

(c1495-1545): 'being but a Musitian'. The composer writes thus about the piece:

"This prayer is the foundation of Orthodox faith in the Holy Trinity. In setting it to music, I have tried to capture something of the deep compunction and repentance which lie at the heart of Orthodoxy. Each person of the Trinity is represented by a different tone in the Byzantine 'ochtoechos'. The semichorus should be placed at a considerable distance from the main choir. It is like the 'heartbeat' of repentance."

"In the Roman Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit is deemed to come from both the Father and the Son, but this is regarded as a heresy by the Orthodox: we believe that the Spirit proceeds only from the Father. For this reason counterpoint is forbidden in Orthodox church music, as it is considered a symbol of dualism, and I have reflected this in my setting."

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR: Owen Rees - director.

Sopranos: Diana Baumann; Josie Dixon; Helen Garrison; Hester Higon; Bryony Lang; Caroline Preston Bell; Sally Terris.

Altos: Jennie Cassidy; Simon Godsell; Nicholas Perkins; Rupert Preston Bell.

Tenors: David Allinson; Paul Baumann; Joss Sanders; David Thompson; Michael Thompson.

Basses: James Durran; Frank Salmon; Gary Snapper; Paul Watson.

Programme Notes by Dr Owen Rees

Lighting Advisor: Mike O'Toole.

Flowers: Joan Mallard.

Grateful acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who have helped with the Festival, or supported us financially and in other ways. Particular thanks are due to the following, without whose generous support there would be no Festival.

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Pat Harrison memorial concert

Little Missenden Church
Friday 9th October 8pm

In presenting a memorial concert for Pat Harrison (1905-1998) we remember her flair, her tireless energy, her breadth of musical taste. Though she might not have been familiar with all tonight's music, she loved 16th century polyphony. Equally she was always keen to discover new music, and her friendship with, and championing of, John Tavener took place at a time when he was much less famous than now. As is well known, that association took Pat (and several village children) to London's Festival Hall. But what equally delighted her was the bringing of music and musicians, many of whom became her friends, to her beloved Little Missenden, the place where so much of her life was so fruitfully spent.

PART ONE: Marian Music from Renaissance
Spain and Portugal

THOMAS LUIS DE VICTORIA 1548-1611
Vidi speciosam

AIRES FERNANDEZ
Alma redemptoris mater

PEDRO DE CRISTO c1550-1618
Ave regina cœlorum
Magnificat (8 voices)

FRANCESCO GUERRERO 1527-1599
Tota pulchra es, Maria
Ave virgo sanctissima
Regina cœli, lætare

INTERVAL

PART TWO: Music by John Tavener and Arvo Pärt

ARVO PÄRT b1935
Magnificat (1989)

JOHN TAVENER b1944

Two Hymns to the Mother of God (1985)

A Hymn to the Mother of God

Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God

Today the virgin (1989)

Prayer to the Holy Trinity

commissioned by the Cambridge Tavener Choir,
first performed 1996.

1998 is the 450th anniversary of the death of Spain's greatest Renaissance composer—Tomás Luis de Victoria—and the 400th anniversary of the death of Spain's most famous monarch—Philip II (Philip I of Portugal). We mark these anniversaries with a selection of works from Renaissance Spain and Portugal, all of them settings of texts concerned with the Blessed Virgin Mary, perhaps the richest source of inspiration to composers working in the Iberian Peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Several of these texts—*Vidi speciosam*, *Ave virgo sanctissima*, and *Tota pulchra es, Maria*—draw upon the rich poetic imagery of the Song of Songs, a common source of texts applied to Mary. Among these images, the lilies and roses appear both in Victoria's grand six-voice motet for the assumption of the Blessed Virgin, *Vidi speciosam*, and in Francisco Guerrero's famous *Ave virgo sanctissima*. The climax of the latter piece comes at the word 'salve', where Guerrero quotes repeatedly and at ever higher pitches the four-note motive which begins the chant *Salve Regina*. The same motive occurs at the same word in Pedro de Cristo's *Ave regina cœlorum*.

While Victoria (born in Avila in 1548) spend about two decades in Rome, Guerrero (1528-1599) lived in Seville for almost his entire life (although he visited Italy to oversee the publication of his music and undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land towards the end of his life). His setting of the Marian antiphon *Regina cœli* is for two choirs, and portrays vividly the joy of Easter, the season with which antiphon is associated.

Portuguese Renaissance music is still relatively little-known. The largest collection of musical sources of the period originated at the Augustinian Monastery of Santa Cruz (Holy Cross) in the northern city of Coimbra. Owen Rees has transcribed much of the music by Portuguese composers found in these manuscripts, of whom one of the finest is Pedro de Cristo (c1550-1618), *mestre de capela* (that is, director of polyphonic music) at Santa Cruz from the 1590s until his death. Much of his music, although beautifully crafted, is basically conventional in technique, remaining within the bounds of the typical late sixteenth-century contrapuntal style, the *stile antico*. This is true, for example, of the simple four-voice setting of the Marian antiphon *Ave regina cœlorum*. However, other works break through these technical boundaries in striking ways. For example, his setting of *Magnificat* for two choirs regularly breaks into vigorous declamation in short note-values

An even finer Portuguese composer than Pedro de Cristo is Aires Fernandez, but, frustratingly, we currently know nothing

for certain about his life, and relatively few complete works have been discovered so far. The piece by Aires Fernandez performed tonight, a setting of the Marian antiphon *Alma redemptoris mater*, incorporates (in the tenor) the plainchant associated with this text.

The music in the second part of the concert (with the exception of the concluding piece) follows the Marian theme of the first half, exploring how two contemporary composers who are acutely aware of their connection to musical and religious traditions—including those of the Renaissance—have responded to this area of devotion.

The sound-worlds of Arvo Pärt (b1935) and John Tavener (b1944) have become familiar to a wide audience in the last decade, and share many central characteristics: sonorous, repetitive, with a great simplicity and economy of melody (sometimes akin to plainchant) and harmony. Both concentrate on religious texts (whether of the Catholic or Orthodox tradition), aiming to capture the mystery and majesty of solemn liturgy. In the case of the Estonian composer, this religious emphasis and chant-informed style is a product of a change of direction in his work which occurred in the 1970s.

Pärt's treatment of the *Magnificat* text is articulated by changes in scoring, most but not all of them at the ends of verses or half-verses in the text. In many of these sub-sections the soprano maintains a monotone against which other parts move to produce gently shifting harmonic colours.

In *A Hymn to the Mother of God*, Tavener employs the simplest of techniques to create harmonies of extraordinary grandeur. The work is scored for two choirs, the second following on the heels of the first, but the piece is not canonic in the conventional sense: the harmonies of the two choirs are simply allowed to clash, producing an impression of monumental inevitability. The *Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God* features two of Tavener's most typical devices: firstly a drone sustained by the basses (as a support for the opening tenor verse), and secondly the doubling of a single melody in thirds, fifths, and octaves to produce a rich texture of triads moving in parallel. The first of these effects is heard again in the verses of the carol *Today the Virgin*.

The concert ends with the John Tavener's *Prayer to the Holy Trinity*, commissioned by the Cambridge Tavener Choir, and headed by the composer: *eternal memory—John Tavener*