

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 11 April 2022 1.00pm

Christ on this Cross: A meditation on the Crucifixion

The Cardinall's Musick

Julie Cooper soprano **Mark Dobell** tenor
Cecilia Osmond soprano **Nicholas Todd** tenor
Carris Jones alto **Richard Bannan** bass
Matthew Venner alto **Nathan Harrison** bass

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This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3

Plainchant

	Vexilla regis prodeunt (569)
Cristóbal de Morales (c.1500-1553)	O crux ave, spes unica (c.1550)
William Byrd (c.1540-1623)	Miserere mei, Deus (pub. 1591)
Giovanni Croce (c.1557-1609)	O triste spectaculum (pub. 1605)
Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)	Lamentations 1: Incipit lamentatio
Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)	Vere languores nostros (pub. 1572)
Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)	Aus der Tiefe SWV25 (pub. 1619)
Gerónimo Gonzales (fl.1630)	Lamentación de Jeremías
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)	Stabat mater (c.1590)

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'Vexilla regis prodeunt' is an Easter plainchant hymn composed by the Bishop of Poitiers, Venantius Fortunatus, in 569AD to celebrate the arrival in his city of a splinter of Christ's cross, authorised by the Roman emperor and brought in procession under the imperial banner. When published by Vaughan Williams in English translation in the English Hymnal in 1906 it had seven verses, though the Latin original has as many as ten. It is sung in unison.

One of the verses - 'O crux ave, spes unica' - is the source of the text set by Spanish composer **Cristóbal de Morales** as a five-voice motet around 1550. One of two tenors begins. The other voices - bass, tenor, alto, soprano in that order - follow in imitation, setting up flowing polyphony, or lines of interweaving melody. At 'Piis adauge gratiam' ('improve religious souls in grace'), the texture reduces like the good, who are few, but gathers again with all parts arriving together for the final bars 'Reisque dele crimina' ('the sins of criminals efface') who are, of course, the many.

The English Roman Catholic composer **William Byrd** published 'Miserere mei, Deus' in his 1591 collection *Cantiones Sacrae II*. After its launch, the composer left London and retired to the Essex countryside for the rest of his long life to compose nothing but Latin music for a discreet community of Roman Catholics around his patron, Lord Petre, who had refused to give up the old religion. The text is Psalm 51 (the same as in the famous Allegri 'Miserere'). Byrd's choir sings the opening words in homophony - all parts moving together - before breaking into polyphony - the parts independent - when the s of 'secundum' becomes percussive and rhythmic around the choir. The minor key of the start becomes major at 'Et secundum' when homophony returns. It breaks again at 'dele iniquitatem' ('blot out my transgressions') as the individual singers focus on their own iniquities.

'O triste spectaculum' is a double choir motet by **Giovanni Croce**, choirmaster of St Mark's Basilica, Venice, from 1603 until 1609 when he died of an infection giving him 'fever and spots'. St Mark's was famous for its double choirs volleying phrases to each other across the vault. Here Choir I sings the opening phrase about the sad spectacle of Christ on the cross; Choir II agrees, replying 'O crudeli supplicium' - 'cruel punishment'. The ping-pong continues until the final phrase when the choirs come together.

Byrd's mentor and senior colleague was **Thomas Tallis**, who had lost his job in the dissolution of the monasteries and subsequently had to tread a careful path through the religious minefield of the early 16th Century. Elizabeth ascended in 1557 and announced she would not be 'a window on men's souls', bringing reconciliation at the start of her reign. Tallis set the Bible's Lamentations of Jeremiah during her first decade. Jeremiah uses the Hebrew alphabet Aleph, Beth etc and a Latin text to itemise the woes of

Jerusalem: A - the city has become enslaved; B - her friends have become her enemies, and so on. Finally, the soprano leads a call for the city to repent ('convertere') with the others repeating her words in solemn homophony.

Tomás Luis de Victoria's 'Vere languores nostros' is a four-voice motet published in 1572. The text is in two parts: first, Isaiah 53 verse 4, which Handel set in *Messiah*; secondly, from the Latin poem *Crux fidelis* by the 'Vexilla regis prodeunt' poet, Venantius Fortunatus. The music follows the principles laid down by the counter-reformers in the Catholic church requiring composers to change note with the syllables and avoid repetition. Simple polyphony becomes long-drawn homophony at the change of mood for 'dulce lignum' - 'sweet wood' (of the cross) - which bore the saviour. The parts separate and Victoria allows himself an indulgent, not to say naughty melisma (melodically extended syllable) on the important word 'Dominum'.

The German composer **Heinrich Schütz** was sent to Venice as a young man to perfect his musical talent. At St Mark's Basilica he heard double choirs echoing each other and applied the technique to the music he would write for the protestant Lutheran church. In 1619, back in Germany, he published *Psalmen Davids* ('The Psalms of David') including 'Aus der Tiefe', a German setting of Psalm 130 for double choir. It is almost entirely syllabic and homophonic, the separate choirs volleying block chords back and forth, agreeing only on certain key words - Herr! (Lord) and Israel!

Also for double choir is the 'Lamentación de Jeremias' by the 17th-century Portuguese composer **Gerónimo Gonzalez**, choirmaster at the Convento del Carmen in Seville. The manuscript of this work turned up in Guatemala, Central America, presumably having travelled there with the early colonists.

Giovanni Perluigi da Palestrina composed his double-choir setting of the *Stabat Mater* around 1590. The 20-verse, 13th-century Latin poem came into being at the same time as the Franciscan monastic order. It is believed by some to have been written by the Italian poet Jacopone da Todi, born around the time of St Francis's death, who was accepted into the brotherhood on the strength of his religious satirical poems in the Umbrian dialect condemning corruption in the rich, the powerful and the papacy. The rhythmic four-beat meter and regular rhymes give the *Stabat Mater* the appeal of folk poetry. Its value in Christian iconography is its portrayal not of the young mother cradling a new-born, but the grief-laden 50-year-old present at the execution of her son.

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Plainchant

Vexilla regis prodeunt

(569)

Venantius Fortunatus

Vexilla regis prodeunt
Fulget crucis mysterium,
Qua vita mortem pertulit,
Et morte vitam protulit.

Quae vulnerata lanceae
Mucrone diro, criminum
Ut nos lavaret sordibus,
Manavit unda et
sanguine.

Impleta sunt quae concinit
David fideli carmine,
Dicendo nationibus
Regnavit a ligno Deus.

Arbor decora et fulgida,
Ornata Regis purpura,
Electa digno stipite
Tam sancta membra tangere.

Beata, cuius
brachiis
Pretium pependit
saeculi:
Statera facta corporis,
Tulitque praedam
tartari.

O crux ave, spes
unica,
Hoc passionis tempore
Piis adauge gratiam,
Reisque dele crimina.

Te, fons salutis Trinitas,
Collaudet omnis spiritus:
Quibus Crucis victoriam
Largiris, adde praemium.
Amen.

Cristóbal de Morales (c.1500-1553)

O crux ave, spes unica

(c.1550)

Anonymous

O Crux ave, spes
unica,
Hoc passionis tempore

Abroad the Regal Banners fly

Abroad the Regal Banners fly,
now shines the Coss's mystery;
upon it Life did death endure,
and yet by death did life procure.

Who, wounded with a direful spear,
Did, purposely to wash us clear
from stain of sin, pour out a flood
of precious Water mixed with
Blood.

That which the Prophet-King of old
hath in mysterious verse foretold,
is now accomplished, whilst we see
God ruling nations from a Tree.

O lovely and refulgent Tree,
adorned with purpled majesty;
culled from a worthy stock, to bear
those Limbs which sanctified were.

Blest Tree, whose happy
branches bore
the wealth that did the world
restore;
the beam that did that Body weigh
which raised up hell's expected
prey.

Hail, Cross, of hopes the most
sublime!
Now in this mournful Passion time,
improve religious souls in grace,
the sins of criminals efface.

Blest Trinity, salvation's spring,
may every soul Thy praises sing;
to those Thou grantest conquest by
Thy holy Cross, rewards apply.
Amen

O Cross! all hail! sole hope, abide

Hail, Cross, of hopes the most
sublime!
Now in this mournful Passion time,

Piis adauge gratiam,
Reisque dele crimina.

Te, fons salutis Trinitas,
Collaudet omnis spiritus:
Quibus Crucis victoriam
Largiris, adde praemium.
Amen.

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Miserere mei, Deus (pub. 1591)

Liturgical text

Miserere mei, Deus,
Secundum magnam
misericordiam tuam
Et secundum multitudinem
Miserationum tuarum dele
iniquitatem meam.

improve religious souls in grace,
the sins of criminals efface.

Blest Trinity, salvation's spring,
may every soul Thy praises sing;
to those Thou grantest conquest by
the holy Cross, rewards apply.
Amen.

Have mercy upon me, O God,
according to your great
mercy
and according to the abundance
of your compassion blot out my
transgressions.

Giovanni Croce (c.1557-1609)

O triste spectaculum

(pub. 1605)

Anonymous

O triste spectaculum,
O crudeli supplicium,
Mortis turpissima condemnatur
Jesus.
Ululate, plangite et clamate
Quia occisus est Salvator noster.

O sad sight

O sad sight,
O cruel punishment,
Jesus condemned to the pangs
of death.
Mourn, weep and cry out
because our Saviour is killed.

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

Lamentations 1: Incipit lamentatio

Incipit lamentatio
Jeremiae prophetae.

Aleph. Quomodo sedet sola
Civitas plena
populo:
Facta est quasi vidua domina
gentium:
Princeps
provinciarum
Facta est sub
tributo.

Beth. Plorans ploravit in
nocte,

Here begins the lamentation

Here begins the lamentation
of the prophet Jeremiah.

Aleph. How desolate lies the city
that was once thronged with
people;
the one-time queen of
nations
has become as a widow; once a
ruler of
provinces, she is now subject to
others.

Beth. By night she weeps in
sorrow,

Et lacrimae eius in maxillis eius: Non est qui consolateur eam Ex omnibus caris eius: Omnes amici eius spreverunt eam Et facti sunt ei inimici.	and tears run down her cheeks; of all who love her, there is none to console her; all her friends have spurned her and have become her foes.
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Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.	Jerusalem, Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God.
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Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)

Vere languores nostros Truly, our failings

(pub. 1572)

Liturgical text

Venantius Fortunatus

Vere languores nostros ipse tulit Et dolores nostros ipse portavit Cujus livore sanati sumus.	Truly, our failings he has taken upon himself and our sorrows he has borne; by his wounds we have been saved.
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Dulce lignum, Dulce clavos dulcia ferens pondera Quae sola fuisti digna sustinere Regem coelorum et Dominum.	Sweet wood, sweet nails that bore this sweet burden which alone were worthy to support the king of heaven and Lord.
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Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)

Aus der Tiefe SWV25 Out of the deep

(pub. 1619)

Liturgical text

Aus der Tiefe ruf ich, Herr, zu dir, Herr, höre meine Stimme! Lass deine Ohren merken Auf die Stimme meines Flehens! So du willst, Herr, Sünden zurechnen, Herr, wer wird bestehen? Denn bei dir ist die Vergebung, Dass man dich fürchte. Ich harre des Herren, Meine Seele harret, Und ich hoffe auf sein Wort. Meine Seele wartet auf den Herren Von einer Morgenwache Bis zur andern. Israel, hoffe auf den Herren! Denn bei dem Herren ist die Gnade	Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O Lord, who my abide it? For there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared. I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him: in his word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch. O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy:
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Und viel Erlösung bei ihm. Und er wird Israel erlösen Aus allen seinen Sünden. Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn Und auch den Heiligen Geiste. Wie es war im Anfang Jetzt und immerdar, Und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen.	and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel: from all his sins. 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.
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Gerónimo Gonzales (fl.1630)

Lamentación de Jeremías

Incipit lamentatio
Jeremiae prophetae.

Aleph. Quomodo sedet sola
Civitas plena
populo:
Facta est quasi vidua domina
gentium:
Princeps
provinciarum
Facta est sub
tributo.

Beth. Plorans ploravit in
nocte,
Et lacrimae eius in maxillis eius:
Non est qui consoletur eam
Ex omnibus caris eius:
Omnes amici eius spreverunt eam
Et facti sunt ei inimici.

Ghimel. Migravit Juda propter
afflictionem
Ac multitudinem
servitutis:
Habitavit inter gentes,
Nec invenit requiem.
Omnes persecutores eius
Apprehenderunt eam inter
angustias.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Convertere ad Dominum Deum
tuum.

Lamentation of Jeremiah

Here begins the lamentation
of the prophet Jeremiah.

Aleph. How desolate lies the city
that was once thronged with
people;
the one-time queen of
nations
has become as a widow; once a
ruler of
provinces, she is now subject to
others.

Beth. By night she weeps in
sorrow,
and tears run down her cheeks;
of all who love her,
there is none to console her;
all her friends have spurned her
and have become her foes.

Ghimel. Judah has gone into
exile because of
her suffering and the burden of
her servitude;
she is settled among the heathen,
and has found no rest.
All her pursuers
have captured her in the
straits.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
turn to the Lord your
God.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594)

Stabat mater (c.1590)

Anonymous

Stabat mater dolorosa
luxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat filius.

Cuius animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransiuit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti;

Quae moerebat et dolebat
Pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati poenas incliti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari,
Piam matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Iesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
Morientem desolatum,
Dum emisit spiritum.

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim
doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum
Ut sibi complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Tui nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Mecum poenas divide.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

Stood the sorrowful mother

Stood the sorrowful mother
weeping by the cross
while her son hung there.

Through her sorrowful heart,
crushed with sadness and grief,
there passed a sword.

O how sad and how afflicted
was that blessed woman,
the mother of the sole begotten;

How she grieved and sorrowed
and trembled when she saw
the pains of her glorious son.

What man would not weep
to see the mother of Christ
in such great anguish?

Who could not feel her grief,
to think on the mother of Christ
grieving with her son?

She saw Jesus in agony
and scourged by the lash
for the sins of his people.

She saw her own sweet son
dying and forsaken,
until he yielded up his spirit.

O mother, fount of love,
make me feel the force of your
sorrow,
that I too may grieve with you.

Make my heart burn
with love for Christ my God,
that I may be pleasing to him.

Holy mother, grant me this,
fix deep within my heart
the wounds of him, crucified.

Let me share the torment
of your wounded son,
who deigned to suffer for me.

Let me weep with you,
and suffer with the crucified
my whole life through.

luxta crucem tecum
stare,
Te libenter sociare
In planctu desidero.

Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi iam non sis amara:
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fac ut portem Christi
mortem,
Passionis fac consortem,
Et plagas recolare.

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

Inflammatum et accensum
Per te, Virgo, sim defensum
In die
iudicii.

Fac me cruce custodiri,
Morte Christi praemuniri,
Confoveri gratia

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.

I yearn to stand with you beside
the cross,
and willingly join with you
in deep lament.

Virgin, all virgins excelling,
do not be harsh with me:
but let me mourn with you.

Let me bear Christ's death
within me,
let me share his passion
and be mindful of his wounds.

Let me be riven by his wounds,
intoxicated by his cross,
out of love for your son.

Thus kindled and enflamed,
may I, through you, O virgin,
be defended on the day of
judgement.

Let me be guarded by the cross,
defended by the death of Christ,
and strengthened by his grace.

And grant that when my body dies,
my soul may gain
the glory of paradise.

Translation of 'Vexilla regis prodeunt' by Walter Kirkham Blount