

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 18 November 2024
1.00pm

TOWARD THE DAWN

Stile Antico

Helen Ashby soprano
Kate Ashby soprano
Rebecca Hickey soprano
Emma Ashby alto
Cara Curran alto
Rosie Parker alto
Andrew Griffiths tenor
Jonathan Hanley tenor
Benedict Hymas tenor
James Arthur bass
Nathan Harrison bass
Gareth Thomas bass

John Wilbye (1574-1638)
Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)
John Ward (c.1589-1638)
William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Philippe Rogier (c.1561-1596)
Orlande de Lassus (c.1530-1594)
Nico Muhly (b.1981)

Thomas Tallis
Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
John Taverner (c.1490-1545)

EVENING

Draw on, sweet night (pub. 1598)
Te lucis ante terminum (i) (pub.1575)
Come, sable night (pub. 1613)
Vigilate (pub. 1589)

NIGHTFALL

Laboravi in gemitu meo (n/a)
Toutes les nuitz (pub. 1563)
Gentle sleep (2015)

DAWN

O nata lux de lumine (pub. 1575)
Ecco mormorar l'onde SV51 (pub. 1590)
Ave Dei Patris filia (n/a)



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Today's programme charts a course from twilight to sunrise, echoing both the rhythms of church liturgy and the medieval experience of night, seductive and unsettling in equal measure.

We begin with **John Wilbye's** *Draw on, sweet night*, published in 1598 in the last years of Elizabeth I's reign. The poet, wallowing in gloom, yearns for darkness to mirror his own inner state. Wilbye's music perfectly captures the bittersweet quality of the text in chains of deliciously drawn-out dissonance. A similar poetic conceit underlies *Come, sable night* from the 1613 *First Book of Madrigals* by the Jacobean composer **John Ward**, whose outstanding music deserves to be much better known. Ward clothes his melancholic verses in music of startling nuance and harmonic richness.

Between these madrigals we sing one of two settings of *Te lucis ante terminum* by **Thomas Tallis**, whose career spanned no fewer than four monarchs. The hymn sets a text for Compline, the final office of the monastic day, and is a prayer for God's protection through the night. The only remaining source for this work is *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575, a publication which Tallis produced jointly with **William Byrd**, each composer contributing 17 Latin motets. It seems that this book – the first volume of music ever to be printed in England – was intended not only for use in private homes, but to rival the great motet collections of the Continent and showcase the quality of English composers abroad. Although by 1575 Tallis could have drawn on a large repertoire of older music, it seems likely that works such as *Te lucis* were newly written for *Cantiones*: its economy, elegance and characteristic five-voiced texture are typical of his Elizabethan style.

Byrd served for much of his life as a Gentleman of Elizabeth's Chapel Royal, but nevertheless remained active in the undercover Catholic community, at considerable personal risk. His music often expresses coded support for the Catholic cause – nowhere more than in his subversive 1589 *Cantiones sacrae*, whose texts, while scrupulously Biblical, would have carried clear resonances for his persecuted Catholic friends. The superb *Vigilate* is a case in point, exhorting true believers to stay awake, hold firm, and prepare for the return of their judge. Byrd pulls out all the stops, depicting the crowing of the cockerel, the drooping head of the lethargic believer, and the sudden panic at the unexpected return of the master, in vividly madrigalian fashion.

Night arrives, but our sleep is fitful at best. The motet *Laboravi in gemitu meo* speaks of a bed washed with tears, strikingly painted in the falling melismas of the opening. A version of this work

survives in English manuscripts where it is attributed to Thomas Morley. In fact, Morley had merely made minimal adjustments to an existing composition by **Phillipe Rogier**, one of many Flemish composers who made their careers at the Spanish court in the later 16th Century, and it is Rogier's original that we perform today. We follow it with a luscious chanson by **Lassus**, first published in 1563. *Toutes les nuitz* depicts a solitary lover with only a pillow to kiss; constantly shifting between minor and major, it sounds like a study in frustration.

Insomnia of another kind is found in **Nico Muhly's** atmospheric *Gentle Sleep*, a 2016 Wigmore Hall commission for *Stile Antico*. Muhly sets verses from Henry IV Part II, in which the careworn monarch yearns for the oblivion of sleep. Muhly wrote that 'setting Shakespeare is near impossible' and risks becoming 'an act of vandalism'. His solution was therefore 'to fragment the text so that specific lines emerge from a soporific texture of repeated phrases!' The result is a rich, complex tapestry of sound, by turns lulling and insistent, but never finding repose.

The first glimmers of dawn are signalled by Tallis's *O nata lux*, another gem from the 1575 *Cantiones*. The text, a hymn appropriate for the morning service of Lauds, describes Christ as 'Light born of Light'; the crystalline simplicity of Tallis's music conjures an atmosphere of freshness and renewal. Nature then responds, stirring gently in the morning breeze, as painted with exquisite poise by **Monteverdi** in *Ecco mormorar l'onde* from the Second Book of Madrigals (1590).

Our musical sunrise arrives in the shape of **John Taverner's** immense *Ave Dei Patris filia*. Probably written during the 1520s, it is based on the Matins plainchant *Te Deum*, and its text praises the Virgin, who is compared both to the sun and the moon; Taverner relishes the words 'ut sol' – 'like the sun', playing on their double meaning as the ascending fifth in the medieval hexachord. Like many large-scale antiphons, it falls into two parts – the first in triple time, and the second in duple metre. Sections for solo singers (most thrillingly, for three high voices in the second part) alternate with monumental sections of polyphony for the full choir. The most remarkable music of all is reserved for the final Amen: a dazzling web of complex rhythmic and motivic interplay, leaving the listener bathed in golden light.

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EVENING

John Wilbye (1574-1638)

Draw on, sweet night (pub. 1598)

Anonymous

Draw on, sweet night! best friend unto those cares
That do arise from painful melancholy;
My life so ill through want of comfort fares,
That unto thee I consecrate it wholly.

Sweet night, draw on! My griefs, when they be told
To shades and darkness, find some ease from
paining,
And while thou all in silence dost enfold,
I then shall have best time for my complaining.

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

Te lucis ante terminum (i) (pub.1575)

Liturgical text

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Te lucis ante terminum, | Before the ending of the day, |
| Rerum Creator, poscimus, | Creator of the world, we pray |
| Ut pro tua clementia, | that with thy wanted favour thou |
| Sis praesul et custodia. | wouldst be our guard and keeper now. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Procul recedant somnia, | From all ill dreams defend our eyes, |
| Et noctium phantasmata: | from nightly fears and fantasies; |
| Hostemque nostrum comprime, | tread under foot our ghostly foe |
| Ne pollutantur corpora. | that no pollution we may know. |

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Praesta, Pater piissime, | O Father, that we ask be done |
| Patrique compar Unice, | through Jesus Christ thine only Son, |
| Cum Spiritu Paraclito, | who, with the Holy Ghost and thee, |
| Regnans per omne saeculum. Amen. | doth live and reign eternally. Amen. |

John Ward (c.1589-1638)

Come, sable night (pub. 1613)

John Ward

Come, sable night, put on thy mourning stole,
And help Amyntas sadly to condole.
Behold, the sun hath shut his golden eye,
The day is spent, and shades fair lights supply.
All things in sweet repose their labours close;
Only Amyntas wastes his hours in wailing,
Whilst all his hopes do faint, and life is failing.

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Vigilate (pub. 1589)

Liturgical 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.

NIGHTFALL

Philippe Rogier (c.1561-1596)

Laboravi in gemitu meo

Liturgical text

Laboravi in gemitu
meo;
Lavabo per singulas
noctes lectum
meum;
Lachrimis meis stratum
meum rigabo.

I have laboured with my groaning

I have laboured with my
groaning;
I will wash my bed
through each
successive night;
I will water my coverlet
with my tears.

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

Orlande de Lassus (c.1530-1594)

Toutes les nuitz (pub. 1563)

Clément Marot

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| Toutes les nuitz que sans vous je me couche, Pensant à vous ne fay que sommeiller, Et en revant jusques au resveiller Incessemment vous quiers parmi la couche, Et bien souvent au lieu de vostre bouche En soupirant je baise l'oreiller. | Every night that I sleep without you, thinking of you makes me want only to slumber, so as to dream of you until awakening seeking you incessantly in the bed, and often in place of your mouth with a sigh I kiss the pillow. |
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Nico Muhly (b.1981)

Gentle sleep (2015)

William Shakespeare

O sleep! O gentle sleep!
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfum'd chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lull'd with sound of sweetest melody?

DAWN

Thomas Tallis

O nata lux de lumine O light born of light

(pub. 1575)

Anonymous

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|---|---|
| O nata lux de lumine Jesu redemptor saeculi, Dignare clemens supplicum Laudes precesque sumere. | O light born of light, Jesus, redeemer of the age, deign mercifully to hear suppliants' praises and prayers. |
| Qui carne quondam contegi Dignatus es pro perditis, Nos membra confer effici Tui beati corporis. | You who once deigned to take on flesh on behalf of the damned, grant that we be made limbs of your blessed body. |

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

Ecco mormorar l'onde Here the waves murmur

SV51 (pub. 1590)

Torquato Tasso

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| Ecco mormorar l'onde E tremolar le fronde A l'aura mattutina e gli arborscelli E sovra i verdi rami i vagli augelli Cantar soavemente E rider l'orient Ecco già l'alba appare E si specchia nel mare E rasserena il cielo E imperla il dolce gielo E gli alti monti indora O bella e vaga aurora L'aura e tua messagiera E tu de l'aura Ch'ogni arso co ristaura. | Here the waves murmur, the leaves and bushes rustle in the morning breeze, and on green branches the charming birds sing sweetly, and the east smiles. Here, the dawn already breaks and mirrors itself in the sea, and heaven calms itself, turning the mild frost to pearls and the high mountains are gilt. O lovely and laughing dawn, the breeze is your messenger and you are of the breeze, which restores every burnt-out heart! |
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John Taverner (c.1490-1545)

Ave Dei Patris filia Hail, daughter of Liturgical text God the Father

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| Ave, Dei patris filia nobilissima, Dei filii mater dignissima, Dei spiritus sponsa venustissima, Dei unius et trini ancilla subiectissima. | Hail, most noble daughter of God the Father, most worthy mother of God the Son, most comely bride of God the Spirit, most obedient handmaiden of God the one and three. |
| Ave, Summae aeternitatis filia clementissima, Summae veritatis mater piissima, Summae bonitatis sponsa benignissima, Summae trinitatis ancilla mitissima. | Hail, most merciful daughter of all eternity, most pious mother of all truth, most kindly bride of all goodness, most gentle handmaiden of the highest Trinity. |

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| Ave, Aeternae caritatis filia desideratissima, Aeternae sapientiae mater gratissima, Aeternae spirationis sponsa sacratissima, Coaeternae maiestatis ancilla sincerissima. | Hail, most longed-for daughter of eternal charity, most dear mother of eternal wisdom, most hallowed bride of the eternal spirit, most pure handmaiden of co-eternal majesty. |
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| Ave, Jesu tui filii dulcis filia Christi Dei tui mater alma, Sponsi sponsa sine ulla macula, Deitatis ancilla sessioni proxima. | Hail, sweet daughter of Jesus, your son, and kindly mother of Christ, your God, immaculate bride of the bridegroom, handmaiden of the Godhead at whose side you sit. |
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| Ave, Domini filia singulariter generosa, Domini mater singulariter gloriosa, Domini sponsa singulariter speciosa, Domini ancilla singulariter obsequiosa. | Hail, most noble daughter of the Lord, most glorious mother of the Lord, most fair bride of the Lord, most obedient handmaiden of the Lord. |
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| Ave, Plena gratia poli regina, Misericordiae mater meritis praeclara, Mundi domina, a patriarchis praesignata, Imperatrix inferni, a prophetis praeconizata. | Hail, queen of heaven, full of grace, mother of mercy, pre- eminent in merit, mistress of the world, foretold by the patriarchs, empress of the world below, proclaimed by the prophets. |
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| Ave, Virgo feta ut sol praelecta, Mater intacta sicut luna perpulchra. Salve parens inclita enixa puerpera, Stella maris praeifulgida, felix caeli porta. Esto nobis via recta ad aeterna gaudia, Ubi pax est et gloria: O gloriosissima semper virgo Maria. Amen. | Hail, fruitful virgin, unique as the sun, spotless mother, beautiful as the moon. Hail, wondrous mother who laboured in childbirth, glistening star of the sea, blessed gate of heaven. Be to us a straight way to eternal joy, where there is peace and glory. O most glorious ever- virgin Mary. Amen. |
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