



December 2020
National Centre for Early Music

STILE ANTICO

A RENAISSANCE CHRISTMAS

Corde natus ex parentis

Piae Cantiones, 1582

The fall of man

Eve's Apologie in Defence of Women

Emilia Lanier 1569–1645

Remember O thou man

Thomas Ravenscroft ?1592–c.1635

God promises blessings to His chosen people

Psalm 85

The Sidney Psalter 16th century

Rorate coeli

William Byrd c.1540–1623

The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour

The Flower

George Herbert 1593–1633

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen

arr. **Michael Praetorius** 1571–1621

Melchior Vulpus c.1570–1615

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown

Peace
Agnus Dei
(from *Missa 'Simile est regnum'*)

Herbert
Tomás Luis de Victoria 1548–1611

The Annunciation

Annunciation
Ave Maria

John Donne 1572–1631
Josquin des Prez c.1450/5–1521

The birth of Jesus

Nativity
O magnum mysterium

Donne
Victoria

The shepherds go to the manger

The Shepherds
Angelus ad pastores ait

Henry Vaughan 1621–95
Raffaella Aleotti c.1570–after 1646

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus

Extract from 'A Christmas Sermon'
A un niño llorando

Lancelot Andrewes 1555–1626
Francisco Guerrero 1548–99

The mystery of the Incarnation

The Burning Babe
Verbum caro factum est

Robert Southwell c.1561–1595
John Sheppard c.1515–1558

The familiar, comforting rhythm of the service of Nine Lessons and Carols is for many a highlight of the festive season: a symbol of constancy and hope amidst a world of change and challenge. Today's concert follows its structure but – since we are not at prayer – replaces each Lesson with a Renaissance poem on a complementary theme.

We begin with the ancient hymn *Corde natus ex parentis*, familiar as 'Of the Father's heart begotten'. The words are by the fourth-century poet Prudentius; the melody can be traced to the tenth century, though words and music were only brought together in Victorian times. In place of the first Lesson, recounting the fall of man, we hear a welcome riposte: Eve's *Apologie in Defence of Women* by Emilia Lanier, the first English woman to assert herself as a professional poet. Thomas Ravenscroft's *Remember O thou man* underlines mankind's need for repentance, before we hear Psalm 85 in a sixteenth-century translation from the Sidney Psalter, calling on God to remember his chosen people. The same Psalm is quoted as part of William Byrd's joyful Advent Proper, *Rorate coeli*.

The message of spiritual renewal found in the Old Testament prophets is echoed in George Herbert's exuberant *The Flower*; similar imagery is found in the beloved carol *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*, which we sing in both Michael Praetorius's familiar version and in Melchior Vulpus's enchanting four-part canon. Herbert's allegorical *Peace* then directs us to look heavenward for our repose, mirroring the closing words of the Agnus Dei – 'grant us peace' – heard in a setting by Tomás Luis de Victoria, based on a motet by Francisco Guerrero. Initially written for four voices, it expands in its final section to a sumptuous, eight-voiced texture.

John Donne's sublime *Annunciation* and *Nativity* are linked by the shared line 'Immensity, cloistered in thy dear womb'. We pair them with Josquin's serene *Ave Maria*, whose clarity of structure and lucidity of expression made it one of the most popular works in the entire Renaissance, and Victoria's *O magnum mysterium*, whose atmosphere of rapt contemplation seems perfectly to complement Donne: 'Seest thou, my soul, with thy faith's eyes, how He / Which fills all place, yet none holds Him, doth lie?'

In response to Henry Vaughan's *The Shepherds*, we perform the quicksilver *Angelus ad pastores ait* from a 1591 collection by the Ferrarese nun Raffaella Aleotti: the first time that a woman was credited in print with the composition of sacred music. Excerpts from a sermon by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, overseer of the translation of the King James Bible, usher in the Wise Men; if certain phrases sound familiar, it is because T.S. Eliot used it as a source for *The Journey of the Magi*. The music that follows is a *villancico* (a Spanish-language, folk-like carol) by Guerrero: it describes the visit of the Magi in an irrepressible dance metre.

Robert Southwell's *The Burning Babe* was written in 1595 while the poet was awaiting execution in the Tower for his work as a Jesuit missionary. It is a dark, troubling poem, reminding us that the suffering of the Passion is implicit in the mystery of the Incarnation. Doubtless Southwell would have rejoiced to hear the Catholic music of John Sheppard with which we conclude our programme: *Verbum caro factum est*, which clothes words from the first chapter of John's Gospel in towering, radiant pillars of sound.

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STILE ANTICO

Helen Ashby, Kate Ashby, Rebecca Hickey *sopranos*

Emma Ashby, Cara Curran, Katie Schofield *altos*

Andrew Griffiths, Jonathan Hanley, Matthew Howard *tenors*

James Arthur, Will Dawes, Nathan Harrison *basses*

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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Corde natus ex parentis

(Piae Cantiones)

Corde natus ex parentis
ante mundi exordium
A et O congnominatus,
ipse fons et clausula
Omnium quae sunt, fuerunt,
quaeque post futura sunt.
Saeculorum saeculis.

Ipse iussit et creata,
dixit ipse et facta sunt,
Terra, caelum, fossa ponti,
trina rerum machina,
Quaeque in his vigent sub alto
solis et lunae globo.
Saeculorum saeculis.

Corporis formam caduci,
membra morti obnoxia
Induit, ne gens periret
primoplasti ex germine,
Meruerat quem lex profundo
noxialis tartaro.
Saeculorum saeculis.

O beatus ortus ille,
virgo cum puerpera
Edidit nostram salutem,
feta Sancto Spiritu,
Et puer redemptor orbis
os sacratum protulit.
Saeculorum saeculis.

Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending, He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore!

At His word the worlds were framed;
He commanded; it was done:
Heaven and earth and depths of ocean
In their threefold order one;
All that grows beneath the shining
Of the moon and burning sun,
Evermore and evermore!

He is found in human fashion,
Death and sorrow here to know,
That the race of Adam's children
Doomed by law to endless woe,
May not henceforth die and perish
In the dreadful gulf below.
Evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed,
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bare the saviour of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!

Tibi, Christe, sit cum Patre
hagioque Pneumate
Hymnus, decus, laus perennis,
gratiarum action,
Honor, virtus, victoria,
regnum aeternaliter.
Saeculorum saeculis.

Christ, to Thee with God the Father,
And O Holy Ghost, to Thee,
Hymn and chant with high thanksgiving,
And unwearied praises be:
Honour, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory,
Evermore and evermore!

*Translation: John Mason Neale
& Henry Williams Baker*

Remember O thou man (Ravenscroft)

Remember O thou man,
O thou man, O thou man,
Remember O thou man,
thy time is spent:
Remember O thou man
How thou art dead and gone
And I did what I can,
therefore repent!

Remember Adam's fall
O thou man, O thou man,
Remember Adam's fall
from heav'n to hell!
Remember Adam's fall,
How we were condemned all
In hell perpetual,
there for to dwell.

Remember God's goodness,
O thou man, O thou man,
Remember God's goodness
and promise made!
Remember God's goodness,
How He sent His son doubtless
Our sins for to redress:
be not afraid!

In Bethlem He was born,
O thou man, O thou man,
In Bethlem He was born,
for mankind's sake;
In Bethlem He was born
For us that were forlorn,
And therefore took no scorn
our flesh to take.

Thomas Ravenscroft

Rorate coeli (Byrd)

Rorate coeli desuper,
et nubes
pluant justum:
aperiatur terra,
et germinet salvatorem.
Benedixisti, Domine,
terram tuam:
avertisti captivitatem Jacob.
Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio,
et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Drop down ye heavens, from above,
and let the skies
pour down righteousness:
Let the earth open
and bring forth a Saviour.
Lord, thou hast blessed thy land:
Thou hast turned away
the captivity of Jacob.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Mass Introit during Advent

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen (Praetorius / Vulpus)

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen
Aus einer Wurzel zart,
Wie uns die Alten sungen,
Von Jesse kam die Art
Und hat ein Blümlein bracht
Mitten im kalten Winter
Wohl zu der Halbennacht.

A rose has sprung up
from a tender root,
as the ancients sang to us,
its strain came from Jesse
and it has brought forth a flower
in the midst of the cold winter,
in the middle of the night.

Das Röslein, das ich meine,
Davon Jesaias sagt,
Ist Maria, die Reine,
Die uns das Blümlein bracht.
Aus Gottes ewigem Rat
Hat sie ein Kind geboren,
Und blieb doch reine Magd.

The little rose that I mean
of which Isaiah told
is Mary, the pure,
who brought us the little flower.
From God's eternal counsel
she has borne a child
and remained a pure maid.

Anonymous

Agnus Dei (Victoria)

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

Mass Ordinary

Ave Maria (Josquin)

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum, Virgo serena.
Ave cuius conceptio,
solemni plena gaudio
Caelestia, terrestria,
nova replet laetitia.
Ave, cuius nativitas
nostra fuit solemnitatis,
Ut lucifer lux oriens
verum solem praeveniens.
Ave pia humilitas,
sine viro fecunditas,
Cuius annunciatio
nostra fuit salvatio.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you, fair virgin.
Hail to you, whose conception,
full of holy joy,
fills heaven and earth
with new rejoicing.
Hail to you, whose birth
we celebrated,
like the day-star rising,
foretelling the true sun.
Hail, holy and humble one,
fruitful without a man,
you whose annunciation
was our salvation.

Ave vera virginitas,
immaculata castitas,
Cuius purificatio
nostra fuit purgatio.
Ave, praeclara
omnibus angelicis virtutibus,
Cuius fuit assumptio
nostra glorificatio.
O Mater Dei,
memento mei. Amen.

Hail, true virginity,
spotless chastity,
whose purification
cleansed us also.
Hail to you who excel
in all the angelic virtues,
you whose assumption
glorified us also.
O Mother of God,
remember me. Amen.

Anonymous

O magnum mysterium (Victoria)

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum
natum jacentem in praeseptio.
O beata Virgo,
cujus viscera meruerunt
portare Dominum Jesum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the
new-born Lord lying in a manger!
O blessed is the Virgin,
whose womb was worthy
to bear Christ the Lord.
Alleluia!

Responsory for Christmas

Angelus ad pastores ait (Aleotti)

Angelus ad pastores ait:
annuntio vobis gaudium magnum,
quia natus est vobis hodie
Salvator mundi.
Alleluia.

The angel said to the shepherds:
'I bring you tidings of great joy,
for the Saviour of the world
has been born to you today.'
Alleluia.

Luke, 2: 10–11

A un niño llorando (Guerrero)

A un niño llorando al hielo
van tres Reyes a adorar
Porque el niño puede dar
Reinos, vida, gloria y cielo.

Nace con tanta bajeza
Aunque es poderoso Rey
Porque nos da ya por ley
Abatimento y pobreza.

Por eo llorando al hielo
van tres Reyes a adorar
Porque el niño puede dar
Reinos, vida, gloria y cielo.

Three kings go to adore
a child crying in the cold,
Because the child can give
Kingdoms, life, glory and heaven.

He is born with such lowliness
Although he is a powerful king,
Because he is giving us through his law
Humbleness and poverty.

To him crying in the cold,
Three kings go to adore him,
Because the child can give
Kingdoms, life, glory and heaven.

Anonymous

Verbum caro factum est (Sheppard)

Verbum caro factum est
et habitavit in nobis cujus gloriam
vidimus quasi unigeniti a Patre
plenum gratiae et veritatis.

In principio erat verbum
et verbum erat apud Deum
et Deus erat verbum.

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.

The Word was made flesh
and lived with us and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the only-begotten by the
Father, full of grace and truth.

In the beginning was the word,
and the word was with God,
and the word was God.

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

John, 1:14