The Sixteen Edition

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The Call of The Beloved
Tomas Luis de Victoria

The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

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COR16007
Scholar, mystic, priest, singer, organist and composer – six persons all rolled into one and that is, quite simply, why Victoria is the most outstanding composer of the Renaissance. He devoted his life to the church, and his works reveal such heartfelt passion that there are times, in performance, when we are almost overwhelmed by their intensity. Our Victoria series aims to show not only the deeply felt emotion of the Lenten settings but also his ability to be joyously inventive and highly sensual, as in his treatment of texts from “The Song of Songs”.

On one of our more recent tours to the USA, I was determined to take a choral programme which would be a supremely moving experience; I remember saying to the choir that this would be very demanding but so rewarding. That programme was devoted solely to the music of Victoria, and proved inspirational to singers and listeners alike. The result was breathtaking. If one can ever achieve complete emotional expression through the power of music, then here it is.

TOMAS LUIS DE VICTORIA (1548-1611)

Thomas Luis de Victoria’s maiden publication, a sumptuous volume containing thirty-three motets, was printed in Venice in 1572. It contains just one eight-voice piece, a double-choir Ave Maria. A twelve-voice setting of Psalm 122, Laetatus sum, the first Roman triple choir music to be published appearing in 1583. From the 1580s on, three choirs of musicians were becoming standard in Rome for Mass and Vespers on major feast days, and Victoria’s music must have been widely heard, especially where he himself was involved in such services.

These were exciting years for Roman sacred music. However the call of his beloved native land was always strong, and in the dedication (to Philip II) of his 1583 book of Masses, Victoria expressed a wish to return to a quiet life in Spain, to “…to spend my time in contemplation of the divine, as befits a priest.”

So, in 1585 Philip II appointed him chaplain to his sister, the Dowager Empress Maria, at the Convento de las Descalzas Reales in Madrid. Victoria was maestro of the convent choir which included boys and priests, until 1604, and then organist until his death in 1611.

In 1600 Victoria brought out a major collection, including the magnificent twelve-voice triple-choir Missa Laetatus sum (2)-(7), based on his own Psalm setting, and the Magnificats for double and triple choirs. Such triple-choir pieces were still uncommon in Spain, so it excited much attention.

Missa Laetatus sum often has only tenuous connections with the Psalm (1). Homophonic writing is contrasted with flowing imitative polyphonic sections for reduced voices in both Mass and Psalm. Unusually, the Psalm opens with a triple time passage (perhaps reflecting the joyful opening words); this is not imitated in the Mass.

The triple-choir Magnificat Sexti toni (12) also shares some music with the Psalm. The opening verse, and that beginning 'Deposuit potentes', are copied directly from a four-voice Magnificat Sexti toni, published in 1581.

In this recording, the Mass and Psalm Laetatus sum, and the Magnificat have instrumental doubling of the voices, in line with contemporary Spanish practice. The lowest choir is doubled by a cornett and three sackbuts; choir II, by organ and bass dulcian; and the highest choir is unaccompanied throughout.
Victoria’s hymns would have graced many a service. Having fallen out of use, they are now recognised as important parts of the repertoire. They provide a great contrast to the massive and magnificent sonorities of the twelve- and eight-voice pieces, yet lose nothing in the impact of their elegant four-part polyphony. Ad caenam Agni providi (11) is for Easter, and Veni creator spiritus (8) for Pentecost. Victoria sets the even verses in polyphony, as always in his hymns, and he quotes the chant and paraphrases of it freely in every voice.

Renaissance composers often took texts directly from the Song of Songs with its rich symbolism evoking the desert, the spirit rising as a dove or as smoke, perfumes and incense, of the search for the beloved. Vidi speciosam (10) and Vadam at circuibo civitatem (9) are settings of two such texts in flowing, six-part polyphony, graceful and of great beauty.

Victoria died in 1611, after a life dedicated to God and Music. For his last words, those opening Psalm 122 would have been entirely apt: ‘Laetatus sum in quae dicta sunt mihi; in domum Domini ibimus’ - I was glad when they said unto me: Let us go up into the house of the Lord.

Martyn Imrie

[MOTET: LAETATUS SUM]


[KYRIE]

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

[GLORIA]


Missa Laetatus sum

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise thee, we bless thee, we glorify thee. We give thanks to thee for thy great glory. Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. Thou 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 the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy. Thou only art the Lord. Thou only art the Lord, Thou only art the most high, Jesu Christ. With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.
CREDO

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. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate: he suffered and was buried. And on the third day he rose again according to the scriptures: he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; and of his kingdom there will be no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake to us through 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


BENEDICTUS

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis.

AGNUS DEI

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.

VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS

Veni Creator Spiritus, come, Creator Spirit, fill the minds of your people. Fill with grace from above. The hearts which you have created. You who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete, you who are called the Paraclete.
Sermo ditans guturra.
Enriching throats with speech.
Accende lumen sensibus,
Awaken our senses with light,
Infunde amorem cordibus,
Pour love into our hearts,
Infirma nostri corporis
Constantly strengthening
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Per te sciamus da Patrem,
Grant that through you,
we may know the Father,
Noscamus atque Filium,
And learn of the Son;
The Spirit of both, for all time.
Gloria Patri Domino,
Glory to the Lord and Father,
Natoque, qui a mortuis
And to the Son who rose from the dead,
Surrexit, ac Paraclito,
And to the Paraclete,
In saeculorum saecula.
For ever and ever.

Hostem repelles longius,
May you drive the enemy far away,
Pacemque dones protinus:
And give us peace forthwith:
Ductore sic te praevio,
Thus, with you as leader going before us,
Vitemus omne noxium.
May we avoid all harm.

Vadam et circuibo civitatem
I will arise and go about the city
and in the broad ways. I will seek
him whom my soul loveth.
I sought him but found him not.
I charge ye, O daughters of Jerusalem,
if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him,
that I am sick of love.
What is thy beloved more than another,
that thou dost so charge us?
My beloved is white and ruddy,
the chiefest among ten thousand.
This is my beloved and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.
Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside,
that we may seek him with thee?
He has gone up into the palm tree
and taken the fruit thereof.

Vidi speciosam
I saw the spirit rising like a dove above
the rushing waters: it was clothed in
fragrance of exceeding beauty - just
as the days of spring are adorned
with roses in flower and the lilies
of the valley. Who is she who arises from
the wilderness like pillars of smoke,
perfumed with aromatic myrrh and frankincense? - just
as the days of spring are adorned with roses
in flower and the lilies of the valley.
AD CAENAM AGNI PROVIDI
Ad caenam Agni providi, 
Et stolis albis candidi, 
Post transitum maris Rubri 
Christo canamus principi. 
Cuius corpus sanctissimum 
In ara crucis torridum, 
Cruore eius roseo, 
Gustando vivimus Deo. 
Protecti paschae vespere, 
Ad devastante Angelo, 
Erepti de durissimo 
Pharaonis imperio. 
Iam pascha nostrum Christus est, 
Qui immolatus agnus est, 
Sinceritatis azyma, 
Caro eius oblata est. 
O vere digna hostia, 
Per quam fracta sunt tartara, 
Reddita vitae praemia. 
Consurgit Christus tumulo, 
Victor redit de barathro, 
Tyrannum trudens vinculo 
Et reserans Paradisum. 
Quaesumus, auctor omnium, 
In hoc paschali gaudio, 
Ab omni mortis impetu, 
Tuum defende populum. 
Gloria tibi Domine, 
Qui surrexisti a mortuis, 
Cum Patre et Sancto Spiritu, 
In sempiterna saecula. Amen.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is upon them that fear him, throughout all generations. He hath showed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever. 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.

MAGNIFICAT

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