



# **THE KEBLE EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**The Prince of Music**

**Palestrina in the Eternal City**

**STILE ANTICO**

**Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 7.30pm**

*With thanks to the Warden and Fellows of Keble College*

**THE KEBLE  
EARLY MUSIC  
FESTIVAL**

**FESTIVAL DIRECTOR** Christian Wilson

**FESTIVAL ADMINISTRATOR** Pippa Thynne

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# THE PRINCE OF MUSIC    Palestrina in the Eternal City

**Palestrina** *Sicut cervus*

## THE PAPAL CHAPEL

**Josquin**    *Salve Regina*

**Arcadelt**    *Pater noster*

**Palestrina** *Tu es Petrus*

## THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

**Palestrina** *Nigra sum sed Formosa*

**Victoria**    *Trahe me post te*

**Palestrina** *Credo from Missa Papae Marcelli*

## INTERVAL (15 mins)

*Interval drinks on sale in the basement of the Arco Building*

**Palestrina** *Super flumina Babylonis*

## A TIME OF TURMOIL

**Palestrina** *Peccantem me quotidie*

**Palestrina** *Gioia m'abond'al cor*

**Palestrina** *Surge propera amica mea*

## IN PRAISE OF MUSIC

**Palestrina** *Cantantibus organis*

**Palestrina** *Exultate Deo*

**Lassus**      *Musica Dei donum*

## PALESTRINA'S RICH LEGACY

**Anerio**      *Christus factus est*

**Allegri**      *Christus resurgens*

**Cheryl Frances-Hoad** *A Gift of Heaven*

**Palestrina** *Laudate Dominum a 12*

## THE PRINCE OF MUSIC: PALESTRINA IN THE ETERNAL CITY

Such was the relentless march of taste in Renaissance times that even the most celebrated composer could expect the next generation to treat them as yesterday's news. Palestrina is the shining exception to this rule: a figure whose star glowed still more brightly after his death. How was it that he was still feted as "the prince and father of music" by the theorist Angelo Bernardi a full century later, when even the likes of Josquin and Lassus had long faded from memory?

One reason for Palestrina's enduring stature was the legend of the *Missa Papae Marcelli*. In 1562, or so the story goes, delegates to the Council of Trent (during which the Catholic church refocused its beliefs and practices in response to the Reformation) were so fed up with composers basing masses on bawdy songs, or obscuring the sacred texts with intricate textures, that they planned to do away with polyphonic church music altogether. According to Agostino Agazzari (1607) it was Palestrina's mass which stayed their hand, converting the sceptics and rescuing complex liturgical music from oblivion. It hardly matters that the evidence and chronology are at best vexed: posterity had anointed Palestrina as the saviour of church music.

Palestrina's posthumous reputation was also bolstered by the idea that his music represented the perfection of the *stile antico*: an exquisitely balanced, strictly controlled, and – above all – highly teachable style of polyphony, epitomised by such motets as 'Sicut cervus' or 'Super flumina Babylonis'. Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, and Bruckner all studied Palestrina's music, and the rules of so-called 'species counterpoint', derived from his style, are still used to instruct undergraduates today. Yet these twin pillars of Palestrina's fame – historical importance and stylistic perfection – can also make the composer and his music seem rarified or academic. Our programme seeks to showcase the astonishing richness of his work, and to reveal the extent of his expressive and emotional world.

Few composers of any era have been more closely associated with a single city than Palestrina with Rome. Aside from a youthful stint as organist at S Agapito in his native town of Palestrina, he never held a position outside the Eternal City. In 1551, aged just twenty-six, he was appointed to lead the Cappella Giulia at the Vatican. In 1555 he was elevated to the elite Papal Cappella Sistina, but later that year took the post of *maestro di cappella* at S Giovanni Laterano. In 1561 he moved to S Maria Maggiore, where he had once sung as a choirboy, returning finally to the Capella Giulia in 1571.

At the Vatican, Palestrina would have assimilated the music of earlier members of the Papal Choir, including the revered Josquin (in Rome from 1489–1494) whose 'Salve Regina' a5 was copied into a Sistine manuscript as late as 1545. Here Josquin contrives a brilliant synthesis of technical trickery (a pre-composed ostinato motif in the tenor) and rhetorical clarity – a feat which presages Palestrina's own later achievements. The same Sistine collection includes an eight-voiced 'Pater noster' by Jacques Arcadelt, who was in

Rome until 1551. Its dense counterpoint is typical of Flemish music from the first part of the sixteenth century, and contrasts starkly with the clean lines of 'Tu es Petrus', the festal motet which Palestrina composed in honour of Rome's patron in 1572, shortly after his return to Papal service.

Palestrina's brief service in the Cappella Sistina during 1555 had been controversial. He was appointed without undergoing the normal examination by the other singers, and, having married young, he fell foul of the Chapel's celibacy rules – a fact initially overlooked, but which led to his abrupt departure when a new Pope decided to enforce the policy strictly. Having chosen the path of family life, the series of misfortunes which befell Palestrina during the 1570s must have been particularly painful. Within ten years he lost a brother, two sons, and finally his wife to illness. The dark-hued 'Peccantem me quotidie' dates from 1572, the year his eldest son died; it plumbs startling expressive depths. Having briefly considered taking holy orders, Palestrina instead remarried in 1581. His second wife was a wealthy widow with a flourishing fur business, and he enjoyed for the first time both personal happiness and financial security. His new situation finds an echo in his madrigal Gioia m'abond'al cor', published in 1586, which speaks of the joy of new love after times of trouble.

Madrigals make up only a small part of Palestrina's oeuvre; his music is overwhelmingly sacred, and his career and style were shaped above all by the Counter-Reformation. Whatever the truth of the story about the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, there is no doubt that it epitomises post-Trent musical ideals, especially in text-heavy movements like the Credo. Here the different voice parts often sing the same words at the same time, especially at the beginnings of phrases, so that the text emerges with clarity despite the rich, six-voiced texture. Only in the opulent Amen does Palestrina allow himself to be caught up in sonority for its own sake.

Though Counter-Reformation strictures may initially have been discouraging to composers, other new currents promoted the use of music as an evangelical tool. Religious devotion became increasingly fashionable during the 1570s, and Palestrina wrote music for the various confraternities which developed in response to figures such as Ignatius Loyola and Filippo Neri. It is likely that the Songs of Songs motets contained in his *Canticum canticorum* were intended for this purpose; they are models of textual clarity, but also full of variety and lyrical colour, calculated to produce an expressive and devotional response in the listener. Tomás Luis de Victoria, who worked in Rome in this period and who may have studied with Palestrina, is similarly vivid and colourful in his 1587 motet 'Trahe me post te', which also draws from the Song of Songs.

It was for a confraternity of musicians – the Congregazione dei Signori Musici di Roma – that Palestrina wrote his lavish motet 'Cantantibus organis', in 1585. The text is appropriate for the feast of St Cecilia, patron saint of music, and we complement it with two other motets in praise of music: the buoyant 'Exultate Deo' and the polychoral 'Laudate Dominum in tympanis', which

calls for three choirs of four voices each. Lassus's rich motet 'Musica Dei donum' continues this theme; it was published in 1594, the year in which both he and Palestrina died. The two composers likely met when Lassus worked in Rome during the 1550s, and this glorious music seems a fitting epitaph for the Italian.

Palestrina's example must have been daunting for those who followed, and perhaps not surprisingly, they preferred to strike out in new directions than try to match him. Felice Anerio was his successor as composer to the Papal Choir; his 'Christus factus est', appropriate to Good Friday, grafts a more frank expressivity onto the fundamentals of Palestrina style. We answer it with a vivacious polychoral Easter motet, 'Christus resurgens', by Gregorio Allegri, who joined the Papal Choir in 1629 and was seen by his colleagues as a guardian of the stile antico, even revising some of Palestrina's hymns.

Our programme is completed by Cheryl Frances-Hoad's new work *A Gift of Heaven*, which draws us back to the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, setting Palestrina's own words from the preface to the 1572 volume in which it was published, and quoting music from the Gloria. The composer writes:

I was delighted to be asked by Stile Antico to write of music for this programme, but also rather daunted: responding to a composer of the stature of Palestrina makes one feel doomed to fail. I was therefore thrilled to discover that some of Palestrina's letters and other writings survive, and it occurred to me that it would be wonderful to set some extracts to music, so that we hear words as well as notes from the master's pen during this recital.

Palestrina's dedication to Philip of Austria in his Second Book of Masses especially appealed to me because of its tone, and I immediately felt a kinship with this great composer of centuries past upon reading it. It is tremendously reassuring to know that us composers are all the same, buttering up their patrons in the hope of securing more work and more money!

*Andrew Griffiths*

### **SICUT CERVUS**

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum,  
ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

*Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks: so  
longeth my soul after thee, O God.*

*Psalms 42: 1-2*

### **SALVE REGINA**

Salve Regina, Mater Misericordiae,  
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, Salve!  
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Hevae,  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes,  
In hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eja ergo, Advocata nostra,  
Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos  
converte  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
Nobis, post hoc exilium, ostende,  
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

*Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy,  
Our life, our sweetness and our hope!  
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of  
Eve,  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.  
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us,  
and after this, our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb,  
Jesus.*

*O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

*Compline antiphon*

### **PATER NOSTER**

Pater noster, qui es in caelis,  
sanctificetur nomen tuum;  
Adveniat regnum tuum.  
Fiat voluntas tua  
sicut in caelo et in terra.  
Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,  
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra,  
sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.  
Et ne nos inducas in tentationem;  
sed libera nos a malo.

*Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.*

*The Lord's Prayer*

### **TU ES PETRUS**

Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram  
aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi  
non praevallebunt adversus eam. Et tibi dabo  
claves regni caelorum.  
Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit  
ligatum et in caelis, et quodcumque solveris  
super terram, erit solutum et in caelis. Et tibi  
dabo claves regni caelorum.

*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my  
Church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome  
it. And I will give you the keys to the kingdom of  
heaven.*

*Whatever you bind upon earth shall be bound in  
heaven, and whatever you release upon earth  
shall be released in heaven. And I will give you  
the keys to the kingdom of Heaven.*

*Matthew 16: 18-19*

### **NIGRA SUM**

Nigra sum sed formosa, filia Jerusalem, sicut  
tabernacula Cedar, sicut pelles Salomonis.  
Nollite me considerare, quod fusca sim,  
quia decoloravit me sol. Filii matris meae  
pugnaverunt contra me; posuerunt me  
custodem in vineis.

*I am black but beautiful, a daughter of  
Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar and the  
curtains of Solomon. Do not think of me that  
I am dark, for the sun has discoloured me. My  
mother's sons have fought against me, and put  
me to mind the vineyards.*

*Song of Songs 1:3*

### **TRAHE ME POST TE**

Trahe me post te, virgo Maria, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum. Alleluia.

*Draw me after you, Virgin Mary; we will run after the fragrance of your ointments. Alleluia.*

*Adapted from Song of Songs*

### **CREDO**

Credo in unum Deum. Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine: Et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato: passus, et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum scripturas. Et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos: Cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum sanctum Dominum, et vivificantem: Qui ex Patre, Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre, et Filio simul adoratur, et conglorificatur: Qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

*I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds. God of God, light of light, Very God of very God. Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father: by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.*

*And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary: and was made man.*

*And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate: he suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead: His kingdom shall have no end.*

*And [I believe in] the Holy Ghost, Lord and giver of life: Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified: Who spake by the Prophets.*

*And in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

*Mass Ordinary*

### **SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS**

Super flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus et flevimus dum recordaremur tui, Sion In salicibus in medio eius suspendimus organa nostra.

*By the streams of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered you, Sion. On the willows in its midst we hung up our harps.*

*Psalms 137:1-2*

### **PECCANTEM ME QUOTIDIE**

Peccantem me quotidie et non paenitentem, timor mortis conturbat me. Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio. Miserere mei, Deus, et salva me.

*I who sin every day and am not penitent, the fear of death troubles me: For in hell there is no redemption. Have mercy upon me, O God, and save me.*

*Responsory for the Office of the Dead*



### **GIOIA M'ABOND'AL**

Gioia m'abond'al cor tanta e sì pura,  
tosto che la mia donna scorgo e miro,  
ch'in un momento ad ogni aspro martiro,  
in ch'ei giacesse, lo ritoglie e fura.  
E s'io potessi un dì, per mia ventura,  
queste due luci desiose in lei  
fermar quant'io verrei,  
su nel ciel non è spirto sì beato,  
con ch'io cangiassi il mio felice stato.

*My heart overflows with such pure joy,  
As soon as I see my lady and gaze upon her,  
That in an instant all the bitter pain,  
Which weighed my heart down, is taken away.  
And if one day my destiny could be  
To rest my desiring eyes on her  
For as long as I would like,  
Up in heaven there is no spirit so blessed  
With whom I would be willing to exchange my  
happy state.*

*Pietro Bembo, translation Jennifer Rushworth*

### **SURGE PROPERA**

Surge propera, amica mea, columba mea,  
formosa mea, et veni. Iam enim hiems transit,  
imber abiit et recessit. Flores apparuerunt in  
terra nostra, tempus putationis advenit. Vox  
turturis audita est in terra nostra; ficus protulit  
grossos suos; vineæ florentes dederunt  
odorem suum.

*Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and  
come. For now the winter is past, the rain is  
over and gone. The flowers appear in our land,  
and the time of pruning is nigh. The voice of  
the turtle dove is heard in our land; the fig tree  
brings forth its figs, the flowers of the vine  
give forth their smell.*

*Song of Songs 2:10-13*

### **CANTANTIBUS ORGANIS**

Cantantibus organis Cecilia virgo soli Domino  
decantabat dicens: Fiat Domine cor meum et  
corpus meum immaculatum ut non confundar.  
Biduanis ac triduanis jejuniis orans,  
commendabat Domino quod timebat:  
Fiat Domine cor meum et corpus meum  
immaculatum ut non confundar.

*While organs played, Cecilia the virgin sang  
to the Lord alone, saying: 'Lord, make my  
heart and body pure, that I might not be  
confounded.'  
Supplicating by two or three days of fasting,  
she gave herself unto the Lord whom she  
feared: Let my Lord make my heart and my  
body unspotted, that I may not be confounded.*

*Antiphon at Vespers for the feast of St Cecilia*

### **EXSULTATE DEO**

Exsultate Deo adiutori nostro. Jubilate Deo  
Jacob.  
Sumite psalmum, et date tympanum,  
psalterium jucundum cum cithara.  
Buccinate in neomenia tuba, insigni die  
solemnitatis vestrae.

*Sing we merrily unto God our strength. Make a  
cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob.  
Take the psalm, bring hither the tabret, the  
merry harp with the lute.  
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, even  
in the time appointed, and upon our solemn  
feast-day.*

*Psalm 81: 1-3*

### **MUSICA DEI DONUM**

Musica Dei donum optimi trahit homines,  
trahit deos: Musica truces mollit animos  
tristesque mentes erigit. Musica vel ipsas  
arbores et horridas movet feras cunctisque  
solatia prestans.

*Music, gift of the most high God, draws men,  
draws gods. Music soothes savage souls  
and raises up sorrowful minds. Music moves  
even the trees themselves and fearsome wild  
beasts.*

*Anon.*

### CHRISTUS FACTUS EST

Christus factus est pro nobis obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum, et dedit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen.

*Christ became obedient for us unto death, even to the death, death on the cross. Therefore God exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above all names.*

*Antiphon for Holy Saturday*

### CHRISTUS RESURGENS EX MORTUIS

Christus resurgens ex mortuis, jam non moritur, mors illi ultra non dominabitur. Quod enim mortuus est peccato, mortuus est semel, quod autem vivit, vivit Deo, Alleluia. Mortuus est enim propter delicta nostra: et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram, Alleluia. Quod enim mortuus est peccato, mortuus est

*Christ, rising from the dead, now dieth not. Death shall have no dominion over him; for that he died, he died once unto sin, but that he lives, he lives to God. Alleluia. He died once for our sins and arose for our salvation. Alleluia. For that he died, he died once unto sin; but that he lives, he lives to God. Alleluia.*

*Romans 6:9-19, 4:25*

### A GIFT OF HEAVEN

To Philip of Austria, Catholic and Invincible King: Since the pleasure afforded by the art of music is a gift of heaven greater than all human teachings, and since it is particularly valued by the Holy Scripture, so it appears that this art can be properly exercised upon divine subjects. I, therefore, who have been engaged in this art for many years, not wholly unsuccessfully, have considered it my task to bend all my knowledge and industry to that which is the most divine of all things – that is, to adorn the Mass in a new manner. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Accept then, most mighty and God-fearing king, these labours as testimony of my perpetual loyalty toward your Majesty, magnanimous and noble king. Farewell, ornament and bulwark of all who bear the name of Christians.

*Text from Pope Marcellus Mass by G.P. da Palestrina  
Translated by Lewis Lockwood  
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### LAUDATE DOMINUM

Laudate Dominum in tympanis, cantate Domino in cymbalis. Modulamini illum psalmum novum. Exsultate, et invoke nomen eius, quoniam magnus est Dominus et praeclarus in virtute sua. Dominus conterens bella; Dominus nomen est illi. Hymnum cantemus Domino Deo nostro.

*Praise the Lord with drums, sing to the Lord with cymbals. Let us sing a new psalm to Him. Rejoice and call upon His name, for great is the Lord and excellent in His virtues. The Lord puts an end to wars; His name is 'the Lord'. Let us sing a hymn to our God.*

*Judith 16: 1-2, 13*



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## STILE ANTICO

**Helen Ashby, Kate Ashby, Rebecca Hickey, Emma Ashby, Cara Curran, Rosie Parker, Jonathan Hanley, Matthew Howard, Benedict Hymas, James Arthur, Nathan Harrison, Gareth Thomas**

Stile Antico is firmly established as one of the world's most accomplished and innovative vocal ensembles. Working without a conductor, its twelve members have thrilled audiences on four continents with their fresh, vibrant and moving performances of Renaissance polyphony. Its bestselling recordings have earned accolades including the Gramophone Award for Early Music, Diapason d'or de l'année, Edison Klassiek Award, and Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik. The group has received three Grammy® nominations, and performed live at the 60th Grammy® Awards at Madison Square Garden.

Based in London, Stile Antico has appeared at many of the world's most prestigious venues and festivals. The group enjoys a particularly close association with Wigmore Hall, and has performed at the BBC Proms, Buckingham Palace, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Cité de la Musique, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Leipzig Gewandhaus, and Madrid's Auditorio Nacional. Stile Antico is frequently invited to appear at Europe's leading festivals: highlights include the Antwerp, Bruges, Utrecht and York Early Music Festivals, the Lucerne Easter Festival, and the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Since its 2009 North American debut at the Boston Early Music Festival, Stile Antico has enjoyed frequent tours to the US and Canada. The group performs regularly in Boston and New York, and has appeared at the Ravinia Festival, Washington's National Cathedral and Library of Congress, Vancouver's Chan Centre, and in concert series spanning twenty-five US states. Stile Antico has also appeared in Mexico, Colombia, South Korea, Macau, and Hong Kong.

Stile Antico's performances are often praised for their immediacy, expressive commitment, and their sensitive and imaginative response to text. These qualities arise from the group's collaborative working style: members rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing artistically to the musical results. The group is also noted for its compelling programming, which draws out thematic connections between works to shine new light on Renaissance music. In addition to its core repertoire, Stile Antico has premiered works by Kerry Andrew, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Joanna Marsh, John McCabe, Nico Muhly, Giles Swayne, and Huw Watkins. The group's diverse range of collaborators includes Fretwork, the Folger Consort, Marino Formenti, Lemn Sissay, B'Rock, Rihab Azar, and Sting.

Alongside its concert and recording work, Stile Antico is passionate about sharing its repertoire and working style with the widest possible audience. After many years in residence at Dartington International Summer School, the group now leads courses at the Music Summer School at Gresham's, and holds regular Come and Sing days open to all. Stile Antico also works extensively with younger singers in university and school settings and with the Rodolfus Foundation, and the support of the charitable Stile Antico Foundation has enabled the group to offer bursaries to talented young ensembles, and to run an annual Youth Consort course. Stile Antico is proud to be a member of the European early music network REMA.

During 2025 Stile Antico celebrates twenty years as a professional ensemble with gala performances at Wigmore Hall, the Boston Early Music Festival, and for AMUZ Antwerpen. The group also marks the five hundredth birthday of Palestrina, the quintessential master of the stile antico, with a series of concerts and the release of a new album for Decca Classics.

