

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Owen Rees - director

Great Masses of the Renaissance

Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge

22nd April 2001

8.15 p.m.

PROGRAMME
Music by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Introit motet: Assumpta est Maria in cælum

Missa Papæ Marcelli
Kyrie
Gloria

Gradual motet: Nigra sum sed formosa

Missa Papæ Marcelli
Credo

INTERVAL of 10 minutes

Stabat mater

Offertory motet: Fratres, ego enim accepi

Missa Papæ Marcelli
Sanctus

Elevation motet: Adoramus te Christe

Missa Papæ Marcelli
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

Salve regina

**Unfortunately Owen Rees is unwell and therefore cannot conduct tonight's performance.
We are delighted that Rupert Preston Bell has agreed to take his place at very short notice.**

Sopranos - Kate Ashby, Diana Baumann, Josie Dixon, Helen Garrison, Caroline Preston Bell, Margie Simper

Altos - Rachael Beale, Eleanor Harries

Tenors - Paul Baumann, Mark Dourish, Tom Salmon, Joss Sanders

Basses - Sam Barrett, James Durran, Piers Master, Gary Snapper

The Cambridge Taverner Choir is a member of the National Federation of Music Societies

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Our thanks to the Master & Fellows of Jesus College for their kind permission to use the chapel.

Palestrina's most famous Mass—the six-voice *Missa Papæ Marcelli*—owes that fame partly to its becoming associated with the long-enduring view of Palestrina as 'saviour of church music' at the time of the Council of Trent. In fact, we know little about the date of the piece (although Palestrina published it in his second book of Masses in 1567) and nothing for certain about any role it might have played in the discussions of the proper nature of polyphony at the Council (the fruit of which in the end was merely a rather vague set of instructions on music for Mass) or afterwards as part of the experiments conducted by Cardinals Borromeo and Vitelli (using singers of the Sistine Chapel) into an 'intelligible' style of church music, of which Borromeo was a great advocate, overseeing the implementation of such a style by his own cathedral choirmaster, Vincenzo Ruffo, in Milan. In practice, the 'intelligible style' was hardly a radical innovation, but rather an increased use of the chordal syllabic writing which was already one of the textures available to composers of sacred and secular music. Composers such as Palestrina, desiring to accommodate patrons with an interest in such sacred music, simply offered it as one of the manners of composition available 'to order' (so that in one case Palestrina asked whether a patron wished from him Masses which were 'long, short, or in the intelligible style'). Whatever the relationship of the *Missa Papæ Marcelli* to these trends of the Catholic Reformation, it is undeniable that Palestrina chose a concise and often chordal treatment for much of the movements with the longest texts: Gloria and Credo. Variety is achieved within these movements partly through scoring, the text being presented by many different combinations of three, four, five, or all six voices. The restricted use of counterpoint or repetition makes the grand imitative 'amen' all the more impressive. Elsewhere in the Mass, as in the four-voice Benedictus, one finds the extended imitative style regarded as the 'classic' Palestrina style.

Just as the date of the piece is unknown, so is it unclear whether Palestrina based it on any model(s) outside his own music. Certainly, this is not a conventional cantus firmus Mass (based on an existing melody laid out principally in one voice), paraphrase Mass (with the material of an existing melody permeating all voices), or parody Mass (modelled on an existing polyphonic piece). It has been pointed out, however, that the opening theme of the Kyrie, which also opens the Credo (in the lowest voices) and both Agnus Dei settings, is similar to the opening of one of the most famous of all melodies in the Renaissance: *L'homme armé*. This tune was the single most popular basis for Masses in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and indeed Palestrina joined in this tradition of Mass composition. While the presence of any quotation of the tune in the *Missa Papæ Marcelli* has been challenged, it seems not entirely likely that Palestrina's singers, and musically knowledgeable listeners, would have failed to make the connection.

We intersperse between the Mass movements a selection of motets which demonstrate some of the—perhaps unsuspected—variety to be found among Palestrina's sacred works. In the dedication of his 1584 cycle of motets setting a substantial proportion of the Song of Songs, Palestrina declared that the nature of these texts had caused him to adopt a 'somewhat more sprightly' style than his usual, and this response to the vivid poetic language of the Song of Songs can easily be heard in *Nigra sum*, with its unexpectedly chromatic opening and its suddenly fiery declamation at 'pugnauerunt contra me' ('they have fought against me'). In *Assumpta est Maria*, for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Palestrina creates vigorous word-painting of Mary's ascent into heaven using a motive derived from the relevant chant, reflects the rejoicing of 'gaudete et exultate' with a change to triple metre, and employs the obvious device of an entry of the full choir for 'omnes' ('all'), a pun still being employed by Bach a century and a half later. By comparison with this grand two-section motet *Adoramus te Christe* is a miniature, scored for four voices in a narrow overall range and eminently suitable for that climactic point in the Mass, the Elevation of the Host.

Relatively little of Palestrina's music for multiple choirs is well known, the obvious exception being, of course, his ravishing treatment of the Stabat mater. The text of Fratres, ego enim accipi recounts the Last Supper and Institution of the Eucharist. Palestrina gives a powerful and colourful treatment to the most famous Marian text of all, Salve regina, in his three-choir setting, with which the concert ends. The opening verses are each such by just one choir of four voices, but at the name of the Saviour ('Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui') in the next verse the texture increases to eight voices; and the final acclamations—'O clemens, o pia, o dulcis virgo Maria'—are finally presented by all twelve voices, and spun out to produce a magnificent climax to the piece.

The **Cambridge Taverner Choir**, founded in 1986, belongs to a generation of exciting early music chamber choirs which, like The Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen, emerged from the Oxford and Cambridge choral tradition. As well as regular concert series and festival appearances in Cambridge, the choir has performed in many parts of the U.K., and undertaken highly successful tours of Portugal in 1991 and Switzerland and Italy in 1996; it has also broadcast on Radio 3, and has been featured on Radio 4. The choir has released three recordings; all have been acclaimed by the critics, and *Music from Renaissance Portugal* was short-listed for the *Gramophone* Early Music Award in 1994.

The choir specialises in the performance of sacred polyphony in illuminating thematic, liturgical and physical contexts, aiming to recreate the grandeur and excitement of the European Renaissance, and especially the Tudor age in England and the Iberian 'Golden Age'. The choir also performs baroque and contemporary works. The 1995/6 season celebrated the music of John Taverner on the 450th anniversary of his death, and included a prestigious commission from the contemporary composer, John Tavener, while the 1996/7 season explored the music of five great European cities at the turn of the seventeenth century. In 1999 the choir performed the complete motets of J.S. Bach with guest director John Butt.

Owen Rees began his academic and conducting career as Organ Scholar at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, studying with Peter le Huray and Iain Fenlon. After a period as College Lecturer in Music at St Peter's College and St Edmund Hall, Oxford, he joined the Music Department at the University of Surrey. In 1997 he returned to Oxford, where he is Fellow in Music and Organist at the Queen's College, Lecturer at Somerville College, and Lecturer in the Faculty of Music. His published studies include work on musical sources and repertoires from Coimbra, and on the music of, for example, Francisco Guerrero and William Byrd. His work as a scholar has consistently informed his work as a performer. He has conducted at festivals in the UK, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, and the Netherlands. Choirs under his direction have released CD recordings on the Herald, Hyperion, and Unicorn Kanchana labels, to consistently high critical acclaim.

NEXT CONCERT
Sunday 20th May, 8.15pm, Jesus College Chapel
Victoria: Requiem

Assumpta est Maria in caelum, gaudent angeli laudantes, benedicunt Dominum: Gaudete et exultate omnes recti corde quia hodie Maria Virgo cum Christo regnat in aeternum. Quae est ista, quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata. Gaudete ...

Mary has been taken up into heaven, the angels' choice, and praising they blessed the Lord: Rejoice and be glad all ye righteous of heart since today the Virgin Mary reigns with Christ for ever. Who is she who goes forth like the rising of the sun, beautiful as the moon, chosen as the sun, terrible as a city battalion? Rejoice...

Nigra sum sed Formosa, filiae Jerusalem, sicut tabernacula Cedar, sicut pelles Salomonis. Nolite me considerare cur fusca sim quia decoloravit me sol: filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me, posuerunt me custodem in vineis.

I am dark but comely, daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Cedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards.

Fratres ego enim accepiam, Domino ego enim accepiam, quod et tradidi vobis quoniam Dominus Jesus in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem et gratias agens fregit et dixit: Accipite et manducate: hoc est corpus meus; hoc facite in meam commemorationem.

What I received from the Lord, brothers, I also handed to you. For the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread and, giving thanks, broke it and said: Take, and eat: this is my body; do this in memory of me.

Adoramus te Christe et benedicimus tibi: quia per sanctam crucem tuam redemisti mundum.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because through your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Salve Regina, mater misericordiae, vita, dulcedo et spes nostra salve. Ad te clamamus, exules filii Evae, ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes, in hac lacrimarum valle. Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte, et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exilium ostende. O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.

Hail Queen of Mercy; hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. We cry to you, exiled children of Eve; we send up our sighs to you, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Therefore, as our advocate, turn your merciful eyes towards us, and after this life of exile, show us, Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb. O clement, o holy, o sweet Virgin Mary.

Stabat Mater

Stabat Mater dolorosa
luxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat Filius

Cuius animam gementem
Contristatam et dolentem
Pertransivit gladius

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti!

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
Et tremebat cum videbat
Nati poenas incliti

Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Christi Matrem si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari,
Piam Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Iesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
Moriendo desolatum
Dum emisit spiritum

Eia Mater, fons amoris
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum
Ut sibi complaceam

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Tui nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Poenas mecum divide.

The sorrowing mother stood,
tearfully beside the Cross
while Her Son hung there,

Whose soul - moaning,
sad and saddening -
a sword had pierced.

Oh, how mournful and suffering
was that blessed
Mother of the Only-begotten;

She was grieving and aching
and trembling as She saw
the torments of her renowned Son.

What human being would not weep
upon seeing the Mother of Christ
in such torture?

Who would fail to be saddened
when observing the faithful Mother
sorrowing along with Her Son?

For the sins of His people
She saw Jesus in torment
and subjected to whips.

She saw Her sweet Son
dying in desolation
as He gave up the ghost.

O Mother, fount of love!
Make me feel the force of the pain,
so that I may mourn with you.

Make my heart blaze
with love for Christ the Lord
so that I may please Him.

Holy Mother, do this:
strongly transfix my heart
with the wounds of the crucified One.

Divide with me the torments
of Your wounded Son,
Who has now deigned to suffer for me

Fac me vere tecum flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

luxta crucem tecum stare,
Te libenter sociare
In planctu desidero

Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi iam non sis amara
Fac me tecum plangere

Fac, ut portem Christi mortem
Passionis eius sortem,
Et plagas recolere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Cruce hac inebriari,
Ob amorem Filii

Inflammatum et accensum
Per Te, Virgo, sim defensum
In die iudicii.

Fac me cruce custodiri
Morte Christi praemuniri
Confoveri gratia

Quando corpus morietur
Fac ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria

Make me truly weep with You
and suffer along with the crucified One as
long as I live.

I desire to stand with You beside the Cross:
to join with You willingly
in weeping.

Virgin, famous among virgins,
do not be bitter to me now,
make me cry along with You.

Make me bear the death of Christ,
make me a sharer in His passion,
meditating upon His wounds,

make me be afflicted with those wounds
and intoxicated with this Cross
for love of Your Son.

In my ardor and zeal
let me be defended by You, Virgin,
on Judgment Day.

Make me be guarded by the Cross,
fortified by the death of Christ
and fostered by Grace.

When my body dies
make my soul be given
the glory of Paradise.