

Programme

Laudate pueri Dominum	Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)
Missa de Batalla	Joan Cererols (1618-1680)
Kyrie	
Gloria	
Instr. Cum audisset	Alonso Lobo (1555-1617)
Credo	
Instr. Ego flos campi	Lobo
Sanctus	
Agnus Dei	

Interval

Motet: O quam gloriosum	Victoria
Villancico: Riu, riu, chiu	Anon
Motet: Rex autem David	Bernardino de Ribera (c.1520-1580?)
Organ solo: Beata viscera Mariae virginis	Antonio Cabezón (1510-1566)
Instr. O quam suavis est, Domine	Sebastian de Vivanco (c.1550-1622)
Motet: Pater peccavi	Duarte Lobo (1564-1646)
Organ solo: Tiento de 2nd tone	Heliadoro de Paiva (c.1500-1552)
Motet: Hortus conclusus	Rodrigo de Ceballos (c.1525-1591)
Motet: Ave Virgo sanctissima	Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
Instr. Ego sum panis vivus	Juan Esquivel (c.1560-c.1630)
Te lucis ante terminum	Esquivel
Hymn: Conditore alme siderum	Guerrero

The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble
Gawain Glenton – Cornett and Director
Emily White – Sackbut
Martyn Sanderson – Sackbut
Adrian France – Sackbut

Organist – Peter Noke

Programme Notes

The late 16th century/early 17th century is often referred to as the Golden Age of church music in Spain and Portugal. Why is this? Two reasons: firstly, the high quality of so much of the music produced at this time, driven by the intensity of religious belief and the need to give it expression – not only in music but also in art and literature; secondly, the sheer number of composers active during this period which far exceeded the number of composers working in England at this time.

This was, of course, a very religious age: the period of the Counter-Reformation when the Catholic Church was fighting back against what it saw as heresy in its various forms (Lutheranism, Judaism, Islam). The extent of religiosity was revealed in a survey into the religious beliefs and customs of local people carried out by Philip II between 1575 and 1580. In 1591, he followed this up with a tax survey which revealed that in just one city alone, Toledo – the capital of the largest and wealthiest diocese in the peninsula – there were 26 churches, 36 monasteries and convents. Furthermore, the city had 1,900 nuns and in a city of approximately 50,000 inhabitants, about 5% of were priests. These statistics alone provide concrete evidence for the climate of religiosity which permeated all levels of society at this time.

Every cathedral had a *maestro de capilla*, (a chapel master) who was tasked with training the choir and composing music for the daily round of services which took place in the *coro* (the choir area), largely for the benefit of the resident religious community. Since the *coro* was a three-sided box facing the high altar but shut off from the nave, lay people would be separated from this community, only hearing the services from a distance. The small choir of boys and men sang from a single large choir book standing on a choir stand (the *facistol*) and not from printed sheets of music like those we are using today.

Every cathedral, too, had at least one organ which was used for accompanying the choir and filling in whilst the clergy moved around during the liturgy. Composers were required, to provide *versos*, short contrapuntal or ornamental pieces often based on plainchant, like *Beata viscera Mariae virginis* by Antonio Cabezón we hear tonight, where the traditional plainsong melody is in the bass. Another type of organ music was the *tiento* (*tento* in Portuguese), an abstract contrapuntal piece. Tonight we hear such a composition by the Portuguese organist, Heliadoro de Paiva. The organist would also play *alternatim* with the choir – that is, one verse was sung to plainchant, the next played on the organ. Unaccompanied plainchant (or plainsong), of course, formed the bedrock of liturgical music in cathedrals and monasteries in medieval times and many centuries onwards. Larger cathedral establishments had a group of instrumentalists, the *ministriles*, mostly players of wind instruments: cornetts, sackbuts, shawms, recorders, dulcian (a forerunner of the modern bassoon) and at the beginning of the 17th century, these instruments were joined by the harp.

In our programme tonight, we want to present the kind of music that would be heard in a Spanish cathedral on an almost daily basis, not only choral music but music for the organ and a typical instrumental group. Much of the instrumental music in this Golden Age was not specifically written in the first place for instruments to play; it was choral music which instrumentalists collected together for the pleasure of playing, perhaps during the liturgy or on ceremonial occasions. For example, much of the instrumental music you will hear tonight comes from a manuscript assembled for use in the collegiate church of San Pedro in Lerma, a small village only a few miles south of the major ecclesiastical centre of Burgos in Northern Castile; the church was

under the patronage of the Duke of Lerma. We have inserted two motets by Alonso Lobo into our performance of Cererols *Missa de Batalla*, both found in the Lerma manuscript.

We open our programme with *Laudate pueri Dominum*, a fine, exuberant psalm setting by perhaps the greatest Spanish composer of his age. Born in Avila, Victoria was ordained as a priest in 1575 and worked in Italy for many years before returning to Madrid in 1596 where he was organist and choirmaster at the convent of the *Descalzas Reales*. The work is scored for two choirs; the soprano line in choir 2 quotes an ancient plainsong melody associated with this text, Psalm 113.

Praise the Lord, O servants of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and for evermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations and His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God who is seated on high and looks upon the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust, and the needy to make them sit with princes of His people. He makes the barren woman a home making her the joyous mother of children. Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

We move forward in time to the work of Joan Cererols, a Catalan composer connected for most of his life with Montserrat Abbey where he directed the choir for over 30 years. His *Missa de Batalla* is one of his most celebrated works and part of a Battle Mass tradition. Secular instrumental battle music was very much in fashion in the 16th century – and indeed before – but the concept of the battlefield invading the church in the form of a Mass is a tradition that goes back to the French composer, Clément Janequin (c.1485-1558).

In 1515, François 1 of France won a decisive victory against Swiss mercenaries in the village of Marignano outside Milan, and, in 1529, Janequin composed his famous onomatopoeic chanson in praise of this victory known as ‘La guerre’ or ‘La bataille’. In 1532, he wrote a Mass, taking his main themes from this chanson which started a vogue for writing Battle Masses that continued well into the 17th century. Although the idea of associating a mass with warfare may seem strange to us, there are a number of reasons for this phenomenon. Warfare was an ever-present reality in 16th century Europe and maybe composers chose Janequin’s chanson as a model because of the symbolic possibilities inherent in the text; the borrowing of secular musical motifs associated with the battlefield could be re-used and re-interpreted to symbolise the battle between the Church and the world or, in the case of Spain, the religious struggle. Another reason is that Janequin’s chanson, with its multiplicity of musical motives, provided a rich store of material from which composers could draw.

Cererols’ Mass possibly dates from February 1648 when Austria triumphed over a revolution in Naples, then under the rule of Aragon. Writing for three four-part choirs, the composer draws heavily on thematic ideas from Janequin’s chanson; thematic ideas pass from one choir to another – a kind of musical game of tennis! Tonight, choir 3 is doubled by cornett and three sackbuts while the organ supports choirs 1 and 2.

Victoria's celebrated, joyful motet *O quam gloriosum* was composed for All Saints’ Day. Textually and musically, it depicts saints following the Lamb in white robes.

O how glorious is the kingdom in which, with Christ, all the saints rejoice. Clothed in white robes, they follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Riu, riu, chiu takes us back to the season of Christmas. It is a *villancico*, a semi-sacred Christmas carol with seven verses and a refrain. *Villancicos* originated as rustic folk songs in the 15th century and became very popular in Spain in the 16th century when choirmasters were expected to produce these compositions at Christmas and other religious festivals. Sadly, many have been lost over the course of time. This *villancico* has a rather convoluted text which might be summarised as ‘Beware of the wolf!’ It has a chorus which translates as: *He who herds by the river: God kept the wolf far away from our ewe.* Verse 1 tells us that a furious wolf attempted to bite the Virgin Mary but God protected her; verse 2 announces that the newly born Christ-child is infinite; verse 3 refers to the prophecy foretelling His coming; verse 4 describes a vision of a thousand youths celebrating the birth of Christ; verse 5 states that Christ brings life to those who have died and atone for their sins. Verse 6, God the Father states that Mary’s Son is also her Father; finally, verse 7 suggests that we should worship the Christ-child.

Bernardino de Ribera is one of the lesser-known composers of the Golden Age. He was *maestro de capilla* at Avila (1558-62) and then at Toledo (1563-1570). His plangent motet **Rex autem David** draws on the Old Testament story of King David mourning the death of his son, Absalom, found in 2 Samuel 19:4. The text reads:

*Now David the king, going forth, with covered head, mourned for his son,
saying: Absalon my son, would that I might die for thee, my son Absalon.*

The lovely motet, **Pater peccavi** by the Portuguese composer Duarte Lobo takes its text from the Bible story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

Father I have sinned against heaven and before you.

The motet is in five parts with two soprano parts; the second soprano has a repeated phrase of just two notes: *Miserere mei Deus.* Lord have mercy on me.

Another lesser-known Spanish composer of the golden age was Rodrigo de Caballos. His beautiful motet, **Hortus conclusus**, became much admired in its time and has been preserved in a number of sources. By nature of its text – a verse from the biblical Song of Songs – the work, with erotic undertones, seems to stray into the borderline between sacred and secular and far from the Catholic liturgy.

*A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, a garden enclosed and a fountain sealed.
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. Arise, my love and come.
Come my fair one, let me see your face. Your lips distil nectar; honey and milk
are under your tongue. Come, my bride, come and you shall be crowned.*

Francisco Guerrero spent a large part of his life at Seville cathedral, first as assistant and then *maestro de capilla*. **Ave Virgo sanctissima** is one of his most celebrated works – just one of 105 motets he composed during his lifetime. The Marian text, so rich in imagery, was in liturgical use in 16th century Spain. In five vocal parts, the two soprano parts are in canon – a kind of round: soprano one carries the theme which is imitated almost immediately by the second soprano. The climax of the work is reached in the middle section when the word *Salve* (Hail) reaches its highest point in the sopranos.

*Hail, Holy Virgin, most blessed Mother of God, bright star of the Sea. Hail, ever
glorious, precious pearl, beautiful as the lily, shining and giving perfume like the
rose.*

As we near the close of our concert, and the ending of the day, it seems fitting to include a setting of the Compline hymn *Te lucis ante terminum* which Esquivel published in a great volume of liturgical music in 1613. In verses 1 and 3, we hear the unadorned plainsong melody on which the hymn is based; the middle verse is sung in polyphony with the plainsong melody in the soprano part.

Before the ending of the day, creator of the world, we pray that you, with steadfast love, would keep your watch around us while we sleep.

From evil dreams defend our sight, from fears and terrors of the night; tread underfoot our deadly foe, that we no sinful thought may know.

Oh Father, that we ask be done through Jesus Christ, thine only Son. Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee, dost live and reign eternally. Amen.

We close with a hymn composed by Francisco Guerrero for the service of Vespers during the season of Advent and published in Rome in 1584. The traditional plainsong melody, *Conditor alme siderum*, is sung unaccompanied in verses 1, 3 and 5. In verse 2, the melody appears in long note values in the alto part; in verse 4, it is in the soprano part and, finally, in verse 6, in the bass.

Bounteous creator of the stars, eternal light of all believers; Christ, Redeemer of all, hear the prayers of all thy supplicants.

You who, grieving with this age's deathly destruction, have saved the feeble world, giving succour to the accused.

As nightfall descends upon the world, thou has gone forth like a bridegroom from the chamber, most honoured offspring of a virgin mother.

To whose mighty power all bend the knee, in heaven and earth, subjected to the command.

We pray thee, holy one, coming judge of this age, save us at that time from the deceitful thrust of the enemy.

Praise, honour, virtue and glory be to God the Father, and to the Son, as also to the Holy Ghost, forever and ever. Amen.

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