

Weeping in Sharps and Flats

Music by Bernardino de Ribera (c1520-1580+)

Plainsong antiphon: O Rex Glorïae
Magnificat secundus tonus

Regina caeli
Final antiphon in Paschal Time

Rex autem David
Magnificat antiphon, Vespers on the Sixth Saturday and Sunday post octavo corporis Christi

Dimitte me ergo
Motet setting of part of the Ninth Lesson of Matins of the Dead

Vox in Rama
Motet setting of the Communion at Mass of the Holy Innocents

Plainsong antiphon: In ferventis
Magnificat quartus tonus (II)

Interval

Assumpsit Jesus Petrum
Antiphon at Vespers for the Transfiguration of Our Lord (6th August)

Beata mater
Psalm (later Magnificat) antiphon at Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturdays

Conserva me, Domine
Motet for Holy Saturday & Corpus Christi

Virgo prudentissima
Magnificat antiphon for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15th August)

Hodie completi sunt dies Pentecostes
Magnificat antiphon for Pentecost Sunday

Plainsong antiphon: Non vos relinquam orphanos
Magnificat primus tonus

DE PROFUNDIS

Alto: Oliver El-Holiby, James Dixon, Richard Childress, Ashley Harries, Martin Lucas-Smith
Tenor: Mark Dourish, Peter Ellis, Samir Savant, David Thomson, Philip Scard
Baritone: Stephen Pledger Jones, Richard Paterson, Kieran Cooper, Simon Trist, Gareth Thomas
Bass: Stephen Lloyd, Nick Martyn, Paul Grier, Robert Asher
Bajón: Rachel Haggarty

Conductor: David Skinner

Among the many musical treasures that survive in the archives of Toledo Cathedral there is a great choirbook devoted entirely to works by 'Bernardinus Ribera'. It's known to musicology as E-Tc6. Let's call it the Ribera Codex. It was the work of Toledo's renowned copyist Martin Pérez, and decorated with illuminations by Buitrago. Beautiful to behold, it is massive; bound in metal-studded, leather-covered wooden boards, the one hundred and fifty nine parchment folios are resplendent in their fine musical notation with exquisite headings and decorated initials. Or so it should have been if we still had it as it was in 1570, copied in the final year of Ribera's tenure as *maestro de capilla*. Many years later some vandal sliced out whole folios, presumably the most beautifully decorated, and he cut out many of the elaborate initials of the texts, thus creating holes which have swallowed the notation on the reverse. This vandalism probably happened in the 18th century. Little other damage or deterioration is to be seen. Its mutilated survival still constitutes the only source of the majority of the known compositions of this obscure maestro.

So much is missing from many of the compositions that they are beyond recovery. There were two full Lady Masses – *Missae de Beata Virgine* – one for four voices, the other for five. Both included the medieval tropes (*Spiritus et alme ... etc.*), and polytextual passages such as the words and music of *Ave Maria gratia plena* being sung in several sections of the five-part Credo. It's a shame that these Masses are not fully retrievable; twelve folios were torn from this part of the manuscript, and there are numerous vandal-holes in the pages that remain. With the motets we are more fortunate.

Although a total of 25 folios (48 pages of music) were torn out, we can confidently present six of the nine motets in the Ribera Codex with just a few small lacunae 'repaired'. One missing page was recently found elsewhere, sliced in two; it restored the beginning of *Regina caeli*. We have lost most of an 8-part *Ascendens Christus; O quam speciosa festivitas*, a special Toledo motet for St. Eugenius (6 voc); and, lacking its beginning, an imposing *Gloriosae Virginis Mariae* for eight voices.

The Codex ends with what should have been eight Magnificats, the first half of a set of sixteen, two (odd-verse and even-verse) to each of the eight Tones, polyphony alternating with the chanted recitation formulae. The Codex contains four of these pairs, setting Tones 1 - 4. We do not know if Ribera composed Magnificats to Tones 5 - 8. Sadly, only three of the existing set can be transcribed complete with minimal editorial patching. These will be performed tonight. One more can be restored using a unique source at the Monastery of Guadalupe; it gives us all that is missing from the Toledo manuscript's version.

This may seem like a lot of bad news. The good is that we have another source for five of Ribera's motets; two of them, *Virgo prudentissima* and *Rex autem David*, are in the Toledo codex, but there are three that are not: *Dimitte me; Assumpsit Jesus*; and the magnificent seven-voiced *Vox in Rama*. The latter, with its twenty-six repeated cries of 'Rachel' (accented short-long in the Spanish manner), is the piece that got the present writer interested in Ribera in the first place, many years ago. This second source is a set of partbooks now kept at the Real Colegio de Corpus Christi in Valencia. The books were donated to the College in 1641. They were copied some forty years earlier. The five Ribera motets are in mixed company, if fame is the criterion. Nearly eighty works demonstrate the compiler's broad and excellent taste: 'Lasso', Palestrina, Ruffo and Vecchi from Italy; from Spain, above all, Guerrero (of Seville) and a veritable host of lesser masters, all from the east coast provinces, Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Murcia: Comes, Cotes, Company, Pérez, Pujol, Robledo and Josep Gay, to name a few.

And so to Ribera's background and career: he was very much a man of Spain's south-east. He was born in Játiva (Valencia) probably in around 1520. His father, Pedro, was then *maestro de capilla* of

the collegiate church there. Soon the family moved to Orihuela (Alicante), thence later to Murcia: Pedro was certainly maestro at the cathedral in 1535. Bernardino must have received his training and formative experience there. His first known major appointment was to the cathedral at Ávila where he succeeded the maestro Espinar (d.1558). He took up the post in June 1559. There he was the mentor not only of the young Tomás Luis de Victoria but also of Sebastian de Vivanco. Ribera left the Ávila post at the end of 1562 and became *maestro de capilla* at Toledo early in 1563. He stayed until 1570, succeeded by Andrés Torrentes. It has been assumed in the modern dictionaries that Ribera had died, but recently it has been shown that he returned to his roots and became maestro at Murcia Cathedral from 1572 until 1580.

What are we to make of Ribera's music, of his position in the hierarchy of hispanic composers, and of his possible influence on Victoria?

Now things get personal. As the transcriber and editor of most of Ribera's works, presenting them to be sung tonight is a mission accomplished and a real pleasure. There is not enough of his music, nor enough variety in it, to award Ribera a place among the great masters, Morales, Guerrero and Victoria. To me, his music seems influenced by Morales and the mid-century musicians from the Low Countries brought in by Charles V and Philip II for their Capilla Flamenca. Ribera's general style reminds me of Gombert and his generation. It's very linear, very horizontal. Luxuriant tendrils of vocal lines take precedence over vertical harmonic (dare I say Palestrinian?) balance. But there are passages with clear melodic triads in the approaches to final cadences. Ribera, it seems to me, is a link between the era of the Josquin emulators and that of Guerrero, my personal hero.

'Weeping in sharps and flats', my half-remembered quotation from among the many, often chauvinistic, descriptions of national singing, is rather over-doing it in relation to Ribera's music. But it certainly draws attention to the startling passage in *Rex autem David* when the King laments '*Absalon, fili mi*', sung eleven times by the five voices in imitation, descending mournfully by semitones. Elsewhere, Ribera uses frequent intermediate cadences at phrase-ends, interlocking so that sharps in one voice are very close to flats or naturals in others, indeed sometimes colliding. This is a kind of astringent seasoning of the polyphonic mix, not a means of expressing particular words.

And, yes, Ribera must have had some influence upon the teenage Victoria; but, no, I can't detect it in Victoria's very Roman style.

Bruno Turner

Thanks to Michael Noone for introducing me to the Toledo Codex 6.

Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers of Ascension Day:

O Rex gloriae, Domine virtutum, qui triumphator hodie super omnes caelos ascendisti, ne derelinquas nos orphanos, sed mitte promissum Patris in nos Spiritum veritatis, alleluia

King of glory, Lord of the virtuous, victor over all things, who this day ascended to the heavens, do not leave us as orphans, but send us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth, alleluia.

Magnificat secundus tonus

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo,

*My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:

*Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid;
for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me;

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:

and holy is His name.

et sanctum nomen eius.

And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.

Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.

He hath shewed might in His arm:

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:

He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.

Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.

He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy:

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae.

As He spoke to our fathers,

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,

to Abraham and to His seed for ever.

Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto,

sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

Amen.

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia:
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia:

*O Queen of heaven, rejoice! alleluia:
for He whom thou didst merit to bear,
alleluia,*

resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.

hath arisen as He said, alleluia.

Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Rex autem David, cooperto capite, incedens, lugebat filium suum dicens,

Now David the king, going forth, with covered head, mourned for his son saying:

Absalon fili mi,
quis mihi det ut ego moriar pro te,
Absalon fili mi.

*Absalon, my son,
would that I might die for thee,
my son Absalon.*

Dimitte me ergo
ut plangam paululum dolorem meum:
antequam vadam et non revertar,
ad terram tenebrosam,
et opertam mortis caligine.

*Send me away, therefore,
that I may lament my sorrow a little
before I go, without return,
to a land that is dark
and covered with the mist of death.*

Vox in Rama audita est,
ploratus et ululates:
Rachel plorans filios suos,
et noluit consolari, quia non sunt.

*A voice was heard in Rama,
weeping and great lamentation:
Rachel weeping for her children,
and inconsolable, since they are not.*

Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers of S.Ioannis ante portam Latinam (May 6th):

In ferventis olei dolium missus beatus Iohannes
Apostulus, divina se protegente gratia,
illaesus exivit, alleluia.

*Having been cast into a cauldron of boiling
oil, the blessed Apostle John, by the
protection of divine grace, came forth
unharméd, alleluia.*

Magnificat quartus tonus (II)

INTERVAL

Assumpsit Jesus Petrum,
Jacobum et Joannem fratrem eius
et duxit eos in montem excelsum seorsum,
et transfiguratus est ante eos.

*Jesus took Peter,
and James, and John his brother,
and led them up a high mountain
apart from the others,
and he was transfigured before them.*

Beata mater et innupta Virgo gloriosa,
Regina mundi intercede pro nobis

*Blessed Mother and unwed glorious Virgin,
Queen of the world, intercede for us.*

Conserva me, Domine
quoniam speravi in te.
Dixi Domino: Deus meus es tu
quoniam bonorum meorum non eges.
Sanctis, qui sunt in terra eius,
mirificavit Dominus omnes voluntates meas in eis.

*Preserve me, O Lord,
For I have put my trust in Thee.
I have said to the Lord, "Thou art my God,
who needs not my good things."
And the saints who are in his land,
in them he hath made wonderful all my
desires.*

Virgo prudentissima, quo progredieris,
quasi aurora valde rutilans?
Filia Sion, tota formosa et suavis es,

pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol.

*O Virgin most wise, wither goest thou,
radiant as the dawn?
O Daughter of Sion, thou art all beautiful
and serene,
fair as the moon, bright as the sun.*

Hodie completi sunt dies Pentecostes, alleluia.

Hodie Spiritus Sanctus
in igne discipulis apparuit,
et tribuens eis charismatum dona:
Misit eos in universo mundo
praedicare et testificari:
qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit,
salvus erit, alleluia.

*Today comes round the day of Pentecost,
alleluia.
Today the Holy Spirit
appeared to the disciples in fire
and conferred upon them His gifts of grace.
He sent them out into all the world
to preach and bear witness:
whoever believes and is baptized,
he will be saved, alleluia.*

Non vos relinquam orphanos, alleluia:
vado et venio ad vos, alleluia:
et gaudebit cor vestrum, alleluia.

*I will not leave you as orphans, alleluia:
I go away and shall return to you, alleluia:
and your heart shall rejoice, alleluia.*

Magnificat primus tonus

Founded in 2011, **DE PROFUNDIS** is an early music vocal ensemble based in Cambridge, UK. The choir presents concerts of continental Renaissance polyphony at the original lower pitch, employing the all-adult-male singers appropriate to the period. De Profundis's concert schedule involves some of the world's leading early music conductors. In the past the choir has worked with Andrew Parrott, Robert Hollingworth, Andrew Carwood and Edward Wickham.

In January 2012 the choir recorded the plainsong on *I Fagiolini's* Decca CD *1612 Italian Vespers*. The disc was Gramophone magazine's Recording of the Month and was later a nominee for the 2013 Gramophone Early Music Award. The group will shortly be releasing a CD of its Ribera programme on the Hyperion record label. In June 2015 the choir made its London debut at the Voices of London Festival.

Further information can be found on the choir's website, www.deprofundis.org.uk.



www.facebook.com/deprofundischoir

DAVID SKINNER is a renowned scholar and choral director. He was co-founder of The Cardinal's Musick in 1989, and has also worked with many other leading early music groups in the UK including The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, the Hilliard Ensemble and the King's Singers. David founded Alamire in 2005 as an extension to his research and performance activities. The ensemble has already received critical acclaim for their performances and recordings and has released nine CDs on the Obsidian label, of which David is Artistic Director.

An engaging presenter, David has worked extensively for BBC radio, appearing in and writing a variety of shows on Radio 3 and 4. He acted as music advisor for the *Music and Monarchy* series on BBC 2 with historian David Starkey; he and Alamire appear in the first two episodes of the series. He has published widely on music and musicians of early Tudor England and has an excellent reputation as an editor of performance scores. David's edition of the complete Tallis Psalter was published by Novello in 2012 and was well reviewed, receiving 5 stars in *Early Music Today*. He is currently planning a further collaboration with the same publisher, entitled "The Gibbons Hymnal". David has also worked with the King's Singers on their latest recording of the Richafort Requiem, advising the group on the programming of the disc and writing the accompanying notes.

David is Fellow, Tutor, and Osborn Director of Music at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge where he teaches historical and practical topics from the medieval and renaissance periods. He directs the Choir of Sidney Sussex College, with whom he has toured and made highly acclaimed recordings. David is frequently invited to lecture, lead workshops and coach choirs throughout Europe and the USA, and is noted for his refreshing and entertaining approach. Other recent projects include media appearances on TV and radio, masterclasses and workshops including at the National Centre for Early Music, a US tour with Alamire including an appearance at the 2014 American Choral Directors' Association conference and concerts in Indianapolis and Lubbock, and tours with the Choir of Sidney Sussex College.

BRUNO TURNER (b.1931) has been a freelance musicologist and choral director. He was raised in Catholic Latin liturgy and its music, and self-educated in musicology. A church choirmaster from 1952-1973, he directed Pro Musica Sacra (1956-1964) and Pro Cantione Antiqua (1968-2003), making over sixty LP and CD recordings with the latter. In 1977 he co-founded (with Martyn Imrie) the publisher Mapa Mundi, specialising in Iberian music of the Renaissance. He is a vice-president of the Renaissance Society and Singers, current President of the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, and a member of the Editorial Committee of the CUP journal Plainsong & Medieval Music. In December 2015 he received La Medalla de Oro al Mérito en las Bellas Artes from King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia at a ceremony in Seville.