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To find out more about The Sixteen, concerts, tours, and to buy CDs, visit www.thesixteen.com
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
Volume II: The Mystery of the Cross

Lamentations for Maundy Thursday
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Hymn: Vexilla Regis (more hispano)

Lamentations for Good Friday
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Hymn: Pange Lingua (more hispano)

Lamentations for Holy Saturday
1 Lectio I
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3 Lectio III
In the years following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), music came to play an increasingly important role in the religious life of the holy city of Rome. Tomas Luis de Victoria had been sent there in 1565 as a young man of 17, sponsored by Philip II and the Church. His early years were spent at the Collegio Germanico, where he rose to prominence, finally becoming moderator musicae there in 1575, the year of his ordination, until he left in late 1576 or early 1577. At this time the populist spiritual assemblies of Philip Neri were demonstrating the success of fine music in attracting new adherents, while the numerous confraternities in the city provided great opportunities not only for productive social contacts but for remunerative employment in the supply of music. These ‘brotherhoods’ were often for foreign nationals, one such, established as far back as 1495, being that for the Aragonese and Catalans, another for Castilians (of whom Victoria was one), founded in 1579. Their energies were directed not only into charitable works (for the council of Trent had re-emphasised the importance of these for salvation), but also into the enrichment of spiritual life, the sanctification of their members. The constitution of the Castilian Confraternity of the Resurrection, associated with the Church of S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, bound its members to celebrate solemnly the Feasts of the Resurrection and of Corpus Christi, and the Forty Hours Devotion, and not least the Feasts of Holy Week, in particular of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Victoria and other Spanish musicians, notably Francisco de Soto, a castrato who served from 1562 until 1611 in the Papal Choir and who was famed for his singing of laude spirituali at Neri’s oratory, were to both gain and contribute much in their association with these organizations.

It was in such favourable conditions that Victoria was able to publish regularly and copiously, bringing out no less than five large volumes of his music by 1585, including in that year the austere and plangent Officium Hebdomadae Sanctae, his great monument of music for the Liturgy of Holy Week, for the ceremonies of the Passio et mors Domini nostri Iesu Christi. It is true that his great publication, and the Officium Defunctorum of 1605, with their intensity of expression and concentrated anguish, have influenced somewhat unduly our view of Victoria, overshadowing much of his music which is serene and joyous for the many happy festivals in the Church. Yet the great importance he attached to the Holy Week Liturgy is shown by the extent of the music he published for it, virtually unique for a 16th century composer in its scope: no less than nine Lamentations, eighteen Responsories, choruses for two Passions, hymns, the Canticle of Zachary and the Psalm Miserere mei Deus, the antiphon Pueri hebraeorum, the extra liturgical motets Vere languores and O Domine Iesu Christe, and the Reproaches Popule meus. The eighteen Responsories have in particular taken on a life of their own in our time, divorced from the unique liturgy which had stimulated their creation, separated from their companion Lessons, verses from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. However, the nine Lamentations set by Victoria, three for each day of the Triduum Sacrum, have been by comparison unjustifiably neglected, yet they share equally with the Responsories an intensity of expression, a somber, passionate and mysterious quality (often thought of as peculiarly Spanish) and an apparent simplicity which belies their subtlety. They were probably written long before their publication in 1585, for there exists in a manuscript copied for the use of the Papal Chapel, an earlier version with, albeit minor, differences, somehow less polished and lacking the economy and tautness of the published work. As was the Spanish custom, they are commonly quasi-chordal, lacking the complex melismatic flights of fancy of many composers, particularly in the vocalisations of the Hebrew letter names separating the verse sections. Victoria did not need a superficial prolixity for his depiction of these anguished texts, for the textures are continually varied through the use of all the subtle musical techniques that he had employed so successfully since his earliest days as a composer. The scorings are for four or five voices, once for three, in various combinations, until the final Oraio Jeremiae Prophetae, the Prayer of Jeremiah, sung on Holy Saturday (11), with six voices expanding to eight for the concluding refrain: Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum. Victoria gives alternative settings of these words: in Lectio II of the Maundy Thursday Lamentation (2), for four or five voices; likewise in Lectio II of the Holy Saturday set (10); and for six or
eight voices to conclude the Oratorio (11). On this CD The Sixteen has recorded the Lamentations in their entirety.

Of the two hymns recorded here Pange Lingua (8) is, of course, primarily for the Feast of Corpus Christi, but it could be, and was, often used during Holy Week. In this version the chant is Spanish, commonly notated in Peninsular and New World books as a mensural triple-time melody, but it was printed by Victoria in his 1581 publication, Hymni totius anni secundum Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae consuetudinem, in plain, (non mensural) black breves. As with Pange Lingua, there are two different versions of the chant for Vexilla Regis (4): Victoria set both, but it was the one subtitled more hispano which was printed in the Officium Hebdomadae Sanctae, and that is recorded here. For the last verse, Victoria increased the number of voices from four to six, a fitting climax not only to his fine setting of this Passiontide hymn, but also to the final item of his music for Holy Week.

For Victoria the words of this last verse served both as a dedication and a benediction: They are printed in splendid isolation on the second folio of the Officium, following the title page with its woodcut of Christ hanging on the Cross; and they are repeated on the last folio (beneath the index and the word finis). With this alpha and omega, Victoria dedicated his collection of Holy Week music, not to any earthly patron, but to the Holy Trinity itself: Te summa Deus Trinitas, collaudet omnis spiritus: ‘God, most high Trinity, may every soul praise you’; and in a few words he summarized the enduring and deeply-felt beliefs that gave birth to it: Quos per Crucis mysterium salvas, rege per saecula. Amen: ‘For ever reign over those you save through the Mystery of the Cross. Amen’.

MARTYN IMRIE

Lamentations for Maundy Thursday
Feria V in Coena Domini
Ad matutinum
Lessons of the First Nocturn

Lectio I


Here beginneth the Lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet. Aleph. How does the city sit alone that was full of people. She has become as a widow, she that was great among nations: the princess among the provinces has become tributary. Beth. She weeps weeping in the night, and her tears lie on her cheeks. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.
Hymn: Vexilla Regis

Vexilla Regis prodeunt:
Fulget Crucis mysterium:
Quo carne carnis conditor,
Suspensus est patibulo.

Hymn: Vexilla Regis (more hispano)

Vexilla Regis prodeunt: Fulget Crucis mysterium:
Quo carne carnis conditor, Suspensus est patibulo.

2 Lectio II

Vau. Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor eius: facti sunt principes eius velut arietes non invenientes pascau: et abierunt absque fortitudine ante faciem subsequentis. Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

2 Lectio III


3 Lectio III

Vau. And from the daughter of Zion all beauty is departed. Her princes are now as rams that find no pasture and they are gone away without strength before the face of their pursuer. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Jod. The enemy hath stretched out his hand to all her desirable things: for she hath seen the gentiles enter into her sanctuary, of whom thou gavest commandment that they enter not into thy church. Caph. All her people groan: they seek bread. They have given all their treasures for food to refresh the soul. See, O Lord, and consider, for I have become vile. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

3 Hymn: Vexilla Regis (more hispano)

The banners of the King advance: the mystery of the Cross shines forth; he, the creator of all flesh, flesh himself, was hanged.

Quo vulneratus insuper, Mucrone diro lanceae Ut nos lavaret crimine, Manavit unda sanguine.

Impleta sunt quae concinit David fidelis carmine, Dicens: in nationibus Regnavit a ligno Deus.

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

Beata cuius brachii, Sacelli pependit pretium, Statera facta corporis, Praedamque tulit tartaris.

O Crux ave, spes unica, Hoc Passionis tempore: Auge piis iustitiam, Reisque dona veniam.

Te summa Deus Trinitas, Collaudet omnis spiritus: Quos per Crucis mysterium, Salvas, rege per saecula. Amen.
Lamentations for Good Friday

Feria VI in Parasceve
Ad matutinum
Lessons of the First Nocturn

Lectio I


Heth. The Lord has thought to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he has stretched out his line and has not turned his hand from destruction. He has mourned before the ramparts, and the wall he has likewise demolished. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Lectio II


Lamed. They called to their mothers: Where is the corn and the wine? – when they swooned as wounded in the streets of the city. Mem. To what will I compare thee, to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, to comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Lectio III


Aleph. I am the man who can see my poverty by the rod of his wrath. Aleph. He hath driven and brought me into darkness and not into light. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.
**Hymn: Pange Lingua (more hispano)**

Pange lingua gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi
Quem in mundi pretium,
Fructus ventris generosi,
Rex effudit genitium.

Novis datus, nobis natus
Ex intacta Virgine,
Et in mundo conversatus,
Sparso verbi semini;
Sui moras incolatus
Miro clausit ordine.

In supremae nocte coenae
Recumbens cum fratribus,
Observata lege plene
Cibis in legalibus;
Cibum turbae duodenae
Se dat suis manibus.

Verbum caro, panem verum,
Verbo carnem efficit,
Fitque sanguis Christi merum;
Et, si sensus deficit,
Ad firmandum cor sincerum
Sola fides sufficit.

Sing, O tongue, of the mystery
of the glorious Body and of the
precious Blood, which as ransom
of the world, the King of all
people, fruit of a noble womb,
poured forth.

Born for us, given to us,
from the pure Virgin, and
residing in our world, he has
sown the seed of the Word,
ending his sojourn with a
miracle.

In the night of that supreme
feast, reclining with his
brethren, he has observed the
obligations of that lawful meal:
now with his own hands he
gives himself to his twelve
companions.

With a word, the Word made
flesh is true bread and the blood
of Christ is wine; and, if our
senses fail to comprehend, faith
alone will suffice.

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui;
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui.
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

Genitori Genitoque
Laus et iubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio;
Procedenti ab utroque
Compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

Let us venerate the
Sacrament with bowed
head, and may the ancient
rules give way to new rites.
May faith supplement the
defects of our senses.

To the Father and his Son
be praise and jubilation,
homage, honour, virtue and
all blessings; and to him who
proceeds from both, let equal
praise be given.
Lamentations for Holy Saturday

Sabbato Sancto
Ad matutinum
Lessons of the first Nocturn

Lectio I

Heth. Misericordiae Domini quia non sumus consumpti: quia non defecerunt miserationes eius. Teth. Bonum est viro, cum portaverit iugum ab adolescentia sua. Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Heth. By the mercies of the Lord we are not consumed, because his kindnesses have not failed. Teth. It is good for a man that he hath borne the yoke from his youth. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Lectio II

Aleph. Quomodo obscuratum est aurum, mutates est color optimus, dispersi sunt lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum. Beth. Filii Sion inclyti, et amicti auro primo: Quomodo reputati sunt in vasa testea, opus manuum figuli? Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Aleph. How the gold is dimmed; the finest colour is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the head of every street. Beth. The nobles sons of Zion that were clothed in the finest gold: how they are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Lectio III


Here beginneth the Oration of the Prophet Jeremiah. Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. Our necks are under persecution: we labour and have no rest. Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.