

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR
director Owen Rees

CHRISTMAS MUSIC FROM THE TUDOR AGE



Jesus College Chapel
Sunday 4 December 1994
8.15 p.m.

PROGRAMME

1	Quid petis, o fili?	Richard Pygott
2	Qui creavit celum (Song of the Nuns of Chester)	anon.
3	Videte miraculum	Thomas Tallis
4	Lully, lulla, thow littel tyne child (The Coventry Carol)	anon.
5	Gloria from Missa Puer natus est nobis	Thomas Tallis

INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES

6	Lullaby, my sweet little baby	William Byrd
7	Swete was the song the Virgine soong	anon.
8	This day Christ was born	William Byrd
9	Jesu mercy, how may this be?	(John?) Browne
10	Verbum caro	John Sheppard

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The Cambridge Taverner Choir

director Owen Rees

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Diana Baumann	Toby Gee	Paul Baumann	James Durran
Josie Dixon	Simon Godsill	Finaly Lockie	Frank Salmon
Helen Garrison	Martin Neill	Philip Mills	Gary Snapper
Bernadette Nelson	Nicholas Perkins	Vijay Rangarajan	Paul Watson
Caroline Preston Bell	Rupert Preston Bell	Jonathan Stoughton	
Margaret Simper			
Rachel Sutton			
Sally Terris			
Tanya Wicks			

The choir is grateful to the Master, Chaplain, and Fellows of Jesus College for their kind permission to perform in the chapel.

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During the reign of the first two Tudors - Henry VII and Henry VIII - the feast of Christmas was celebrated with music in a remarkable range of styles and forms. At one extreme was polyphony of a strictly liturgical nature, destined as an festive adornment of the Mass or the Offices of Matins and Vespers, and setting texts from those services that would otherwise have been sung to plainchant. This type of polyphony is represented in tonight's programme by an Office responsory - Sheppard's *Verbum caro* - and by one section from the Mass *Puer natus est nobis* by Tallis. Sheppard's work might have been composed either under Henry VIII or during the brief reign (1553-1558) of his daughter Mary, who swept aside the Protestant reformation begun during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) and restored the Catholic rite. The text of *Verbum caro* is the ninth responsory at Matins on Christmas Day, and the chant associated with that text is presented in equal note-values in the tenor part, surrounded by the rich and brilliant contrapuntal texture typical of festal English polyphony of the period. The second responsory performed tonight - Tallis's *Videte miraculum* - has a text appropriate to the Christmas theme, though it belongs liturgically to First Vespers of the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

According to an attractive hypothesis advanced by Jeremy Noble, Tallis's seven-voice Mass might have been composed for performance at Christmas 1554, when Philip of Spain, together with his chapel establishment, was in London following his marriage to Queen Mary. We know that on the first Sunday in Advent both Mary's and Philip's chapel singers sang at Mass in St Paul's, as did the cathedral choir itself, and it is possible that they collaborated again at Mass on Christmas Day, a service for which Tallis's setting would

have been perfectly suited, incorporating as it does the Introit chant for this Mass as a tenor cantus firmus. In the 'Gloria' the notes of the chant are deployed in note-values whose length is determined by the vowel which they originally carried in the Introit chant (so that a = 1 semibreve, e = 2 semibreves, and so on). The scoring of the Mass is somewhat unusual for a festal English work, the upper voices being means (reaching only to a 'written pitch' of *d*'') rather than the higher trebles which are employed in *Verbum caro* and *Videte miraculum*.

Beyond the genre of festal polyphony with Latin text there flourished before the reformation the vernacular 'carol', a genre characterised by a stanzaic structure - a series of verses preceded by and alternating with a 'burden' or refrain. Although carol texts encompass a variety of subjects - including, for example, the Passion - most are concerned with Christmas and/or the Virgin. The text so poignantly set by Richard Pygott, *Quid petis, o fili?* (which, as is common in the carol repertory, includes Latin elements), portrays Mary playing with the baby lying in her lap. Pygott was Master of the Children in the household chapel of Thomas Wolsey, and also held a post as Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1524 until his death nearly thirty years later. The 'Browne' to whom *Jesu mercy, how may this be?* is attributed was possibly the John Browne whose Latin works in the Eton Choirbook reveal him as one of the finest English composers of the period. The text of *Jesu mercy*, although concerned with the Incarnation, looks forward to the Passion in a way that called forth a powerful response from the composer.

Both of the musical traditions described so far - liturgical Latin polyphony and the vernacular types of carol - were disrupted by the Protestant reformation begun under Edward VI and confirmed under Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603). Although the feast of Christmas continued to be celebrated, it was frowned upon by the more radically Calvinist subjects of Elizabeth. The Latin rite which had supported grand polyphonic works such as those by Tallis and Sheppard described above had ceased to exist, and - as John Stevens has observed - 'the monks and friars who had contributed so much to the [vernacular] religious carol were gone'. Works adhering to the traditional refrain structure and textual norms of the older carol are rare from the later Tudor period. One lucky survival is the so-called 'Coventry carol', which was sung as part of a mystery play - the Pageant of the Shearman and Tailors - performed annually in the streets of Coventry. Towards the end of the play is a portrayal of the massacre of the Holy Innocents (upon the orders of Herod). As Mary and Joseph leave with the baby Jesus, the women sing this piece as a lullaby to their children, so that their crying will not attract the attention of the searching soldiers.

The slaughter of the Holy Innocents is likewise the theme of William Byrd's *Lullaby, my sweet little baby*, although the lullaby is here directed to the baby Jesus himself. Byrd conceived the piece originally for performance by one singer (the second highest part) and four viols, but when the work appeared in the *Psalmes, Sonets and Songs* of 1588, Byrd added text to these four parts to allow for the option of all-vocal performance (which is how the piece is performed here). The refrain structure of the earlier carol repertory re-appears in this work, Byrd differentiating between refrain and verse through a change to triple metre for the latter.

The other work by Byrd performed tonight - *This day Christ was born* - was published in the *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets* of 1611, and is there described as 'A Caroll for Christmas Day'. The text is a direct translation of the Latin 'Hodie natus est nobis' (antiphon to the *Magnificat* at second Vespers of the feast of the Nativity). Byrd's setting - for six voices - has a grandeur and magnificence which might suggest that it was conceived for performance as an anthem in church.

The four-voice setting of *Swete was the song the Virgine soong* performed here is an arrangement by the seventeenth-century musical amateur Thomas Hamond of an earlier consort-song version of the piece. It sets with beautiful simplicity a text akin to those of Pygott's *Quid petis, o fili* and Byrd's *Lullaby*, describing the lullaby sung by the Virgin mother to her child.

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on Sundays in Jesus College Chapel at 8.15 p.m.

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TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Quid petis, o fili? Mater dulcissima baba.

O pater, o fili, michi plausus oscula da, da.
The mother, full mannerly, and meekly as a maid,
Looking on her little son, so laughing in lap laid,
So prettily, so pertly, so passingly well apay'd,
Full softly and full soberly unto her sweet son she said:

Quid petis . . .

I mean this by Mary, our Maker's mother of might,
Full lovely looking on our Lord, the lantern of light,
Thus saying to our Saviour; this saw I in my sight:
This reason that I rede you now, I rede it ful right.

Quid petis . . .

Musing on her manners so nigh marr'd was my main,
Save it pleased me so passingly that past was my pain;
Yet softly to her sweet son, methought I heard her sain:
Now gracious God and good sweet babe, yet once this game again,

Quid petis . . .

Qui creavit celum, lully, lully lu,
Nascitur in stabulo, *by-by, by-by, by,*
Rex qui regit seculum, *lully, lully, lu.*

(He who made the earth, *lully...*
Sleeps in the stable, *by-by...*
The King who rules the age, *lully...*

Inter animalia, *lully...*
Iacent mundi gaudia, *by-by...*
Dulcis super omnia, *lully...*

Among the animals, *lully...*
Lie the joys of the world, *by-by...*
Sweet above all things, *lully...*

Roga, mater, Filium, *lully...*
Ut det nobis gaudium, *by-by...*
In perenni gloria, *lully...*

O mother, ask your Son, *lully...*
That he may give us joy, *by-by...*
In everlasting glory, *lully...*

In sempiterna secula, *by-by...*
In eternum et ultra, *lully...*
Det nobis sua gaudia, *by-by...*

Throughout all ages, *by-by...*
World without end, *lully...*
May he give us his glory, *by-by...*

Videte miraculum matris Domini: concepit virgo virilis ignara consortii. stans onerata nobili onere Maria; et matrem se lætam cognoscit, quæ se nescit uxorem.

Hæc speciosum forma præ filiis hominum castis concepit visceribus, et benedicta in æternum Deum nobis protulit et hominem.

Stans onerata . . . uxorem.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

Et matrem . . . uxorem.

(Behold the miracle of the mother of our Lord: the virgin has conceived though she knew not a man, Mary, standing laden with her noble burden; and she is glad, knowing that she is a mother, and knowing that she is not a wife.

She has conceived in her chaste womb one who is more beautiful than the sons of men, and - blessed for ever - she has brought forth God and man for us.

Mary, standing laden . . .

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

And she is glad . . .)

Lully, lulla, thow littel tyne child,

By, by, lully, lulla, thou littel tyne child,

By, by, lully, lullay.

O sisters too,

How may we do

For to preserve this day

This pore yongling

For whom we do sing:

By, by, lully, lullay?

Lully, lulla . . .

Herod the King

In his raging

Chargid he hath this day

His men of might

In his owne sight

All yonge children to slay.

Lully, lulla . . .

That wo is me,

Pore child, for thee,

And ever morne and say

For thi parting

Nether say nor singe:

By, by, lully, lullay.

Lully, lulla . . .

Lullaby, my sweet little baby.

What meanest thou to cry?

Be still my blessed babe, though cause thou hast to mourn,
Whose blood most innocent to shed the cruel king hath sworn.
And lo alas! behold what slaughter he doth make,
Shedding the blood of infants all, sweet Saviour, for thy sake.
A King is born, they say, which King this king would kill:
O woe! and woeful heavy day, when wretches have their will.

Lullaby my sweet little baby,

What meanest thou to cry?

But thou shalt live and reign, as Sybils have foresaid,
As all the prophets prophesy, whose mother, yet a maid
And perfect virgin pure, with her breasts shall upbreed
Both God and man that all hath made, the Son of heavenly seed.
Whom caitiffs none can 'tray, whom tyrants none can kill:
O joy! and joyful happy day, when wretches want their will.

Lullaby my sweet little baby,

What meanest thou to cry?

Swete was the song the Virgine soong

When she to Bethlem Juda came
And was deliver'd of hir Sonne,
Who blessed Jesus hath to name.
La lulla, lulla, lullaby,
lullaby swete Babe! soong she;
My Sonne and eke my Saviour borne,
Which hath vouchsafed from an high
To visitt us that ware forlorne.
La lulla, lulla, lullaby,
lullaby swete Babe! soong she,
And rockt him featly one hir knee.

This day Christ was born; this day our Saviour did appear. This day the angels sing in earth; the archangels are glad. This day the just rejoice, saying: Glory be to God on high. Alleluia.

Jesu mercy, how may this be,
That God himself for sole mankind
Would take on Him humanity?
My wit nor reason may it well find:
Jesu mercy, how may this be?

Christ that was of infinite might,
Egall to the Father in deity,
Immortal, impassible, the worldes light,
And would so take mortality.
Jesu mercy, how may this be?

He that wrought this world of nought,
That made both paines and joy also,
And suffer would pain as sorrowful thought

With weeping, wailing, yea sowning for woe.
Jesu mercy, how may this be?

Ah Jesu!
Why suffered thou such entreating,
As beating, bobbing, yea spitting on thy face?
Drawn like a thief, and for pain sweating
Both water and blood, crucified, an heavy case.
Jesu mercy, how may this be?

Lo, man, for thee, that were unkind,
Gladly suffered I all this.
And why, good Lord? Express thy mind.
Thee to purchase both joy and bliss.
Jesu mercy, how may this be?

Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis; cuius gloriam vidimus quasi unigeniti a Patre, plenum gratiæ et veritatis.
In principio erat v
erbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat verbum.
Cuius gloriam . . . veritatis.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spritui Sancto.
Plenum gratiæ et veritatis.

(The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we saw his glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
And we saw his glory . . . truth.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
Full of grace and truth.)

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