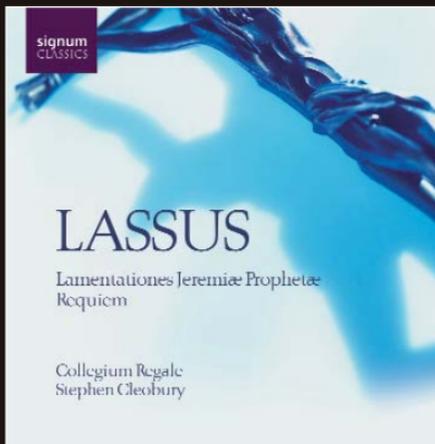


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VOX IN RAMA

Il Secondo libro de motetti
Giaches de Wert

Collegium Regale
Stephen Cleobury

VOX IN RAMA
GIACHES DE WERT (1535-96)

Il Secondo libro de motetti (1581)

1. O crux ave spes unica	[3.35]
2. Providebam Dominum (Acts 2:25-28)	[6.58]
3. Hoc es praeceptum meum (John 15: 12-15)	[8.01]
4. Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas (Introit for Trinity Sunday)	[1.57]
5. Hora est iam nos (Romans 13:11-14)	[8.31]
6. Hoc enim sentite in vobis (Philippians 2:5-11)	[7.15]
7. Gaudete in Domino (Philippians 4:4)	[1.42]
8. Obsecro vos fratres (Romans 12:1-2)	[7.47]
9. Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35)	[5.14]
10. Angelus Domini astitit (Acts 12:7)	[3.51]
11. Amen, amen dico vobis (John 16:20-21)	[5.58]
12. Domine, tu es qui fecisti (Acts 4:24-26)	[5.25]
13. Vox in Rama (Matthew 2:18 from Jeremiah 31:15)	[4.42]
Total Timings	[71.16]

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Despite increasing research, particularly in recent years, into the life and works of Giaches de Wert (1535-96, pronounced *Geeack de Vehuf*), much of his music is still largely unknown to many. The Flemish-born composer was one of the multitude of foreigners who almost entirely dominated the Italian musical scene in the mid- to late-sixteenth century. Due to his significance in Italy, especially in the north where he worked for most of his life, as well as in his homeland, his music had a marked influence not only on his contemporaries but also on future generations, particularly through his famous understudy, Monteverdi.

As with many musicians during the sixteenth-century, Wert's origins are vague at best. Born in 1535, he was brought over as a boy to Naples, but by whom and in what context is still unknown. One intriguing possibility is that Ferrante Gonzaga brought Wert to Italy at roughly the same time as he did Lassus and Rore, both of whom were as significant to the development of the madrigal as Wert. By 1551 the young musician had established contact with Novellara, a small court in northern Italy that formed the basis for his crucial early musical training; whilst there he released his first four books of madrigals, which already demonstrated his distinct use of rhythm. In 1565 he was appointed as *maestro di cappella* in Mantua, a far

larger court that played an active role in the vibrant musical scene of northern Italy; here he came into contact with the chief musicians of the day and, more importantly, had to compose regularly for his patron, Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga, who was responsible for maintaining Mantua's strong musical tradition.

At Mantua Wert's prolific madrigal composition continued, and he produced a further eight books before his death in 1596. Undoubtedly these were his most influential output, striking an individual stylistic path of gravitas whilst his contemporaries tended to write in the fashionable lighter style. It was through this genre that he heavily influenced Monteverdi, who worked under him at Mantua from 1589-96, and thus created his most significant legacy. As *maestro di capella*, however, he was also expected to fulfil a liturgical role, even if secular music played a greater part in daily life at this particular court. Aside from the two masses and the handful of other liturgical works which survive, Wert produced three books of motets, relatively modest for a composer during that time, the first two for five voices and the third one for six. It is the second book, *Il Secondo libro de motetti a cinque voci*, first published in 1581, which appears on this disc, written when his skill as a madrigalist had reached its height; over the

course of thirteen motets Wert displays his proficiency in writing sacred music, whilst further forging a truly individual stylistic path.

Conventionally, the stylistic qualities of liturgical music were more restrained than those of secular counterparts, which were themselves inspired by often sensuous secular poetry. There were exceptions of course, typically with settings of particularly penitential liturgical texts (such as those during Holy Week), but on the whole Wert's motets are more restrained, both harmonically and texturally, than his often exotic madrigals. Many of the motets in *Il secondo libro* are fairly extensive; this is because Wert commonly takes a small section of text, treats it to one or two points of imitation, and extends this over a large passage of music. When a new point of imitation is introduced with the next section of text, it is done so subtly and gradually in one or two of the voices, whilst the others continue with the preceding material. The result of this approach, in the longer motets at least, is a sustained overarching structure, only really broken by the division of the pieces into two parts; in some of the best examples, such as *Obsecro vos fratres*, *Hoc est praeceptum meum* and *Amen, amen dico vobis*, the effect is a perpetual sense of drive and direction whilst at the same time providing few structural points to hold on to as a listener. This is

enhanced by the harmonic stability of the imitative motifs themselves, which in extreme examples can contain just two or three pitches; in the very opening of *Hora est iam nos* (representing the reference to sleep), Wert uses five consecutive repetitions of the same pitch, and the opening of *Hoc enim sentite in vobis* is similarly static. The shorter motets in the collection, such as *O crux ave spes unica*, *Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas* and the vibrant *Gaudete in Domino*, each contain more direct points of interest and are a welcome contrast to the extended structures of the longer pieces in the set.

Yet, despite the stylistic simplicity of many of the motets, the music is nonetheless influenced by more exuberant aspects of his madrigals. By the time Wert was writing these motets, in the years preceding 1581, he had entered his full maturity as a madrigalist, and parallel techniques are abundant. One stylistic trait almost unique to madrigals, and absent from most sacred music during this period, was the use of fast-moving virtuosic passages, which can be found in various places in these motets. *Gaudete in Domino*, one of the shorter motets in the set, represents the command "Rejoice in the Lord" not solely with its lively mood, but particularly through the rapid passage which ends the piece. Indeed, the word "joy" is almost always portrayed by this virtuosic style throughout the set, and

examples can be found in both halves of *Amen, amen dico vobis*. On the other hand, the second half of *Hoc enim sentite in vobis* uses this virtuosic style to provide contrast with the preceding text: God, having humbled himself, "hath highly exalted him", painted by the sudden introduction of rapidly rising scales which sets the tone for the rest of the piece. The subtle and sustained quality of much of the surrounding music only heightens the effect that these virtuosic passages have on the motets as a whole.

This use of word-painting is another technique which was extremely common to madrigal writing and, whilst naturally more understated in his motets, examples can be found in almost every piece. The restrained opening to *Hora est iam nos* mentioned above is, immediately afterwards, contrasted with a rising scale to represent *surgere* ("to awake" out of sleep). In the second half of this piece, *ambulemus* ("let us walk") is painted with constant ascending and descending scales which are shared between all the voices in what is probably one of the most extended settings of one section of text in the entire set. Descending scales are used in turn towards the beginning of *Domine, tu es qui fecisti* to paint the word *mare* ("sea"), whilst the energetic setting of *Surge velociter* ("Arise quickly") at the end of *Angelus Domini astitit* immediately

drives through the texture. In *Providebam Dominum*, Wert relies on a more typical technique to represent joy and rejoicing: the passage "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad" moves into a spirited triple time rather than employing the fast virtuosic passages mentioned above, although these do make an appearance at the end of the piece for "thou shalt make me full of joy", in a section almost entirely lifted out of several of his madrigals, and again unconventionally placed within the sacred genre.

Amidst the varied proficiency displayed throughout these motets, however, the highlight of the set is undoubtedly *Vox in Rama*. The text of this motet, taken from the Book of Jeremiah and quoted in St Matthew's Gospel, concerns the desolation of a mother over the loss of her children. Given its particularly evocative nature, it is perhaps unsurprising that Wert employs many techniques typically reserved for his more sensuous madrigals, from extreme tessitura and wide leaps to extended chromatic movement. The stark opening motif, consisting of a low tessitura in each voice followed by a rising octave leap, sets the tone for the music to follow. Word-painting is also more frequently employed, from the alternating thirds representing the *ululatus* ("weeping"), to the lamenting motifs so reminiscent of those used in his madrigals set

to the humanist texts of Petrarch. This is most evident in the twin-motifs used for *Rachel plorans* (“Rachel weeping”), which Wert weaves in and out seamlessly to create wrenching chromatic shifts. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this motet, however, is the way in which the tension gradually accumulates through a series of increasing climaxes, culminating only at the very end of the piece. It is a fitting end to a set in which Wert successfully adapts his foremost stylistic qualities, employed so effectively in his madrigals, to the sacred genre.

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TEXTS

Biblical texts taken from Douay-Rheims translation.

Giaches de Wert, *Il Secondo libro de motetti* (1581)

1 O crux ave spes unica

O crux ave spes única,
Hoc passiónis témpore,
Auge piis iustítiam,
Reísque dona véniam.

*Hail, O Cross, the only hope
in this time of suffering.
Extend justice to the dutiful;
To the guilty give pardon.*

(translation by J.D. Billett)

2 Providebam Dominum (Acts 2:25-28)

Providébam Dóminum in conspéctu meo semper:
quóniam a dextris est mihi, ne commóvear:
propter hoc lætátum est cor meum, et exsultávit
lingua mea, însuper et caro mea requiéscet in spe.
Quóniam non derelínques ánimam meam in inférno,
nec dabis sanctum tuum vidére corruptiónem.
Notas mihi fecísti vias vitæ: replébis me iucunditáte
cum fácie tua.

*I foresaw the Lord always before my face:
because he is at my right hand, that I may not be
moved. For this my heart hath been glad,
and any tongue hath rejoiced: moreover my
flesh also shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt
not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy
One to see corruption. Thou hast made known
to me the ways of life: thou shalt make me full
of joy with thy countenance.*

3 Hoc es præceptum meum (John 15: 12-15)

Hoc est præcéptum meum, ut diligátis ínvicem,
sicut diléxi vos.

Maiórem hac dilectiónem nemo habet, quam ut
ánimam suam ponat quis pro amícis suis. Vos
amíci mei estis, si fecéritis quae ego præcípío vobis.
Iam non dicam vos servos: quia servus nescit quid
fáciat dóminus eius. Vos autem dixi amícos: quia
omnia quæcúmque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci
vobis.

*This is my commandment, that you love one
another, as I have loved you.
Greater love than this no man hath, than that
he lay down his life for his friends. You are my
friends, if you do the things that I command
you. I will not now call you servants: for the
servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I
have called you friends: because all things*

whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.

4 Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas (Introit for Trinity Sunday)

Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas, atque indivisa Unitas: confitebimur ei, quia fecit nobiscum misericordiam suam. Benedicamus Patrem et Filium, cum Sancto Spiritu. Amen.

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, and the undivided Unity: we shall praise Him, for he has shown his mercy unto us. V. Let us bless the Father and the Son, with the Holy Ghost. Amen.

(translated by J.D. Billett)

5 Hora est iam nos (Romans 13:11-14)

Hora est iam nos de somno surgere. Nunc enim proprius est nostra salus, quam cum credimus. Nox praecessit, dies autem appropinquavit. Abiciamus ergo opera tenebrarum, et induamus arma lucis.

Sicut in die honeste ambulamus: non in comessationibus, et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus, et impudiciis, non in contentione, et aemulatione sed induimini Dominum Jesum Christum.

Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

6 Hoc enim sentite in vobis (Philippians 2:5-11)

Hoc enim sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Jesu: qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo: sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominum factus, et habitu inventus ut homo. Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum, et donavit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen: ut in nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum, et omnis lingua confiteatur, quia Dominus Jesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found

as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

7 Gaudete in Domino (Philippians 4:4)

Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico gaudete. *Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice.*

8 Obsecro vos fratres (Romans 12:1-2)

Obsecro vos fratres per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum. Nolite conformari huic saeculo, sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri: ut probetis quae sit voluntas Dei bona, et beneplacens, et perfecta.

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the well-pleasing, and the perfect will of God.

9 Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35)

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, quae occidis prophetas, et lapidas eos qui mittuntur ad te, quoties volui congregare filios tuos quemadmodum avis nidum suum sub pennis, et noluiti? Ecce relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta. Dico autem vobis, quia non videbitis me donec veniat cum dicitis: Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Behold your house shall be left to you desolate. And I say to you, that you shall not see me till the time come, when you shall say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

10 Angelus Domini astitit (Acts 12:7)

Angelus Domini astitit, et lumen refulsit in habitaculo carceris: percussitque latere Petri, excitavit eum, dicens: Surge velociter. Quia ceciderunt catenae de manibus tuis.

An angel of the Lord stood by him: and a light shined in the prison cell: and striking Peter on the side, he raised him up, saying: Arise quickly, for the chains have fallen from your hands.

11 Amen, amen dico vobis (John 16:20-21)

Amen, amen dico vobis: quia plorábitis, et flébitis vos, mundus autem gaudébit: vos autem contristabímini, Sed tristítia vestra vertétur in gáudium. Múlier cum parit tristítiam habet, quia venit hora eius; cum autem péperit púerum, iam non méminit pressúræ propter gáudium.

Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, because of joy.

12 Domine, tu es qui fecisti (Acts 4:24-26)

Dómine, tu es qui fecisti cælum et terram, mare et ómnia quæ in eis sunt:

qui Spírítu Sancto per os patris nostri David púeri tui dixisti: Quare fremuérunt gentes, et pópuli meditáti sunt inánia? Astitérunt reges terræ, et príncipes convenérunt in unum advérsus Dóminum, et advérsus Christum eius.

Lord, thou art he that didst make heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. Who, by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, hast said: Why did the

Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and his Christ.

13 Vox in Rama (Matthew 2:18 from Jeremiah 31:15)

Vox in Rama audíta est plorátus, et ululátus multus: Rachel plorans filios suos, et nóluit consolári, quia non sunt.

A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

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BIOGRAPHIES

STEPHEN CLEOBURY

As a conductor and organist, Stephen Cleobury enjoys a reputation as a highly versatile performer. In his roles as Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge and Conductor Laureate of the BBC Singers, he is associated with two of the world's most famous choirs. At King's he is responsible for the recruitment and training of the choristers and choral scholars: he instituted the now 25 year-old tradition of commissioning a new carol for the annual *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* and founded the festival *Easter at King's*. In 2007 he initiated the *Concerts at King's* series, opening this by conducting an Elgar programme with the Philharmonia. He has premiered many works with the BBC Singers, notably Giles Wayne *Havoc* and Harrison Birtwistle *Ring Dance of the Nazarene* in the Royal Albert Hall at the Proms, and Edward Cowie *Gaia*, all with the Endymion Ensemble. He premiered Errollyn Wallen *Our English Heart* in Portsmouth with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Singers as part of the Nelson bicentennial celebrations.



The King's Choir tours widely, having lately visited the USA, Brazil, Italy, Korea, Singapore, Finland and the Baltic states, and appeared at the Lufthansa Early Music Festival, the Newbury Festival, the York Early Music Festival, the Beethovenfest in Bonn, and the Ambronay Festival in France. Recent concerts with the BBC Singers have been at the Spitalfields Festival and at the Tampere Festival in Finland. As a concert organist he gave the first performance of Judith Bingham's *Organ Concerto* in Minneapolis-St Paul in June 2008, and has recorded a DVD on the King's organ released by Priory in the autumn of 2008. During the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth, Stephen conducted a number of the composer's large-scale works, including *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Light of Life*, *The Music Makers* and *The Apostles*.

COLLEGIUM REGALE

When Henry VI founded "The King's College of Our Lady and St. Nicholas" in 1441, he mandated that his college's choir should include 16 "poor and needy" boy choristers and six "singing men", who, like the boys, sang in daily services, as well as playing the organ. For most of its existence, the choir at King's drew its singing men ("lay clerks") from the Cambridge community, granting lifetime appointments. Reforms at the end of the nineteenth

century gradually introduced undergraduates into the choir. Today the 14 members of the alto, tenor and bass sections are choral scholars, undergraduates studying a variety of subjects in the College itself.

As part of King's College Choir, the choral scholars sing in the chapel's daily worship services, which remain the choir's *raison d'être*, as well as maintaining a busy concert, recording and touring schedule. As Collegium Regale (Latin for "King's College"), the choral scholars perform independently of the choir, singing a repertoire that encompasses 15th Century sacred music, jazz, folksongs and pop. "Coll Reg" provides entertainment at dinners, conferences, and Cambridge charity events. They also give frequent concerts, especially at Easter when they split into two groups to tour the North and South of England.

Collegium Regale's recent international tours have included United States, Hong Kong and Italy. Each spring, the choral scholars split into two groups of seven to tour the North and South of England.

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The Director of Music at King's College, Mr Stephen Cleobury, is always pleased to hear from prospective choristers, choral scholars and organ scholars. Further information can be obtained from his PA, Ms C. Georgiou on +44 (0)1223 331224, or by writing to her at King's College, Cambridge, CB2 1ST, United Kingdom.

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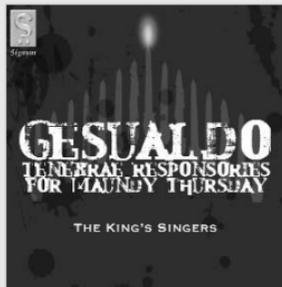
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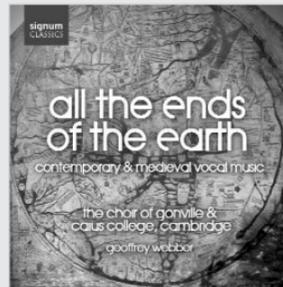
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