

Early Music for Lent & Easter

RTHK Radio 4
10 – 11 am

Programme 3
Sunday 20th March 2005

MUSIC: Gibbons: Hosanna to the Son of David 90R10 tr 11 2:33

KANE: “Hosanna to the Son of David”: a scriptural acclamation for Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, remembering the solemn entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Hello again: I’m Ciaran Kane, and the programme is ‘Early Music for Lent and Easter’. The composer of that 7-part double-choir ‘Hosanna’ is Orlando Gibbons, and it *seemly* was a widely *popular* anthem in 17th century England. Gibbons was one of that country’s greatest early composers, and wrote many church anthems, motets, madrigals, pavans and music for keyboards and for viols. Composing music for the choir was *not* the main job of Vivaldi at the Pieta orphanage in Venice, but he ended up having to do it anyway. And around 1715, in the absence of the official choirmaster, he wrote a *couple* of motets meant to be *introductory* to the singing of the “Miserere” psalm, in Holy Week. One of these is “Filiae maestae Jerusalem” (Sorrowing daughters of Jerusalem), for an alto solo voice. It begins with a recitative: ‘Sorrowing daughters of Jerusalem, behold the King of all, your King wounded and crowned with thorns’ Then there’s an aria, about nature *itself* being dulled, silenced, sun and moon darkened; and a second recitative leading to the words “But while we cannot grieve enough, you good Jesus, have mercy on us.” In the *latin*, the final word is “miserere”, the cue for the start of Ps 50 - -- only, there isn’t *any* extant ‘Miserere’ by Vivaldi that *could* have been the one then sung. “Filiae maestae Jerusalem” is sung here by James Bowman, countertenor, with members of The King’s Consort.

MUSIC: Vivaldi -- Filiae maestae Jerusalem 98R05 ttrr 17-19 7:37

KANE: What would Vivaldi’s attached “Miserere” have sounded like ? Alas we *just* have that extended introductory anthem “Filiae maestae Jerusalem” and an alternative companion-piece. Two great

collections survive in Italy of medieval vernacular religious songs known as 'laude', songs of praise. They developed around the time of St Francis of Assisi in the 1200s, and the spirituality of Francis and his early companions had a lot to do with the spread and usage of these songs. They were a popular, devotional kind of song, poetic and influenced by the language of courtly love. Their topics were events in the life of Christ, or about His mother and some of the saints. Musically they were quite simple and repetitious..... and *some* went on for verse after verse after verse. They developed into mini religious *dramas*, in which *various* biblical characters would appear.. And they gave rise to neighbourhood lay confraternities, who used them in processions similar occasions. From the collection of such 'laude' known as the Laudario di Cortona, here's the Lauda no.25 about Jesus on the cross "Let all men with a loud voice praise the true cross!" The language is a dialect of old Tuscan. A few verses read in translation: "Thus saith Isaiah in his true prophecy, 'like a lamb he shall be shorn', and nailed upon the cross. Thus cried Jeremiah, when he lamented and said 'Ye that go by the way, behold the sorrow of the cross.... Jesus Christ, thou the brotherhood dost increase and govern in everlasting glory, through the power of the cross.'" The singers are Ensemble Organum

MUSIC: Laudario di Cortona --- Lauda XXV 98R20 tr. 8 7:44

KANE: From a medieval mystery, from 13th century Italy. A long-standing feature of church music for Lent is the singing of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, five poems of national lament for the destruction of Jerusalem, which formed part of the readings (or Lessons) for Matins of the last three days of Holy Week. At least *part* of these texts were *chanted*, and many composers followed suit by making at least partial settings. One of the most complete sets we have is the work of Bohemian composer Jan Dismas Zelenka, whose music J.S.Bach admired. Zelenka has *two* each of the three Lamentations readings proper to Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. At the end of each of the six readings, there's a call to repentance ("Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum", Jerusalem, Jerusalem, turn back to the Lord your God). This is usually the *same* music or psalm-

tone, but Zelenka makes a point of setting each of these six repetitions *differently*. An *unusual* feature of 'Lamentations' is that in the original Hebrew poems each line begins with successive letters of the alphabet, and these Hebrew letters are inserted into the Latin translation, and have been *sung* as text, as a kind of reflective interlude. A bit of *each* of these features in *this* extract from Zelenka's setting of the 1st Lamentation of Good Friday. First, the *text* "Mutely they sat on the ground, the elders of the daughters of Zion"; then a vocalise on the Hebrew letter "K", Kaph; the next verse "My eyes wasted away with weeping"; and the refrain 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem'.

MUSIC: Zelenka --- fr. Lamentations CD 13326 ttrr 12 – 13 5:22

KANE: From Zelenka's 1st Lamentation of Good Friday, with John Mark Ainsley and the Chandos Baroque Players. A generation older than Zelenka, English composer Michael Wise was one of the singer-musicians who benefited when music returned to church life, after the end of the Puritan era in England,. His last appointment was at St Paul's Cathedral in London, but it's not clear if he ever took up the post. He'd *been* organist and choir instructor at Salisbury cathedral; and it was *at* Salisbury on St Bartholomew's night 1687 that he was hit over the head and killed outright by the night-watch, allegedly for "giving stubborn and refractory language to them". Must have been celebrating well but none too wisely. Michael Wise's masterpiece is claimed to be the anthem "The ways of Zion do mourn", the text being verses from the First Lamentation of Jeremiah. "The ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feasts, all her gates are desolate..... Behold and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow". The modern-day choir of St Paul's Cathedral, with treble and bass soloists, sing the anthem here.

MUSIC: Wise --- The ways of Zion do mourn 96R16 tr 7 9:00

KANE: Michael Wise's anthem, "The ways of Zion do mourn". A legend similar to the story of Allegri's "Miserere" and Mozart's copying of it surrounds the "Stabat Mater" that *Palestrina* wrote, around about 1590. He's supposed to've presented the manuscript to the Sistine chapel

choir for their exclusive performance every Good Friday; and the English musician Charles Burney is said to've bribed a singer to show him a copy, which led to the work being published in England. "Stabat Mater" is a 20-verse medieval poem on the sorrows and suffering of Mary standing by the cross of Jesus. Palestrina's musical style is usually to draw *out* a short section of text, but here with the 20 verses he's much more concise and compact, using contrast and voice interplays of the double-choir to create variety. This recording of one of Palestrina's masterpieces is by The Cambridge Singers directed by John Rutter.

MUSIC: Palestrina --- Stabat Mater 92R06 tr 7 8:08

KANE: Palestrina's "Stabat Mater" (The sorrowing mother stood by the cross). The personal piety and devotion reflected in that poem are paralleled in the kind of poems and meditations that Schütz, Telemann, Bach and others introduced into *their* settings of the gospels of the Passion and Death of Christ. They *also* introduced the great congregational *hymns* of the Lutheran tradition, the great chorales, producing the much-loved 'Passions' that are synonymous with music for Lent and Holy Week. There's only time, unfortunately, for just one *token* sound-bite, as the *ending* to this week's Early Music programme, with me Ciaran Kane. This is the beautiful, meditative recitative of each solo voice and the chorus that comes just before the conclusion of J.S.Bach's "St Matthew Passion": "And now the Lord to rest is laid"

MUSIC: Bach --- St Matthew Passion 92R13 tr 13 2:17

Music timing 42:41

Text wordcount: 1258