

Petrucci Ensemble

MARY'S DOWRY

A recital on the Vigil of the Assumption, 14 August 2003

Pre-reformation England was known as 'Mary's Dowry' in recognition of the special devotion to Our Lady of our forebears. On the eve of the Assumption, the newly formed Petrucci Ensemble presents a selection of pre-reformation music in honour of Our Lady.

Rachael Beale
Alto

Mark Dourish
Tenor

Rupert Beale
Bass

Chris Jordinson
Bass

Salve Regina (*Sarum chant from Processionale ad usum Sarum 1502*)

'Sarum' chant (from the Latin name for Salisbury) is representative of English Gregorian chant in pre-Reformation times. This setting of the Salve Regina, similar to the Gregorian solemn tone, contains five additional verses, or tropes, which we sing as solos.

Ave Maria, Mater Dei (*William Cornysh, c.1430-1502*)

This dramatic piece is in fact one of Cornysh's more small-scale works, though it typifies the exuberant, florid style for which the Eton Choirbook is famous.

Ave Maris Stella (*John Dunstaple c.1390-1453*)

Quam Pulchra Es (*Dunstaple*)

The elaborate musical style popularised by John of Dunstable (the Bedfordshire town, then spelled with a 'p') became distinctive of pre-Reformation England, but was also popular on the continent. The first piece, a setting of the Office Hymn for Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, paraphrases the chant in the high voice while the two lower voices provide an energetic accompaniment. In the second, three voices of equal importance combine with the sensuous language of the Song of Songs to form possibly Dunstable's best-known work.

Alma Redemptoris Mater (*Sarum Chant from the Barnwell antiphoner*)

This setting is similar to the Gregorian solemn tone, but contains one very different and beautiful cadence on the words '*tuum sanctum genitorum*'. It is probably the chant referred to by Chaucer in 'The Prioress's Tale'.

Veine Pleine de Duçur (*Anonymous 13th century English*)

Although the words are French, this is an English setting of a very plaintive hymn to the Virgin.

Alleluia: Assumpta est Maria (*Gregorian Chant*)

The Alleluia for the Feast of the Assumption. Liturgically, this chant precedes the Gospel.

Gaude Virgo (*Josquin des Pres c.1455-1521*)

The one non-English piece in our programme is by the pre-eminent composer of his generation. Josquin's influence is very clear in the compositions of the famous Renaissance masters such as Palestrina and Lassus.

Ave Regina Coelorum (*Sarum Chant from the Barnwell antiphoner*)

The Marian Antiphon for the Assumption, solemn tone.

Ave Lumen Gratiae (*Robert Fayrfax 1464-1521*)

A contemporary of Josquin's, Fayrfax is one of the most forward looking of all the composers represented in the Eton Choirbook, his style prefiguring that of John Taverner. The second half of this wonderful piece is sadly incomplete.

The Petrucci Ensemble is a newly formed Cambridge-based group, concentrating on the late medieval and early Renaissance periods, as well as the associated chant. There will be more concerts in the near future (details available from www.petrucci-ensemble.org.uk shortly - email info@petrucci-ensemble.org.uk to subscribe to the mailing list). We would like to thank Dr Chris Page for much help and encouragement and Dr Mary Berry for preparing the Sarum chant.