

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

The Rose and The Ostrich Feather

Eton Choirbook Volume I

A page of musical notation from the Eton Choirbook, Volume I. The page features a large, decorated initial 'C' in green and red at the top left. The music is written on four staves, with Latin text in red ink below the notes. The text includes: "I di ca p monati spūe lat ppora", "tū vi dit moxi fi", "unt Videt pns flagellari ma", "x des ppora ri unti a cruce li bus vid cap", and "Go tū corpus cūta tū pastor pro o vi bus".

The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS



I remember well, some years ago, sitting in the library at Eton College with Christopher Page and recording a programme for BBC Radio 3 about the Eton Choirbook, by far the most outstanding of a handful of choirbooks to survive the Reformation. We turned the parchment pages of this vast book, admiring the vividly illuminated capitals, marvelling at some of the, obviously frequently performed, motets, the corners of which were heavily thumbbed by fingers of a past century. My abiding thought was how incredibly talented these sixteen choristers must have been to sing this highly complex music, difficult by any standard, while crowding around a lectern, straining to read by candlelight. Today we have modern editions, electricity and aids for failing sight and it still seems difficult! Our edition represents very much the grass roots of our work and our overwhelming desire to rejoice in the survival of this great music.

Harry
Christopher,

THE SIXTEEN

TREBLE

Ruth Dean
Carys Lane
Alison Smart

MEAN

Sally Dunkley
Penny Vickers
Julia White

ALTO

Andrew Giles
Michael Lees
Philip Newton
Christopher Royall

TENOR

Philip Daggett
Neil MacKenzie
Nicolas Robertson
David Roy

BASS

Simon Birchall
Timothy Jones
Christopher Purves
Francis Steele

TURGES: FROM STORMY WINDES

ALTO

Philip Newton (verse)
Michael Lees
Penny Vickers

TENOR 1

Neil MacKenzie (verse)
Nicolas Robertson
David Roy

TENOR 2

Simon Berridge (verse)
Peter Burrows
Philip Daggett

BROWNE: STABAT IUXTA CHRISTI CRUCEM

TENOR 1

Neil MacKenzie (verse)
Philip Daggett
David Roy

TENOR 2

Simon Berridge (verse)
Peter Burrows
Nicolas Robertson

BASS 1

Simon Birchall (verse)
Henry Whickham

BASS 2

Timothy Jones (verse)
Philip Lawson

BASS 3

Christopher Purves (verse)
Lawrence Whitehead

BASS 4

Francis Steele (verse)
Benjamin Odom

ANON: THIS DAY DAY DAWS

SOPRANO

Carys Lane (verse)
Ruth Dean
Sally Dunkley

TENOR

Neil MacKenzie (verse)
Nicolas Robertson
David Roy

BASS

Christopher Purves (verse)
Simon Birchall
Timothy Jones

The Rose and The Ostrich Feather

Eton Choirbook Volume I

To an age that prizes and preserves the heritage of its past, the cavalier attitude of our ancestors to the culture of their own day strikes us as deplorable. Tudor church music is a case in point: rich as the repertory may seem to us today, untold quantities of similar music have been lost, most of it destroyed by the end of the sixteenth century. Without question the number of discarded works far exceeds those that survive. Why such carelessness, negligence and, to our minds, vandalism by those who should have recognized and cherished artefacts of such high quality? There are several explanations. First, English church music was devastated by political and theological change in the sixteenth century. Choral foundations that had nurtured a strong musical tradition were abolished, refounded or starved of income: changes in doctrine overnight converted time-honoured texts into superstition, rendering both them and the music to which they were set obsolete; music books that had once been used daily in the service of the liturgy ceased to be of any practical value and were broken up or left to rot. Second, natural laws of changing taste prevailed in Tudor England no less than they do in our own time: as the art of

one generation becomes outmoded, so the odds against its survival become weighted indeed.

Such was the fate of much Tudor church music.

Institutions known to have owned impressive collections of music around 1500 have lost everything. Of the many choirbooks listed in inventories at King's College, Cambridge and Magdalen College, Oxford, not a single one remains. Even the music library of the Chapel Royal, England's premier choral foundation throughout the sixteenth century, has been totally destroyed.

Viewed in that light, the very fact that Eton College still possesses the great choirbook that was in daily use in its chapel in the early sixteenth century is little short of a miracle. Admittedly negligence has seriously disfigured the book: 98 parchment sheets, more than a third of the original total, are now missing, presumably thrown away as the binding fell to pieces. Even so, the Eton Choirbook survived, first through oversight, in more recent times through careful preservation. It is the largest and most valuable document of early Tudor church music still in existence. Without it the music of its age would have been plunged into near obscurity.

Although the chapel at the College Royal of Our Lady of Eton supported a flourishing musical tradition in the late middle ages, it would be a mistake to assume that the pieces

contained in its choirbook were specifically composed for use there. With few exceptions, the opposite is true: most of the contents were drawn from the repertoires of other choirs, assembled by an unknown editor who copied the manuscript probably in London during the late fifteenth century. While the Eton Choirbook usefully documents the musical diet of Eton around 1500, it also tells us a great deal about other institutions whose music books have perished. Above all, it helps us to reconstruct the repertoire of the choir that sang before the Tudor monarchy itself. Many of the works contained in the Eton Choirbook would have been performed by the Chapel Royal. Some, including several included on this record, were even addressed directly to members of the Tudor royal family. Admittedly the connections are often vague rather than specific. Robert Fayrfax, Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1497 to his death in 1521, gave the title 'Regale' to one of his settings of the Magnificat presumably because the piece was composed either for the king or for a royal foundation such as Eton College or King's College, Cambridge. Beyond that, however, we move into conjecture. Fayrfax's colleague William Cornysh, Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal from 1509, can hardly have written his elaborate *Salve Regina* for any institution other than his own. Works such as these are 'royal' only in the sense that they probably graced the king's chapel.

Others are more immediately linked to persons or events. A striking example is Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*, a six-part antiphon on the theme of the Virgin's sorrows at the foot of the cross. John Browne, the most fertile mind represented in the Eton Choirbook, is a shadow figure thought to have been associated with Oxford rather than royal circles. Nevertheless his antiphon quotes extensively from a partsong, *From stormy windis and grievous wethir*, by the London composer Edmund Turges. The song's text prays for the protection of the ostrich feather, emblem of Prince Arthur, elder brother of Henry VIII and heir to the throne, as he sets out on a journey, possibly a sea voyage. By quoting Turges' song, Browne's antiphon evidently becomes an allegory on the untimely death of Arthur in 1502: the sorrowing of the Virgin mirrors the mourning of the queen, Elizabeth of York, and the song's plea for protection from danger now becomes a prayer for the prince's safe passage from earth. Allegory may also be sensed in the *Salve Regina* of Richard Hygons, even if the connection with royalty is here tenuous. One of the tenor voices quotes at length from the plainchant antiphon *Venid ad Petrum*, specifically the huge melody that occurs on the single word 'caput' ('head'). Other composers of the fifteenth century, continental as well as English, also made use of the quotation, yet its exact significance remains unexplained. Possibly the word 'caput' alludes to the idea of 'head of state', making works based on

the melody appropriate for state occasions such as coronations, investitures or royal visits. Working in the relative obscurity of Wells Cathedral, it is hard to know what even Hygons could have had in mind. Yet the biography of this composer, like so many of his colleagues, is clouded in obscurity; the true significance of his *Salve Regina* remains tantalizingly unexplained. Just as early Tudor church music is often shot through with references to the magnates who financed it, so partsongs by the same composers reflect the biographies, personalities and obsessions of the patrons who supported them. Turges' prayer for the ostrich feather, preserved in a late fifteenth-century songbook emanating from courtly circles, is a clear example. Another is the anonymous three-part song *This day day dawes*, copied adjacently in the same manuscript. Here the allusion to 'the lily-wighte rose' is specifically to the emblem of Elizabeth of York, Henry VII's queen. Yet the text is rich in other resonances: to the white rose a symbol of virginity, the rose as a metaphor for the Virgin – an image that recurs regularly in the Marian antiphons of the Eton Choirbook. At first sight the juxtaposition of secular songs and sacred music presented in this collection might seem incongruous. In reality the two repertoires, worldly and divine, intertwine exquisitely. The emblems of the white rose and the ostrich feather merge almost imperceptibly into the veneration of Christ and his Mother.

JOHN MILSOM

The Rose and The Ostrich Feather Eton Choirbook Volume I

Robert Fayrfax (1464-1521)	
① <i>Magnificat ('Regale')</i>	13.20
Richard Hygons (c1435-c1509)	
② <i>Salve Regina</i>	11.49
Edmund Turges (c1450-?)	
③ <i>From stormy windes</i>	6.32
John Browne (fl c1490)	
④ <i>Stabat iuxta Christi crucem</i>	10.59
Anon	
⑤ <i>This day day dawes</i>	4.30
William Cornysh (d1523)	
⑥ <i>Salve Regina</i>	14.46
Total playing time	62.34

□ *Magnificat*

*Magnificat anima mea Dominum
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.*

*Quia respexit humilitatem
ancillae suae:*

*ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.*

*Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen ejus.*

*Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.*

*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.*

*Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exaltavit humiles.*

*Esurientes implevit bonis:
et divites dimisit inanes.*

*Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae.*

*Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.*

*Gloria Patri, et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.*

*Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my saviour.
For he has regarded the low estate of his
handmaiden:

for behold, henceforth all generations shall call
me blessed.

For he who is mighty has done great things to
me; and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them who fear him from
generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has
scattered the proud, even the arrogant of heart.

He has deposed the mighty from their seats
and exalted the humble.

The hungry he has filled with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy.

As it was spoken to our fathers,
to Abraham and his seed for ever.

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

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

2 *Salve Regina*

*Salve Regina, mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac
lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.*

*Virgo mater ecclesiae,
Aeterna porta gloriae,
Esto nobis refugium
Apud Patrem et Filium.*

*O clemens!
Virgo clemens, virgo pia,
Virgo dulcis, O Maria,
Exaudi preces omnium
Ad te pie clamantium.*

*O pia!
Funde preces tuo nato,
Crucifixo, vulnerato,
Et pro nobis flagellato,
Spinis puncto, felle potato.*

O dulcis Maria, salve!

Hail O Queen, mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail.
To you we cry, exiled children of Eve.
To you we sigh, as we mourn and weep in
this valley of tears.

Ah then, our advocate, turn those merciful
eyes of yours upon us;
and Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb,
show to us after our exile here.

Virgin mother of the church,
everlasting gate to glory,
be our refuge
before the Father and the Son.

O gentle!
Gentle virgin, loving virgin,
O sweet virgin Mary,
hear the prayers of all
who humbly cry to you.

O loving!
Pour out prayers to your Son,
the crucified, the wounded,
scourged for our sake,
pierced with thorns, given gall to drink.

O sweet Mary, hail!

③ *From stormy windes*

From stormy windes and grievous weather,
Good Lord, preserve the Estridge Feather!

O blessed Lord of heaven celestial,
Which formed hast of thy most special grace
Arthur, our prince, to us here terrestrial
In honour to reign, Lord,
grant him time and space,
Which of alliance
Our prince of pleasance
By inheritance of Englund and France
Right heir for to be;
Wherefore now sing we: *From stormy windes...*

Wherefore, good Lord, sith of thy creation
Is this noble prince of royal lineage,
In every case be his preservation,
With joy to rejoice his due inheritance,
His right to obtain
In honour to reign,
This heir of Britayne, of Castille and Spain,
Right heir for to be;
Wherefore now sing we: *From stormy windes...*

Now, good Lady, among thy saintes all,
Pray to thy Son, the second in Trinity,
For this young prince which is and daily
shall be
Thy servant with all his heart so free,
O celestial,
Mother maternal,
Empress infernal, to thee we cry and call,
His safeguard to be;
Wherefore now sing we: *From stormy windes...*

4 *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*

*Stabat iuxta Christi crucem
Videns pati veram lucem
Mater regis omnium
Vidit caput coronatum
Spinis latus perforatum,
Vidit mori filium.
Vidit corpus flagellari,
Manus, pedes perforari,
Itis a crudelibus.
Vidit caput inclinatum,
Totum corpus cruentatum
Pastoris pro oviris pro ovibus.
In dolore tunc fuisti,
Virgo pia, cum vidisti
Mori tuum filium.
Dolor ingens, dolor ille
Dicunt sancti plus quam mille
Praecellit martyrrium.
Virgo mitis, virgo pia,
Spes reorum, vitis via,
Virgo plena gratia,
Iube natum et implora
Servis tuis sine mora
Nobis donet gaudia.*

Near the cross of Christ stood Mary,
As the True Light suffered there
Mother of the King of glory,
There she saw Him cruelly crowned,
Saw the spear his side that wounded,
Watched as death overcame her Son.
Beheld his body scourged, afflicted,
Gentle hands and feet transfixed
By the blows of cruel men.
And as he bowed his head she saw
The Shepherd's body bloodied o'er
For the sake of all his sheep.
Then in sorrow, holy Virgin,
Sadly gazing, watching there
Death invade thy dearest Son.
Greater suffering thou enduredst,
Say the saints, than pain and torment
Of a thousand martyrdoms.
Gentle Virgin, Virgin holy,
Hope of sinners, path of glory,
Virgin full of Heavenly grace,
Bid thy Son, thy servants beg thee,
And implore Him that He quickly
Bring us into heaven's bliss.

5 *This day day dawes*

This day day dawes
This gentill day dawes,
This gentill day dawes
And I must go home.

In a glorius garden grene
Sawe I syttyng a comly quene
Among the flouris that fresh byn.
She gaderd a floure and set betwene;
The lyly-whight rose methought I sawe
The lyly-whight rose methought I sawe,
And ever she sang:
This day day dawes...

In that garden be flouris of hewe;
The gelofir gent that she well knewe
The flour-de-luce she did on rewe,
And said - 'The white rose is most trewe
This garden to rule be ryghtwis lawe'.
The lyly-whyghte rose methought I sawe,
And ever she sang:
This day day dawes...

(DAWES = DAWNS. SET BETWENE = SAT AMONGST
THEM. GELOFIR GENT = CLOVE-SCENTED PINK)

Recording Producer: Mark Brown
Recording Engineer: Anthony Howell

CD mastering: Julian Millard

Recorded at St. Bartholemew's Church,
Orford, Suffolk

Originally released on the Collins label
Cover artwork: from the Eton Choirbook,
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Design: Richard Boxall Design Associates

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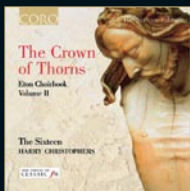


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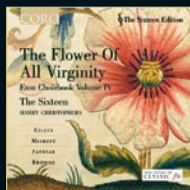


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THE TIMES

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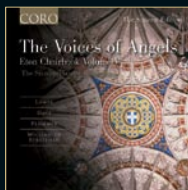


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