

## Early Music for Lent & Easter

RTHK Radio 4  
10 – 11 am

Programme 2  
Sunday 13th March 2005



**MUSIC: Byrd: Emendemus in melius                      90R03   tr 4                      4:08**

**KANE:** “Emendemus in melius” (Let’s change for the better): a 5-part latin motet by William Byrd, starting off this week’s ‘Early Music for Lent and Easter’, with me Ciaran Kane. This motet is one of Byrd’s masterpieces, its *sound* something very new in the England of his time, and he must have felt particularly pleased with it --- it’s the opening piece in the milestone 1575 collection of “Cantiones Sacrae” (Sacred Songs) jointly published by Byrd and Thomas Tallis and dedicated to the Queen. She later gave them a 21-year monopoly on the *printing* of music in the country. The *text* for “Emendemus in melius” is a responsorial verse from one of the daily prayer-services of the church for Ash Wednesday: ‘Let us atone for the sins we have committed in our ignorance, lest suddenly surprised at the day of our death, we seek time for repentance and cannot find it. Lord, hear us and have mercy’. Byrd wrote over 150 such *latin* motets, and more than 50 English anthems. But the *most* prolific, versatile and widely-known composer of the age was the Franco-Flemish prodigy who wrote in *five* languages and who’s variously known as Roland de Lassus, Orlando Lasso, Orlandus Lassus, Orlando di Lasso, Roland deLattre. He’d already performed as a singer throughout Italy and Sicily before becoming choirmaster at the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome, at the age of 19. Five years later he settled down in Munich, at the court of the Duke of Bavaria, and apart from frequent travels around Europe and being in demand for music commissions, remained there till his death in 1594. Just six weeks before that event, he completed the last work of his enormous output --- a set of 20 Italian spiritual madrigals, representing the remorse of St Peter for having denied Jesus, “Lagrima di San Pietro” (The tears of St Peter). The music is sombre and penitential, tortured in places, as it follows closely the psychological moods of the long poem of a contemporary Italian poet on which it’s based. The early verses picture St

Peter as an old man, remembering his terrible failure and imagining the eyes of Jesus looking at him from the cross. The middle section has Peter contemplating Jesus' crucifixion and suffering; and at the end he calls out in anguish, praying for his own death. A concluding latin motet has Jesus speaking to all of us from His cross, "Behold what I suffer for you.... Yet my heart suffers even more because of your ingratitude". Here's the last two madrigals and the latin motet from di Lasso's "Lagrima di San Pietro", sung by Ars Nova.

**MUSIC: Di Lasso : Lagrima di San Pietro      96R28 ttrr 19-21      8:53**

**KANE:** The ending of Orlando di Lasso's 'The Tears of St Peter'. Further tears next, in another latin motet from the same period, "In jejuniis et fletu" (In fasting and in tears). This is a 5-voice motet by Englishman Thomas Tallis, and was one of his works included in the important 'Cantiones Sacrae' that Tallis published jointly with William Byrd in 1575. It's been claimed to be "possibly Tallis's finest work", and is a careful match of text and music, showing influence from what was going on in continental Europe at the time. The text is a liturgical responsory from the Matins service on the first Sunday in Lent: "Fasting and weeping, the priests prayed: spare thy people O Lord, and let not thine inheritance fall into destruction". The choir here is that of Winchester Cathedral in England, conducted by David Hill.

**MUSIC: Tallis: In ieiunio et fletu      93R11 tr 2      5:01**

**KANE:** Thomas Tallis's "In ieiunio et fletu", for the first Sunday of Lent. Tallis, like many contemporaries in Europe, set to music parts of the biblical Lamentations of Jeremiah, which formed an important part of the "Tenebrae" services held in the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Holy Week. Between the readings, there were responsory verses many of which became motets in their own right. One of these, from the *Friday* service, is "O vos omnes" (O all you who pass by, pay heed and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow). The words are *from* the Lamentations, but are referred to the crucifixion scene on Calvary. The *setting* of "O vos omnes" that I've chosen is by a colourful character who was a prince and grand-nephew of a Pope, and nephew both of an

archbishop of Naples and of a canonised saint, St Charles Borromeo, who was Archbishop of Milan. He's Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, and he had his castle at Gesualdo near Naples. In his time he was renowned for having murdered his wife whom he'd "caught in the act", so to speak. Musically, he's better known for his passionate and sensual madrigals than for his sacred music in which he kept inventively to the old unaccompanied style of polyphony which was being overtaken towards the end of his life by developments in Venice, with composers like Monteverdi. Gesualdo's "O Vos Omnes" is sung here by The Tallis Scholars, directed by Peter Phillips

**MUSIC: Gesualdo: O Vos Omnes 94R03 tr 5 3:36**

**KANE:** "O Vos Omnes", by Carlo Gesualdo. So far in this programme, the lives of *all* the composers overlapped each other in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But now we're going back more than fifty years to around 1490 in England, when there was a John Browne active. Nothing much is known about him, but he appears as composer of a number of items in the celebrated Eton Choir Book. In fact he was the most represented there, and the most talented, and has been called the best composer of his age. One of his best works is a 6-part anthem on the theme of Mary's sorrows at the foot of Jesus' cross: "Stabat juxta Christi crucem" (She stood beside Christ's cross). The title and text are very similar to the better known hymn of Jacopone da Todi, "Stabat Mater dolorosa". It's not known exactly when or for what occasion this was written. But one striking thing about Browne's anthem is that it quotes from a well-known part-song by an earlier London composer, "From stormy winds and grievous weather" which was a prayer for the safety of the elder brother of the future Henry 8<sup>th</sup>. That brother's untimely death in 1502 turns Browne's anthem into a kind of political allegory and prayer for protection. Intended so, or not? Here's John Browne's "Stabat juxta Christi crucem", sung by The Sixteen

**MUSIC: Browne: Stabat juxta Christi crucem 96R23 tr 4 10:59**

**KANE:** "Stabat juxta Christi crucem" by John Browne, written about 500 years ago. Seven of the biblical Psalms of David are known as 'penitential' psalms: we've had one of them already in the "Miserere" that features so

much in music for Lent. Another is Ps 129 (130 in Hebrew numbering) “De Profundis” (From the depths I cry to you O Lord). Orlando di Lasso made extended settings of each of the penitential psalms in a seven-year-long project. Some years later, in 1583, his good friend Andrea Gabrieli, uncle of Giovanni, published *his* volume of psalm-settings, including the ‘De Profundis’, in which he followed Orlando’s simplifying of harmonies and allowing the text to speak more clearly. The Sixteen are again the singers for Andrea Gabrieli’s “De Profundis”

**MUSIC: A. Gabrieli De Profundis 98R45 tr 2 6:34**

**KANE:** The 6-part “De Profundis” of Andrea Gabrieli. Another psalm, from a *different* period, to end with: Henry Purcell’s “Lord, how long wilt thou be angry”. This was written about 1680, before Purcell adopted his later style of church music, his great ‘verse anthems’ with their solo parts and orchestral accompaniments more in line with the European Baroque style. “Lord, how long” is verses from Psalm 79, in a style still influenced by the early Tudor-era polyphony. In this recording, it’s sung by the Cambridge Singers, directed by John Rutter. And it’ll take us to the end of *this* week’s edition of Early Music for Lent and Easter. Next week, some bigger names and a more *varied* selection of styles and composers. Till then, good-bye from me, Ciaran Kane.

**MUSIC: Purcell: Lord, how long wilt thou be angry tr 12 4:08**

Text wordcount: 1313  
 Music items timing 43:19

**[alternate ending: Purcell: Hear my prayer O Lord. Tr 14 of same 2:28]**

[This is the first verse of Ps 102, and it’s from an album written by Purcell himself and dated 1682. It seems it was meant as part of a larger work, as blank pages were left for completing it. It’s in 8-parts, and in a style still influenced by the earlier Tudor-era polyphony, before Purcell adopted his later style of church music, his great verse-anthems with their solo parts and orchestral accompaniments more in line with the European Baroque style. “Hear my prayer O Lord” is sung by the Cambridge Singers directed by John Rutter. And it’ll take us.....