

## Early Music: Easter & Beyond

RTHK Radio 4  
10 – 11 am

Programme 2  
Sunday 10th April 2005



**MUSIC:** Handel: Alleluia fr 'Silete Venti' CD 4000 // 6 2:56

**KANE:** A different *Handel* 'Alleluia' --- from his early Italian-style motet, "Silete Venti". You're listening to "Early Music for Easter and beyond": and welcome to stay with me, Ciaran Kane, for another 50 minutes or so of early music written for the season of Eastertime and its festivals of Ascension and Pentecost, and *some beyond* that. But first, to make up for an earlier *oversight*: if you read the "FM Magazine" article about last month's "Early Music for Lent" and were looking forward to hearing Buxtehude, you may have noticed he got *lost* somewhere and never appeared. My mistake, which I'd like to rectify by presenting him *now*. Buxtehude's 'Membra Jesu Nostri' is really a Lent or passiontime meditation on the *suffering* Jesus, a cycle of seven cantatas each dedicated to a different part of the body of the crucified Christ, His feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and face. The emotional climax of the cycle is the one on the *heart*, and the composer himself signalled its importance in the whole cycle. It has a *number* of features distinguishing it from the other six cantatas, and is the one I've chosen for this programme. The theme and most of the text for 'Membra Jesu Nostri' come from a medieval latin poem "Salve mundi salutare" (Hail, saviour of the world), which became very well-known in both latin and in German translation and paraphrases throughout 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. (The familiar hymn 'O Sacred Head now wounded' derives from part seven of the same poem). Each cantata *begins* with a biblical text *referring* to the particular part of the body, sometimes rather obliquely. For 'The Heart', the quote is from the Song of Songs: "You have wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse" and the same quote is repeated by the choir at the end. "On the Heart" is written for two sopranos and bass, with chorus and

strings. Here John Eliot Gardiner conducts the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists.

**MUSIC: Buxtehude --- Ad cor fr. Membra Jesu Nostri 97R18 // 7 9:29**

**KANE:** 'Upon the Heart', one of the cycle of seven meditation cantatas by Dietrich Buxtehude "Membra Jesu Nostri" written in 1680. If that music was really *pre*-Easter, the next *two* pieces look towards the *end* of the Easter season, its 50<sup>th</sup> day *completion* in the festival of Pentecost, a piece of plainchant and a hymn-prayer to the Holy Spirit. The chant is from the vigil Mass of Pentecost Sunday, and consists of the Eastertime 'Alleluia' with a verse from Ps 104: "Send forth your Spirit and they shall be re-created; and you will renew the face of the earth". And following that short chant by Benedictine monks, a version of the hymn "Veni Creator Spiritus" (Come Creator Spirit) written by Marc Antoine Charpentier for the nuns of the famous Paris convent of Jansenist fame, Port Royal. His connection with Port Royal is quite vague, apart from the fact that his sister was a nun there. Following custom, Charpentier would have simply provided the organ prelude and postlude and the first stanza of the hymn. Here the singers are Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr with Michel Chapuis.

**MUSIC: Plainchant --- Alleluia, Emitte Spiritum 97R23 // 23 1:21**

**MUSIC: Charpentier --- Veni Creator Spiritum 97R29 // 1 2:39**

**KANE:** 'Veni Creator Spiritus', a Pentecost hymn, by Marc Antoine Charpentier for the nuns of the Port Royal convent in Paris; and before that, an Alleluia and scripture-verse from the Pentecost vigil. Austrian Baroque-era composer Heinrich Biber has become known for his instrumental work and secular pieces, but he seemingly left quite a *lot* of church music, most of it still un-researched and un-published. A Mass of his, titled "Missa Alleluia", is on disc, and from that I'm going to play the 'Credo' movement. The Mass is for 36 voices and accompaniment including *four* organs. In his time, such forces would only have been available in Salzburg, where Biber was in the service of the Prince-Archbishop and became Kapellmeister both in the cathedral and at the court. Why this Mass is called "Alleluia-Mass" I'm

afraid I can't tell you..... or when it was written or first sung, but most probably in the Salzburg cathedral. As, however, the "*Alleluia*" bit is appropriate for Eastertime, and the trumpets and bright cheerfulness also, especially the section "Et resurrexit tertia die" (and He rose on the third day), I've picked the 'Credo' section for today's "Early Music". The performers are Gradus ad Parnassum, under Konrad Junghänel.

**MUSIC: Biber --- Credo fr Missa Alleluia 96R10 // 6 9:37**

**KANE:** The 'Credo' section from Heinrich Biber's "Missa Alleluia". The summer festival of Corpus Christi *doesn't* fall within the Easter season (it's shortly after Trinity Sunday), but its *meaning* is in fact closely related to the paschal celebration of the last three days of Holy Week and Easter Sunday: more *specifically*, with the observance of the Lord's Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening. And Corpus Christi (the festival, literally in the latin, of the Body of Christ) has a couple of *special* hymns, motets and prayers of its own. They, like the festival itself, originated in the Middle Ages, some attributed to the great 13<sup>th</sup> century Dominican theologian, St Thomas Aquinas. Their language is latin, of course. Yet, one in *particular* has remained in use, as a favourite both in concert-hall and, even now in these non-latin days, in church for special occasions --- Ave Verum. You mostly hear *Mozart's* gem, written for Corpus Christi in the last year of his life. There are numerous more modern ones, and also ones fitting into the "Early Music" slot, and I've chosen *three* of those for these weeks. Today, William Byrd's celebrated setting, one of his masterpieces, intimate, economical and concentrated, published four hundred years ago in 1605. "Ave Verum corpus, natum de Maria virgine" is sung here by the choir of New College, Oxford, directed by Edward Higginbottom.

**MUSIC: Byrd --- Ave Verum 98R51 // 4 4:29**

**KANE:** William Byrd's "Ave Verum". Next week, someone else's. Like J.S.Bach, George Philiip Telemann was obliged to produce a number of *series* of church cantatas for the Sundays and major festivals of the year. When he started out as musical director at Hamburg (where he

served for 46 years) the music scene there wasn't very healthy, so he had to make do with quite meagre forces. His first year of cantatas published in 1725 as "Harmonischer Gottesdienst" (Harmonic Divine Service), showed that meagreness: they're a kind of 'chamber' cantata for one solo voice plus one or two obligato strings or woodwind plus basso continuo. One of these is for the Sunday after Trinity (not *too* far into the "beyond" of our programme's title this month), "Ach, Seele" (O soul, hungry and thirsty, endure it all in the name of the Lord). It consists of two alto arias, with a *recitativo* in between. The singer here is Eva Lax, with Ensemble Barocco Padovano Sans Souci

**MUSIC: Telemann --- Ach, Seele, Hungre, dürste 98R25 // 14-16 10:09**

**KANE:** A Telemann cantata for the Sunday after Trinity. The Eastertime hymn "Regina Coeli" (Queen of Heaven) *also* turns up in many versions, ancient and modern, and in some maybe unexpected places too, like in the middle of Mascagni's opera 'Cavalleria Rusticana'. But here it is in one of its, presumably, *oldest* incarnations, the solemn-tone Gregorian plainchant version, and sung too by 'real' monks. And with this I leave you until the same time next Sunday morning, and more Early Music for Easter and beyond.

**MUSIC: Plainchant --- Regina Coeli Laetare 97R23 // 20 1:27**

**MUSIC (if needed to fill): Vivaldi motet "alleluia" section in 98R05 except // 23**

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**Timing 42:07**

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