

Early Music: Easter & Beyond

RTHK Radio 4
10 – 11 am

Programme 4
Sunday 24th April 2005



MUSIC: Plainchant --- Psalmus Alleluaticus 97R23 // 27 1:42

KANE: Eastertime “alleluias”, with part of Ps 47, sung during the week of Ascensiontime. Hello; I’m Ciaran Kane, presenting Early Music this month, for the season of Easter and beyond. As this is the *last* programme in this short special series, the feast of Pentecost, the *ending* of the Easter season, is the focus, with one of Bach’s cantatas for that festival. But first, a motet from the Vespers of Whit Sunday, “Loquebantur variis linguis” (the Apostles spoke in different tongues the great deeds of God). The setting we’ll hear is by Thomas Tallis, who wrote for both Latin and English usage. This is one of the most glorious of his pre-Reformation motets. It’s built up, like much of the contemporary church music, around a gregorian chant which is sometimes heard by itself, sometimes threaded into the polyphony. The music is written for seven voices, and reflects the mood of *excitement* of the day, as people filled with the Holy Spirit begin to speak. The Cambridge Singers with John Rutter sing Tallis’ “Loquebantur variis linguis”

MUSIC: Tallis ---- Loquebantur variis linguis 90R10 // 2 3:53

KANE: Thomas Tallis’ Pentecost motet, “Loquebantur variis linguis” (they spoke in various languages). What they *spoke* about was Jesus and His having risen from death. The gospel of St *Matthew* records an earthquake and an angel of the Lord descending from heaven, coming to roll away the stone that had closed Jesus’ tomb, and then sitting on that stone. The text has been put to music in a motet “Angelus Domini descendit de caelo”, by one Leone Leoni, from Verona. He became maestro di cappella at Vicenza cathedral for and this one is from his first book of 8-voice motets published in 1608. It’s

dedicated to the prince-archbishop of Salzburg, who was himself a musician and composer, had studied in Italy, and was a prominent patron of church music. Leoni's "Angelus Domini" is sung here by the Salzburg Bach Choir almost 40 years before his death in 1627. He left almost 150 motets,

MUSIC: Leoni --- Angelus Domini 97R09 // 1 4:19

KANE: "Angelus Domini", the Easter story of the angel at the empty tomb, by Leone Leoni. And so to J.S.Bach, and one of his four Pentecost cantatas: BWV 34, "O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe" (O fire everlasting, o fountain of loving). This cantata was first sung for Whitsunday at Leipzig some year after 1740, but the *text* (by an *unknown* author/compiler) *unusually* makes no reference at *all* to the gospel of the day or even to the festival of Pentecost. In fact, it's a so-called "parody" cantata, as almost *all* of the music comes from the mid-1720s and the text, likewise, is *adapted* from what originally was a *wedding* cantata. The central alto aria, "Blessed ye hearts whom God has chosen" very much retains its bridal feeling: a Bach biographer has commented that "... (for) its lovely melodies, it is indisputably fitted to rank at the head of all Bach's works of this kind...". The opening and closing choruses are particularly festive, ending with "Peace be unto all mankind, peace be unto you forever". The Sixteen are the singers here.

MUSIC: Bach --- BWV 34 98R49 // 3 – 7 16:34

KANE: A Bach cantata for the feast of Pentecost. Before that, we heard an Easter gospel setting by a minor Italian composer, who *wasn't* connected with the contemporary great musical centres of Venice and Rome, and who *also* dedicated some of his music to the prince archbishop of Salzburg. A very similar case was Orazio Vecchi, from Modena where he eventually became cathedral choirmaster. Besides 13 volumes of other vocal works, he published four volumes of sacred music; and about six months before his death in early 1605, dedicated a collection of 33 four-voice hymns to the Salzburg archbishop. One of these was the hymn for Corpus Christi, attributed

to St Thomas Aquinas: “Pange Lingua gloriosi” (Let us tell the mystery of the glorious body and precious blood of Jesus). Even though they’re in *latin*, the last *two* verses of this Eucharistic hymn *used* to be familiar to Catholic church-goers up to about 40 years ago as the Benediction-service hymn “Tantum ergo sacramentum”. Here’s Orazio Vecchi’s “Pange Lingua”, with its verses alternately in chant and polyphonically, sung by the Salzburg Bach Choir.

MUSIC: Vecchi ---- Pange Lingua 97R09 // 2 6:14

KANE: The hymn for the festival of Corpus Christ, ‘Pange Lingua’. The past two weeks we’ve had versions of the much *better*-known Corpus Christi motet, “Ave Verum”, by two English composers, William Byrd and Richard Dering. This week *another* one, by Peter Philips a contemporary of the other two, but who lived in the Netherlands and became the most prolific composer of *latin* motets in northern Europe.. He published his “Ave Verum” at a time when motets for a *small* number of voices, as well as for solo voices, were coming into fashion. Philips’ “Ave Verum” is scored for three solo tenors, with continuo; the singers here are from the choir of King’s College, Cambridge.

MUSIC: Philips --- “Ave Verum” 93R07 // 5 4:27

KANE: “Ave Verum”, by Peter Philips, early in the 17th century. His style was influenced by the great name of a generation earlier, Orlando Lasso, and he may well have met or *known* the great man, in Holland or on his travels. Lasso provides the setting for the *next* item, *another* one we’ve already had *two* versions of in the past couple of weeks, the plainchant and Francisco Guerrero’s. It’s the Easter-season Marian hymn, “Regina Coeli laetare” (Queen of heaven rejoice). Lasso wrote it for seven voices, and it’s here sung by The Tallis Scholars directed by one Peter Phillips (*not* the same as the composer of the *last* piece we heard)

MUSIC: Orlando di Lasso 91R05 // 12 2:55

KANE: The Easter-season Marian anthem, “Regina Coeli laetare” (Queen of

heaven rejoice), by Orlando Lassus. Richard Farrant was an English musician, organist, choirmaster and producer of plays in the middle of the 16th century. There's a small handful of vocal music attributed to him, including a *latin* piece we had Thomas Tallis' version of last week, the Eucharistic motet "O Sacrum Convivium" (O sacred banquet). Here it is, sung by the monks and choirboys of Downside Abbey in England

MUSIC: Farrant --- O Sacrum Convivium 97R07 // 20 2:03

KANE: "O Sacrum Convivium", for Corpus Christi and also Holy Thursday's commemoration of Jesus' Last Supper. So it makes an apposite bracket around the *sub*-title of this month's Early Music programmes --- 'for Easter and Beyond'. This *concludes* the series; I hope you have enjoyed the music; and thank you for listening. I'm Ciaran Kane; and my *last* word has to be a final Eastertime "Alleluia" --- one of Vivaldi's best. Good-bye for now.

MUSIC: Vivaldi ---- Alleluia 98R05 // 23 2:05

Music timing : 44:12
Text wordcount 1117