

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Owen Rees *director*

John Taverner WESTERN WIND MASS

and music by
Robert Fayrfax



Sunday 25 February 1996
Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge
8.15 p.m.

PROGRAMME

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Maria plena virtute	Robert Fayrfax (1464–1521)
Introit: Invocavit me	chant
Gloria, Western Wind Mass	John Taverner (c. 1490–1545)
Epistle	chant
Credo, Western Wind Mass	Taverner
INTERVAL of 15 minutes	
Preface	chant
Sanctus, Western Wind Mass	Taverner
Pater noster & Pax Domini	chant
Agnus Dei, Western Wind Mass	Taverner
Communion: Scapulis suis	chant
Aeternae laudis lilium	Fayrfax

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The Cambridge Taverner Choir
director Owen Rees

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Diana Baumann	Toby Gee	Paul Baumann	James Durran
Josie Dixon	Simon Godsill	Finlay Lockie	Frank Salmon
Helen Garrison	Rupert Preston Bell	Philip Mills	Gary Snapper
Rachel Godsill		Edwin Simpson	Paul Watson
Caroline Preston Bell		David Thompson	
Margaret Simper			
Sally Terris			
Tanya Wicks			

We are most grateful to the Master, Dean of Chapel, and Fellows of Jesus College, for their kind permission to perform in the chapel.

John Taverner may have come from Lincolnshire, but we have no knowledge of his life until 1524 or 1525, when he was a lay clerk at the collegiate church of the Holy Trinity at Tattershall in that county (the church where the Cambridge Taverner Choir gave its inaugural concert). In 1525 he was invited to become master of the choristers of a prestigious new foundation in Oxford: Cardinal College, the brainchild of Cardinal Wolsey. Taverner took up his duties there in 1526, but his stay in Oxford was to be brief, for in 1529 Wolsey fell from grace and his College went into decline, and we must presume that this was the reason for Taverner's departure in 1530. While in Oxford Taverner became associated with a Lutheran faction at the college, but escaped punishment because, as Wolsey declared, he was 'unlearned and not to be regarded'.

Taverner may have returned directly to Lincolnshire in 1530. We next have sight of him as a lay clerk in the choir maintained at Boston Parish Church by the wealthy Guild of St Mary, a choir which—like those at Tattershall and Cardinal College, Oxford—was large by the standards of the time. By 1537 he had left the choir, and thereafter there is no sign that he continued to be involved directly in church music. A year later he was responsible for destroying the rood screen in Boston Parish Church; this and other evidence shows that he played his part in the Henrician reformation. However, the widely-known claim of John Foxe that Taverner 'repented him very much that he had made songs to Popish ditties in the time of his blindness' is likely to be—at the least—exaggerated.

Taverner's Masses are remarkable not least for the variety of techniques and styles found within them. In addition to the three elaborate and florid six-voice works based upon a plainchant cantus firmus—*Corona spinea* (a performance of which opened our current season), *Gloria tibi trinitas* (with which we conclude the season in Ely Cathedral on 3 August), and *O Michael*—there are several works in relatively more concise styles. Among these the most unusual in style and striking in source-material is the **Western Wind Mass**, which is effectively a huge set of variations upon what was clearly a secular melody (though the original remains untraced), heard in the topmost voice in the opening section of the Gloria, and used nine times in each section of the work. The inventiveness with which Taverner presents the tune in new contexts—in terms of texture and harmony—is astonishing, and the fact that the piece is so unified through the presence of the tune makes this variety all the more striking. Concise though the piece is, it demonstrates the rhythmic vitality and exuberance typical of Taverner: this is apparent, for example, at 'et propter nostram salutem' in the Credo, where duple and triple rhythms are set against one another. Such triple rhythms emerge as a major feature of the *Agnus Dei*. Taverner's structural skills are revealed at the opening of the Sanctus, where the first appearance of the tune (in the topmost voice) is accompanied by five statements of the same rising scale figure in the bass.

Tonight, the first Sunday in Lent, we present Taverner's Mass in the context of chants from the Use of Salisbury for Mass on that day. The text of Robert Fayrfax's *Maria plena virtute* fits well into this context, being a meditation upon the crucifixion. The extraordinarily vividness with which Fayrfax sets this text of dramatic narrative (including glosses upon Christ's words from the Cross) and intense supplication makes it one of the most striking antiphons of the entire pre-reformation period. The stylistic simplicity typical of this composer—his music is often less florid than that of Taverner—here acts to emphasise the text, and the setting of such phrases as 'Mater dolorosa plena lachrimosa videns ruinosam Filium in cruce' (the opening of the first fully-scored section of the piece) belies any crude generalisation that English sacred polyphony of this period is merely a form of decoration with little affective relationship to the text. In the manner of its expressiveness *Maria plena virtute* is reminiscent of some of those carols of the period which treat the Passion theme.

Fayrfax was probably the most highly respected English composer of the generation before Taverner. A Gentleman of the Chapel Royal by 1497, he gained his MusB from Cambridge in 1501 and a MusD three years later. Although he retained his Chapel Royal post, he may have worked at St Alban's Abbey from 1502, the year in which Queen Elizabeth of York visited St Albans and paid Fayrfax twenty shillings for an 'Anthem of our Lady and St Elizabeth'. This piece was almost certainly the antiphon *Aeternæ laudis lilium*, with which we end tonight's concert. The name of the royal

patroness is emphasised by Fayrfax, who suddenly reintroduces the upper voices at this point within what had been a low-voice duet. This section of the text—a genealogy of Christ—leads to a second musical climax at its conclusion, when the birth of Christ is reached: 'est Jesus Dei Filius natus in hunc mundum'. The piece ends—as does *Maria plena virtute*—with a masterfully shaped melismatic 'amen'.

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The next two concerts in our series are set to provide a fitting climax to our two-year celebration of the 450th Anniversary of John Taverner. In our final concert, we additionally celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Cambridge Taverner Choir

Sunday April 21st at 8.15 pm
Jesus College Chapel
In Nomine Domini

John Taverner - In Nomine Domini

John Taverner - A Prayer to the Holy Trinity - World Premiere
(special commission by the Cambridge Taverner Choir)

Concert includes music by Taverner, Tye, Tallis, Byrd and Sheppard
with the viol consort Concordia (directed by Mark Levy)

Taverner has provided inspiration for composers up to the present day, and this concert will chart his continuing influence. The *In Nomine* from Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas* gave rise to a whole genre - the instrumental *In Nomine* - examples of which will be performed by the acclaimed viol consort Concordia. Additionally we will explore various vocal connections between Taverner and his successors. Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas* was the inspiration for the modern John Taverner's *A Prayer to the Holy Trinity*, specially commissioned by the choir and performed here in his presence for the first time.

Saturday August 3rd at 8.15 pm
The Lady Chapel, Ely Cathedral
Gloria tibi Trinitas

John Taverner - Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas

Cambridge Taverner Choir Tenth Anniversary Concert

The Cambridge Taverner Choir was formed ten years ago to sing perhaps the finest of Taverner's six-part masses, the *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas*. This was part of a reconstruction of Mass for Trinity Sunday in Tattershall, Lincolnshire - one of the churches where Taverner worked. To mark the tenth anniversary of the choir, and to bring our celebration of Taverner's music to a close, we perform this mass once again, this time in one of the finest medieval chapels in Europe.

Booking Information

Ticket prices: April Concert *Sighted* £10 (£8); *Unsighted* £5 (£3)

August Concert *Sighted* £7 (£5); *Unsighted* £3 (£2)

Tickets can be obtained from Corn Exchange Box Office, Wheeler St., Cambridge 01223 357851

Text and Translations

Aeternae Laudis Liliūm

Aeternae laudis liliūm, O dulcis Maria, te laudat vox angelica, Nutrix Christi pia. Jure prolis gloriae detur harmonia, salus nostrae memoriae omni agonia. Ave radix, flos virginum, O sanctificata; Benedicta in utero materno creata. Eras sancta puerpera et inviolata, tuo ex Jesu Filio Virgo peramata. Honestis caeli precibus Virgo veneraris, Regis excelsi filii Visu jucundaris; Eius divino lumine Tu nusquam privaris; Gaude sole splendidior Virgo singularis. Issachar quoque Nazaphat nec non Ismaria, nati ex Jesse stipite qua venit Maria, atque Maria Cleophae Sancto Zacharia, a qua patre Elizabeth, matre Sophonia natus est Dei gratia Johannes Baptista; Gaudebat clauso Domino in matrice cista. Linae ex hoc genere est Evangelista Johannes. Annae filia ex Maria ista est Jesus Dei Filius natus in hunc mundum; Conferat nos in gaudium, in aevum jocundum, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto regnat in unum. Amen

O gentle Mary, eternally the lily to be praised, the voice of angels praises thee, holy nurse of Christ, mindful that his agony is our salvation. Hail, flower of virgins, our sacred root, you were made blessed by your maternal womb, holy and immaculate in childbirth, Virgin most beloved of your son, Jesus. Virgin worshipped in the true prayers of heaven, you delight to see your son, the sublime king; you are nowhere deprived of his divine light; rejoice, unrivalled Virgin more brilliant than the sun. Issachar, Nazaphat and Ismaria were born of Jesse's stem, from which Mary sprang, and Mary daughter of Cleophas. From holy Zacharia, and Elizabeth, daughter of Sophonia, was born John the Baptist, by God's grace: he was rejoicing while the Lord was enclosed in his mother's womb. Of this line was John the Evangelist. The daughter of Ann, Mary, brought Jesus, the son of God, into the world; the burial of his blood purified him in the world; he brings us to joy and eternal happiness, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, reigns in one. Amen.

Maria plena virtute

Maria plena virtute pietatis gratie mater misericordie, tu nos ab hoste protege. Clementissima Maria vite per merita compassionis tue pro nobis preces effunde et de peccatis meis erue. Sicut tuus filius petiit pro crucifigentibus, 'Pater dimite ignorantibus', magna pietate pendens in latronibus dixit uni ex hominibus, 'in paradiso cum patribus mecum eris hodie'.

Mary full of goodness, devotion and grace, mother of mercy, protect us from the enemy. Most merciful Mary, by the merits of your life and compassion pour out your prayers for us and do away mine offences. Just as your son prayed for those who were crucified, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do', in great trust as he hung there, he spoke to one of the robbers and said, 'today you will be with me among our fathers in paradise'.

Mater dolorosa plena lacrimosa videns ruinosa filium in cruce, cum voce rauce dixit speciosa, 'mulier clamorosa filium tuum ecce'. Vertens ad discipulum, sic fuit mandatum matrem fuisse per spatium, et ipsam consolare: et sicut decebat filium servum paratissimum custodivit preceptum omnino servare.

Mother of sorrows, full of tears, as you watched your son on the cross of destruction, in a voice of broken beauty he said, 'woman of weeping, behold your son'. Turning to the disciple, it was his command that she be his mother, and that he comfort her: and thus it was fitting that the servant you was most ready to preserve the rule of serving all.

Dixit Iesus dilectionis, 'sitio salutem genui'. Audi orationibus nostris tue misericordie, O Iesu. Rex amabilis quid sustulisti pro nobis! Per merita tue passionis peto veniam a te. Iesu, dicens clamasti 'Deus meus, quid dereliquisti?' Per acetum quod gustasti ne derelinquas me, 'consummatum' dixisti.

Jesus spoke of his love, saying, 'Thirst for the salvation of all people'. O Iesu in your mercy listen to our prayers. O king of love, what have you taken from us! By the merits of your passion I ask pardon. Iesu, you cried aloud and said, 'my God, why have you forsaken me?'. By the bitter wine you tasted do not abandon me; you cried, 'it is fulfilled'.

O Iesu fili Dei, in hora exitus mei, animam meam suscipe. Tunc spiritum emisit, et matrem gladius pertransivit. Aqua et sanguis exivit, ex delicato corpore. Post ab Arimathia rogavit et Isum sepelivit, et Nicodemus venit ferens mixturam myrrhe. O dolorosa mater Christi, quales penas tu vidisti, corde tenens habuisti fidem totius ecclesie. Ora pro me, regina celi, filium tuum dicens, 'Fili, in hora mortis, servi tui peccatis suis indulge'. Amen

O Iesu, son of God, in the hour of my death receive my soul. Then he gave up the ghost, and a sword pierced his mother. Blood and water flowed out from his body. Joseph of Arimathea asked for his body and buried Jesus, and Nicodemus came bringing a mixture of myrrh. O sorrowing mother of Christ, what torments you beheld and kept in your heart the faith of the whole Church. Pray for me, queen of heaven, and say to your son, 'Son, in the hour of death, forgive the sins of this your servant'. Amen