

Beatus Vir

*The
Choir of
Ormond
College*

*directed by
Douglas
Lawrence*



Press comments from the Choir's European Tour 1999 during which time these recordings were made ...

“ ... the incredible professional discipline and the rich sound was most impressive ... swept the audience away. Rhythmically driving, slowly unfolding, the Stanford works had a life and energy to which the singers applied their full talents – the effect and radiance was in places breathtaking.”

– Schwabian Zeitung, Lindau

“ ... A bewitchingly rich sound unfolded as the choir made its way through the break-neck harmonic progressions of Gesualdo's O vos omnes with precise intonation and extraordinary security.”

– General Anzeiger, Bonn

Beatus Vir

The Choir of Ormond College
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Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

- 1** Stabat Mater 7'29"
- 2** Sicut cervus 2'59"
- 3** Tu es Petrus 6'56"

Carlo Gesualdo (1561-1631)

- 4** O vos omnes 3'14"

Jacob Handl (1550-1591)

- 5** Pater noster 3'46"

Giovanni Gabrieli (1553-1612)

- 6** Jubilate Deo 4'41"

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1633)

- 7** Cantate Domino 2'07"
- 8** Beatus vir 8'37"

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

Three motets

- 9** Justorum animae 3'02"
- 10** Coelos ascendit hodie 1'47"
- 11** Beati quorum via 3'42"

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901)

- 12** Abendlied 2'46"

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The Choir of Ormond College made its first international tour in 1985. Since then the choir has toured every second year and this compact disc was recorded in 1999, during the most recent tour.

The fifteenth century church of Santa Maria in Bressanoro sits in majestic solitude in the midst of farmland on the outskirts of Castelleone, a town near Cremona in northern Italy. Here on the 22nd and 23rd of July 1999 the Choir re-recorded most of the music on this disc. The church has fine acoustic properties as evidenced on this recording. All was fine until half way through the first recording session when a persistent whirring sound caused a pause in the recording. We discovered that a farmer had emerged from his siesta and commenced ploughing. After some discussion and much laughter Giovanni agreed to leave his tractor silent until we had finished the session and to take a longer siesta the following day.

Beatus vir was recorded in St. Martin's Church in Wangen, near Lake Konstanz in Southern Germany. The Choir has given several concerts in this fine Baroque church. It houses an impressively beautiful organ from the Austrian firm of Rieger. The music on this disc represents some of the best loved sacred repertoire of all time. The composer's names conjure up images of superb Italian mediaeval and renaissance basilicas; Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, San Marco, Venice and after a detour through Prague and Munich the great gothic cathedrals of England.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594). One can place Palestrina alongside Orlando di Lasso and William Byrd; the other defining figures of late 16th Century composition. How Palestrina managed to work within the confines imposed by the ecclesiastics and yet produce many works of unearthly beauty remains one of the wonders of music. His many masses and motets are consistently crafted in a masterly and poetic fashion and seem to reach to the heavens.

1 Stabat Mater

A Mother stood grieving, tearful, beside a cross, while her son hung dying. A sword passed through her heart, which groaned in grief and mourning. O how sad and afflicted was that blessed woman, Mother of the Only Begotten Son, who mourned and grieved, and trembled as she saw the suffering of her bright Son. Who would not weep to see the Holy Mother regard her Son, feeling every pain with Him? For the sins of his race, she saw Jesus in torment, broken by the whipping he had suffered. She saw her sweet son dying, deserted by all others as he gave up the ghost.

Hail Mother, source of all love; make me feel the power of your grief that I may weep with you. Grant that my heart may burn with love for Christ our God, that I may be more acceptable to him. Holy Mother, I pray that you strike my heart keenly with the strokes which Christ himself bore. Share with me the pains which your wounded Son deigned to bear on my behalf. Grant that I may weep holy tears with you and partake of the pangs of the crucified as long as I shall live. I burn to stand there with you by the cross and to share in your grief. Virgin high above all others, do not refuse my request: let me weep

with you. Grant that I may bear Christ's own death, let me be a partaker in his Passion, and gaze upon his wounds. Let me feel the blows of the whip and sip of the blood of Christ and of the cross until I am drunk; Inflamed with love for Him, defend me at the Last Day, O Virgin. May I stand under the protection of the cross, fortified by the death of Christ and nourished by His grace. When my mortal body dies, grant that my body may be brought into the joys of heaven!

2 Sicut cervus

As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God. (Psalm 42:1)

3 Tu es Petrus

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19)

Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, Count of Conza was born in Naples about the year 1561. He died in Avellino in 1613 as he had lived; an enigmatic and intriguing figure. Gesualdo, the maker of amazing chromaticisms and even more amazing adventures was always the centre of attention, no more so than when shortly after discovering his wife, Maria d'Avalos "in flagrante delicto di fragrante peccato" with the Duke of Andria; the two lovers were assassinated. Cavalieri commented on Gesualdo's "mad passion for music". Gesualdo went well beyond the bounds of conventional harmony in his compositions; often tortured harmonies yes, but also undeniably beautiful.

4 O vos omnes

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
behold, and see if there be any sorrow like
unto my sorrow.
(Responsory at Matins for Holy Saturday.
Lamentations 1:12)

Jacob Handl (1550-1591). Various known as Handl, Händl, Hähnel, Handelius, Petelin, Jacob, Jakob, Gallus and Jakobus, this fine Bohemian composer was already known throughout Europe in his own lifetime. He spent his professional career in Prague and Vienna. The motet 'Pater noster' demonstrates a wonderful mastery of polychoral counterpoint. The alternating upper and lower voices finally combining in a gloriously majestic Alleluia.

5 Pater noster

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.
(The Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6:9-13)

Giovanni Gabrieli (1553-1612) was nephew of Andrea Gabrieli and the immediate predecessor of Claudio Monteverdi as Maestro di Capella at San Marco, Venice. He is best remembered for his *Sacrae Symphonie*, works which assembled different choirs of voices and instruments in the galleries of San Marco. The listener would hear the choirs coming from different parts of the church, and then hear them join in glorious harmony. The beautiful space and acoustic of San Marco established Gabrieli's place in the history of music. However, 'Jubilate Deo' probably comes from the period after 1605, when the death of Doge Grimani caused musical cutbacks at San Marco. Despite using only a single choir, Gabrieli still managed to capture the magnificence of earlier days.

6 Jubilate Deo

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands,
for thus shall the man be blessed
that feareth the Lord.
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands.
May the God of Israel unite you
and himself be with you.
May he send thee help from the sanctuary,
and strengthen thee out of Sion.
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands.
The Lord that made heaven and earth

give thee blessing out of Sion.
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
(taken from the Psalms and Tobit 7:15)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1633) was appointed to San Marco one year after the death of Giovanni Gabrieli. Monteverdi is one of the greatest composers of the early Baroque era. In his compositions style, harmony and imagination fuse into a stunning musical landscape.

7 Cantate Domino

O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, bless his name for he hath done marvellous things. Make a loud noise, rejoice and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of a psalm, for he hath done marvellous things. (From Psalms 96 and 98)

8 Beatus vir

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen. (Psalm 112)

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) is regarded as the savior of English church music. Since Purcell there had not been much English church music of great distinction. Stanford brought a new nobility to church music and through his many distinguished students created a legacy which still rules the music lists of cathedrals and large churches throughout the English speaking world. Interestingly, many choral conductors in Europe have discovered Stanford and his contemporaries and this music is now heard in the great churches of continental Europe.

Three Motets (Op38)

9 Justorum animæ

The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of malice shall not touch them: in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peace. (The Book of Wisdom 3)

10 Cœlos ascendit hodie

Today Jesus Christ, the King of glory, has ascended into the heavens, Alleluia!
He sits at the Father's right hand, ruling heaven and earth, Alleluia!
Now are David's songs fulfilled, now is the Lord with his Lord, Alleluia!
He sits upon the royal throne of God, in this his greatest triumph, Alleluia!
Let us bless the Lord: let the Holy Trinity be praised, let us give thanks to the Lord, Alleluia! Amen.

11 Beati quorum via

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. (Psalm 119:1)

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger was born in Vaduz in 1839. He just lived into the 20th Century, dying in Munich in 1901. He is best known for his 20 fine organ sonatas but now nearly one hundred years after his death choirs are again discovering his music. On this disc we sing one exquisite miniature. There is much more to be heard from this composer.

12 Abendlied

Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. (Luke 24:29)

The Choir Of Ormond College July 1999
Soprano: Virginia Jones, Julia Thomas, Caitlin Murray, Katherine Norman, Lucy Monie, Yvette Gainey, Rebecca Bennett, Megan O'Mullane, Katrina Renard, Bianca Schimizzi.
Alto: Susie Furphy, Shelley McCuaig, Hildy Essex, Kate Brian.
Tenor: Samuel Qualtrough, Michael Roe, Brian Johnson, Aditya Witjaksono.
Bass: Jonathan Wallis (Senior Chorister), Jamie Wallis, Tom Reid, Ross Abraham, Edward Morgan, Grantley McDonald.
Organ: Elizabeth Anderson (**Beatus vir**)
• Notes © Douglas Lawrence with reference to the 'New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians'.
• Recorded in Europe, July 1999, by Martin Wright and edited by Vaughan McAlley
• Cover painting: Virgin and child with Saints Gabriel and Anne (Italy)

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