

Early Music: Poems, Pilgrims and Parodies --- 3

RTHK Radio 4
10 – 11 am

Programme 3
Sunday 15th April 2007

MUSIC: Bach: Jesu meine Freude 96R06 # 6 beginning.... 0:40

KANE: Welcome once more to some Early Music. I'm Ciaran Kane, and my selections these weeks revolve, loosely, around poems, pilgrims and parodies. This time we start off with pilgrims, and a pilgrims' song, 'Dum pater familias'. It's part of the treasure-trove of music associated with the popular medieval pilgrimage to Compostela in northwest Spain. The apostle St James was, and still is, honoured there, where his remains were believed to've been transferred from Jaffa. It's only fairly recently that much of this music has been brought to light, although this particular song was recovered in the 19th century with the discovery of an important 12th century manuscript in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. 'Dum pater familias' was likely a rallying song for pilgrims on their way to Santiago. Its melody was evidently quite well-known; and through the piece there are two refrains, one in latin, the other in different dialects, which sung together produce polyphony. Another curious feature is that successive strophes of the poem use the name "James" in the forms of its latin declension: that is, the changes in form that latin words go through depending on where they fit in a sentence. Besides being the subject (the nominative form) latin words have other forms called genitive, dative, accusative, vocative and ablative. "Dum pater familias" then seems also to be a kind of mnemonic: or perhaps a revision exercise in latin grammar. The text begins: 'When God the Father, the universal king, gave each apostle authority over a province, James, a light of virtue, enlightened Spain'.

MUSIC: Compostela Vespers: 'Dum Pater Familias' AMB 9966 # 1 6:55

KANE: Ensemble Organum singing 'Dum Pater Familias', a 12th century pilgrim

song from music for Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrims going there would also have known the plainsong “Ave Maris Stella”, ‘Hail, Star of the Sea’, a hymn-poem addressed to Mary the mother of Jesus as protector of sea-farers and beacon guiding travellers to a safe port. It was written at least as early as the 9th century and became very popular, set to music by dozens of known composers, from Josquin des Prez to Monteverdi, Grieg, Elgar and Peter Maxwell Davies. ‘Ave Maris Stella’ is also the national anthem (so to speak) of the Acadian francophone people of Canada’s maritime provinces. The poem is not rhymed, but has alternating *accented* syllables, six syllables in each 4-line stanza, seven stanzas in all. Here’s a setting of it by French composer, contemporary and friend of King Louis 14th, Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers. He frames the text with organ interludes --- he was organist for 63 years at the church of St Sulpice in Paris, and was friend and benefactor to a number of convents in that parish. In particular, Nivers had a life-long association with a group of Benedictine sisters, for whom this setting was prepared.

MUSIC: Nivers : ‘Ave Maris Stella’ 98R10 # 5 7:58

KANE: ‘Ave Maris Stella’, by Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers, sung by Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr, directed by Emmanuel Mandrin playing an historic organ of Nivers’ own time. It may be a *convenient* term, but the name ‘Parody’ Mass is a quite unsuitable and misleading title used for settings of the ordinary Mass texts using melodies or line-parts from some other musical form --- most usually, either a popular song of the day (which *needn’t* have been religious) or a hymn or motet by the same composer, or indeed by someone else. The practice arose in the 14th century, and became very common in the 15th and 16th: Palestrina alone wrote more than 50 so-called ‘parody’ Masses, before the church Council of Trent banned the use of secular tunes for such compositions. Palestrina’s contemporary from the Low Countries, Roland de Lassus, a widely-travelled man of international standing, wasn’t quite so constrained by Trent’s instructions. He was working for the Duke of Bavaria when his “Missa Susanne un jour” was published, in 1577. It’s based on the most

famous song the 16th century, which tells the story of Susanna, her accusers and the prophet Daniel as recounted in the apocryphal biblical Book of Daniel. The song became particularly popular in Reformation circles, as providing more indigenous-language *biblical* material and heroes for the new reformed church services. And then Lassus made it the basis of a lush setting of the old latin Mass. Here now are the two final sections of Lassus' Missa Susanne un jour, the Sanctus and Agnus Dei.

MUSIC: Lassus : Missa 'Susanne un jour' 94R04 ##10-11 12:23

KANE: The Sanctus and Agnus Dei from "Missa Susanne un jour" by Roland de Lassus, sung by the Oxford Camerata. A change of style, language, century, country and purpose next, with the choice of another and quite different poem. The composer is Henry Purcell in late 17th century England, the poem by a contemporary of his, Sir Charles Sedley, and the occasion the birthday of Queen Mary, wife of King William, in 1692. Purcell wrote for the court as well as the church, and Queen Mary was a great music-lover, for whom Purcell wrote a number of his best odes. This 1692 one is comparatively restrained and not so lavish in scoring as some others were. It also happens to have, in the bass line of one of its airs, a folk song "Cold and raw" that the Queen particularly liked. The ode "Love's goddess sure was blind" is rather long, so I'm leaving out the opening 'Symphony' and the 2nd and 3rd verses. The Sixteen and the Orchestra of the Sixteen are directed by Harry Christopher.

MUSIC: Purcell : "Love's goddess sure was blind" 95R05 ## 8, 10-14 13:52

KANE: From Henry Purcell's birthday ode for Queen Mary, in 1692, 'Love's goddess sure was blind'. I omitted then the 5-minute long 'Symphony' that opens Purcell's ode: maybe I can make some amends by now using the *closing* part of that same Symphony to round off today's programme. You've been listening to Early Music, focussing this month on poems,

pilgrims and parodies. Next week, Hildegard, Nicholas and 11,000 virgins.

MUSIC: Purcell: "Love's goddess sure was blind" 95R05 # 7 prefade to end at programme time 52:00

Music timings: 41:48

Text wordcount 957