanding France. Already in 1470 the cunning French king Louis XI had tried to secure such a marriage between the royal houses of Castile and France. Louis had sent a legation of diplomats and courtiers to Toledo, among whom were his *chapelle royale*, lead by the great master **Johannes Ockeghem**. Negotiations had failed. Isabella of Castile had had other plans; she had married her cousin Ferdinand of Aragon in secret. Initially this marriage was regarded as clandestine, but eventually Pope Sixtus IV sent his blessings. Later the Spanish Pope, Alexander VI, granted them the title of *Los Reyes Cathólicos*. The joint forces of Castile and Aragon turned most of Spain into a united nation to be reckoned with. The monarchs were to conquer Granada in 1492 and expel Jews and Moors who refused to convert to Christianity. They also installed the infamous Spanish Inquisition. In later generations, the Low Countries would have to deal with the unyielding attitude of their zealous successors.

We will focus again on Philip and Joanna: within years of their marriage, Joanna's elder brother and sister died prematurely, which made Joanna unexpectedly the rightful heir to the Castilian

throne. When in 1504 her mother Queen Isabella also died, Philip and Joanna decided to embark on a journey to Spain in order to settle their claim of the Castilian crown. Their expedition was of course replete with great pomp and splendour.

After a forced stopover in England, due to a tempest wrecking their fleet on the Dorset coast, they finally landed in La Coruña. In their large retinue was a contingent of Philip's renowned court musicians. Among these, **Alexander Agricola** was one of the more prominent members. He did not survive the journey and died at the gates of Valladolid in June of the same year 1506.

The Flemish court must have made a substantial impression upon the Spanish aristocracy and church. One of the results of the musical exchange with the Flemish visitors was a number of splendid collections of sheet music, containing both Spanish and Flemish repertoire of the time – sacred as well as secular music. The so-called Segovia Codex is the most important source for the repertoire on this CD. Juan Anchieta, Joanna's personal court musician, and Alexander Agricola, Philip's star composer, are both prominent among the composers in the Segovia collection. This CD also presents Flemish titles by Agricola and Roelkin from the same source.

One of the telling traces of the musical exchange between the northerners and the Spanish is Ockeghem's **¿Qu'es mi vida? preguntays**. Its haunting melody was originally composed by Juan Cornago, an Aragonese court musician. Ockeghem must have loved it, for he arranged the song into a new 4-part one, keeping Cornago's Cantus and Tenor voices.

A manuscript preserved in Sevilla contains Ockeghem's playful setting of the popular melody, **Petite camusette**. Another of Ockeghem's lively *rondeaux* in the old style is **L'autre dantan**. Its theme of rejected love, is timeless. The 'motet' in two parts, **Ut heremita solus**, was attributed to Ockeghem after his death. This is highly doubtful though, since it bears rather stronger stylistic similarity to Agricola's work. The central Tenor part of this exceptional composition consists of long sustained notes. In our recording it is sung on the solmisation syllables of the hexachord: ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la. The other voices are clearly instrumental in their virtuosic tumble of rhythmic and melodic motives.

Juan Anchieta was of a later generation — *maestro de capilla* to Isabella at first, and later serving her son Juan and her daughter Joanna. His **En memoria d'Alixandre** is a majestic and ceremonious *romance* composed at the occasion of the victory of Baxa in 1489. The

victorious Isabella and Ferdinand are honoured as worthy imitators of Alexander the Great. **Con amores, mi madre** is a playful *villancico*, strikingly written in quintuple time.

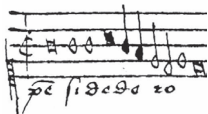
Alexander Agricola was born in Ghent. His career began at the courts of Milan, Florence and Naples but his star rose highest at the Burgundian court of Brussels and Ghent, under the reign of Philip the Handsome.

In 1487 Agricola worked together with fellow singer and composer Johannes Ghiselin at the Aragonese court of Naples. Ghiselin borrowed the opening motive of Agricola's chanson, *C'est mal cherché*, and makes it reappear continuously in his 4-part setting of **La Spagna**. Remarkably enough, the same motive appears at the end of *Ut heremita solus*. This 'musical signature' is one more suggestion that the composer of this motet is to be found among Agricola's generation.



Alexander Agricola: Bassus motive *C'est mal cherché*:  
(from *Harmonice musices Odhecaton A*, Venice 1502)

One of Agricola's most popular compositions is the textless **Si dedero**. Jacob Obrecht adopted the opening theme of its Tenor line to use it as the subject for a complete mass. The *Christe eleison* from that mass was especially widespread and appears in the mentioned Segovia Codex, together with *Si dedero* itself. It was arranged for lute or viola da mano by the Italian Vincenzo Capirola under the title **Christe de Si dedero**.



Agricola's *Si dedero* motive from Jacob Obrecht's *Christe si dedero* (Segovia Codex)

Afore mentioned Segovia manuscript contains a considerable number of compositions with Flemish titles. **Vreucht ende moet** is one of them, by the elusive 'Roellkin', along with Agricola's **In minen zin**. Obrecht, Agricola and Anchieta are the foremost composers in this collection, that may have been compiled for Joanna of Castile, who herself was a driven music practitioner.

And what became of the once so happy couple Philip and Joanna?

That is a sad story. During their 1506 sojourn in Spain, Philip suddenly died of a fever in the city of Burgos. Queen Joanna was beside herself with grief. She was completely unprepared to take the reign of the Habsburg Empire on her shoulders. The crazed Joanna travelled around for a long time with the embalmed body of her beloved. She was reported to have opened the coffin daily to check if Philip would arise from the dead. After two years of confusion and impasse her father Ferdinand intervened and she was safely locked up in the convent of Torredesillas. There Joanna lived in seclusion until her death in 1555. Her faithful court musician Juan Anchieta served her for the rest of his life.

History granted Joanna her nickname 'the Mad', but it remains to be seen whether she was really insane. Perhaps she was merely unbalanced and incapable as a ruler. Even nowadays she is, half affectionately, referred to as 'zot Jeanneken' (foolish Joanna) in Lier, where she spent happier days.

**Petite camusette**, a la mort m'aves mys.  
Robin et Marion s'ent vont au bois jouer.  
Ilz s'en vont bras a bras; il se sont endormis.  
Petite camusette, a la mort m'aves mys.

Little snub-nose, you have put me to death.  
Robin and Marion went off to play in the woods.  
Arm in arm they went; they have fallen asleep.  
Little snub-nose, you have put me to death.

**¿Qu'es mi vida? preguntays.**

Non vos la quiero negar:  
bien amar e lamentar  
es la vida que me days.

You ask about my life?  
I do not wish to deny it to you:  
both loving deeply and lamenting  
is the life you grant me.

¿Quien vos pudiero servir  
tambien como he servido?  
¿Mi trabajado bevir  
Quien pudiera aver sofrido?

Who else would have served you  
as well as I have?  
My life of toiling,  
who could have suffered it but me?

¿Para que? me preguntays  
La pena que he de passar,  
pues amar e lamentar  
es la vida que me days.

'What for?'; you ask me.  
I would have an end to my pains,  
because loving and lamenting  
is the life you grant me.

**L'autre dantan** l'autrier passa  
et en passant me transperça  
d'un regard forgé a Milan,  
qui m'a mis en l'arrière ban,  
tant mauvais brassin me brassa.  
L'autre dantan l'autrier passa.

My former lover passed me the other day  
and, in passing me, pierced me  
with a glance forged in Milan,  
that knocked me clean off my feet,  
so badly did she strike me.  
My former lover ...

Par tel façon me fricassa  
que de ses gaiges me cassa.  
Mais, par Dieu, elle fist son dan!  
L'autre dantan ...

Puis apres nostre amour cessa,  
car onques puis qu'elle dansa,  
l'autre dantan, l'autre dantan.  
Je n'eus ne bon jour ne bon an,  
tant mauvais en moy amassa.  
L'autre dantan l'autrier passa.

### **En memoria d'Alixandre**

Julio César se fería,  
aque'l Judas Macabeo  
sus cabellos desfasía.

Según dizen escrituras  
y de Santos profecía  
Que vos, reyes, sois aquéllos  
de quien Dios se serviría.

En cuyo tiempo y ventura  
esta vitoria sería,  
Caminad, emperadores  
naçidos en muy bien día.

El pontifice de Roma  
las coronas vos pornía,  
cantando Gloria in excelsis  
al qu'en tierra pas envía.

She cut me to pieces in such a fashion,  
as she broke her promises to me.  
But, by God, did she give it to me!  
My former lover ...

Then, after our love ceased,  
she has danced on forever,  
my former lover.  
I have not had one good day nor year,  
so much ill has she piled upon me.  
My former lover ...

Remembering Alexander,  
Julius Caesar bared his head,  
whereas Judas the Macabean  
tore out his hair.

The scriptures declare,  
as do the holy prophecies,  
that you, kings, are those  
whom God is employing.

Now and in the future,  
this victory will resound.  
Come forth, emperors,  
born on a blessed day.

The Pontiff in Rome  
has crowned you,  
singing Gloria in excelsis  
to those without peer on earth.

**Con amores, mi madre,**

con amores me adormí.  
Assí dormida soñaba  
lo que el coraçon velaba.  
Qu'el Amor me consolaba  
con más bien que merecí.  
Adormecióme el favor  
que Amor me dió con amor.  
Dió descanso a mi dolor  
la fe con que le serví.

I was in love, mother,  
when I went to sleep.  
Thus sleeping, I dreamed of the one  
that kept my heart awake.  
Amor comforted me  
with more happiness than I deserved.  
The favor that Amor granted me  
so lovingly, lulled me asleep.  
The faith with which I served him  
gave relief to my sadness.

**In minen zin** hadde ick vercoren  
een maechdeken jonck van daghen.  
Schoonder wijf en was noyt geboren  
ter wereltdt wijt na mijn behaghen.  
Om haren wille so wil ick wagh  
beyde mijn lijf ende daertoe goet.  
Mocht ic noch troost aen haer bejaghen,  
so waer ick vro, daer ic nu trueren moet.

Haer minne doet mi mijn herteken quelen;  
ick ducht dat ick dat sal besterven.  
Nochtans soude si mi niet vervelen,  
mocht ic noch troost van haer verwerven.  
Die nijders tonghen willen my bederven,  
des ben ick gheworden vroet.  
Woude si mi in haer herteken erven,  
so waer ick vro, daer ic nu trueren moet.

In my thoughts I had chosen  
a maiden young in days.  
A lovelier girl was never born  
in all the world to my pleasure.  
For her sake I am ready to risk  
both my life and goods.  
If I could I arouse some hope from her,  
I would be happy, whereas now I am miserable.

My love for her makes my heart languish  
and I fear that this will be my death.  
Yet she would never bore me  
if I could win any comfort from her.  
Jealous tongues strive to injure me,  
this I have come to know.  
Were she to admit me in into her heart,  
I would be happy, whereas now I am miserable.



## Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique por la muerte de su padre

### *Copla I*

**Recuerde el alma dormida,**  
abive el seso e despierte, contemplando  
como se passa la vida,  
como se viene la muerte, tan callando.  
Cuan presto se va el plazer;  
como, despues de acordado, da dolor.  
Como, a nuestro parescer,  
cualquier tiempo passado fue mejor.

Let the slumbering soul remember,  
let reason awaken and contemplate  
how life passes by,  
how death approaches, so silently.  
How swiftly pleasure gives way;  
how, after it ends, pain sets in.  
How, in our perception,  
any time bygone was better than the present.

### *Copla II*

**Pues si vemos lo presente**  
como en un punto se es ido y acabado,  
si juzgamos sabiamente,  
daremos lo no venido por passado.  
No se engañe nadie, no,  
pensando que ha de durar lo que espera  
más que duró lo que vio,  
porque todo ha de passar por tal manera.

For, if we see the present  
as something gone by and finished,  
if we judge wisely, we shall  
consider that which has not arrived as past.  
Let no one be so foolish as to think that  
that which is hoped for will last  
longer than that which is actually seen,  
for everything has to pass in this manner.

### *Copla III*

**Nuestras vidas son los rios**  
que van a dar en la mar, qu'es el morir.  
Allí van los señoríos,  
derechos a se acabar e consumir.  
Allí los rios caudales,  
allí los otros medianos e más chicos.  
Allegados son iguales,  
los que viven por sus manos e los rios.

Our lives are rivers  
that flow into the sea, which is death.  
There go the powerful,  
straight unto their destruction.  
There go the abundant rivers,  
there the others, the medium and smaller ones.  
All are related and equal,  
the manual labourers and the rich.

### *Copla V*

#### **Este mundo es el camino**

para el otro, que es morada sin pesar.  
Mas cumple tener buen tino  
para andar esta jornada sin errar.  
Partimos cuando nascemos,  
andamos mientras vivimos, e llegamos  
al tiempo que feneçemos;  
assí que cuando morimos, descansamos.

This world is but the road  
leading to the other, an abode without sorrow.  
So let us have the good sense  
to embark upon this journey, without straying.  
We start on the road at birth,  
walk on while living, and arrive  
at the time of our death;  
so that when we die, we rest.

### *Copla VII*

#### **Si fuesse en nuestro poder**

hazer la cara hermosa corporal,  
como podemos hazer  
el alma tan gloriosa angelical,  
¡Que diligencia tan viva  
toviéramos toda hora e tan presta,  
en componer la cativa,  
dexándonos la señora descompuesta!

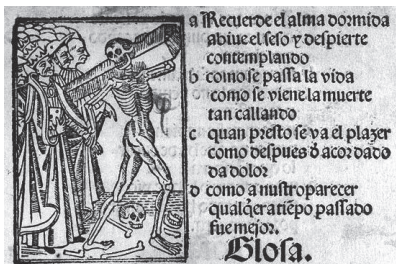
If it were as much in our power  
to create corporal beauty,  
as it is to evolve  
a glorious, angelical soul,  
what a diligent effort  
would we not make, every hour, in great haste,  
to adorn the slave, [the body]  
deserting the neglected lady. [the soul]

### *Copla XXXVIII*

#### **Non tengamos tiempo ya**

en esta vida mesquina por tal modo,  
que mi voluntad está  
conforme con la divina para todo.  
E consiento en mi morir  
con voluntad plazentera, clara e pura,  
que querer hombre vivir  
cuando Dios quiere que muera, es locura.

We have no more time  
in this puny life.  
Let my will be in accordance  
with the divine will, in every respect.  
I agree to meet my death  
in joyful readiness, clear and pure.  
For a man to wish to live on  
when God wishes him to die, is only madness.



**Jorge Manrique** (c.1440-1479) was a major Castilian poet, whose most outstanding and, even today, widely read work is his *Coplas por la muerte de su padre*. This extensive poem of 40 stanzas is a funeral eulogy in memory of his father, Rodrigo Manrique, who died in 1476 after living a honourable and devout life.

Having composed *Five Nippon Waka* for *Quadrivium* (viz. the CD *La Cause est Amer*, Kattenberg KA003), **Janpieter Biesemans** went on to select a number of Manrique's *Coplas* for yet another opus especially written for *Quadrivium*. The ensemble has chosen six stanzas and the *Interludium* to be included on this CD. In writing this work, Biesemans makes his own musical journey into 15th-century Spain, in the footsteps of Ockeghem and Agricola, as it were.

*Quadrivium* wishes to express its gratitude to him for this new opus, of which the ensemble has grown especially fond.



Photo © Roland Van Rompaey



## Quadrivium

**Maaïke Boekholt** studied viola da gamba with Freek Borstlap and Anneke Pols. As a soloist and continuo player she has concertized both at home and abroad, and taken part in numerous recordings for radio, television and CD. As a member of various ensembles (La Primavera, Ensemble A la Douzaine, Ensemble Dulcibella), she has won national and international prizes and performed at many prestigious festivals, including the Festival voor Oude Muziek in Utrecht, the Festival of Ambronay and Royaumont, the Festival of Flanders and the Innsbrucher Festwochen der Alten Musik.

**Ellen Delahanty** has been praised in the international press as a “wunderbar klare Sopran” and “a singer of great charm and perfect diction”. She studied voice with the renowned voice teachers Marie Traficante in New York, Jessica Cash in London, and Stephanie Friede in Antwerp. She is a regular guest at several early music festivals in Europe and America, as a soloist as well as a member of the ensembles Quadrivium and Sospiri Ardeni with whom she has recorded CD’s for Kattenberg Recordings.

**Willem Mook** studied the lute at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Toyohiko Satoh, and at the Sweelinck Conservatory of Amsterdam with Anthony Bailes. He studied musicology at the State University of Utrecht.

In addition to his activities as a lute teacher and performer, both solo and in ensemble, he is an avid researcher, and has specialized in the performance of musical sources of the period 1400-1650. He currently performs in duos with Kaspar Kröner, altus; with Harry van Berne, tenor; and with Peter Adema, poetry reader; and is a member of the ensemble Voix et Cordes. He has an extensive lute-teaching practice in his hometown Haarlem and in Deventer.

**Bill Taylor** is a specialist in the performance of medieval and renaissance European harp music, as well as the ancient harp music of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. He is one of very few players investigating these repertoires on medieval gut-strung harps, wire-strung clarsachs and renaissance harps with buzzing bray pins. He has performed with several ensembles in the US, including the Folger Consort, the Newberry Consort and Hesperus. Now based in Scotland, Mr. Taylor regularly performs and records with Canty and Coronach. He teaches privately, offers classes through Fèis Rois, and frequently teaches and performs at festivals in the UK, Europe and the US.

After finishing his studies at several conservatories in Flanders with honours, **Geert Van Gele** went on to co-found the Flanders’ Recorder Quartet. For ten years he performed and recorded with the Quartet in Europe and both North and South America. Along the

way he won several important international competitions. He is regularly invited to give masterclasses. As a soloist he is admired as much for his interpretations of Bach and his performances of early Italian baroque music as for his mastery of contemporary recorder literature -- repertoires which he has recorded on CD. In 2009 he founded the record label, Kattenberg Recordings.

Belgian tenor **Jan Van Elsacker** has won many prizes, including the Soloist Competition 'Musica Antiqua Brugge' 1996. In 2003 he was the Festival Star of the Festival of Bruges, Musica Antiqua. He works regularly with internationally renowned ensembles, including Concerto Palatino, Le Poème Harmonique, Weser Renaissance, and La Fenice, and has given recitals with Jos Van Immerseel, Claire Chevalier and Tom Beghin. In 2007 he founded his own ensemble, Il Trionfo del Tempo. Jan's CD and DVD recordings receive rave reviews in the international press. His recording of Die Winterreise with fortepianist Tom Beghin was named one of the CD's of the Year by Diskotabel 2014. He is currently on the faculties of the Academy of Lier (Belgium) and of the Musikhochschule of Trossingen (Germany).

**Janpieter Biesemans** was born on November 16, 1939 in Vilvoorde. He studied organ at the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp where he developed a love of early music which was to lead him to found and direct the Consortium

Antiquum, an ensemble which gave more than 500 concerts in 25 countries. In 1980 he bought a grand piano, and wrote his opus 1. As a pedagogue, Biesemans taught solfège and coached chamber music ensembles at the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp. Until 2006 he was director of the Academy of Arts in Meise. In his compositions, Janpieter finds inspiration in his curiosity about the music of other cultures. Biesemans composed the Vijf Nippon Waka, (Five Nippon Waka) for Quadrivium in 2002. This work is recorded on the Quadrivium CD, La Cause est Amer, KA003. The Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique, his opus 142, was composed in 2009.

*Recording:* Kattenberg, Borgerhout (BE)  
*Production, editing, & mastering:* Geert Van Gele  
*Research and notes:* Willem Mook  
*Photograph Quadrivium:* Julia Miller  
*Design concept:* Hans De Cock  
*Our special thanks to:* Janpieter Biesemans

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# Musical Passages: Flemings in Spain

Ockeghem (1470), Agricola (1506) and Biesemans (2009)

1	Petite camusette	Johannes Ockeghem	2:37
2	¿Qu'es mi vida? preguntays	Johannes Ockeghem (c.1420-1497)	4:16
3	L'autre dantan	Johannes Ockeghem	2:24
4	Ut heremita solus I	Alexander Agricola (?)	4:53
5	Ut heremita solus II	Alexander Agricola (?)	3:38
6	En memoria d'Alixandre	Juan de Anchieta (c.1462-1523)	2:22
7	Si dedero ( <i>instr.</i> )	Alexander Agricola (1446-1506)	1:49
8	Christe de Si dedero ( <i>instr.</i> )	Vincenzo Capirola (1474-after 1548)	2:52
9	La Spagna ( <i>instr.</i> )	Johannes Ghiselin (1455-c.1510)	2:54
10	Con amores mi madre	Juan de Anchieta	1:43
11	Vruecht ende moet ( <i>instr.</i> )	Roellkin	1:33
12	In minen zin	Alexander Agricola	2:16
<b>Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique (1478)</b>		Janpieter Biesemans (b.1939)	
13	Recuerde el alma dormida		3:52
14	Interludium ( <i>instr.</i> ) / Pues si vemos		3:26
15	Nuestras vidas son los rios		2:04
16	Este mundo es el camino		2:23
17	Si fuesse en nuestro poder		2:18
18	Non tengamos tiempo		2:43

Total: 50:11