

The Tallis Scholars

Hymns to the Virgin / Hymnes à la Vierge

DECEMBER 12 DÉCEMBRE 2022 19:00

Alma redemptoris mater

ORLANDE DE LASSUS

Missa Ave maris stella

JOSQUIN DES PREZ

Intermission / Entracte

Maria Magdalene et altera Maria

FRANCISCO GUERRERO

Ave virgo sanctissima

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Sanctissima

MATTHEW MARTIN

Bogoroditse devo

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Virgencita

ARVO PÄRT

Virgo prudentissima

HEINRICH ISAAC

The Virgin Mary has served as inspiration for artists of all forms, including composers since the earliest days of sacred music. The Tallis Scholars – “the rock stars of Renaissance vocal music” (The New York Times) – return to perform a selection of such inspired works from both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, ranging from Josquin to Stravinsky.

Réputé pour leur maîtrise des œuvres de la Renaissance, le légendaire ensemble vocal du Royaume-Uni, The Tallis Scholars, vient à Ottawa avec un programme mettant en vedette un répertoire consacré à la Vierge Marie. Avec la musique de Lassus, Guerrero, Stravinsky, et plus encore, ce concert est une ode à l'une des figures les plus vénérées au monde.

Amy Haworth

soprano / soprano

Simon Wall

tenor / ténor

Emma Walshe

soprano / soprano

Steven Harrold

tenor / ténor

Caroline Trevor

alto / alto

Rob Macdonald

bass / basse

Alexander Chance

alto / alto

Tim Scott Whiteley

bass / basse

Programme Notes

Much of the greatest sacred music that comes down to us from the Renaissance celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was (and continues to be) valued as an intermediary, one who sits in the presence of Christ in heaven and may intercede with him on our behalf. This 'approachable' quality helped inspire the many musical prayers and tributes to her which proliferated among medieval and Renaissance composers, and which continue to be written today.

Four such prayers are appointed to be sung at the evening office in Catholic monastic communities, at different times of the year. The Flemish composer Orlande de Lassus revisited these antiphons time and again, in works that represent some of his most ambitious and splendid compositions.

Lassus had worked in Italy for much of his early life, before bringing Italian musical fashions back with him to the courts of Germany and the Low Countries. These included the 'polychoral' technique in which choirs are split into two or more smaller groups. **Alma redemptoris mater** makes clever use of it, deftly separating and recombining the two choirs to create moments of climax and repose.

Josquin, the 500th anniversary of whose death is commemorated this year, was one of the most admired and respected composers of his age. The **Missa Ave maris stella** was widely known and very influential, a synthesis of the modern style of imitation between voices with the older style of basing music on a plainchant-derived melody or cantus firmus.

The chant which underpins this mass, **Ave maris stella**, was a well-known hymn, still regularly used in devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its distinctive opening motif, a rising perfect fifth, can be heard at the beginning of each movement of the mass. The chant hymn provides the basis for every section, and fragments can occasionally be heard in longer notes in the tenor part (harking back to the older tradition). The tenor sings the hymn tune in full during the **Osanna**.

Peter Phillips notes the concision of Josquin's method in the mass, using the four phrases of the hymn as units to be dispersed around the voice parts. He considers it 'a model exercise in cantus firmus treatment, suggesting that Josquin was summing up all he knew about it at this point in his career, before moving on.'

Mary was the most common name for Jewish women of the first century. It is not surprising, therefore, to find other Marias mentioned in the gospel narratives. Francisco Guerrero's motet **Maria Magdalene** was published in 1570, with a text drawn from various sources. Its first line introduces both the titular Mary and 'the other Mary' (the Mother of Jesus seems to be absent). The piece narrates the discovery by these Marias of the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, and their learning of Christ's victory over death. It introduces us to the composer's favoured sonority: two equal soprano parts atop a smoothly expressive polyphony.

Ave virgo sanctissima is today one of Guerrero's best-known motets. Perhaps this is due to the easy and flowing way in which he embeds a canon in the two soprano parts, giving the motet a meditative, eternal quality which is sustained until its final moments. There are other delights for the attentive contemporary listener, who would have recognised a quotation of the distinctive four-note beginning of the **Salve regina** antiphon, prompted by the occurrence of the word **Salve**.

Sanctissima holds a contemporary mirror up to Guerrero's original. Matthew Martin's setting contains exactly the same number of beats as its model, and follows a similar structure. However, the composer takes the motifs of the original and subjects them to harmonic transformations, some of them quite extreme. Familiar cadences emerge as though out of a cloud, though almost all the phrases have their roots in Guerrero's original material, and the four-note **Salve regina** quotation is still recognisable.

In the mid-1920s, Igor Stravinsky returned to the Russian Orthodox Church, having abandoned it as a teenager.

Bogoroditse devo was written in the early 1930s, one of three Sacred Choruses which set the central texts of the Church to music. With their syllabic word-setting and humble harmonic palette, they contrived a return to a simplicity the composer associated with ancient church traditions. In contrast to much of his other music, this **Ave Maria** is devoid of complexity, a solemn, austere prayerful miniature.

Mary has also attracted devotions via her recorded apparitions to the faithful. One such appearance occurred in Mexico in the sixteenth century, causing a shrine to be established to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is the subject of Arvo Pärt's **Virgencita**, written by the contemporary Estonian composer as a 'present' to the people of Mexico in advance of a visit there. 'The happy anticipation of being in Mexico very soon and the name Guadalupe left me no peace', he wrote. Pärt treats his subject with the utmost reverence, establishing a chordal sonority of gentle dissonance, building towards an impassioned climax before subsiding.

In his day, Heinrich Isaac held a pre-eminence second only to Josquin. By 1507, he was in the employ of Maximilian, who was presently to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor. The motet **Virgo prudentissima** was designed to demonstrate the soon-to-be Emperor's piety and cast Mary as his heavenly supporter and advocate. The text, describing her as the 'most wise Virgin' combined with language from the Song of Songs, is matched by music of considerable 'wisdom'. It employs multiple internal canons in which three voices sing the same music at different times, and includes a number of musical puns to delight the learned listener. Isaac dials up the awe by interspersing complicated decorative passages with monumental, slow-moving chant. There is even a self-referential moment as the musicians mention their own participation in this heavenly endorsement. Finally, the words *ut sol* ('as the sun') provide an opportunity that Isaac could not resist: a musical pun in which the syllables can be set to their corresponding scale degrees.

Alma redemptoris mater

ORLANDE DE LASSUS

Alma Redemptoris mater, quae pervia caeli porta manes, et stella maris, succurre cadenti surgere qui curat populo.

Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem. Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud ave, peccatorum miserere.

Gracious mother of the Redeemer, you who remain the ever-open gate of heaven, and the star of the sea, succour thy people who fall but strive to rise again.

You who gave birth, while Nature marvelled, to your Holy Creator, a virgin before and after, who heard that Ave from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy on sinners.

Missa Ave maris stella

JOSQUIN DES PREZ

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

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

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; 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.

Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill towards men. We praise thee; we bless thee; we worship thee; we glorify thee. We give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty.

O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art Holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art Most High in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo; Lumen de Lumine; Deum verum de Deo vero; genitum, non factum; consubstantialem Patri; per quem omnia facta sunt.

Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis, et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto, ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est.

Et resurrexit tertia die secundum Scripturas; et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris; et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos; cuius regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit; qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per prophetas;

Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds. God of God; Light of Light; very God of very God; begotten, not made: being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made.

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.**

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

**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.**

O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.

Maria Magdalene et altera Maria

FRANCISCO GUERRERO

Maria Magdalene et altera Maria emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Jesum. Et valde mane una sabbatorum veniunt ad monumentum orto iam sole. Alleluia. Et introeuntes in monumentum viderunt iuvenem sedentem in dextris coopertum stola candida et obstupuerunt. Qui dicit illis: Jesum quem quaeritis Nazarenum, crucifixum: surrexit, non est hic: ecce locus ubi posuerunt eum. Alleluia.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had bought spices that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun. Alleluia. And they entered into the sepulchre and saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said unto them: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. Alleluia.

Ave virgo sanctissima

FRANCISCO GUERRERO

Sanctissima

MATTHEW MARTIN

**Ave virgo sanctissima
Dei mater piissima
Maris stella clarissima
Salve semper gloriosa
Margarita pretiosa
Sicut liliū formosa
Nitens olens velut rosa**

Hail, Holy Virgin,
most blessed Mother of God,
bright star of the sea.
Hail, ever glorious,
precious pearl,
lovely as the lily,
beautiful and perfumed as the rose.

Bogoroditse devo

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Bogoroditse Devo, raduisya,
Biagodatnaya Maria Gospod s Toboyu.
Blagoslovenna Tvoyego,
yako Spasa rodila yesi dush nashikh.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos,
Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou,
For thou has borne the Saviour of our souls.

Virgencita

ARVO PÄRT

Adapted from traditional prayers to the Mother of God
(by Arvo Pärt)

Virgencita de Guadalupe, salva nos, salva.
Santa María de Guadalupe, ruega por nosotros.
Virgencita, salva nos.
Santa María, Madre de Dios, salva nos, ruega por nosotros
pecadores.
Salva nos, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.
Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Virgencita, ruega por nosotros.
Amén.

Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, save us.
Holy Mary of Guadalupe, pray for us.
Virgin Mary, save us.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, save us, pray for us sinners.
Save us, now and in the hour of our death.
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Virgin Mary, pray for us.
Amen.

Virgo prudentissima

HEINRICH ISAAC

Virgo prudentissima, quae pia gaudia mundo attulit,
ut sphaeras omnes transcendit
et astra sub nitidis pedibus radiis,
et luce chorusca liquit,
et ordinibus iam circumsepta novenis
ter tribus atque ierarchiis excepta.
Supremi ante Dei faciem steterat, patrona reorum.
Dicite qui colitis splendentia culmina Olympi:
Spirituum proceres, Archangeli et Angeli
et alme Virtutesque Throni vos Principum,
et agmina sancta, vosque Potestates,
et tu Dominatio caeli flammantes Cherubin,
verbo Seraphinque creati,
an vos laetitiae tantus perfuderit unquam sensus,
ut aeterni Matrem vidisse tonantis consessum.
Caelo, terraque, marique potentem Reginam,
cuius numen modo spiritus omnis
et genus humanum merito veneratur adorat.
Vos, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael testamur
ad aures illius, ut castas fundetis vota precesque
pro sacro Imperio, pro Caesare Maximiliano.
Det Virgo omnipotens hostes superare
malignos; restituat populis pacem
terrisque salutem.
Hoc tibi devota carmen Georgius arte ordinat Augusti
Cantor Rectorque Capellae.
Austriacae praesul regionis, sedulus omni,
se in tua commendat studio pia gaudia mater.
Praecipuum tamen est Illi
quo assumpta fuisti,
quo tu pulchra ut luna micans electa es,
et ut sol.
Tenor Cantus firmus: Virgo prudentissima, quo progredieris,
quasi aurora valde rutilans? Filia Sion.
Tota formosa et suavis es:
pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol.

When the most wise Virgin, who brought holy joy to the world,
passed beyond all spheres
and left the stars beneath her glistening feet
in gleaming radiant light,
she was surrounded by the ninefold Ranks
and received by the nine Hierarchies.
The protector of sinners, she stood before the face of Almighty
God. You who inhabit the dazzling heights of Heaven,
Leaders of the Spiritual Host, Angels and Archangels,
bountiful Virtues, and you Thrones of Principalities,
holy armies, Powers,
Dominions of Heaven, fiery Cherubim,
and Seraphim created from the Word, say whether
such a feeling of joy has ever overwhelmed you as when you
saw the assembly of the Mother of the everlasting Almighty.
She is the Queen, powerful in Heaven, on land and at sea;
whose majesty every spirit and every human being
rightly praises and adores.
You we invoke, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael,
to pour upon her chaste ears our prayers and entreaties
for the sacred empire and for Maximilian the Emperor.
May the all-powerful Virgin grant that he conquer
his wicked enemies, and restore peace to the nations
and safety to the land.
With faithful skill Georgius, the Emperor's Precentor
and Kapellmeister, rehearses this anthem for you.
Austria's Protector, diligent in everything,
earnestly commends himself, Mother, to your tender joys,
The highest place, however, belongs to Him
by whom you were taken up,
through whom you shine, beautiful as the moon,
and are as excellent as the sun.
Virgin most wise, where are you going,
glowing brightly like the dawn? Daughter of Sion!
Wholly fair and sweet you are,
beautiful as the moon, excellent as the sun.