



Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, volume 1

Hugh Aston
Robert Jones
John Mason

Blue Heron
Scott Metcalfe

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Hugh Aston (c1485-1558)

Robert Jones (fl1520-35)

John Mason (c1480-1548)

Blue Heron *Scott Metcalfe*

1 Hugh Aston

Ave Maria dive matris Anne (11:17)

NB TW BW • PD MN • JM MS • AC ST • CB GB PG

2 Robert Jones

Magnificat (13:38)

NB LB BW • JA MN • JM MS • AC AS • CB PG ST

3 Aston

Gaude virgo mater Christi (12:02)

NB TW BW • PD MN • JM MS • MB AC • CB PG ST

4 John Mason

Quales sumus O miseri (12:13)

MM MN • JM SS • AS MS • AC ST • GB PG

5 Aston

Ave Maria ancilla trinitatis (14:36)

NB LB BW • JA MN • AS MS • AC JM • CB GB PG

Total time: (63:48)

Gaude virgo edited by, and all other works edited and completed by Nick Sandon.

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Blue Heron

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MUSIC FROM THE PETERHOUSE PARTBOOKS

All of the music included in this recording comes from a set of partbooks belonging to Peterhouse, Cambridge (Peterhouse MSS 471–4). It is ironic that Peterhouse, one of the oldest and smallest of the colleges that together make up the university of Cambridge, should today own not just one but three significant sets of partbooks, for the college had no early choral tradition and did not even have a chapel of its own to worship in until the 1630s. The two later sets of partbooks that it possesses, known as the former and latter Caroline sets (MSS 475–81 and 485–93), were acquired during the reign of Charles I (1625–49) as part of the college’s campaign to create a chapel, a choir and a choral repertory for itself. In contrast, the partbooks preserving the music recorded here date from about a hundred years earlier, towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII, for which reason they are known as the Henrician set. For those who may find it interesting, I will explain briefly why these partbooks are so important, and give an idea of the detective work that has gone into their study. Those who find this kind of stuff a trifle nerdy may wish to skip to the section headed “Music by Aston, Jones and Mason.”

Provenance, destination, and historical interpretation of the Peterhouse partbooks

Peterhouse’s Henrician partbooks are the most important extant source of English church music on the eve of the Reformation. The repertory of five-part polyphony that they contain is both large and varied, consisting of seventy-two compositions in the standard forms of the day—Mass, Magnificat, votive antiphon, ritual plainchant setting, and one or two pieces whose function is debatable—and more than half of these works do not survive in other sources. The composers represented (twenty-nine, plus one anonymous) range from those widely admired both at the time and also today, such as Robert Fayrfax and John Taverner, whose careers are relatively well documented and whose music is ubiquitous in sources of the period, to the most obscure, such as Hugh Sturmy, whose careers have yet to be traced and whose music survives nowhere else. The musical quality of the collection is generally very high, and many pieces (by no means only those by well-known composers) show not only skilled craftsmanship but also marked imagination and strong character.

The very varied nature of this repertory, intermingling compositions in a rather conservative style (expansive, melismatic, ornate, and structurally rather opaque to the listener) with

others in a more modern idiom (concise, syllabic, plain, and structurally transparent), and placing settings of traditional texts honouring Mary alongside settings of new texts honouring Jesus, reminds us that the English church was in a state of flux and that the future was by no means clear. The idea that in order to gain support for his repudiation of papal authority Henry VIII had to give free rein to religious reformers, and that this resulted in the abandonment of traditional forms and styles of church music a decade or more before the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549, stems from a one-sided and ludicrously over-simplified reading of history. Henry remained a religious conservative to the end of his days, and he ensured that conservative opinion was well-represented in the church that he governed. Although radicals in the English church may have begun to experiment with new forms and styles of musical service several years before Henry’s death in 1547, institutions with more traditional tastes clearly continued to welcome the type of repertory offered in Peterhouse’s Henrician partbooks, which would have been familiar to Henry’s father in religious content if not always in musical style.

A great deal can be deduced about the genesis of these partbooks: who the copyist was; when he carried out his task; where he found many of his exemplars; for whose benefit the work

was done; and why the enterprise was necessary. The composers represented in a musical manuscript can provide valuable clues as to where the collection originated, particularly if their representation in other sources is either very sparse or non-existent, and even more so if their music shows technical limitations or peculiarities: the implication is that these may have been ordinary musicians—most probably choral singers—who did not specialise in composition and whose occasional essays in the art did not travel outside the walls of the institution that employed them. Discovering where a minor composer of this type worked may reveal the provenance of a source in which he figures. In the case of Peterhouse MSS 471–4 the presence of music by front-rank composers such as Fayrfax, Taverner, Nicholas Ludford, Hugh Aston and Richard Pygott tells us very little, because their work was very widely distributed. On the other hand, the presence of otherwise unknown music by William Alen, Thomas Appelby, John Catcott or Cobcot, Arthur Chamberlayne, “Edwarde” (probably Edward Hedley), Robert Hunt and Edward Martyn, most of whom do not appear in other extant sources, is extremely suggestive of a connection with Magdalen College, Oxford, because the names of all of these men occur in a musical context—mostly as singers in the choir—in college records dating from between the later 1480s to the early 1540s. Some of the other composers in the

books strengthen the probability of a link with Oxford, although not a direct one with Magdalen College: John Mason, Hugh Aston, John Darke and James Northbroke held the degree of B.Mus. from the University of Oxford; John Taverner was choirmaster of Cardinal College between 1526 and 1530, and William Whytbroke was a chaplain of that college in 1529/30. In addition, John Mason and Richard Pygott were members of the household chapel ("chapel" can mean a group of ecclesiastical singers as well as the building in which they sing) of Cardinal Wolsey, founder of Cardinal College and himself an ex-member of Magdalen College.

It therefore seems very likely that most of the music in the partbooks was available for copying in Oxford, and that some of it was only to be found at Magdalen College. But for where was the collection copied, and why should such a large copying project have been necessary at all? An answer is suggested by a major event in contemporary English history: Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. In 1539–40 this reached its climax with the closing-down of the greatest monastic houses in the kingdom, including all eleven of the cathedrals (Bath, Canterbury, Carlisle, Coventry, Durham, Ely, Norwich, Rochester, Winchester, Worcester and Christ Church, Dublin) which housed a community of monks rather than secular priests. Most of the ex-monastic

cathedrals were refounded as secular cathedrals and provided with a dean and chapter and a choral staff to perform divine service with appropriate ceremony and expertise. Three other monasteries—Chester, Gloucester, and Peterborough—were also reconstituted as the cathedral churches of new dioceses. In many ways the transition was smooth enough: some monks were pensioned off; others became secular clergy in the new foundations; and with the necessary administrative and liturgical adjustments the life of the institution carried on. Musically, however, there was a problem: at the beginning of their new existence very few of these cathedrals can have possessed a particularly challenging or extensive polyphonic repertory. Even if they inherited the polyphonic repertory of their monastic predecessor, this may not have been particularly impressive; monasteries had for several decades been finding it hard to keep up with musical fashion—especially with the increasing scale and technical difficulty of choral polyphony—because monks were not necessarily expert musicians and monastic rules severely restricted the hiring of professional singers. Any of these cathedrals of the new foundation would thus have needed not only to recruit a competent choir consisting of anything between about eight to twelve boys and twelve to twenty-four men, but also to assemble a suitable repertory for itself as quickly as possible.

Thus there appeared on the scene several important choral foundations urgently in need of skilled singers and music for them to perform. Could the partbooks have been intended for one of these? One of the compositions in them has a bearing upon this question: Hugh Sturmy's *Exultet in hac die*, a setting of an antiphon in honour of St Augustine of Canterbury, the missionary sent by Pope Gregory the Great to bring Christianity to the pagan Anglo-Saxons. This piece could only have been relevant to Canterbury, whose first archbishop Augustine became. No other work in the collection refers to a saint associated with one of the refounded cathedrals. The hypothesis that the partbooks were intended for Canterbury is strengthened by the existence of a highly relevant human link between the cathedral and Magdalen College in the person of Thomas Bull. Between Michaelmas 1528 and Michaelmas 1539 Bull was a lay-clerk in the choir of Magdalen College; when he next appears, in the summer of 1540, it is as a lay-clerk of Canterbury Cathedral. During his time at Magdalen, moreover, Bull often received extra payments for copying music. In Bull, therefore, Canterbury secured the services not only of an experienced choral singer but also of a professional music copyist who had access to one or more of the major musical collections in Oxford. Presumably he spent his final months there choosing and making loose copies of compositions that would be

useful to his new employers, and then brought them with him to Canterbury. There, I suspect, they were recopied neatly into the partbooks that we now have, along with other music that Bull may have picked up during his journey from Oxford to Canterbury (which would probably have taken him through London) or found waiting for him at his destination. This might explain why the partbooks contain two copies (clearly from different exemplars) of the votive antiphon *Salve intemerata* by Thomas Tallis, one of Bull's colleagues in the cathedral's newly formed choir (it was Tallis's first major appointment). *Salve intemerata* probably dates from the late 1520s; Bull could have made one copy from an exemplar at Oxford, and the second copy could have been made at Canterbury from an exemplar provided by the composer himself.

If we accept that the Henrician partbooks were copied for and used at Canterbury Cathedral, their significance becomes even greater. Canterbury was regarded as the birthplace of Christianity in England; it was a cathedral city of unrivalled antiquity; its archbishop was the senior primate of the English church, and his mandate descended from Pope Gregory. Such considerations had even greater resonance in a country which had recently repudiated papal authority: Canterbury was England's Rome, and the cathedral was her St Peter's. It would seem ludicrous to pursue this analogy

by suggesting that the Archbishop of Canterbury was England's Pope—Thomas Cranmer would have been horrified by such a comparison, and his authority and initiative were much more limited—but he had more influence on religious policy than anyone except the king himself. Cranmer, of course, was a determined but cautious religious reformer who rejected many aspects of traditional catholicism. How could such a man allow the performance in his cathedral of a musical repertory as conservative as this? The question is misconceived, because like all English bishops Cranmer had very little say in the running of his own cathedral church. Responsibility for this lay instead with the cathedral chapter, and in the early 1540s the chapter of Canterbury Cathedral was a markedly conservative body, some of whose members even abetted an attempt to destroy Cranmer himself. A musical collection including Masses and votive antiphons celebrating saints and the mother of Jesus is precisely what one would expect such men to have commissioned. What the Peterhouse repertory demonstrates is that in 1540 the future of the English church was by no means as obvious and inevitable as we today, with the advantage of hindsight, may imagine it to have been. There was still room, at its very heart, for music that was in all respects traditional.

Missing parts and their restoration

If this set of partbooks is as important as I am suggesting, why is it so much less famous than, say, the Eton choirbook (a large collection of votive antiphons and Magnificats assembled for Eton College about forty years before), and why is the music unique to it still virtually unknown? The chief reason is that the set is not complete. Originally it consisted of five books each containing one of the vocal parts—generally treble, mean (alto), contratenor (a rather high tenor), tenor (a slightly lower tenor, or sometimes a baritone), and bass—of this five-part repertory; hence the term “partbooks.” However, the book containing the tenor part is now missing, and pages have been lost from the beginning and end of the treble book. In some cases the missing voices can be supplied from other musical sources, but many of these are themselves incomplete. The end result is that no fewer than fifty of the seventy-two works in the collection lack their tenor parts, and nineteen also lack their treble. In its surviving state, two thirds of the repertory is unperformable.

One of the tasks that I set myself when I began working on the Henrician partbooks more than thirty years ago was to restore the incomplete pieces to a performable state by recomposing the missing voices; I included editorial completions of nearly all of them in the doc-

toral dissertation that was accepted in 1983. At that time the practice of editorial recomposition tended to arouse suspicion—sometimes even disdain—on such grounds as the following: it created a kind of forgery; it risked disfiguring what it tried to make whole; it strayed dangerously away from science into creativity; it conjured up the ghost of the musical “general practitioner”—the amateur scholar, the organist-cum-antiquarian—which British musicology was for social and historical reasons especially anxious to lay. I believed, however, that the potential benefits outweighed the risks: competent restoration might increase awareness of this repertory and encourage a more balanced appraisal of English church music; and it could rescue a large amount of music—some of it very good indeed—from oblivion and give pleasure to listeners and performers. Nowadays the restoration of music of all periods is much more widely practised and accepted, and there have been some astonishing achievements, for example Anthony Payne's completion of Elgar's third symphony. I have continued to revise my Peterhouse restorations and to publish them through Antico Edition (www.anticoedition.co.uk), and have been gratified by the number of choirs that have performed them. The contribution of Blue Heron and Scott Metcalfe has been exceptional: no other choir has shown such sustained interest in them, and very few have sung them with such insight and skill.

The restorer's task is to complete what remains of the original in the most congruous way that is possible, not to improve (still less to distort) it. This demands an acute eye, a very accurate ear (particularly the inner or mental ear), concentration, patience, time, and (my wife asks me to add) surpassing tolerance from one's partner. In this context the idea of restoration is perhaps rather misleading, because it implies that it should normally be possible to work out precisely what is missing from an incomplete composition and supply it with absolute fidelity. This is, however, rarely the case. It happens only when a missing vocal part can be shown to have been based exclusively on material which exists elsewhere, and to have used that material in an entirely systematic and predictable fashion. For example, it might quote a plainchant melody in equal note values (as in John Mason's *O rex gloriose*) or sing in canon with one of the surviving voices of the piece (as in William Alen's *Gaude virgo mater Christi*). However, most compositions which incorporate a plainchant or other pre-existing melody as a structural backbone or cantus firmus, as most of the Peterhouse Masses and some of the other pieces in the collection do, quote it only when all five voices are singing, the sections in fewer voices being freely composed. They also vary its rhythmic layout from one statement to another, and sometimes decorate it melodically, so a great deal is left to the restorer's discretion. But at least, when a can-

tus firmus is present, it is usually in the tenor part, and this can be a great help when it is the tenor part that is missing.

Another musical device which, when present, can be enormously helpful to the restorer is imitative writing, where musical motifs pass from one voice to another in a sort of musical discussion; if the extant voices of a composition exploit this technique it is highly probable that the missing voice or voices did so too, and close examination will usually reveal places where the motifs can be fitted in. The strength of a composer's musical personality can also strongly influence the ease or difficulty of completing his music: the more distinctive his style—even if the distinctiveness is of a negative kind, involving melodic gawkiness or idiosyncratic dissonance treatment, for instance—the more there is to assimilate and copy. The hardest music to restore with conviction is that which is incoherent and lacking in personality: it can be completed in virtually countless ways, none of which may seem strongly preferable to any other. It is also considerably more difficult to complete a piece lacking two voices than it is to complete one lacking a single voice, because the number of possible solutions is so greatly increased. One is perhaps bound to be more often disappointed than satisfied by one's efforts, but the reward comes on the rare occasions when one feels convinced of having recreated a piece essentially as the composer left

it. I am no spiritualist—it puzzles me that dead composers should bother to communicate mediocre and uncharacteristic music to their amanuenses—but I have once or twice felt that I was experiencing something extremely close to the original composer's thought processes.

Music by Aston, Jones and Mason

Four of the five compositions recorded here are votive antiphons, representing one of the favourite genres of church music in pre-Reformation England. Strictly speaking votive antiphons were not liturgical, in that they were not a compulsory constituent of either the Mass or the Divine Office; instead they were sung as a separate act of devotion to Mary, Jesus or a saint usually after Compline, the final service of the day. By singing such pieces religious communities sought to enlist the intercession of the personages addressed in them; private individuals could do the same by reading or reciting the texts, many of which were standard constituents of the books of hours that were being printed in large quantities from the 1490s onwards. Some votive antiphon texts, such as *Salve regina*, were centuries old and survive in numerous musical settings, but early Tudor England saw the production of many new texts, not a few of which exist in a single musical setting, as if they were created especially for it. The intellectual content and literary style of these texts are astonish-

ingly varied, ranging from jog-trotting poetry to Ciceronian prose, and from pedestrian eulogies that are hackneyed in thought and language to prayers that are imaginative, eloquent and compelling. A significant number of them are reworkings or expansions of the *Ave Maria*, Gabriel's greeting to Mary.

It is easy to dismiss the former type, exemplified here by Hugh Aston's settings of *Ave Maria dive matris*, *Gaude virgo mater Christi* and *Ave Maria ancilla trinitatis*, as being intellectually unworthy, but in their intended context repetitive and predictable texts of this kind can work well as mantras aiding contemplation. It is interesting that in all three of these compositions a closing prayer explicitly seeking the addressee's intercession has been added to the main text; in the first two the request is made on behalf of the college or religious community performing the piece, while in the last it is made more personal. Aston spent most of his working life at the wealthy collegiate church of St Mary Newarke at Leicester, where he was choirmaster at least from 1525 until the college's dissolution in 1548; details of the earlier part of his career after taking the Oxford B.Mus. in 1510 are lacking, but he may have worked in Coventry, perhaps at the cathedral. It is clear that he was highly thought of: he was the first choice to be choirmaster of Thomas Wolsey's newly founded Cardinal College, but he declined the post, and only then was it offered

to John Taverner. After his retirement he may have played a significant role in the civic life of Leicester, but it is not yet certain that the Hugh Aston who occupied several important public offices there can be identified with him.

The text of John Mason's *Quales sumus O miseri*, by contrast, is stuffed with biblical allusion and written in rather elegant and resourceful Latin. As with most votive antiphons we do not know its author, but it may perhaps have been the composer himself. We first meet him as a young singer in the household chapel of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, who paid for him to be educated for the priesthood. Having been ordained in 1507, he was instructor of the choristers at Magdalen College, Oxford between 1508 and 1510 and took the degree of B.Mus. in 1509. He then disappears for more than a decade, reappearing as a member of Cardinal Wolsey's household chapel in 1521. It may have been through Wolsey's patronage that he acquired several lucrative benefices, including a chaplaincy at Chichester Cathedral (the Peterhouse partbooks refer to him as "Mason of Chichester") and a canonry of Hereford Cathedral. He seems to have settled at Hereford, where he became cathedral treasurer in 1545. Three of his four extant compositions, including *Quales sumus*, are written not for the usual mixed choir of boys and men but for men's voices alone, presumably because only these were available to him. It is inte-

resting that one of the references in the text is accompanied by a reference in the music: when the words “Sicut cervus aquarum fontes” from Psalm 41:2 are quoted, the bass voice sings the melody to which they are sung in the plainchant tract from the Mass for the dead.

Robert Jones’s Magnificat is a setting of the New Testament canticle sung at the evening service of Vespers. It observes many of the conventions that had grown up in English settings of this item during the previous hundred years. Jones sets only the even-numbered verses of the canticle and its doxology, leaving the others to be sung to their usual plainchant formula; he sets some of the verses for the full complement of five parts, and others for a smaller number; and he bases many of the polyphonic sections (sometimes so loosely that it is almost imperceptible) on a rather unusual type of cantus firmus called a *faburden*, which had originally been the lowest voice of an improvised harmonisation of a plainchant. Very little is known about Jones’s career except that he was a singer in Henry VIII’s household chapel in 1520 and still a member of it in about 1535. Whether he was related to Edward Johns or Jones, a slightly earlier member of the royal household chapel, or to the later lutenist and composer Robert Jones, has yet to be established.

Listeners will notice that although these five compositions share many characteristics—

for instance a rather ornate style, a tendency to create variety and contrast through large blocks of music in different scorings and metres, a slightly ambiguous attitude to imitative writing which is sometimes decorative and sometimes structural—their composers also have unmistakably individual traits. Aston is the most showy, delighting in elaborate figuration and striking effects, tolerant of stronger than average dissonances, and fond of repeating short motifs in a rather dogged way (as the bass does in the “Amen” of *Ave Maria dive matris*); he is also the most innovative of these composers in exploiting now and then a more syllabic style allied to musical repetition and more rapid changes of scoring, particularly in the closing sections of the works performed here. Jones’s music is more lyrical, and he has a talent for telling touches of detail such as a felicitously placed dissonance or a slightly surprising harmony. Mason can give a first impression of reserve and remoteness (it may be that five active vocal lines interweaving in a space of only two octaves create special difficulties for the listener), but repeated and careful listening will reveal subtle interrelationships between the voices and the composer’s ability to make a large structure hang together.

Gaude virgo mater Christi is the only one of these works not to require editorial completion; it survives complete in another manuscript where, however, it has an alternative

text addressed to St Anne beginning “*Gaude mater matris Christi*.” The version recorded here attempts to marry the music of the complete copy to the text of the incomplete copy in Peterhouse. *Ave Maria dive matris*, the Magnificat and *Quales sumus O miseri* need to have their tenor part recomposed, while *Ave Maria ancilla trinitatis* lacks both its tenor and its treble. I would not claim that my restorations are definitive, but I hope that they may help to gain for this music some of the attention that it deserves.

— Nick Sandon
New Year’s Day 2010

Nick Sandon retired from the Chair of Music at Exeter University in 2003, having previously been Professor of Music at University College, Cork. He now lives in France.

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

What sort of choir might have performed the music of the Peterhouse partbooks? A list of the staff of the refounded Canterbury Cathedral, undated but probably from the late summer of 1540, names 169 members of the new establishment. The list includes thirteen “*Vycars*” (vicars-choral) and ten boy “*queresters*” (choristers). Among the vicars are Thomas Tallis and Thomas Bull, the putative copyist of the partbooks. Of course, none of the works recorded here is likely to have been composed for Canterbury; rather they were copied for use

at Canterbury, from pre-existing exemplars of works written in the 1520s and 1530s. The choir at Magdalen College, whose repertoire Bull drew from, was staffed with sixteen boys and around ten men during this period. The three antiphons by Aston were probably composed for the choir at St Mary Newarke, which during his time there (at least 1525–48) consisted of a maximum of six boys and sixteen men. The Royal Household Chapel, served by Jones from at least 1520 until 1535, employed about a dozen boys and fifteen to twenty men when at full strength, shrinking to about six and six when the court went on progress, traveling around the country in the summer months. The household chapel of Cardinal Wolsey was made up of ten lay-clerks and ten boys in 1521, when Mason is first documented there; by the late 1520s there were sixteen lay-clerks and about a dozen boys.

Polyphonic music was most often the province of soloists in the fifteenth century, but by the late 1400s many English choral foundations had rosters comparable to the above. The choirs would have sung a great deal of plainchant, of course, but it seems clear that such sumptuous choral forces were desired especially so that they might adorn the liturgy with performances of polyphonic music. It is not known, however, whether early sixteenth-century polyphony was normally performed by an

entire choir such as Canterbury's thirteen men and ten boys, or (as seems more likely) by some subset of the roster. Multiple voices contribute magnificence as well as power, both desirable qualities for large-scale music sung in grandiose spaces on occasions of special ceremony. Furthermore, at least two singers per part are necessary when a single line divides into two, as happens for one note in the contratenor of Jones's Magnificat and once in the bass of *Quales sumus*. At the same time, however, additional voices tend to decrease clarity of texture and obscure the individuality of the lines.

For this recording we sing mostly two to a part. Treble parts are sung by three women, rather than boys, and in the works with trebles we add a third bass, for a total of twelve singers. In both its size and its relatively even balance of voices this ensemble is very close to the one pre-Reformation choir for which we have detailed evidence of the distribution of voices, that of the household chapel of the Earl of Northumberland: on one typical occasion in about 1518, this choir was divided 3/3/2/2/3. Sixteenth-century English choirs used either boy altos or adult male falsettists on the "mean" or alto line, the second line from the top in the standard five-part scoring; our mean is sung by one man and one woman.¹

The question of the performing pitch of a *capPELLA* music before about 1600 is a challenging one, due in part to the absence of surviving

instruments whose pitch might be measured, and it is sometimes claimed, more or less offhandedly and on scant or no historical evidence, that all-vocal ensembles simply chose a pitch out of the air and that the result was a complete lack of vocal pitch standard across Europe. Besides the lack of evidence in support of this view, there are serious objections to its plausibility. Not the least of these is the fact that when demonstrable pitch standards do begin to emerge in the later sixteenth century, whether in Italy, Germany, France, or England, they fall more or less within a semitone or two above and below $a'=440$ for music that combined voices and instruments: much more variety than exists in the mainstream musical world today, it's true, but hardly random scatter.² For the present purposes, suffice it to say the range of the Peterhouse music—from bottom F for the basses up to high g" or a" in the trebles—corresponds closely to the comfortable, normal ranges of singers today, that is to say, the ranges within which trained voices sound "natural," can sustain melodic lines and are able to pronounce the words understandably. These are all qualities valued by Renaissance writers. Together with many other sorts of circumstantial evidence, this points to a pitch standard of about A440, which we have adopted for this recording. (For more on the issue, interested readers are invited to visit www.blueheronchoir.org and read the essay on performance practice.)

Until recently, the pronunciation of Latin by clerics (and thus church singers) was heavily influenced by the sound of the vernacular tongue, so that English Latin sounded distinct from French, Italian, or Spanish Latin. Here we employ a pronunciation intended to reflect that of a professional church singer in early sixteenth-century England. Our attempt is informed especially by Harold Copeman's book *Singing in Latin* (Oxford, 1990) and *Singing Early Music*, edited by Timothy McGee (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996). The original orthography of the texts, which we have preserved, provides important clues. It should be stressed that any such attempt is highly experimental, for definitive reconstruction of the sound of sixteenth-century Latin is, of course, impossible. Our hope has been that the unexpected sounds of "vernacular" Latin, as opposed to the bland, vaguely Italianate sounds of modern "Church Latin," lend the music a particular, local flavor, draw attention to the texts, and make Latin sound more like a real language and less like a succession of attractive but not especially meaningful vowels. Fortunately for us, English Latin is in a sense a native tongue for Americans, for the sounds called for are just those many American speakers normally use.

Blue Heron and the Peterhouse partbooks

Blue Heron has made the Peterhouse repertoire a specialty ever since our first concerts in 1999, in which we performed Aston's *Ave Maria dive matris Anne*. I think it safe to say that we

have sung more of Nick Sandon's tenor lines than any other ensemble in North America, and I only mention this in order to sing his praises, for never in ten years has any of us ever felt that a note he composed felt wrong. His quite amazing accomplishment is to have recreated a musical line that is utterly idiomatic, not merely to the general language of English music in the early sixteenth century, but to the local dialect and accent of one composer and, even more specifically, to that one composer's voice as heard in one piece in all its particularity. We—and Aston and Jones and Mason and all the other Peterhouse composers—owe him grateful thanks for restoring this marvelous music to us in singable form.

— Scott Metcalfe

¹ The information in the above paragraphs is drawn from Nick Sandon, "The Henrician partbooks belonging to Peterhouse, Cambridge," PhD. diss., University of Exeter, 1983; Roger Bowers, "The vocal scoring, choral balance and performing pitch of Latin church polyphony in England, c. 1500-58," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 112, no. 1 (1986-7): 38-76; Bowers, "To chorus from quartet: the performing resource for English church polyphony, c. 1390-1559," in J. Morehen, ed. *English choral practice 1400-1650* (1995); and Sandon's prefaces to the Peterhouse works published by Antico Edition.

² See Bruce Haynes, *A history of performing pitch* (2002), ch. 2.

The vocal ensemble **Blue Heron** combines a commitment to vivid live performance with the study of original source materials and historical performance practice. Blue Heron's principal repertoire interests are fifteenth-century English and Franco-Flemish polyphony, ranging from Dunstable and Du Fay through Ockeghem to Josquin; Spanish music between 1500 and 1600; and neglected early sixteenth-century English music, especially the rich repertory of the Peterhouse partbooks (c. 1540). The ensemble has also reached outside these areas to perform very early music (*organa* by the twelfth-century French composer Perotin) and very recent music (new works by the Australian composer Elliott Gyger). Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents its own series of concerts in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has appeared at other venues throughout the Northeast, including the Boston Early Music Festival, St Ignatius of Antioch and the 92nd Street Y in New York City, and Monadnock Music in New Hampshire. In July 2008 it made its West Coast debut at Festival Mozaic in San Luis Obispo, California, and in October 2009 celebrated its tenth birthday by opening the twentieth-anniversary season of the Boston Early Music Festival concert series. Blue Heron's first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay (BHCD 1001), was released in March of 2007 to international critical acclaim.

For more about Blue Heron, please visit www.blueheronchoir.org.

Scott Metcalfe is a specialist in music between 1400 and 1750 whose career as a violinist and conductor has taken him all over North America and Europe. He has been invited to serve as guest director by Emmanuel Music, Monadnock Music, the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in works by Monteverdi, Buxtehude, Handel, Bach, and others, and in January 2010 he led the Green Mountain Project in an all-star 400th-anniversary performance of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers in New York City. Metcalfe is concertmaster of the Trinity Consort in Portland, Oregon (dir. Eric Milnes), a member of Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), and an active participant in Montreal's early music scene, working with Arion, Montreal Baroque, Les Voix baroques, and other groups. He was a founding member of the 17th-century ensemble La Luna and of the Renaissance violin band The King's Noyse, and from 1996 through 2007 he conducted the Renaissance choir Convivium Musicum. Besides playing and directing, Metcalfe keeps busy writing, teaching, translating, and editing. He is at work on a new complete edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois in collaboration with Sean Gallagher, and is a lecturer in choral repertoire and performance practice at Boston University. Metcalfe received a bachelor's degree in 1985 from Brown University, where he majored in biology, and in 2005 completed a master's degree in historical performance practice at Harvard.



Martin Near

Steven Soph

Cameron Beauchamp

Mark Sprinkle

Michael Barrett

Noël Bisson

Teresa Wakim

Allen Combs

Brenna Wells

Jason McStoots

Glenn Billingsley

Jennifer Ashe

Paul Guttry

Scott Metcalfe

not pictured: Lydia Brotherton, Pamela Dellal, Marc Molomot, Aaron Sheehan, Sumner Thompson

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

1 Ave Maria dive matris Anne

Ave Maria, dive matris Anne filia unica.
Ave Maria, que peperisti puerum virili sine semine.
Ave Maria, Jesum tuum filium lactasti sacro ubere.
Ave Maria, ipsum alluisti tua super genua.
Ave Maria, tres vidisti magos offerentes munera.
Ave Maria, Egyptum fugiens petisti angeli per monita.

Ave Maria, quesisti tuam sobolem magna cum mestitia.
Ave Maria, in templo reperisti docentem evangelia.
Conserva tuos famulos hec per tua merita,
et perduc eos ad celos cum celesti gloria,
psallentes et omnes hoc Ave Maria. Amen.

2 Magnificat

Magnificat anima mea dominum,
et exultavit spiritus meus in deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancille sue:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.
Quia fecit michi 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.

Hail, Mary, only daughter of the blessed mother Anne.
Hail, Mary, who brought forth a child without the seed of man.
Hail, Mary: you nourished Jesus your son at your sacred breast.
Hail, Mary: you washed him in your lap.
Hail, Mary: you saw three wise men bringing gifts.
Hail, Mary: fleeing, you set out for Egypt, through the angel's warning.
Hail, Mary: you sought your child with great sorrow.
Hail, Mary: you found him in the temple teaching the Gospels.
Preserve your servants through these your merits,
and lead them to the heavens with celestial glory,
all singing this "Hail, Mary." Amen.

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior.
For he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden:
behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty has made me great,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy from generation to generation
is on them that fear him.
He has shown strength with his arm:
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their seat
and exalted the humble.
The hungry he has filled with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordie sue.
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini ejus in secula.
Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto.
Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper:
et in secula seculorum. Amen.

3 Gaude virgo mater Christi

Gaude virgo mater Christi
que per aurem concepisti
Gabriele nuncio.
Gaude, quia Deo plena
peperisti sine pena
cum pudoris lilio.
Gaude, quia tui nati
quem dolebas mortem pati
fulget resurrectio.
Gaude Christo ascendente
et in celo te vidente
motu fertur proprio.
Gaude, quod post ipsum scandis
et est honor tibi grandis
in celi palatio,
Ubi fructus ventris tui
per te detur nobis frui
in perhenni gaudio.
O Maria virgo mater redemptoris nostri:
O Maria virgo nobilissima que jam regnas cum angelis,
coronata in gloria: ibi nostri memor esto.
O virgo sanctissima, funde preces tu pro nobis
ut possimus illic tuo sociari collegio. Amen.

Rejoice, O virgin mother of Christ,
who conceived through the ear
by the message of Gabriel.
Rejoice, for being filled with God
you brought forth without travail,
with the lily of chastity.
Rejoice, for there shines forth
the resurrection of your son,
whom you saw suffer death.
Rejoice, Christ having ascended,
and your having seen him in heaven,
moved, it is said, by his own will.
Rejoice, for after this you ascended,
and great honor is paid to you
in the palace of heaven,
Where the fruit of your womb
through you is given to us to enjoy
in everlasting felicity.
O Mary, virgin mother of our savior,
O Mary, most noble virgin who now reigns with the angels,
crowned in glory: be mindful of us there.
O most holy virgin, pour out your prayers for us,
so that we may be able to join your company in that place. Amen.

4 Quales sumus O miseri

Quales sumus, O miseri,
properantes ad portas inferi,
quatruiduani fetentes,
ut te laudare presumamus,
O Maria, cum sciamus
non audiri delinquentes?

Sed in arcto constituti,
in labore lateris et luti,
insudantes gemiscimus.
Consolatricem miserorum
et refectricem laborum,
te deposcimus

ut oculos misericordes
ad nos convertas et sordes
peccatorum amoveas,
scelerumque soluto vecte,
Jesum sequentes recte
vermiculos ne despicias.

Israel celum non respicit,
nam terrena pulvis perficit;
hinc desperans confunditur.
Quare pro nobis deprecare
ad hunc qui lapides mutare
in Abraham filios dicitur

What are we, O wretches,
hurrying to the gates of hell,
stinking within four days,
that we dare to praise you,
O Mary, since we know
that offenders are not fit to be heard?

But, closely confined,
toiling with bricks and clay,
sweating, we groan.
We beg you, the comforter
of the wretched
and refresher of labors,

That you will turn your merciful eyes
towards us and remove
the stains of sinners,
and not despise the worms
rightly following Jesus
when the bolt of sins has been shot.

Israel does not look towards heaven,
and (since dust is the fate of earthly things),
it is thrown into despair.
Intercede therefore for us
with him who is said to turn stones
into sons of Abraham,

ut Israel oculos erigat
ad celum et deum sitiāt
sicut cervus aquarum fontes,
ut, de Pharaonis imperio
erepti tandem durissimo,
mare transeamus insontes.

Et, licet hostes sevant,
hos maria non operiant,
[lacuna] O domina,
sed sevitiam removeant,
ut ereptos hos deleant
claustra tunc infernalīa.

Et sic, virtutibus fecundi,
ad celestia mente mundi
properemus, O Maria,
ut post finem vite, jocundi
Christo juncti, letabundi
una cantemus alleluia.

So that Israel may raise her eyes
to heaven and thirst for God
“as the hart pants after the water-brooks,”
and so that we, snatched at last
from the most cruel tyranny of Pharaoh,
may cross the sea without harm.

And, although enemies rage,
let the seas not conceal them,
[lacuna] O Lady,
but wash away their fury,
so that then the confines of hell
may destroy these plunderers.

And thus, rich in virtue,
may we hasten to heaven
with a pure mind, O Mary,
so that after life's end,
happily united with Christ,
as one we may sing “Alleluia.”

5 Ave Maria ancilla trinitatis

Ave Maria, ancilla trinitatis humillima.
Ave Maria, preelecta dei patris filia sublimissima.
Ave Maria, sponsa spiritus sancti amabilissima.
Ave Maria, mater domini nostri Jesu Christi dignissima.
Ave Maria, soror angelorum pulcherrima.
Ave Maria, promissa prophetarum desideratissima.
Ave Maria, regina patriarcharum gloriosissima.
Ave Maria, magistra evangelistarum veracissima.
Ave Maria, doctrix apostolorum sapientissima.
Ave Maria, confortatrix martyrum validissima.
Ave Maria, fons et plenitudo confessorum suavissima.
Ave Maria, honor et festivitas virginum jocundissima.
Ave Maria, consolatrix vivorum et mortuorum promptissima.
Mecum sis in omnibus tribulationibus et angustiis meis
materna pietate, et in hora mortis mee suscipe animam
meam et offer illam dulcissimo filio tuo Jesu, cum omnibus
qui se nostris commendaverunt orationibus. Amen.

Hail, Mary, most humble handmaid of the Trinity.
Hail, Mary, most exalted chosen daughter of God the Father.
Hail, Mary, most loving bride of the Holy Spirit.
Hail, Mary, most worthy mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Hail, Mary, most comely sister of the angels.
Hail, Mary, most longed-for promise of the prophets.
Hail, Mary, most glorious queen of the patriarchs.
Hail, Mary, most truthful lady of the evangelists.
Hail, Mary, most wise teacher of the apostles.
Hail, Mary, most potent comforter of martyrs.
Hail, Mary, sweetest fount and source of plenty for confessors.
Hail, Mary, most joyful reward and object of celebration for virgins.
Hail, Mary, most ready consoler of living and dead.
Be with me in all my troubles and perils with your motherly
affection, and in the hour of my death receive my soul and
present it to your most sweet son Jesus, together with all
who have commended themselves to our prayers. Amen.

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