

Music Notes 2017 – Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity

The setting this Sunday is the *Missa Amor ecco colei* by Orlande de Lassus (1532–1594). This mass setting is, of course, one of those gifts to young choristers, for whom it is inevitably the *E.coli Mass*. I tell you this just to illustrate the rich, full inner lives of innocents wearing ruffs. In fact, the name is a secular one, and is period Italian, rather than Latin, meaning something like *Love the one who is here*. This is a *parody mass* (meaning one in which chunks of a pre-existing work are used as inspirational jumping-off points by the composer). Each section of the mass opens with a distinctive dotted rhythm somewhere in the texture that links it back to its model, although we don't actually know exactly what that was. Stephen Rice, conductor of the Brabant Ensemble, has pointed out that it resembles a *villanelle* on this text by an obscure composer of the period called Prospero Caetano, though a BBC music site suggests a better candidate is a setting of a similar text by a Flemish composer Regnart (c.1540–1599), who knew Lassus from 1581. (The only person named Prospero Caetano who is notable was a Roman cavalier; Alexandre Dumas believed that, on the instructions of the Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, he was strangled in his own house and said so bluntly in his book on the Borgias, published in 1840. But I digress...)

Anyway, this mass employs six voices, two sopranos, two tenors and one each of alto and bass. This permits the use – in effect – of two choirs, one of upper, and one of lower voices, while still being able to form complete harmony. Lassus makes the most of this opportunity, as he does of the exciting sound created by having the sopranos either go in for some serious competitive singing, or else having them rush hither and thither in parallel. It is a thrilling setting, and well worth hearing.

We are not sure who composed the offertory motet, *Out of the deep*, a setting of the sentence of this Sunday's *Alleluia*. It could be by the Thomas Lupo, who may have been born in 1571, and who some think died in December 1627; or it may be by the Thomas Lupo, the Younger, who is mentioned in 1578, and died (perhaps) in 1642, the last time he is known to have been active, but at any rate disappeared from records at that point. The *Dictionary of Composers for the Church in Great Britain and Ireland* lists these composers separately, but makes possible attributions of the motet to both of them. Also under both entries, attention is drawn to the fact that each may have been the Thomas Lupo who contributed works to *The Teares and Lamentations of a Sorrowfull Soule* by William Leighton (c.1565–1622), which is, as the name suggests, an antidote to euphoria, if ever there were one. While this motet is not part of Leighton's volume, you can tell from the title that it could have been considered a candidate. Still, it is a very good piece, whichever of the Lupos was its composer.

Evensong is sung for us this week by the choir *Collegium Musicum* under the direction of their musical director, Greg Morris, who is also Associate Organist of the Temple Church, as well as Director of the Bar Choral Society, and a regular

conductor of the professional Temple Singers. This is part of *Collegium Musicum's* residence with us. They rehearse each week usually in The Great and sometimes in The Less, and also sing for us three services in the year.

The canticles are split by composer and geography. The *Magnifac*t is by Hans Leo Haßler (1564–1612) – the ß in his name stands in effect for a double-s for English readers, and indeed is written out as “ss” by German speakers in Switzerland, who love not the ß. Haßler came from a musical family, and his father was also a church musician. When Haßler was 24, he decided to go to Italy, and in particular to Venice, where he met and befriended Giovanni Gabrieli (1554–1612), leading to a period of study with the famous Andrea Gabrieli (1532–1685), Giovanni's uncle. This exposure to the Italian school substantially affected his own compositional style after his return to the Germanic states a year later. This synthesis proved successful, and as a prolific composer and a much-respected organist, his reputation rose to impressive heights. Ultimately, he moved to Dresden, where he worked at the court of the Elector Christian II. The cross-fertilization of the German and Italian schools – which continued apace, since many German composers followed Haßler's example and visited Italy to study there – was not insignificant. These notes have often referred to the procession of Flemish and Spanish composers who were drawn especially to Rome in the mature Renaissance period, taking their experiences home with them to develop a distinctive language inflected by what they had learnt from the great Italian composers. This trend is also extremely pronounced when we come to the German states' composers from Haßler onwards. We can also see the outworking of this when Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) arranged the Italian master Vivaldi's (1648–1751) *Concerti* for organ. Because of its dominance in this area from the Baroque period onwards, it is easy to think of Germany as the capital country of classical music. Nevertheless, one sees all over Europe the power that the magnetic effect of the Catholic Church's centre in Rome and in other great centres such as Venice exerted on composers. Without this, would things have developed in Germany in the way they did? This seems unlikely.

Haßler, who was himself a Lutheran, spent some time working for a nobleman in Augsburg, even though it was a strongly Catholic area. Rather as with Byrd (1539–1623) and Tallis (1505–1585) in England, he made the usual musician's compromise with context and duly wrote much 'Catholic' music, as evidenced by his collection, *Cantiones sacrae de festis praecipuis totius anni – Sacred songs for the principal feasts of the whole year*, published in Augsburg in 1591. Included in this collection were two settings of the *Magnificat*, one written in the scale known as mode VIII, and this one, in Mode V. It displays a very imaginative use of different textures, with each section of the text characterized by a different arrangement of voices and compositional style. The *Nunc Dimittis*, meantime, is taken from the *Evening Service in G minor* by the English, Protestant composer, Henry Purcell (1659–1695). Actually, we have no absolute evidence for his authorship, at least not in the form of a manuscript, but it is

extremely likely that this is by Purcell. It is a somewhat lighter piece than the better authenticated B-flat setting, but there are many structurally similar features: each comprises sections for a full choir of four voices with “verse” sections for six voices where the three upper voices and the three lower voices take it in turns to sing the text. Purcell evidently expected the same *Gloria* to be sung after both canticles, but this was felt by the Irish composer and organist Thomas Roseingrave (1688–1766) to be insufficient, and he wrote a much lengthier *Gloria* to be sung after the *Nunc Dimittis*. Today, however, musicians tend to stick to what Purcell wanted, fun though the Roseingrave certainly is. Personally, I have a soft spot for the longer version, which is imaginative and exciting. Given that (not this Sunday, but whenever both canticles are sung from the same work) we would have already heard Purcell’s own setting after the *Magnificat*, it is difficult to see what harm it does to be a little different after the *Nunc Dimittis*. But that is the result of thinking that purism should be reserved to puritans, and much joy may they have of it.

The anthem is *Justorum animæ* (*The souls of the righteous*) by the equally English Byrd. He and Haßler have something in common, in that each worked extensively for a church that was not his own spiritual preference. Haßler was a Protestant composing for the Catholic tradition, albeit with no danger to his person from holding personal religious views at variance with the local rule. Byrd was a Catholic (convert), working for the newly Protestant English church, and, while he enjoyed quite a measure of protection from Elizabeth I, he was repeatedly fined for not regularly attending services at his local parish church.

Byrd and Haßler also shared the idea of writing collections of music for use throughout the church’s year. The music of the Eucharist is made up of certain texts, known collectively as the *Ordinary of the Mass*, that occur in every service – *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei*, and, on high days and holy days, *Credo* – and also certain texts that are unique to the particular day and, sometimes, the particular time of day, which are referred to in English as *Propers*. When the chants for the propers are collected together in books, their collective name is *Gradualia* – although technically only one of propers of the day is for the moment in the service known as the *Gradual*, which occurs between the first reading and the Epistle. (Incidentally, Lupo’s motet in the morning is also, of course, a setting of a mass proper.) Byrd published two volumes of *Gradualia* – propers that, instead of being sung simply to chant, were set as motets – one in 1605, and one in 1607. Between them, they contain 109 motets, some of which are designed to do double duty by being capable of truncation where only part of a text turns up as one proper, while it is also part of a longer proper elsewhere. It’s a very clever scheme. *Justorum animæ* is the Offertory for All Saints, which we celebrated at the start of this month, and comes from the first volume of *Gradualia*. The text is taken from Wisdom 3:1–3: *The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; but they are in peace.*