

WIGMORE HALL 125

Monday 10 November 2025
7.30pm

Hercules, Duke of Ferrara

The Tallis Scholars

Peter Phillips director
Amy Haworth soprano
Emma Walshe soprano
Caroline Trevor alto
Elisabeth Paul alto

Steven Harrold tenor
Thomas Castle tenor
Nicholas Todd tenor
Edward Woodhouse tenor
Tim Scott Whiteley bass
Simon Whiteley bass

Josquin des Prez (c.1450-1521)

Motet: Gaude virgo, mater Christi

From *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae* (c.1503)
Kyrie • Gloria

Praeter rerum seriem

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(c.1525-1594)

Surge, amica mea, speciosa mea (pub. 1584)

Ecce tu pulcher es (pub. 1584)

Josquin des Prez

Credo from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*

Interval

Josquin des Prez

Sanctus & Benedictus from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*
Stabat mater (1480)

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Laetentur coeli (pub. 1589)

Vigilate (pub. 1589)

Ave verum corpus (pub. 1605)

Josquin des Prez

Agnus Dei from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*



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In 1502, Hercules d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1431-1505) was seeking the best new singers for his chapel. His agent Gian de Artiganova identified two candidates: Henricus Isaac, who had the better disposition and would compose more often, or Josquin des Prez, who was the better composer but would only compose when he wanted to and required nearly double the salary. The duke chose Josquin (c.1450-1521).

In the 16th Century, Italy was a patchwork of small dukedoms and city states whose rivalries drove cultural innovation that was the envy of Europe. Hercules Duke of Ferrara (in north-east Italy) was highly regarded as a patron of the arts and especially music. He assembled virtuoso instrumentalists and developed a chapel choir with singers from Italy, Spain and Northern Europe. In his pursuit of the best musicians and desire to be at the forefront of musical innovation, Josquin's difficult nature and high salary demands were worth the investment.

Josquin joined the Ferrarese Ducal Chapel in 1503 having already worked for the Milanese court, the Sistine Chapel in Rome, and the French King, Louis XII. He stayed just a year, yet one of his most famous works is his *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*. Josquin enjoyed using symbolic structural elements, and the *Missa* uses a technique called 'soggetto cavato dalle... parole' or 'subject carved out of words.' Josquin took the name 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae' and matched the vowels to solmization syllables (ut re mi fa so la) giving a melody of D-C-D-C-D-F-E-D. Listen for this tune in long notes in the *superius* (highest) part at the *Kyrie*'s opening before it moves into its more usual position in the tenor (high men's voice). This melody recurs throughout as a foundation or *cantus firmus*. While not prominent, the device means that Hercules's name underpins the whole Mass around which the elaborate polyphony of the other voices is woven.

Although the *soggetto* is a recurring presence, each Mass movement has its own character. The *Kyrie* playfully passes short motifs from voice to voice. The *Gloria* hurries through its longer text, dwelling only to elaborate on the name of Christ. The long *Credo* text is illustrated with wordpainting at key moments such as the descending motif at 'sepultus est' (he is buried), the lively ascending scales at 'ascendit in caelum' (ascended into heaven), while at 'unam sanctam... Ecclesiam' (one holy church) the voices begin the phrase altogether, emphasising unity. The broad, solemn *Sanctus* contrasts with the lively hosannas. The *Agnus Dei* builds in intensity with increasingly complex counterpoint: a three-voice canon (voices singing the same melody starting at different times) in the second *Agnus* and an expansion from four to six voices for the final one.

Josquin was praised posthumously for both his technical and his expressive capabilities. Reformer Martin Luther described him as 'the master of the notes, who must do as he wills,' while the theoretician Heinrich Glarean declared that 'no-one has more effectively

expressed the passions of the soul in music.' Both talents can be heard in the *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*.

Josquin is also regarded today as a key figure in the development of Renaissance musical style both for his text setting and expression and for heralding the equal-voiced musical texture that would become the norm for 16th-century composers. This new texture can be heard in the motet, *Gaude virgo*. Whereas in *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae* the *soggetto* was distinct from the other parts in both its melody and extended note values, in *Gaude virgo* all voices have similar rhythms and melodies. The interweaving voices are unified by sharing the same opening motifs for each phrase and this texture is contrasted with chordal homophony to reflect the structure and meaning of his text.

Josquin continued to use a mixture of styles throughout his life. His two other motets in the programme both use a *cantus firmus* like the *Missa*. *Praeter rerum seriem* is the most typical in using a chant melody (from the first Mass of Christmas). The *Stabat mater* is more unusual in borrowing a tune from a secular song by Binchois, *Comme femme desconfortée*. Its theme of female lament is fitting for this hymn on the Virgin Mary's suffering at the crucifixion.

The other motets both situate Josquin alongside two of his most illustrious successors and chart a trajectory from Jesus's first entry into the world to his presence in the Eucharist, when Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Josquin's *Gaude virgo* and *Praeter rerum seriem* reflect on the mystery of Christ's conception and birth, celebrating the role of the Virgin Mary. Two motets by **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina** (1525/6-94), who worked in Rome, set texts from the biblical Song of Songs, whose love poems were understood allegorically as illustrating the relationship between Christ and the Church. Josquin's *Stabat mater* leads us into contemplating the death of Christ at the crucifixion, before two motets by English composer **William Byrd** (c.1540-1623) anticipate the arrival of Christ first at Advent and then at his promised second coming. *Vigilate* is especially noteworthy for its vivid wordpainting and insistent repetitions of 'vigilate' (watch). A Catholic composer working in Protestant England, Byrd's motets also had political resonances as Catholics waited and hoped for a restoration of their church. *Ave verum corpus* was a text often sung at the consecration of the bread and wine during Mass. The motet was printed in Byrd's *Gradualia* (1605), a collection of liturgical music for English Catholics celebrating clandestine services.

Both Byrd and Palestrina stand at the opposite end of the Renaissance to Josquin, but the influence of his new equal-voiced polyphony and concern for clear text declamation and expression of meaning can be heard at its height in these later composers' motets.

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Josquin des Prez (c.1450-1521)

Motet: Gaude virgo, mater Christi
Liturgical text

Gaude virgo, mater Christi
Quae per aurem concepisti,
Gabriele nuntio.

Gaude, quia Deo plena
Peperisti sine poena,
Cum pudoris lilio.

Gaude, quia tui nati,
Quem dolebas mortem pati,
Fulget resurrectio.

Gaude Christo ascendente
Et in caelum te vidente
Motu fertur proprio.

Gaude quae post ipsum scandis
Et est honor tibi grandis,
In caeli palatio.

Ubi fructus ventris tui
Per te detur nobis frui
In perenni gaudio. Alleluia.

Rejoice, O virgin mother of Christ

Rejoice, O virgin mother of Christ,
who has conceived through the breath
of the messenger Gabriel.

Rejoice, for when heavy with God
you gave birth without suffering,
with the chastity of a lily.

Rejoice, for your own Son,
whom you mourned as if dead,
now shines in resurrection.

Rejoice, for Christ has ascended
and sees you in heaven and
all proceeds in proper course.

Rejoice, for you rise up after him
and great honour is yours
in the palace of heaven.

Where the fruit of your womb
through your doing is granted to us.
In eternal praise. Alleluia.

From Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae (c.1503)
Liturgical text

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison.

Mass of Hercules, Duke of Ferrara

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

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra pax hominibus
Bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus
te,

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will towards men.
We praise you, we bless
you,

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.

we adore you, we glorify
you.
We give thanks to you
for your great glory.
Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty.
Jesu 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.
you who take away the
sins of the world
receive our
prayer.
You who sit at the right
hand of God the Father
have mercy on us.
For you alone are holy,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the most
high,
Jesus Christ, with the
Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the
Father.
Amen.

Praeter rerum seriem
Liturgical text

Praeter rerum seriem parit
Deum hominem Virgo
mater. Nec vir tangit
virignem, nec prolis
originem novit pater.

Virtus sancti spiritus opus
illud coelitus operatur.
Initus et exitus partus tui
penitus quis scrutatur? Dei
providentia quae disponit
omnia tam suave: tua
puerperia transfer in
mysteria, Mater ave.

This is no normal
scheme of things

Beyond the order of this
world, the Virgin
Mother bore God in
human form. Still a
virgin, she was
untouched by man, nor
did the father know the
child's origin.

That work was achieved
from heaven by the
power of the Holy Spirit.
Who can fathom the
profundity of your
labour's beginning and
its end? God's
providence, which has
ordered everything to
such perfection. Guide
your children into the
mysteries, Mother, hail!

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(c.1525-1594)

Surge, amica mea,
speciosa mea
(pub. 1584)
Biblical text

Arise, my love, my
fair one

Surge, amica mea, speciosa
mea, et veni.

Arise, my love, my fair
one, and come away.

Columba mea, in
foraminibus petrae, in
caverna maceriae,
Ostende mihi faciem tuam,
Sonet vox tua in auribus meis:
Vox enim tua dulcis,
et facies tua
decora.

O my dove, that art in the
clefts of the rock, in the
secret places of the stairs,
let me see thy countenance,
let me hear thy voice;
for sweet is thy voice, and
thy countenance is
comely.

Ecce tu pulcher es (pub.
1584)
Biblical text

Behold thou art fair

Ecce tu pulcher es dilecte mi
et decorus.
Lectulus noster floridus,
Tigna domorum nostrarum
cedrina,
Laquearia cupressina.
Ego flos campi et lilium
convallium.

Behold thou art fair, my
beloved, and comely.
Our bed is flourishing.
The beams of our houses
are of cedar,
our rafters of cypress trees.
I am the flower of the field,
and the lily of the valleys.

Josquin des Prez

Credo from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*
Liturgical text

Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
Factorem caeli et terrae,
Et invisibilium.

I believe in one God,
the Almighty Father,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and
invisible.

Et in unum Dominum Jesum
Christum,
Filiium 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,

And in one Lord Jesus
Christ,
the only begotten Son of
God,
begotten of the Father
before all time.
God of God, Light of
Light,
true God of true God,
begotten not made:
of one substance with the
Father,
through whom all things
were made.
Who, for us men

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.
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 expecto resurrectionem
mortuorum,
Et vitam venturi
saeculi.
Amen.

and for our salvation,
came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the
Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
He was crucified for us
under Pontius Pilate: he
died and was buried.
And he rose on the third day
according to the scriptures
and ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand
of the Father.
And he will come again
with glory
to judge the living and the
dead:
whose kingdom has no end.
And in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the
Father and the Son,
who with the Father and
Son is worshipped and
glorified,
who has spoken through
the Prophets.
And 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.

Interval

Josquin des Prez

Sanctus & Benedictus from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*
Liturgical text

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,
Dominus Deus sabaoth,
Pleni sunt caeli et terra
gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in
nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of hosts,
heaven and earth are full
of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
in Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Stabat mater (1480)

Liturgical text

Stabat Mater dolorosa Juxta crucem lacrymosa, Dum pendebat Filius,	A sorrowing mother stood weeping beside the cross while her son hung there.
Cujus animam gementem, Contristantem et dolentem Pertransivit gladius.	Her grieving heart, so full of tears and anguish, pierced as though with a sword.
O quam tristis et afflicta Fuit illa benedicta Mater Unigeniti.	Oh, how sad and unfortunate was that blessed mother of an only son.
Quae maerebat et dolebat, Et tremebat, dum videbat Nati poenas inclyti.	How the living mother mourned and grieved, watching the suffering of her glorious son.
Quis est homo qui non fleret, Christi Matrem si videret In tanto supplicio?	Who is he that would not weep, seeing the mother of Christ in such distress?
Quis non posset contristari, Piam Matrem contemplari Dolentem cum filio?	Who would not feel compassion at the sight of Christ's mother grieving beside her Son?
Pro peccatis suae gentis, Jesum vidit in tormentis, Et flagellis subditum.	For the sins of her people, she saw Jesus tormented and subjected to scourging.
Vidit suum dulcem natum Morientem desolatum, Dum emisit spiritum.	She watched her dear Son dying forsaken as He yielded up His spirit.
Eia Mater, fons amoris, Me sentire vim doloris Fac, ut tecum lugeam.	O mother, thou fount of love, share the depth of thy suffering with me, so that I may mourn with thee.
Fac ut ardeat cor meum In amando Christum deum, Ut sibi complaceam.	Kindle such love for Christ my God within my heart that I may be worthy of Him.
Virgo virginum praeclara, Jam mihi non sis amara, Fac me tecum plangere.	O Virgin, pre-eminent among virgins, be not disdainful toward me, let me weep with thee.
Fac, ut portem Christi mortem, Passionis ejus sortem, Et plagas recolere.	Grant that I may bear Christ's death, let me share in His passion remembering His suffering.

Fac me plagis
vulnerari,
Cruce hac inebriari,
Ob amorem filii.

Inflammatum et
accensus,
Per te Virgo sim
defensus
In die judicii.

Fac me cruce
custodiri,
Morte Christi
praemunire
Confoveri gratia.

Quando corpus morietur
Fac ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.
Amen.

Let me be wounded by
His wounds,
enraptured by His cross
and the blood of the Son.

Though I burn and am
aflake,
may I be defended by
thee, O Virgin,
at the day of judgement.

Let me be protected by
the Cross,
strengthened by the
death of Christ,
thankful in His love.

When my body dies,
let my soul be granted
the glory of Paradise.
Amen.

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Laetentur coeli

(pub. 1589)

Biblical text

Laetentur coeli, et exultet
terra.
Jubilate montes
laudem,
Quia Dominus noster veniet
Et pauperum suorum
miserebitur.
Orietur in diebus tuis iusticia
et abundantia paucis,
Et pauperum suorum
miserebitur.

Let the heavens be glad

Let the heavens rejoice, and
let the earth be glad.
Let the mountains offer
up praise,
because our Lord will come,
and he will show mercy to
his poor.
On our days let justice and
plenty arise for the select,
and he will have mercy on
his poor.

Vigilate (pub. 1589)

Biblical text

Vigilate, nescitis enim
quando dominus domus
veniat,
Sero, an media nocte,
an gallicantu, an
mane.
Vigilate ergo, ne cum venerit
repente, inveniat vos
dormientes.
Quod autem dico vobis,
omnibus dico: vigilate.

Watch ye

Watch ye therefore for you
know not when the lord of
the house cometh,
at even, or at midnight, or
at the cock crowing, or
in the morning:
Watch therefore, lest
coming on a sudden, he
find you sleeping.
And what I say to you, I
say to all: Watch.

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its
accompaniment have ended.*

Ave verum corpus

(pub. 1605)

Liturgical text

Ave, verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine: vere
passum, immolatum in
cruce pro homine. Cuius
latus perforatum unda
fluxit et sanguine: esto
nobis praegustatum, in
mortis examine.

O dulcis, o pie, o Jesu, fili
Mariae, miserere mei.

Hail the true body

Hail the true body, born
of the Virgin Mary: you
who truly suffered and
were sacrificed on the
cross for the sake of
man. From whose
pierced flank flowed
water and blood: be a
foretaste for us in the
trial of death.

O sweet, O gentle, O Jesu,
son of Mary, have
mercy on me.

Josquin des Prez

Agnus Dei from *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*

Liturgical text

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