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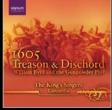
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# The King's Singers



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### THE GOLDEN AGE - SIGLO DE ORO

1.	Crux fidelis	King John IV of Portugal (1604-56)	[9.51]
2.	Kyrie (Mass Mille Regretz)	Cristóbal de Morales (ca.1500-53)	[4.51]
3.	Versa est in luctum	Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)	[3.33]
4.	In ieiunio et fletu	Diogo Dias Melgas (1638-1700)	[2.51]
5.	Versa est in luctum	Sebastián de Vivanco (ca.1550-1622)	[5.26]
6.	Lamentations	Alonso Lobo (1555-1617)	[18.17]
7.	Versa est in luctum	Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (ca.1590-1664)	[3.24]
8.	Pia et dolorosa mater	Diogo Dias Melgas	[2.23]
9.	Versa est in luctum	Alonso Lobo	[5.03]
10.	Libera me	Alonso Lobo	[8.44]
	Total Timings		[64.31]

#### THE KING'S SINGERS

DAVID HURLEY 'ROBIN TYSON 'PAUL PHOENIX 'PHILIP LAWSON CHRISTOPHER GABBITAS 'STEPHEN CONNOLLY

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For a group like ours the choice of repertoire for recording often seems bewilderingly large. So why did we choose Portugese, Spanish and Mexican music from the period known as the *Siglo de Oro* - the Golden Age?

The idea came from our church concert programmes, where acoustics, space and atmosphere allow great scope for drama. Beginning at the back of the church with *Crux fidelis* and slowly moving eastwards as the piece unfolds has proved to be a magical way to start. More than one audience member has told us that if the concert had ended after that one piece, they would have gone home happy. But that would have denied them the chance of hearing one of the most famous pieces from this era - Alonso Lobo's incredible version of *Versa est in luctum*, which often closes the first half of the concerts

With our appetites whetted we then drew on collective knowledge and experience. The King's Singers album *Fire Water* (2000) had included a *Benedictus* by Morales and the *Lamentations* of Juan Gutierrez de Padilla, two composers we felt must be represented. Delving into the memory banks brought out a surprisingly large number of settings of the *Versa est in luctum* text. The musical references in it to harp, organ, and voices

of weeping undoubtedly endeared it to composers, and we chose three more to accompany Lobo's. You will be able to hear a bajón - the precursor to the bassoon - playing in these settings and in other pieces besides. It provides an authentic sound, giving a special quality that immeasurably enhances the performances. We are very grateful that Keith McGowan was able to join us to play in the sessions

Looking through our personal music collections next allowed us to rediscover the music of Melgas whose quirky compositional style, sounding like a precursor to Bruckner, immediately endeared itself to us. But more searching was needed to make a satisfying album programme. That search ended when we found Alonso Lobo's wonderful Lamentations and his Libera me which if Crux fidelis provides the processional, gives us the recessional like much of the music on this album, the Lamentations has an intensity that no doubt starts with the text, but then permeates the music with a dark richness. John reserves his most imaginative writing for the setting of the Hebrew letters, as effective a musical representation of tear drops running down a face as you could wish to hear. The unexpected chord progressions show a sense of harmonic freedom that reminds us of another one of our albums -



Gesualdo's Tenebrae Responsories (2004)

As we recorded we ran out of superlatives to describe the quality of this music, full of Iberian Catholic flavour and colour, and imbued with a religious sensuousness. It shows composers writing at the height of their skills in rich, powerful countries confident of their standing both in Europe and the New World. This music might be associated with death and mourning, but it is exceptionally beautiful, and we hope our performances can move your souls as ours have been moved.

The King's Singers

Much has been said about the supposed mysticism of the music of Spain during the Siglo de Oro, much poetic connection made with the darkened interiors, the glowing black and gold, those necessary adjuncts to the transcendental visions of El Greco. While it is true that there is exaggeration in this, and while it is true that any cursory examination of the music produced in Spain, as well as Portugal and Latin America, will reveal, obviously, an abundance of joyful settings of joyful and celebratory texts, it is also true that it is extraordinarily easy to see in the substantial outpouring of music of mourning during this

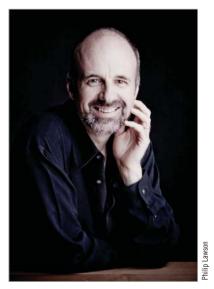


Robin Tyson

period something of a natural aptitude for the sublimation of lamentation, both public and private, by means of ritual art.

The Iberian tradition of polyphonic settings of Versa est in luctum, a text of mourning originating in the Book of Job and turned into a responsorial form, seems to have begun with Francisco de Peñalosa - who at the beginning of the 16th century set the entire responsory together with its verse - and to end somewhere in the early 18th century: the energetic setting by losé Torres dates from 1703, Torres, like Victoria, Lobo and Vivanco. set only the text of the responsory, making it a motet with no specific liturgical function. Victoria's grand and luminous setting was published in 1605 with his 6-voice Officium Defunctorum (Requiem), written for the obsequies of the Dowager Empress Maria, sister of Philip II, held in 1603. It is likely to have been sung between the funeral oration and the final absolution, while those present assembled around the catafaloue.

Similarly, Lobo's setting was almost certainly written for the funeral of Philip II in 1598, and its dignified power makes it one of Lobo's most affecting, and, nowadays, one of his most frequently sung, works. Typical of Lobo is the way in which the two treble parts move downwards imitatively, while the tenors ascend. His magnificent Lamentations for Holy Saturday survive in a manuscript from Seville Cathedral, written more than 150 years after the composer's death. While the texts of Jeremiah are declamatory and relatively simple, Lobo gives full rein to his melodic gifts in the flowing melismatic music he



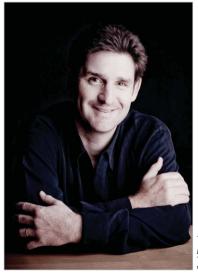
writes for the Hebrew letters which intersperse the Latin text, making also overt reference to the traditional Toledan chant in the upper voices. Rather different is Lobo's funeral responsory Libera me, a stately but impassioned plea, written

for an unknown, but clearly significant, occasion,

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Sebastián de Vivanco was the maestro de capilla at Ávila, later moving to Salamanca, where he also taught at the University. His beautiful setting of Versa est in luctum scored for the same disposition of voices as those by Victoria and Lobo. survives in a manuscript written long after his death, thereby proving its longevity in the repertoire. It was not only Spanish composers who set this text, it was also used in Portugal and in the New World. The compact setting by Juan Guttiérez de Padilla, born in Spain but who emigrated to Puebla. Mexico, at some point before 1622, is definitely part of this tradition. It also shows a more intimate, contemplative side of a composer who is better-known for his double-choir music and villancicos

The much-revered hymn for Holy Week Crux fiidelis is emblematic of the great patron of the arts who was King John IV of Portugal. Not only did he support composers economically, by paying the costs of printing, but he was an accomplished musician himself. His library at Vila Vicosa contained an extraordinary quantity of music, both printed and manuscript, from many countries; it was entirely destroyed by the devastating Lisbon earthquake in 1755. John was declared king in 1640, after sixty years of Spanish rule: his support of national composers was in this sense as much



a political as a cultural statement, but it would be extremely simplistic to consider the two countries' artistic productions as separate, since there was constant interchange, musicians frequently travelling and working in both countries.

The latest music on this disc is by the Portuguese Diogo Dias Melgás. He was born, according to the

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bibliographer Barbosa Machado, in 1638, in the town of Cuba (near Évora). He entered that choir school at Évora Cathedral probably in 1647, and in 1663 became *mestre da claustra*, in 1662 rector of the choir school, and two years later *mestre da capela*. He finally resigned in 1697, on grounds of health, and died in 1700. His most remarkable music is certainly to be found in his series of

motets. As *Pia et dolorosa mater* and the penitential *In ieiunio et fletu* show, Melgás's highly original harmonic sense, in conjunction with his contrapuntal mastery, make him highly representative of the Portuguese tradition, which was itself so interconnected with that of Spain. Indeed, there is a sense in which all the composers whose music is recorded here spring from the affirmation of technical mastery and poetic beauty in the work of the great Cristóbal Morales, during the first half of the 16th century. His Missa *Mille Regretz* in turn pays homage to Josquin<sup>(1)</sup>, upon whose famous lovelorn *chanson* it is built.

Mille regretz de vous abandonner Et d'eslonger vostre fache amoureuse,

(A thousand regrets at deserting you And going far way from your loving face)

A voice of weeping indeed.

Ivan Moody Estoril, September 2007

(1) The attribution has been disputed. See in particular "Who Composed Mille regretz?" in Essays on Music and Culture in Honor of Herbert Kellman, ed. Barbara Haggh, Épitome musical 8 (Paris: Minerve, 2001), 241-52





avid Hurley

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#### TEXTS

#### 1 Crux fidelis

Crux fidelis, inter omnes, arbor una nobilis. Nulla silva talem profert fronde, flore, germine. Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulce pondus sustinet

Flecte ramos, arbor alta, tensa laxa viscera. Et rigor lentescat ille, quem dedit nativitas. Et superni membra Regis tende miti stipite.

Sola digna tu fuisti ferre mundi victimam, Atque portum praeparare arca mundo naufrago, Quam sacer cruor perunxit, fusus Agni corpore.

Sempiterna sit beatæ Trinitati gloria; Aequa Patri Filioque, par decus Paraclito; Unjus Trinique nomen laudet universitas.

2 Kvrie

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Faithful Cross, the noblest of all trees, No forest ever produced your like in leaf, in flower, in seed.

Sweet wood to hold sweet nails and bear sweet weight.

Bend your branches, tall tree, relax your tense muscles And may your native stiffness be softened. Extend the limbs of the supreme King with your gentle trunk.

You alone have been worthy to bear the world's sacrifice

And anointed with holy blood, shed from the body of the Lamb,

like the ark to furnish a harbour for a shipwrecked world

Eternal glory be to the blessed Trinity:

Equal glory to the Father and the Son, equal honour to the Comforter:

May the universe praise the name of the One and the Three

Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.

#### 3 Versa est in luctum

Versa est in luctum cithara mea, et organum in vocem flentium. Parce mihi Domine nihil enim sunt dies mei. My harp is turned to mourning and my music into the voice of those that weep. Spare me, O Lord, for my days are as nothing.

#### 4 In jejunjo et fletu

In ieiunio et fletu, plorabant sacerdotes dicentes: Parce Domine parce populo tuo eawest ne des haereditatem tuam in perditionem. In fasting and tears the priests were weeping, saying: 0 Lord, spare your people and do not give your heritage to destruction.

#### 5 Versa est in luctum

Versa est in luctum cithara mea...

#### 6 Lamentationes Ieremiae Prophetae

De lamentatione, leremiae, Prophetae. Heth.

Misericordiae Domini quia non sumus consumpti, quia non defecerunt miserationes eius.

Novi diluculo, multa est fides tua. Heth

Pars mea Dominus, dixit anima mea: propterea exspectabo eum.

Teth

Bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum, Animae quaerenti illum.

Teth

Bonum est praestolari cum silentio salutare Dei. Teth. From the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Heth

By the mercies of the Lord we are not consumed, because his compassions have not failed. Heth

They are new every morning, great is his faithfulness.

Heth.

The Lord is my portion, saith my soul: therefore will I hope in him.

Teth

The Lord is good unto them that waiteth for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

Teth

It is good that a man should both hope

Bonum est viro cum portaverit iugum ab adolescentia sua

Ind

Sedebit solitarius, et tacebit: quia levavit super se.

Ponet in pulvere os suum, si forte sit spes.

Dabit percutienti se maxillam, saturabitur opprobriis.

lerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

**7** Versa est in luctum

Versa est in luctum cithara mea

#### 8 Pia et dolorosa mater

Pia et dolorosa Mater; ob tam durum et vehementem dolorem intercede pro nobis apud tuum Filium nostrum Redemptorem.

#### 9 Versa est in luctum

Versa est in luctum cithara mea...

and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man that he hath borne the yoke from his youth.

lod

He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

Jod.

He putteth his mouth in the dust:

if so there may be hope.

lod

He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.

Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

Holy Mother full of sorrow, by virtue of your harsh, deep grief, intercede for us before your Son, our Redeemer

#### 10 Lihera me

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda, quando caeli movendi sunt et terra. Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego et timeo, dum discussio venerit atque ventura ira

Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra

Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae, dies magna et amara valde

Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda; quando caeli movendi sunt et terra. Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem. Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Deliver me out of everlasting death, O Lord, upon that day of terror, when the earth and the heavens shall be shaken.

When Thou shalt come and the whole world know the fire of judgement.

Trembling, frightened and full of despair am I, full of terror and great fear, till the trial shall be at hand, and the wrath to come.

When the earth and the heavens shall be shaken. Day of terror, day of anger, disaster and of misery, day most fearful, hopeless and exceeding bitter.

When Thou shalt come and the whole world know

When Ihou shalt come and the whole world know the fire of judgement. Grant them rest and peace eternal, and light for

evermore shine down upon them, Lord our God.
Deliver me out of everlasting death, 0 Lord, upon that day of terror, when the earth and the heavens shall be shaken

When Thou shalt come and the whole world know the fire of judgement.

Lord have mercy upon me. Christ have mercy upon me. Lord have mercy upon me.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Regularly performing well over 100 concerts every season complemented by recording and teaching, The King's Singers delight audiences around the world with their incomparable musicianship, charm and wit. With their last album release Landscape and Time described as possessing 'singing of rare distinction', and 'stunningly high musical standards', they have maintained their place at the apex of a cappella singing, and are counted amongst the world's elite classical performers. In 2008 the ensemble celebrates 40 years of music making.

Their repertoire is all encompassing; from medieval music to masterpieces of the Renaissance, from lieder to folk, pop and jazz or with a contemporary commission from a leading composer, they are constantly expanding their repertoire. Since their debut concert in 1968 they have commissioned works from many well-known composers including Krystof Penderecki, Luciano Berio, Peter Maxwell Davies, Richard Rodney Bennett and Gyorgy Ligeti. With a dozen such commissions since 2000, the latest works will come from Michael Nyman as well as Americans Jay Greenberg and Eric Whitacre.



The list of venues at which they have appeared is equally diverse, including cathedrals and palaces as well as in many of the world's major concert halls. They have joined forces with many famous orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the Cincinatti Pops Orchestra and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and in the last season with chamber ensembles Concordia, Sarband, Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata.

They also team up with distinguished soloists such as Dame Kiri te Kanawa, Emanuel Ax, George Shearing, Evelyn Glennie, and even Bruce Johnston of the Beach Boys. These collaborations have often resulted in recordings to add to the group's

discography of over 80 albums on the Signum Classics RMG and FMI labels

Renowned for their commitment to blend, balance and intonation in their own performances, they are keen to pass on their knowledge through educational work. They conduct masterclass courses in many countries, and have for 10 years been Prince Consort Ensemble-in-Residence at the Royal College of Music, London.

But above all it is their simple enjoyment of what they do that has captured the imagination of the public all over the world. As the London Times puts it, they are 'still unmatched for their musicality and sheer ability to entertain.'

www.kingssingers.com

The King's Singers would like to thank Stephen Baldock for his help with translations.

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