



**December 2020**  
*National Centre for Early Music*

## **THE MARIAN CONSORT**

### THE GREAT MYSTERY

Magnificat primi toni

**Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina**  
*1525/6–1594*

Ave Maria

**Jean Lhéritier**  
*c.1480–after 1551*

Kyrie

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*

**Palestrina**

Inviolata

**Vicente Lusitano**  
*d. after 1561*

Gloria

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*

**Palestrina**

Ave Maria

**Tomás Luis de Victoria**  
*1548–1611*

O magnum mysterium

**Palestrina**

Ave Maria gemma virginum

**Jean Mouton**

*before 1459–1522*

Agnus Dei

**Palestrina**

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*

Ave Maria ... virgo serena

**Josquin des Prez**

*c.1450/5–1521*

Hodie Christus natus est

**Palestrina**

Our festive programme weaves a sequence of seasonal music originally heard in the splendid churches and hallowed chapels of the international melting pot that was renaissance Rome: Marian motets interleave movements from the *Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'* by arguably the city's most famous musical son, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.

As his name suggests, Giovanni Pierluigi was born not in Rome but in the small town of Palestrina, some 25 miles east of Rome. His association with the 'Eternal City' began when he became a choirboy at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, and this formative experience would go on to shape his adult life: he would later hold positions at many of the major Roman churches, including Santa Giovanni Laterano, Santa Maria Maggiore and the Cappella Giulia. Palestrina's first tenure was at the Cappella Giulia in 1550, thanks to the nepotism of Pope Julius III, a former Cardinal-bishop of Palestrina's hometown, who a few years later also landed him a coveted position as a member of the Cappella Sistina choir, without having to fulfil either the requirement of celibacy or the rigorous examinations demanded of other singers. Palestrina was dismissed from the Cappella Sistina following Julius's death a year later, but reappointed as choirmaster of the Cappella Giulia in 1571, a position he retained until his death in 1594.

Palestrina's Magnificat and mass based on his own double-choir Christmas motet *Hodie Christus natus est* do not typify the mellifluous, flowing polyphony for which he is best known, but instead have a more declamatory, text-oriented style ideal for the joy of the words being set to music, fully exploiting the antiphonal and textural possibilities of the various combinations of the eight voices. Sharing these traits, but at least initially putting them to very different use in establishing a mood of intimate mystery, is Palestrina's exquisite six-voice motet *O magnum mysterium*, first published in Rome in 1569. Resident in the city at this time was the Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria, whose radiant eight-voice *Ave Maria* shares an antiphonal language with Palestrina's works.

Josquin des Prez is one of a number of late fifteenth-century Franco-Flemish composers who enjoyed close associations with the Sistine Chapel, although Josquin is notable for having left a lasting mark in the form of a graffitied signature, carved into the wall of the chapel's choir loft. His *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* appears as the first work in Ottaviano Petrucci's pioneering 1502 *Motetti A* and inspired works by a number of later composers.

A member of the Sistine Chapel choir some 20 years after Josquin, fellow Frenchman Jean Lhéritier was also *maestro di cappella* at the French national church in Rome, San Luigi dei Francesi. His *Ave Maria* shares many stylistic traits with Josquin's: both composers construct their four-part imitative polyphony from pairs of voices; make judicious use of triple time for rhythmic contrast; and employ chordal harmony to emphasise moments of textual importance, as in their respective final sections.

Jean Mouton, while never a member of the papal chapel choir, was a particular favourite of Pope Leo X, and a great deal of his music is preserved in Vatican manuscripts. His *Ave Maria gemma virginum* is as ingenious as it is beautiful: a quadruple canon, each of the four written voices is repeated an octave higher at a distance of four beats to create a shimmering, mesmeric eight-part motet. Vicente

Lusitano's *Inviolata* is similarly inventive: based on Josquin's motet of the same name, it borrows his canonic cantus firmus (itself taken from Gregorian chant) but expands the texture from five to eight voices. Lusitano, a Portuguese composer, theorist and ordained priest, was the first documented black musician to have a volume of his music published: his *Liber primus epigramatum*, issued by Dorico in Rome in 1555, contains 23 motets in the composer's harmonically adventurous style, a style that Lusitano defended in a debate with renowned music theorist Nicola Vicentino concerning the nature of chromaticism in music – needless to say, Lusitano was declared the winner!

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## **THE MARIAN CONSORT**

*directed by* **Rory McCleery**

**Charlotte Ashley, Lucinda Cox** *sopranos*

**Sarah Anne Champion, Alex Chance** *altos*

**Edward Ross, Benjamin Durrant** *tenors*

**Jon Stainsby, Edmund Saddington** *basses*

[marianconsort.co.uk](http://marianconsort.co.uk)

## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

### Magnificat primi toni (Palestrina)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,  
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo  
salutari meo, quia respexit  
humilitatem ancillae suae.  
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam  
me dicent omnes generationes,  
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,  
et sanctum nomen eius,  
et misericordia eius in progenies  
et progenies timentibus eum.  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,  
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;  
deposuit potentes de sede  
et exaltavit humiles;  
esurientes implevit bonis  
et divites dimisit inanes.  
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,  
recordatus misericordiae,  
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,  
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.  
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto:  
Sicut erat in principio,  
et nunc, et semper, et in saecula  
saeculorum. Amen.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;  
he has looked with favour  
on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations  
will call me blessed;  
the Almighty has done great things  
for me, and holy is his name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm and  
has scattered the proud in their conceit,  
Casting down the mighty from their  
thrones and lifting up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has come to the aid of his servant  
Israel, to remember his promise of mercy,  
The promise made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be for ever. Amen.

### Ave Maria (Lhéritier)

Ave Maria, gratia plena:  
Dominus tecum:  
benedicta tu in mulieribus, et  
benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.  
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
nunc et in hora mortis. Amen

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord be with you.  
Blessed art thou amongst women, and  
blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

## **Kyrie**

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*  
(Palestrina)

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

## **Inviolata** (Lusitano)

Inviolata, integra et casta es Maria:  
Quae es effecta fulgida caeli porta.  
O Mater alma Christi carissima:  
Suscipe pia laudum praeconia.  
Te nunc flagitant devota corda et ora:  
Nostra ut pura pectora sint  
et corpora.  
Tua per precata dulcisona:  
Nobis concedas veniam per saecula.  
O benigna! O Regina! O Maria!  
Quae sola inviolata permansisti.

O Mary, inviolate, whole and chaste,  
you are the shining gate of heaven.  
O kind mother, dearest to Christ,  
accept our faithful hymns of praise.  
To you our hearts and lips cry out:  
may our souls and bodies  
be pure.  
Through your prayers' sweet sounds  
grant us forgiveness for ever.  
O kindly one, O Queen, O Mary,  
you alone remain inviolate.

## **Gloria**

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*  
(Palestrina)

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax  
hominibus bonae voluntatis.  
Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.  
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.  
Gratias agimus tibi propter  
magnam gloriam tuam.  
Domine Deus, rex caelestis,  
Deus Pater omnipotens,  
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,  
Filius Patris,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis;

Glory to God in the highest  
and on earth peace to men of good will.  
We praise you. We bless you.  
We adore you. We glorify you.  
We give you thanks  
for your great glory.  
Lord God, king of heaven,  
God the Father almighty,  
Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
Son of the Father,  
you who take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;

qui tollis peccata mundi,  
suscipe deprecationem nostram;  
qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,  
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus.

Tu solus Dominus.

Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe.

Cum Sancto Spiritu,

in gloria Dei Patris. Amen

you who take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;

you who sit at the right hand of the  
Father, have mercy on us.

For you only are holy.

You only are Lord.

You only are most high, Jesus Christ.

With the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen

### **Ave Maria** (Victoria)

Ave Maria, gratia plena:

Dominus tecum:

benedicta tu in mulieribus, et  
benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

Sancta Maria, Regina caeli,

O Mater Dei,

ora pro nobis peccatoribus,

ut cum electis te videamus.

Hail Mary, full of grace,

the Lord be with you.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and  
blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Queen of Heaven,

O Mother of God,

pray for us sinners,

that we may see thee with the chosen.

### **O magnum mysterium** (Palestrina)

O magnum mysterium

et admirabile sacramentum

ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
iacentem in praesepe.

Natum vidimus

et chorus angelorum

collaudantes Dominum. Alleluia.

Quem vidistis pastores?

Dicite, annunciate nobis quis apparuit?

Natum vidimus

et chorus angelorum

collaudantes Dominum. Alleluia.

O great mystery

and wonderful sacrament,

that beasts should see the new-born Lord  
lying in a manger.

The new-born we have seen

and a chorus of angels

praising God. Alleluia.

Whom have you seen, shepherds?

Speak, tell us who has appeared?

The new-born we have seen

and a chorus of angels

praising God. Alleluia.

## **Ave Maria gemma virginum**

(Mouton)

Ave Maria, gemma virginum,  
mundi domina,  
caeli regina, Dominus tecum.  
Audi, benigna, mater omnium:  
tu nos adiuva in mortis hora,  
apud Dominum.

Hail Mary, jewel among women,  
mistress of the world,  
queen of heaven, the Lord be with you.  
Hear, blessed one, mother of all:  
be our helper at the hour of death,  
in the sight of God.

## **Agnus Dei**

*Missa 'Hodie Christus natus est'*  
(Palestrina)

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

Lamb of God,  
you who take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you who take away the sins of the world,  
grant us peace.

## **Ave Maria ... virgo serena**

(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 solemnitas,  
ut lucifer lux oriens  
verum solem praeveniens.  
Ave pia humilitas,  
sine viro fecunditas,  
cuius Annuntiatio  
nostra fuit salvatio.

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee, serene Virgin.  
Hail, thou whose Conception,  
full of great joy,  
fills heaven and earth  
with new gladness.  
Hail, thou whose Nativity  
became our great celebration,  
as the light-bearing Morning Star  
anticipates the true Sun.  
Hail, faithful humility,  
fruitful without man,  
whose Annunciation  
was our salvation.

Ave vera virginitas,  
immaculata castitas,  
cuius Purificatio  
nostra fuit purgatio.  
Ave, praeclara omnibus  
angelicis virtutibus,  
cuius fuit Assumptio  
nostra fuit glorificatio.  
O Mater Dei,  
memento mei. Amen.

Hail, true virginity,  
immaculate chastity,  
whose Purification  
was our cleansing.  
Hail, glorious one  
in all angelic virtues,  
whose Assumption  
was our glorification.  
O Mother of God,  
remember me. Amen.

**Hodie Christus natus est**  
(Palestrina)

Hodie Christus natus est, noe, noe ...  
Hodie Salvator apparuit, noe, noe ...  
Hodie in terra canunt angeli,  
laetantur archangeli, noe, noe ...  
Hodie exsultant iusti dicentes:  
Gloria in excelsis Deo, noe, noe ...

This day was Christ born, noe, noe ...  
This day the Saviour appeared, noe, noe ...  
Today on earth the angels sing,  
and archangels rejoice, noe, noe ...  
Today the just exult saying:  
Glory be to God in the highest, noe, noe ...