Friday 10 January 2025 7.30pm

WIGMORE HALL

Armonico Consort

Christopher Monks director

Hannah Fraser-Mackenzie soprano soloist

Billie Robson soprano soloist

Laura Moretto soprano

William Towers alto soloist

Francis Gush alto

Graham Neal tenor soloist

Matthew Pochin tenor

Alex Jones bass soloist
Tom Clough bass
Kelly McCusker leader
Edmund Taylor violin

Kate Agostino violin
Rebecca Windram violin

Joanne Miller viola

Dan Shilladay viola Hetti Price cello Andrew Durban double bass Peter Mankarious trumpet

Geoffrey Webber organ

Francesco Scarlatti (1666-1741)

Daniele (London première)

Sinfonia & Chorus: 'Alle straggi alle vendette' •

Dario: Recitative & Aria 'Di Bello, del Cielo' •

Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'Misero non cader' • Dario &

Daniele: Recitative & Duet 'Che brami veder più' •

Dario & Daniele: Recitative; Daniele: Aria 'D'Israele il Dio sovrano' • Abacucco: Recitative & Aria 'Correre per

soccorrere' • Demone: Recitative & Aria 'La sostanza vi

lascio' • Angelo: Recitative & Aria 'Tutto governa' • Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'Non son per credere' •

Dario: Recitative; Tutti Aria 'Per terra' • Angelo:

Dano. Recitative, Tutti Ana Per terra • Angelo.

Recitative & Aria 'Combattere per vincere' • Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'L'empia fiera' • Dario: Recitative & Aria

'De' Leoni chiudete stringete' • Daniele: Recitative &

Ecco Aria 'Poco, poco è la morte' • Abaccuco & Angelo:

Recitative; Daniele, Abaccuco & Angelo: Trio 'Mai

sempre dona' • Abaccuco, Daniele & Angelo: Recitative; Angelo, Daniele & Abaccuco: Trio 'Restati lieto intanto' •

Dario: Recitative; Chorus 'Gloria al Dio d'Israele'

Interval

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Dixit Dominus HWV232 (1707)

No. 6a Judicabit

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Brother of Alessandro and uncle of Domenico, violinist and composer **Francesco Scarlatti** was one of several Scarlatti family musicians, male and female, who dominated Neapolitan musical life around the turn of the 18th Century. Francesco came to England in 1719, and a few of his works survive in libraries here, notably his oratorio *Il Daniele nel lago de' leoni* - 'The [prophet] Daniel in the lake [or den] of lions'.

This tells the familiar tale of Daniel surviving the den of lions, but also covers other aspects of his remarkable story, notably his encounter with a smoking dragon which explodes after eating a combustible meal devised by Daniel. The work contains spectacular string writing, and an echo aria (depicting the pit of lions) in which the echoes are not vocal, but played by a violin and viola.

The 'da capo' arias in the work are all of the earliest type developed in the 1690s: in Handel and Bach we are used to the contrasting middle section being relatively short, but here it is the opening section that is short, followed a free development of the opening material. The anonymous libretto brings life to all the main characters of the story, creating a typical Italian oratorio that was every bit as a dramatic as an opera, and which was designed to entertain the audience in Lent when the opera houses were closed.

It is unfortunate that so much of Francesco's music has been lost, but at least his time in England led to some significant survivals in the libraries in London, Oxford and Cambridge. It has been suggested that his setting of the Miserere, which survives in the British Library as well as in Vienna, was composed in support of his application to Vienna in 1715. Clearly he brought this piece along with others including his Messa and Dixit Dominus to England to help boost his chances for employment. The Oxford survivals in particular show his versatility and imagination as a composer, resulting in vocal textures extremely rare in the baroque repertoire.

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Handel was a prodigiously gifted musician who by the time he had reached his 20s was already an experienced composer and performer with an established reputation. Like many ambitious musicians he was drawn to Italy, the birthplace of opera, and so in 1707 he went to Rome for three years, where he hoped to further his career as an opera composer. Though raised in the Lutheran faith, Handel always willingly composed for other denominations and was soon patronised by the Catholic Church in Rome, and by many of the city's principal movers and shakers.

Dixit Dominus is a setting of Psalm 110 (109 in the Latin Vulgate) which Handel composed in 1707, when he was only 22. Along with other Latin psalm settings and motets composed at about the same time, it very probably formed part of a setting of the Carmelite Vespers for the feast of the Madonna del Carmine. The work is in eight movements, scored for five-part chorus, soloists, strings and continuo.

At that time the talents of the finest Italian instrumentalists were regularly on display in the brilliant concertos of Vivaldi, Corelli and others, and singers were

similarly able to parade their skills in opera, the exciting new musical theatre that had become all the rage, thanks to composers such as Alessandro Scarlatti and Antonio Caldara.

Dixit Dominus is a showpiece for both singers and players alike, and whilst its unremitting energy and dramatic intensity presents all the musicians with considerable challenges, the demands that Handel makes on the choir are extremely testing, and seldom equalled in his later works. The piece is an extraordinary tour-de-force, particularly for a 22 year-old composer, and demonstrates Handel's precocious mastery of counterpoint, of harmonic and melodic invention and, perhaps most impressively, of powerful dramatic gesture. Clearly, he viewed the commission as an opportunity to display his total command of the Italian style, and so make the most memorable impression possible on his hosts. Not surprisingly, Dixit Dominus is regarded as one of his finest works.

It seems likely that the text was originally intended for a coronation, later becoming part of the liturgy for Sunday Vespers and the ordination of priests. It is one of the most frequently referenced psalms, and from early times has been seen as one of the primary portrayals of Christ as prophet, priest and king not only of his own people but of all nations. Nowadays it seems uncomfortably bellicose, but in Handel's time it would have been cheerfully read as a prophecy of Christ's victory not only over his earthly enemies, but also over the devil and all his works.

The psalm is set by Handel to music of exceptional brilliance, the dramatic contrasts within and between movements vividly illustrating and reinforcing the words. The work is unified by a plainsong cantus firmus - a melody in greatly extended notes, against which the remaining parts weave decorative lines - which appears in both the opening and closing movements. After the energetic opening chorus comes a simple and elegant alto solo, followed by a beautifully lyrical movement for soprano, built on a repeated triplet figure. The drama resumes in the fourth movement, one of alternating slow and fast sections, the measured 'Juravit Dominus' being notable for its daring chromatic harmony and bold dissonances. The sixth and longest movement combines verses 5 and 6 of the psalm text. The unmistakable influence of Corelli can be heard in the instrumental introduction, with the two violin parts and then the voices constantly overlapping in a series of striking suspensions. The ensuing section, 'Judicabit in nationibus', is a busy fugato which appropriately disintegrates at the word 'ruinas'.

There follows one of the most remarkable passages in this unique work: a series of percussive chords repeated to the same syllable (a device very reminiscent of Monteverdi) graphically depicts a crushing military victory. The Gloria brings back the *cantus firmus*, this time set against even more brilliant figuration than in the opening movement, and the work closes with an extended and superbly executed fugue.

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Francesco Scarlatti (1666-1741)

Daniele

Darius has become king of the Babylonians, who worship as gods both a clay idol, Bel (Baal) and a dragon demon.

Each day the priests leave sacrifices of food and wine for the idol, Bel, in its temple, which appear to have been consumed the following morning. Darius's friend and close companion, the prophet Daniel, refuses to acknowledge that Bel is a god, incurring the wrath of the Babylonian priests.

Sinfonia & Chorus: 'Alle straggi alle vendette' Daniel and Baal

Alle straggi, alle vendette, cada l'empio fulminato; abbattuto lacerato dentro fulmini e saette.

To slaughter, to revenge! May the evil one be cut down by lightning, cut to pieces by its arrows.

Dario: Recitative & Aria 'Di Bello, del Cielo'

Dario Daniele, che pensi, che fai, stolto, ove giri mal fondati i tuoi sensi? Torna in te stesso, pur che se non miri che il Ciel, che Belo offendi, nemico a Belo al Ciel crudel ti vendi.

Darius Come to your senses, Daniel; can you not see that Baal does not offend and that you are making yourself an enemy to Baal, to the cruel heaven?

Dario Di Belo, del Cielo, se miri i portenti, confessa potenti lor pregi e virtù. Pentito, contrito con gemiti e pianti, adora i suoi vanti, né bramo di più.

Darius Admire the power and strength of Baal and heaven. Be contrite and repent with tears and sighs, and worship his power - I want no more.

Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'Misero non cader'

Ah, Dario, ah, tu deliri e quei vanti rimiri in quell'Idolo infame e osservi intento.

Deh, raffrena l'accento,

Daniele

Daniel It is you, Darius who is delirious, you who is in awe and gaze at his power. Ah, stop your raving

e brama sol che d'Israele il nume porga agli occhi ciechi il vero lume.

Daniele

Misero, non cader, non traviar così mentre non miri,

né già così voler

chiudere gl'occhi al dì se al

giorno aspiri.

bring the true light to the eyes of the blind.

and only hope that the

God of Israel

Daniel

Alas, poor wretched one, do not go astray while you are unable to see. Do not close your eyes to

the light, if you crave daylight!

Dario & Daniele: Recitative & Duet 'Che brami veder più'

Dario Non vedi tu, non io,

se il culto venerar nieghi al mio Dio. It is you who are blind, not me,

if you condemn the worshipping of my god.

Daniele Daniel He is a demon.

È demone costui.

Dario

Darius

Darius

You are mad, since I see Pazzo ti credo se nel tuo dir freneticar That you are raving when ti vedo; you speak;

quante vittime

ogn'ora Belo inghiotte

e divora per gradire il desio d'alma

devota!

Cortese il dente arruota

a pro' de' suoi devoti, onde s'errore

l'alta credenza mia tu

crederai,

ben punir ti vedrai dal mio

furore.

Look how many sacrifices

have been devoured by Baal

to appease the wishes of a devoted soul!

He sharpens his teeth to the benefit of his worshippers so if you think that my

strong belief is mistaken, you will surely

be punished by my

rage.

Dario Darius

Che brami veder What more proof do you più? Né credi need? And you still do ancor; not believe!

del mio rigor bersaglio

sarai tu.

You will receive my harsh punishment.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Daniele Più veder voglio.

Non credo, rido al tuo

orgoglio.

Daniel

I don't need to see more. I don't believe it - and I laugh at your pride.

Dario & Daniele: Recitative; Daniele: Aria 'D'Israele il Dio sovrano'

Dario

Che. che vuoi veder?

Darius

What, what do you want

to see?

Daniele

Su quell'altar profano le vittime riponi e ancor

ricopri

di cenere quel suolo, e poi, se

sia il mio pensier, tempo verrà che

scopri.

Chiudi quell'orcio rio, d'errori

infesto.

ché a Dio convien poi di scoprire il resto.

Daniel

Put the sacrifices on that profane altar,

the ground with ashes,

and then,

if my thoughts are

misjudged, time will tell.

Close that evil vessel, haunted with error:

God will reveal the rest.

Daniele

D'Israele il Dio sovrano

so che il ver

discoprirà, e saprà con la sua mano

rischiarar tua

cecità.

Daniel

The sovereign God of

Israel

will, I know, reveal the

truth,

and with His hand

will open your eyes to the

light.

Abacucco: Recitative & Aria 'Correre per soccorrere'

Abacucco

Abacucco, è pur l'ora

d'incaminarti ove ragion richiede;

e che s'indugia ancora

ad affrettare e accellerare il piede?

Già lassi e stanchi al faticar

noioso.

braman di ristorar la fame

orrenda

famelici i bifolchi, onde

ozïoso

dritto non è che ancora il piè

sorprenda.

Abacucco

Correre per soccorrere a chi languendo sta.

Habakkuk

Come, Habakkuk

it is now time to set out whither you must go;

tarry not, hasten.

The starving peasants,

tired

with hateful work, are

eager

to assuage their dreadful

hunger,

so it is not

right

that you should linger

lazily.

Habakkuk

Hasten to give aid

to him who is in anguish.

Per me non mancherà con passo intrepido

vigor, valor nel piè; scorgo

ch'il Ciel

mi diè benigno e lepido.

strength and valour

that, I see, the kind Heavens provide.

I shall not lack the

With fearful passion and

steadfast footsteps,

Demone: Recitative & Aria 'La sostanza vi lascio'

Demone

Ministri miei,

le vittime ridutte eccole pronte;

or per l'occulta

strada

da voi che più si bada d'entrar furtivi e trangugliarle

Sia il vostro furto occulto

ancora al cielo,

e credo e

Demone

e i sapori,

speranza,

se a fascio

io vo.

pur che

le divora un Belo.

gl'onori recidere

Se a nudrirmi di fumo ho

più bella sostanza del

fumo non ho.

Dragon demon

My priests, here are the

sacrifices

ready to be taken;

now through a secret passage

make sure

that you sneak in and devour them all.

Let your theft be secret to

heaven too,

and it will be believed that

Baal has devoured

them

Dragon demon

La sostanza vi lascio I leave to you the tasty

offerings,

if I can seize all the honours in one fell

swoop.

If I can only hope to be

fed with smoke,

than that for me.

there is no better offering

Angelo: Recitative & Aria 'Tutto governa'

Angelo

Sceso dall'alte sfere,

alato messaggiero Angel

son io

che in queste rupi solitarie e

nere

rapido vengo, or che

l'impone Dio,

Dio che con ciglio puro vide e vuol ch'io ripari anche

al futuro.

Angelo

Tutto

governa,

tutto prevede,

ripara tutto l'alto motor. La luce eterna che tutto

vede

Angel A winged messenger,

I have come from the

high spheres.

hastening to these black and sinister rocks,

because God, the clear-

sighted God, wills that I remedy

what may befall.

Angel

He who causes all motion,

foresees everything

and resolves everything. The eternal light that all

sees

tenebre e tutto muta in chiaror.

all darkness turn to light.

Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'Non son per credere'

Daniele

Dario che più dirai se ne la sparsa polve

stampate e impresse

rimanon l'orme? Or miri.

Daniel

Darius, what say you,

now you see these footprints imprinted

in the scattered ashes?

Di non dar fé più mai oggi Dario risolve al falso nume, e dove vòi mi tiri; se quanto il popol credulo dispensa

rende a ministri rei lauta la mensa

creder quanto tu credi ho sol desio,

pur che tu creda il nostro

drago un Dio.

Today Darius resolves to believe no longer in the false god – take me wherever you want. If what the gullible populace offers only enriches the table of our evil ministers,

then my only wish is to believe what you do, even if you believe our

dragon a god.

Daniel and the Dragon

Daniele Non son per credere

quel mostro indomito, re miserabile,

qual credi tu. Farollo cedere

d'ira al mio fomito; reso incurabile, non vivrà più. Daniel

I am not prepared to

believe

in that indomitable

monster

in which you believe,

O wretched king.

I will make him succumb to my fire of my anger, and, rendered helpless, he will not survive.

Dario: Recitative; Tutti Aria 'Per terra'

Dario

Per or come chiedesti Belo fracassa, e poi vedrò come dicesti contro il mostro possente i

vanti tuoi.

Darius

For now, as you asked, destroy Baal, and then I shall see how you fare against our powerful

monster.

Daniele Per terra va' pur

fracassato, né rieder più già,

quest'empio che scempio del misero fa. Daniel Be shattered

and thrown to the

ground, and do not return, evil monster that destroys

the wretched.

Demone Mi atterra

l'iniquo spietato, Che scempio del misero fa. Dragon

My evil adversary, who destroys the wretched, knocks me to the ground.

Daniele, Dario, Angelo

Mi atterra

l'iniquo spietato,

Daniel, Darius, Angel Evil monster that

destroys the wretched;

Demone, Abacucco Mi atterra

l'iniquo spietato,

Che scempio del misero fa.

Dragon demon, Habakkuk

Evil adversary who destroys the wretched, knocks me to the ground.

Angelo: Recitative & Aria 'Combattere per vincere'

Angelo

Già Daniele il piede

ed armato di fede

move ove il Drago ha stanza,

di vincere ha certezza, e non

speranza.

Angel

Daniel is already advancing

to where the dragon lives;

armed with faith, he is sure, not hopeful, to

prevail.

Angelo

Combattere per vincere può lenta mano e tenera armata di pietà?

Abbattere ed avvincere,

se il Cielo invoca e venera, l'inferno anche potrà.

Angel

Can a tender, gentle hand

armed with pity win the battle?

It can strike down and

defeat -

if he prays to heaven – even the powers of hell.

Daniele: Recitative & Aria 'L'empia fiera'

Daniele

Ecco l'orrenda belva che infesta questa selva lo, mentre di furore il seno accendo

in Dio, spero ed attendo che con tal

attendo che con tal pania ad ingoiar accinta

soffocata rimanga, oppressa e vinta.

Daniel

Here is the horrible beast that infests this forest. While I light up my breast in divine fury,

in divine fury, I hope that as it

tries to swallow this bait

it will choke and be vanquished.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Daniele

L'empia fiera, morta e

pallida

più severa esser non può.

E non io la resi squallida, ma il mio Dio la

soffogò.

Daniel

The evil beast, dead and

pale,

can be harsh no more.

It was not I who made it powerless.

but my God has choked it.

Dario: Recitative & Aria 'De' Leoni chiudete stringete'

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Dario

Ahi, che il populo tutto sento che morto brama

Daniele. Infelice,

ei coglierà per frutto

vendetta al suo servir, morte

a sua fama,

né contradir mi lice,

se ben son re, per mio martire e duolo

che

contro tanti alfine un solo è

solo.

Dario

De' leoni chiudete,

stringete nel lago l'afflitto,

che invitto

pugnò.

Se in brev'ora bramate ch'ei

mora.

più stragge severa, più fiera non ho.

Darius

Alas, all the people want poor Daniel dead.

Oh, wretched!

He will be repaid

with vengeance for his

service,

death for his good deeds.

And although I am king,

to my pain and sorrow, I

cannot go against them: against many, one is, after all, always

alone.

Darius

Close the door of the

lions' den,

and shut inside the poor man who fought successfully.

If you wish him to die

quickly,

then there is no fiercer. harsher death than this.

Daniele: Recitative & Ecco Aria 'Poco, poco è la morte'

Daniele

S'è tuo voler, mio Dio. ch'io sia di fiere un

miserabil gioco,

con fervido desio

stimo lieve il patir, la morte

poco.

Daniele

Poco è la morte. se vuoi ch'io mora Daniel

If, my God, it is your wish that I should be the

plaything of wild

beasts,

then, with ardent desire,

I consider suffering a trifle, death of no

consequence.

Daniel

Death is of no

consequence,

if you wish me to die

per adempire tua volontà.

Più dura sorte se trovi ancora. l'alma a patire

piegata sta.

to fulfil your will. Even if you find a worse fate for me. my spirit is resigned

to endure it.

Abacucco & Angelo: Recitative; Daniele, Abacucco & Angelo: Trio 'Mai sempre dona'

Abacucco

Ma chi sei tu, che paraninfo

alato

Angelo

sembrato:

paraninfo celeste

Angel di Dio.

rassembi al guardo mio?

Habakkuk

Who are you, who seems

to me

like a winged nymph?

Angel

Tal son quale ho I am that which you think I

a heaven-sent, nymph-

like angel of God.

Abacucco

Angel di Dio, dove tu spieghi il volo?

Angelo

A te ne vengo e solo perché meco

precorra

e in Babel Daniele oggi

soccorra;

sì vòl colui che domina le stelle.

Abacucco

Chi è questo Daniele, ov'è

Babelle?

Angelo

Se nol sai, vieni meco,

che per il crin

sospeso io la

ti reco.

Abacucco

Oh che stupore, oh come sospeso per le chiome in un tratto rimiro

parte giammai

veduta.

Daniele Oh Cielo,

respiro.

Habakkuk

Angel of God, whither are

you flying?

Angel

To you, and I am alone, because I need you to come with me

to help Daniel today in

rules the stars.

Babylon;

this is the will of He who

Habakkuk

Who is this Daniel, and where is Babylon?

Angel

If you do not know, then

come with me: I will carry you there, holding you by your

hair.

Habakkuk

Oh wonder, oh look! Hanging by my hair,

I see at once

lands I have never seen

before!

Daniel

O Heaven! I still have

breath!

Daniele Daniel

Mai sempre dona To the repentant heart, soccorso gradito divine mercy always offers a cor contrito divina pietà. welcome succour.

Angelo Angel

Non abbandona The eternal God l'eterno superno. never abandons him.

Abacucco Habakkuk

Tenderly and kindly, Soave e caro riparo ci dà. he comes to our rescue.

Abacucco, Daniele & Angelo: Recitative; Angelo, Daniele & Abacucco: Trio 'Restati lieto intanto'

Abacucco

Prendi, uomo giusto: il creator pietoso vuol fugarti di fame il duolo rio.

Habakkuk

Take this food, just man, the merciful creator wishes to spare you the evil pangs of hunger.

Daniele

Chi si alimenta in Dio trova riposo.

Daniel

Angel

He who nourishes himself with God, always finds

The man who trusts in

Daniel, I am leaving, and reveal to you

that the ruler of heaven

because of your great

you should have freedom

has decreed that,

God is always rescued.

Angelo

Riparo trova uom che fida in Dio; Daniele, mi parto e ti disvelo che il regnator del Cielo già stabilì de la superna fede

di darti vita e libertade al piede.

Angelo

Rèstati lieto intanto.

Angel

faith,

and life.

Daniele

Cheto mi resterò.

Abacucco

Tergi dagli occhi il pianto.

Daniele

Quanto vuol Dio farò.

Be happy now!

Daniel

I shall enjoy quiet and

Habakkuk

Wipe the tears from your

eyes.

Daniel

I shall do what God wills.

Dario: Recitative; Chorus 'Gloria al Dio d'Israele'

Dario Da le fiere

spietate

vedrò se Daniel già pasto è reso, ché da le zanne

irate

esser non può che sia rimasto illeso. Ma illeso egl'è, dunque se vive

ancora

e tra fiere e tra fame

non vuole il Ciel che mora.

adempirò mie brame:

Daniele vivrà libero e sciolto, e perisca in sua vece

il volgo stolto.

Gloria al Dio d'Israele.

Daniele

D'un cor contrito l'eccelso Dio dolce e gradito, benigno e pio fa dominar le

stelle.

Darius

I shall go to see whether

Daniel

has been fed to the ferocious beasts. It cannot be that he has remained untouched

by their furious fangs.

But he is unharmed therefore, if he is still

alive

and Heaven has decreed that he should not die of hunger or be mauled by

the beasts.

I shall keep my promise:

Daniel shall live unshackled and free, and the foolish people who wanted him dead shall perish instead.

Glory to the God of Israel.

Daniel Kindly pleased with a contrite heart, God on high, benign and pious, makes the stars shine

brighter.

Interval

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Dixit Dominus HWV232 (1707)

Liturgical text

Dixit Dominus The Lord said unto my

Domino meo: Lord:

Sede a dextris meis sit thou on my right hand,

Donec ponam inimicos until I make thine tuos

enemies

In the day of thy power

The Lord hath sworn, and

thou art a priest for ever

will not repent:

after the order of

Melchizedech.

Scabellum pedum tuorum. thy footstool.

Virgam virtutis The Lord shall send the tuae rod of thy power

Emittet Dominus ex Sion: out of Sion: be thou ruler, Dominare in medio even in the midst of

thine enemies. inimicorum tuorum.

Tecum principium in die

virtutis tuae shall people offer thee In splendoribus free-will offerings with an sanctorum: holy worship: the dew Ex utero ante luciferum of thy birth is of the womb

of the morning.

genui te.

Juravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum:

Tu es sacerdos in aeternum

Secundum ordinem Melchisedech.

Conquassabit capita

Dominus a dextris The Lord upon thy right

tuis hand:

Confregit in die irae shall wound even kings in suae reges. the day of his wrath.

Judicabit in He shall judge among the

nationibus, heathen,

Implebit he shall fill the places with the dead bodies, ruinas,

and smite in sunder the

in terra heads over divers

multorum. countries.

De torrente in He shall drink from the via bibet: brook in the way:

Propterea exaltabit therefore shall he lift up

caput. his head.

Gloria Patri, Glory be to the Father et Filio, and to the Son Et Spiritui Sancto. and to the Holy Ghost.

Sicut erat in As it was in the principio, beginning,

and is now, and ever shall Et nunc, et

semper,

world without end. Et in saecula saeculorum.

Amen. Amen.