

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Director: Owen Rees

MUSIC OF THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE



Victoria: Requiem

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL
PALMERSTON PLACE, EDINBURGH

Monday 29 August 1994, 8 p.m.
Admission by programme, £5 (£4) at the door

PROGRAMME

Taddei anima mea	Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)
Missa pro defunctis (6 voices)	Victoria
1 Introit: Requiem aeternam	
2 Kyrie	
3 Gradual: Requiem aeternam	
Verse: In memoriam	
4 Offertory: Domine Jesu Christe	
5 Sanctus and Benedictus	
6 Agnus Dei	
7 Communion: Lux aeterna	
8 Motet: Versa est in lucum	
9 Responsory: Libera me	

Versa est in lucum

Alonso Lobo (c. 1555-1617)

Interval of 10 minutes

Marian motets	
Tota pulchra es Maria	Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
Sancía María, succurre miseris	Victoria
Alma redemptoris mater	Guerrero
Dulcissima María	Sebastian de Vivanco (c. 1551-1622)
Vidi speciosam	Victoria

The Cambridge Taverner Choir

director: Owen Rees

soprano: José Dixon, Helen Carrison, Rachel Goddill,

Margaret Simper, Sally Terris, Tanya Wicks

alto: Tim Dalloso, Judith Dalloso, Simon Goddill, Judith Henderson, Laura Dollin

tenor: Alastair Harper, Vijay Rangarajan, Edwin Simpson

bass: James Durran, Jeremy Hayer, Gary Snapper, Paul Watson

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Tonight's concert presents music by four of the greatest composers of the Spanish Golden Age: Guerrero, Lobo, Victoria, and Vivanco. All but Victoria made their careers in Spain, as chapelmasters in the great cathedrals: Guerrero at Seville, Lobo at Seville and Toledo, and Vivanco at Lérida, Segovia, Avila, and Salamanca. Victoria, on the other hand, made his reputation in Rome, although he returned to Spain for the last period of his life.

Victoria's *Officium Defunctorum* was published in Madrid in 1605. While the principal item in this book is the famous **Requiem Mass** for six voices, Victoria chose to end it with a setting of the second lesson from the first nocturn of Matins of the Dead: *Taddei anima mea*. This setting employs a simple choral texture which throws emphasis on the highly-charged treatment of the text. The marvellous subtlety with which rhythm and phrase-structure are moulded to the shape of the text is matched by an intense harmonic language.

The six-voice setting for the Requiem Mass was written for the obsequies in 1603 of the Dowager Empress Maria (the sister of King Philip II of Spain and widow of the Emperor Maximilian II), whom Victoria had served as chaplain and *maestro* at the Monasterio de las Descalzas de Santa Clara in Madrid, where she lived in retirement. After the death of the Empress he remained at the convent (as organist) until his own death in 1611. The *Officium Defunctorum* contains those sections of the Requiem Mass which composers traditionally set to polyphony (Kyrie, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei from the Ordinary, Introit, Gradual, Offertory, and Communion from the Proper), as well as the responsory *Libera me Domine* from the ceremony of Absolution which follows Mass. The one item which does not belong to the liturgy is the motet *Versa est in lucum* which is the expressive high-point of the collection (making particularly poignant use of alternating major and minor sonorities). It is interesting to compare Victoria's approach to this text with the contrasting but equally expressive treatment it received from his near-contemporary Alonso Lobo, whose *Versa est in lucum* was likewise composed to mark the death of a member of the royal house, in this case Philip II himself.

As is typical of polyphonic treatments of the Requiem at this period, Victoria's setting refers regularly to the original plainchant, which is placed most frequently in the second highest voice (the second soprano in this performance), with little or no decoration. Around this the composer constructs flexible textures, which together with a marvellous control of pace and purposeful but idiosyncratic and highly-coloured harmonies make this some of the most expressive music of the entire Renaissance.

Much of the finest music of the Spanish 'Golden Age' consists of settings of texts devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The language employed is often the impassioned love-poetry of the Song of Songs, as in the case of Guerrero's *Tota pulchra es, Maria* ('Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, spouse'. Vivanco's *Dulcissima Maria* inhabits the same expressive world, with chromaticism emphasising such words as 'suavis' - 'sweet'. The sumptuousness of these works - matching that of their texts - contrasts with Guerrero's quietly beautiful treatment of the Marian antiphon *Alma redemptoris mater*, for four voices. The concert ends with Victoria's *Vidi speciosam*, its text again taken (in part) from the Song of Songs. In this brilliant six-voice setting, written for the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Victoria takes obvious delight in every nuance and image of the words: 'I saw her, beautiful as a dove, ascending from above streams of water, she whose sweet fragrance was above price in garments deliciously perfumed. And like a spring day, she was surrounded by roses and lilies of the valley. Who is she, that has gone up through the empty air like a wrath of smoke from sweet-smelling incense.'

Since its first performance in 1986, the **Cambridge Taverner Choir** has established itself as one of the few specialist Renaissance choirs outside London. Besides its regular concert series and festival appearances in Cambridge, the choir has performed in many parts of the U.K., and undertook a highly successful tour of Portugal in 1991. 1993 saw the release of the choir's first two CD recordings - *Music from Renaissance Portugal* and *Music for a Tudor Christmas*; both have been highly praised by the critics, and *Music from Renaissance Portugal* has been nominated for the *Gramophone* Early Music award this year, as well as being chosen as *Critic's Choice* and *Editor's Choice* in the same magazine. The choir has also broadcast on Radio 3 and has been featured on Radio 4.

The choir's principal emphasis is the performance of Renaissance polyphony in illuminating thematic, liturgical, and physical contexts, aiming to recreate the grandeur and excitement of the music of the Tudor age in England and the 'Golden Age' of Spain and Portugal.

Owen Rees studied at St Catharine's College, Cambridge (where he held an organ scholarship), and taught at Oxford before assuming his current post as a Lecturer in the Department of Music at the University of Surrey. His research - focusing on music in England, Spain, and Portugal in the Renaissance period - feeds directly into his activities as a choral director, both in terms of uncovering and performing hitherto unknown works, and in the areas of performance practice and the presentation of works in liturgical context.

If you would like to receive details of the choir's concerts, please leave your name and address at the desk, or contact:

Gary Snapper, 82 Gwydir St, Cambridge, CB1 2LL (0223 327243).

If you have other enquiries about the choir, please contact the director:

Owen Rees, Department of Music, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 5XH (01483 274119).

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FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Hexham Abbey Festival: Candlelight Concert

Saturday 24 September 1994, 7.30

Music from Renaissance Portugal and Tudor England, including works by Tallis and Byrd, and Duarte Lobo's magnificent eight-voice Requiem.

(box office (0434) 607272)

Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge

Sunday 9 October 1994, 8.15

Music from Renaissance Portugal

Jesus College, Cambridge

Sunday 4 December 1994, 8.15

Christmas music from Tudor England