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Music for Compline

TALLIS • BYRD • SHEPPARD

stile antico

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cover: Sénanque Cistercian Abbey, founded in 1147–48; church from 1160–80. Interior: transept facing east. Photo: Hervé Champollion / akg-images

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Performing editions prepared by **stile antico**.

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PRODUCTION USA

Music for Compline

TALLIS • BYRD • SHEPPARD • WHITE • ASTON

1	<i>Antiphon</i>	Libera nos I & II	JOHN SHEPPARD (c. 1515–1558)	5:35
2	<i>Antiphon</i>	Salva nos, Domine	PLAINCHANT	0:45
3	<i>Hymn</i>	Christe, qui lux es et dies	WILLIAM BYRD (c. 1540–1623)	3:49
4	<i>Responsory</i>	In pace in idipsum	JOHN SHEPPARD	5:29
5	<i>Responsory</i>	In manus tuas	THOMAS TALLIS (c. 1505–1585)	2:42
6	<i>Hymn</i>	Jesu, salvator saeculi, verbum	JOHN SHEPPARD	5:38
7	<i>Responsory</i>	In manus tuas I	JOHN SHEPPARD	4:00
8	<i>Responsory</i>	In manus tuas II & III	JOHN SHEPPARD	3:18
9	<i>Antiphon</i>	Miserere mihi, Domine	PLAINCHANT	0:30
10	<i>Responsory</i>	Miserere nostri, Domine	THOMAS TALLIS	3:12
11	<i>Motet</i>	Miserere mihi, Domine	WILLIAM BYRD	2:43
12	<i>Responsory</i>	In pace in idipsum	THOMAS TALLIS	5:48
13	<i>Hymn</i>	Christe, qui lux es et dies	ROBERT WHITE (c. 1538–1574)	5:55
14	<i>Antiphon</i>	Veni, Domine	PLAINCHANT	0:36
15	<i>Canticle</i>	Nunc dimittis <i>Gradualia I</i>	WILLIAM BYRD	7:02
16	<i>Hymn</i>	Te lucis ante terminum <i>festal</i>	THOMAS TALLIS	2:56
17	<i>Antiphon</i>	Gaude, virgo mater Christi	HUGH ASTON (c. 1485–1558)	14:32

stile antico

Helen Ashby • Kate Ashby • Alison Hill *sopranos*

Emma Ashby • Eleanor Harries • Carris Jones • Timothy Wayne-Wright *altos*

Peter Asprey • Andrew Griffiths • Tom Herford *tenors*

Oliver Hunt • Matthew O'Donovan • David Wright *basses*

Music for Compline

TALLIS • BYRD • SHEPPARD • WHITE • ASTON

THE SERVICE OF COMPLINE was (and in some places still is) the last of the daily monastic hours – a form of night prayer. A substantial portion of the service consisted of psalms recited to plainsong tones, but there were also a number of responsories, antiphons, and a hymn. Some of these would have varied according to the season, though Compline varied significantly less than the other hours. Where capable singers were available, they were often heard in polyphonic settings, and it was common practice in the Sarum rite* to sing a polyphonic antiphon at the end of the Office. This often took the form of an antiphon to the Virgin; amongst the most common were the *Salve regina* and *Regina caeli*, but the choice varied from place to place and according to the occasion. The *Libera nos* settings by Sheppard and Aston's *Gaude, virgo* fall into the category of antiphons which may have been used at the end of Compline; all the other works heard in this recording have associations with the liturgy of the Office itself, as do the three short plainsong antiphons (*Salva nos, Miserere mihi, and Veni, Domine*).

The composers represented here lived through some of the most turbulent times of England's religious history, during a period when the country swung violently between Catholicism and Protestantism, and politics and religion mixed in an often dangerous cocktail. While Henry VIII remained Catholic in liturgical taste (in spite of his break from Rome in 1534), his successor to the throne, the young Edward VI, imposed a puritanical Protestant regime which had no small impact on church music. In 1553 Queen Mary restored a fervent Catholicism, burning at the stake those Protestants who stood against her and reinstating the elaborate music and ceremony of the old Sarum rite, until 1558, when Elizabeth came to a moderately Protestant compromise that has continued to define Anglicanism to this day. All the music on this recording comes essentially from the Catholic sphere of sixteenth-century England (the reformed church did away with Compline, absorbing it into the familiar service of Evensong) – but by no means was all of it written under the rule of a Catholic monarch.

JOHN SHEPPARD (c. 1515–1558) was *Informator Choristarum* (Master of the Choristers) at Magdalen College, Oxford, during the mid-1540s, leaving in 1548 to become a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, shortly after the accession of Edward VI. It seems he appeared again at Magdalen in the 1550s and is documented as having composed music for the college during that time, although without holding any official position there. It is likely that many of his Latin hymns and responsories date from around this period. *In pace in idipsum* is a Compline responsory sung between Quadragesima and Passion Sunday in the Sarum rite; Sheppard's setting is lyrical and peaceful – the counterpoint unfolds with a masterfully gentle simplicity and some unexpected twists. Sheppard composed three settings of the Compline responsory *In manus tuas*, which are here performed in sequence. All three are intimate four-part settings for lower voices. The text is the sixth verse of Psalm 30 (31 in English translations), which was a late addition to the Compline psalms and performed as far as this verse, which was treated as a responsory. By their very nature, the responsories involve a certain amount of repetition if performed according to the correct liturgical custom. In order to provide variety (and given that it was not the composer's intention for these pieces to be performed in sequence) we have joined together Sheppard's second and third settings so they form one complete liturgical rendering of the responsory; this follows a complete performance using his first setting.

Sheppard's six-part setting of the Compline hymn *Jesu, salvator saeculi, verbum* is probably one of his earlier works but displays a fine mastery of the genre. Some may identify echoes of Taverner here – but Sheppard's individual harmonic language is already much in evidence. In typical fashion, Sheppard alternates verses of plainsong with polyphonic settings in which the plainsong can be heard as a *cantus firmus* – here in the highest voice. Sheppard's control of harmonic intensity through the first two polyphonic verses is highly subtle, and in the final doxology the music breaks into triple time, leading to a thrilling close.

The magnificent pair of settings of the Trinitarian antiphon *Libera nos* which open this programme have a particularly

unusual background. The text is a Matins, not Compline, text, but recent research by Dr David Skinner has shown that Sheppard's setting was not in fact designed to fulfil a conventional liturgical role. The statutes of Magdalen College prescribe that every member of the college is to recite 'the antiphon of the Trinity' on waking in the morning and before retiring for the night, and it would seem that it was with this in mind that Sheppard composed these settings. It may be that they were used at Magdalen as an antiphon at the end of Compline in accordance with this custom. In the expansive first setting, the plainsong is heard in the bass as a *cantus firmus*, while the second gives the impression of being a 'condensed version' of the first: it is exactly half the length, and Sheppard doubles the rate of harmonic change. The plainsong is no longer retained (except in the opening incipit) – though echoes of it appear here and there, especially in the steadily-moving bass part.

While Sheppard died only weeks after the accession of Elizabeth I in late 1558, the working life of his longer-lived contemporary in the Chapel Royal, THOMAS TALLIS (c. 1505–1585), bridged the reign of the four monarchs, whose widely differing musical and liturgical tastes obliged him to become arguably the most diverse of all Renaissance composers. Tallis's most mature and masterful compositions were, it seems, written in Elizabeth's reign, but it is unclear to what extent his 'liturgical' Latin music – clearly inspired by the Catholic, not reformed, liturgy – would have been suitable for performance in the Chapel Royal, even though the Latin language remained acceptable there. The majority of Tallis's works are impossible to date, but it would seem likely that his hymns and responsories for the Office were written either toward the very end of Henry's reign in the mid-1540s, or in Mary's in the mid 1550s. His expansive setting of *In pace in idipsum* is one such piece; as with Sheppard's *In manus tuas* settings, he makes effective use of a narrow tessitura, making the piece ideal for performance by the lower voices, which bring out the rich harmonies of the work's tightly interwoven imitative texture.

Tallis composed two settings of the Compline hymn *Te lucis ante terminum* – the one included here, based on the festal

* The variant of the Roman Catholic liturgy which had originated at Salisbury and prevailed in pre-Reformation England.

plainchant melody, and another on the ferial chant. Their origin is hard to pin down; their only extant source is the *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575, a publication which Tallis produced jointly with William Byrd, each of them contributing seventeen Latin motets. That the book was, it seems, intended not only for use in private homes but also for distribution abroad (in order to rival the great motet books of the continental masters), suggests that these may be merely token showpieces of a particular liturgical genre, written specifically for the *Cantiones*, rather than older pieces which Tallis dug out of his archives from the days of the Sarum rite. The musical style seems to support this hypothesis: their economy, elegance and characteristic five-part texture is typical of many of his other Elizabethan works. Likewise, his setting of *In manus tuas*, also included in the *Cantiones*, is evidently not intended to be performed in the traditional liturgical context, since he ignores the responsorial pattern altogether and simply sets the text as it appears in the psalm.

While the liturgical purpose – and propriety – of Tallis's Elizabethan Latin motets is often unclear, in the case of his younger colleague and friend WILLIAM BYRD (c. 1540–1623) the situation is more clear-cut. Working amidst the persecution of Catholics in the 1580s and '90s, Byrd trod a far more dangerous line; his close involvement with the recusant community is well documented, and a number of his Latin motets were evidently written to convey a subversive political and religious message. It seems likely therefore that the majority of his liturgical Latin music, Compline settings included, was written with the recusant Catholic community in mind. His five-part setting of the Compline hymn *Christe, qui lux es* is a strikingly unusual piece, almost entirely homophonic and syllabic, that ironically owes much to the Reformed style of text setting. It is based on the plainsong hymn melody, which begins as a *cantus firmus* in the bass voice and works its way up the texture verse by verse.

The *Miserere* settings by Tallis and Byrd were evidently conceived, at least to some extent, as parallels. Both are included in the *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575, and both are feats of contrapuntal construction involving canonic writing of a sort clearly intended to rival the efforts of the two composers' continental counterparts. Byrd's motet *Miserere mihi, Domine* is based on the Compline plainchant antiphon (heard in track 9), which appears in the outer parts; in the second half of the motet he writes a canon 'four in two' – two simultaneous canons at the fourth take place in the outer pairs of parts. In Tallis's spectacular seven-part *Miserere nostri, Domine* (the text of which is part of a responsory used at Compline) the

counterpoint is even more breathtaking. This is a double canon over six voices, with a free tenor part. The two *superius* parts are in canon at the unison, a semibreve apart; the *discantus* and *contratenor* parts provide a countermelody, the latter singing at a quarter of the speed of the former (double augmentation). The two *bassus* parts provide an inversion of the countermelody, the first singing an eighth of the speed (triple augmentation), and the second at half speed (augmentation).

Byrd's setting of the *Nunc dimittis* (a canticle sung towards the end of the Compline service) was in fact not written for Compline, but as a tract for the feast of the Purification – the presentation of Christ in the Temple – where the text is also used. It comes from his *Gradualia* of 1605, the first of a two-volume project containing Mass Propers for all the major feasts of the church year, published exclusively for recusant Catholic use – a risky project in any case, and one which became politically all the more dangerous in the light of the 'Gunpowder Plot' later that year. Byrd's substantial setting displays dazzling control of harmonic tension and lyricism of the vocal line over its long, expansive phrases, conveying beautifully the depth of ecstatic emotion in the aged Simeon's words. It would be nice to think that Byrd, well into his sixties and an aging man by the standards of the day, was in some sense echoing the words in his own heart as he composed one of the most sublime musical settings of the text ever written; little did he know he was to live for a further eighteen years.

The works of Byrd's slightly elusive contemporary ROBERT WHITE (c. 1538–1574) present us with a similar problem to those of Tallis: his *œuvre* of Elizabethan sacred music contains primarily Latin motets. Like Tallis, he didn't live to see the worst decades of Catholic persecution (his life was cut short by the plague), so the nature or extent of his 'Catholicism' is much harder to gauge than that of Byrd. It is fascinating to speculate what his output might have looked like had he, too, lived to eighty. His *alternatim* setting of *Christe, qui lux es* (one of the four he wrote), may be an early work dating from the end of Mary's reign. In any case, his expressive harmony and superb control of dissonance more than compensate for any subtleties of texture it may be seen to lack in comparison to similar works by Byrd and Tallis.

The composer HUGH ASTON (c. 1485–1558) has been somewhat obscured in the history of English music by his better-known contemporary John Taverner – ironically, perhaps, for Taverner was only appointed to his post as *Informator* at Cardinal College, Oxford (now Christ Church) after Aston had

already been invited and turned the job down. We know little about his career, but he was evidently an outstanding composer, and his skill is amply evident in the large-scale antiphon *Gaude, virgo mater Christi*. It was a long-standing custom in the Sarum tradition to sing a polyphonic antiphon, often an antiphon to the Virgin, after the Office of Compline; this piece may well have been used for that purpose. Its only complete source contains the text of an antiphon not to the Virgin, but to Anna, the mother of Mary. The Marian text performed here, however, is contained in all the other (incomplete) surviving sources. It was popular at the time, and may well have been the original upon which the text in honour of Anna was modelled. It seems probable, therefore, that the established text was the one Aston originally set – though he may have been responsible for both versions. The work's musical language is not unlike that of Taverner; if Aston is not always quite so expert in his control of texture and vocal line, his harmonies are often more daring, with well-timed use of dissonance and some unexpected turns. It is a piece that richly deserves a place alongside the soaring works of his more famous colleagues.

– MATTHEW O'DONOVAN



stile antico is an ensemble of young British singers, fast gaining recognition as one of the most original and exciting new voices in its field. In 2005 the group won the inaugural Audience Prize at the Early Music Network International Young Artists' Competition, drawing critical praise for its 'wonderfully vivid singing' and 'perfectly focused and ideally balanced voices.' Since this success, **stile antico** has appeared throughout the UK, including at the City of London, Lake District Summer Music and Beverley and East Riding Festivals; engagements for 2007 include the York Early Music Festival. The group has also collaborated with Sting on tour in his project *Songs from the Labyrinth*, performing lute songs by John Dowland.

Working without a conductor, the members of **stile antico** rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing artistically to the musical result. Their repertoire ranges from the glorious legacy of the English Tudor composers to the works of the Flemish and Spanish schools and the music of the early Baroque. They are passionate about the need to communicate with their audiences, combining thoughtful programming with direct, expressive performances. They are also committed to developing their educational work, for which they have received generous funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

<p>1 Libera nos Libera nos, salva nos, justifica nos, O beata Trinitas!</p>	<p>Free us, save us, justify us, O blessed Trinity!</p>	<p>4, 12 In pace in idipsum In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam. Si dederò somnum oculis meis et palpebris meis dormitationem, in idipsum dormi- am et requiescam. Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.</p>	<p>In peace, in peace itself I will sleep and rest. If I give slumber to my eyes and drowsiness to my eyelids, I rest and sleep. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.</p>
<p>2 Salva nos, Domine Salva nos, Domine, vigilantes, custodi nos dormientes, ut vigilemus cum Christo, et requiescamus in pace.</p>	<p>Preserve us, Lord, as we keep our watch, and guard us as we sleep. Then we may watch with Christ and sleep in peace.</p>	<p>5 In manus tuas, Domine In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum: redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.</p>	<p>It is into your hands, Lord, that I entrust my spirit. You have redeemed me, Lord, God of truth.</p>
<p>3, 13 Christe, qui lux es et dies Christe, qui lux es et dies, Noctis tenebras detegis, Lucisque lumen crederis, Lumen beatum praedicans. Precamur, sancte Domine, Defende nos in hac nocte; Sit nobis in te requies, Quietam noctem tribue. Ne gravis somnus irruat, Nec hostis nos subripiat, Nec caro illi consentiens Nos tibi reos statuat. Oculi somnum capiant, Cor ad te semper vigilet, Dextera tua protegat Famulos, qui te diligunt. Defensor noster aspice, Insidiantes reprime; Guberna tuos famulos, Quos sanguine mercatus es. Memento nostri, Domine, In gravi isto corpore; Qui es defensor animae Adesto nobis, Domine. Amen.</p>	<p>Christ, the light and the day, You rid the night of its shadows, And bring light to the day, Foretelling the blessed light. We beg you, Holy Lord, Watch over us for this night. May we find rest in you: Grant us a quiet night. Let not heavy sleep invade us, Let not the enemy steal us away, Let not the flesh consent to him And make us guilty in your eyes. May our eyes capture sleep, May our heart always look to you, May your right hand protect The faithful, who follow you. Our defender, watch over us, Hold back the foe. Direct the faithful Whom you have bought with your blood Remember us, Lord, In this weary body. You who are the defender of souls, Be with us, Lord. Amen.</p>	<p>6 Jesu, salvator saeculi, verbum Jesu salvator saeculi, verbum Patris altissimi, lux lucis invisibilis, custos tuorum pervigil. Tu fabricator omnium discretor atque temporum, fessa labore corpora noctis quiete recrea, Ut dum gravi in corpore brevi manemus tempore sic caro nostra dormiat ut mens in Christo vigilet. Te deprecamur supplices ut nos ab hoste liberem ne valeat seducere tuo redemptos sanguine. Quaesumus auctor omnium in hoc paschali gaudio ab omni mortis impetu tuum defende populum. Gloria tibi Domine qui surrexisti a mortuis cum Patre et Sancto Spiritu in sempiterna saecula. Amen.</p>	<p>Jesus, saviour of the ages, Most exalted word of the Father, Light of invisible light, Guardian of your sheep. You, who made everything, And divided the seasons, Restore our bodies worn with toil With the peace of the night, So that while we rest in our weary bodies For a short time Our flesh may sleep But the soul will stay awake in Christ. As suppliants we pray to you To free us from the enemy And not to allow him to lead astray Those redeemed by your blood. Creator of all things, we beseech you: At this joyful Easter, Protect your people From every violence of death. Glory be to you, Lord, Who rose from the dead, With the Father and the Holy Spirit, For all eternity. Amen.</p>
<p>[13] Deo Patri sit gloria Eiusque soli Filio, Cum Spiritu Paraclito Et nunc et in perpetuum. Amen.</p>	<p>Glory to God the Father, And to his only Son With the Holy Spirit, Now and in eternity. Amen.</p>		

7, 8 **In manus tuas, Domine**

In manus tuas, Domine,
commendo spiritum meum:
redemisti me, Domine,
Deus veritatis.

It is into your hands, Lord,
that I entrust my spirit.
You have redeemed me, Lord,
God of truth.

9 **Miserere mihi, Domine**

Miserere mihi, Domine
et exaudi orationem meam.

Have mercy on me, Lord,
and hear my prayer.

10 **Miserere nostri, Domine**

Miserere nostri, Domine,
miserere nostri.

Have mercy on us, Lord,
have mercy on us.

11 **Miserere mihi, Domine**

Miserere mihi, Domine
et exaudi orationem meam.

Have mercy on me, Lord,
and hear my prayer.

12 **In pace in idipsum**

see page 6

13 **Christe, qui lux es et dies**

see page 6

14 **Veni, Domine**

Veni, Domine, visitare nos in pace
ut laetemur coram
te corde perfecto.

Come, Lord, visit us in peace,
so that we may rejoice in your presence
with a perfect heart.

15 **Nunc dimittis**

Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine,
secundum verbum tuum in pace:
quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum
quod parasti ante faciem omnium
populorum: lumen ad revelationem
gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace
according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen
thy salvation which thou hast prepared
before the face of all people: to be a light
to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory
of thy people Israel.

16 **Te lucis ante terminum**

Te lucis ante terminum,
Rerum Creator, poscimus,
Ut solita clementia,
Sis praesul ad custodiam.

You, before the dying of the light,
We beg, Creator of the World:
By your grace
Be our guard and keeper.

Procul recedant somnia,
Et noctium fantasmata:
Hostemque nostrum comprime,
Ne polluantur corpora.

Keep the terrors of the night
Far from our sleep
And defend us from our enemy –
Let our bodies not be defiled.

Praesta, Pater omnipotens,
Per Jesum Christum Dominum,
Qui tecum in perpetuum,
Regnat cum Sancto Spiritu. Amen.

Help us, all powerful Father,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who reigns with you for ever
With the Holy Spirit. Amen.

17 **Gaude, virgo mater Christi**

Gaude, virgo mater Christi,
Quae per aurem concepisti
Gabrielis nuntio.
Gaude, quia Deo plena
Peperisti sine poena
Cum pudoris lilio.
Gaude, quia tui nati,
Quem dolebas mortem pati,
Fulget resurrectio.
Gaude Christe ascendente
Et in caelo te vidente,
Motu fertur proprio.
Gaude, quod post ipsum scandis,
Et est honor tibi grandis
In caeli palatio,
Ubi fructus ventris tui
Per te detur nobis frui
In perenni gaudio.
O Maria virgo,
Mater Redemptoris nostri:
O Maria virgo nobilissima,
Que iam regnas cum Angelis,
Coronata in gloria:
Ibi nostri memor esto.
O virgo sanctissima,
Funde preces tu pro nobis,
Ut possimus illic tuo
Sociari collegio. Amen.

Rejoice, virgin mother of Christ
Who conceived by ear
At the message of Gabriel
Rejoice, because, full of God
You gave birth without pain
With the lily of peace.
Rejoice, because your Son,
Whose death you lamented
Has a resplendent resurrection.
Rejoice – Christ ascends
And, as you watch,
Is borne into heaven by his own strength.
Rejoice, you will ascend after him.
To you great honour is due
In the palace of heaven
Where the fruit of your womb
Is given, through you,
For us to delight in, in joy perpetual.
O Virgin Mary,
Mother of our Redeemer,
O Virgin Mary most noble,
Who now reigns with the angels,
Crowned in glory,
Remember us there.
O most holy virgin,
Pray for us,
That we can come and join
With you there. Amen.

English translation Jo Willmott