

DELPHIAN



MUSIC FOR THE
QUEEN OF HEAVEN

CONTEMPORARY
MARIAN MOTETS

THE
MARIAN CONSORT
RORY McCLEERY

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RORY McCLEERY *DIRECTOR*

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in St Michael's Church, Highgate
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& Rory McCleery
Engineer: Paul Baxter
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24-bit digital mastering: Paul Baxter

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1 Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962) CA, CO, HC, AC, GC, TK, LW, NA	Salve Regina	[4:53]
2 Judith Weir (b. 1954) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Ave Regina caelorum	[3:49]
3 Herbert Howells (1892–1983) CA, CO, HC, GC, LW, NA with Anna Dennis <i>soprano solo</i>	Salve Regina	[4:37]
4 Andrzej Panufnik (1914–1991) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Song to the Virgin Mary	[12:11]
5 Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Alma redemptoris mater	[5:19]
6 Matthew Martin (b. 1976) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Ave virgo sanctissima	[3:36]
7 Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b. 1980) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Gaude et laetare	[4:39]
8 Hilary Campbell (b. 1983) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Ave Maria	[4:07]
9 Stephen Dodgson (1924–2013) CA, RMcC, GC	Dormi, Jesu	[2:33]
10 Roxanna Panufnik (b. 1968) CA, CO, HC, GC, LW, NA	Magnificat (St Pancras Service)	[5:57]
11 Lennox Berkeley (1903–1989) CA, CO, RMcC, GC, LW, NA	Regina coeli, laetare	[3:08]
12 James MacMillan (b. 1959) CA, CO, HC, AC, GC, TK, LW, NA	Ave maris stella	[4:35]
	Total playing time	[59:31]

Notes on the music

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

The Virgin Mary – Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, Advocate of Eve – is celebrated in many guises. Iconography and music, drawing their inspiration from biblical texts, have both fostered and fed off the Christian culture of Marian devotion that unites Catholic, Orthodox and even some Protestant worship. Yet while many of these texts elevate Mary, strip her of flesh and transform her into saint and symbol, none are more emotive than those that retain her humanity. This programme of contemporary Marian music celebrates the life and roles of the Virgin. We see her by turns as daughter, wife and mother, servant of God and Queen of Heaven – a woman at once divine and painfully, vividly human.

While the Marian Consort originally made its name on disc with the music of the Renaissance, this collection of contemporary anthems – many commissioned by the ensemble itself – represents continuity rather than contrast, as the group's director Rory McCleery explains.

What excites me about many of these works is their understanding of and affinity for Renaissance vocal textures and techniques. I think you can hear throughout the recording just how much this music is informed by that earlier repertoire. One of our *raisons d'être* as a group is to champion

Renaissance works that have fallen between the cracks of history, to bring them back to life and to the public. Now we want to show that this music is part of a living, developing tradition, that it's not just a fossil. You can really hear that in the relationship these contemporary works have with the music of the Renaissance – paying homage to it while also reflecting the sensibilities of our own time and the musical personalities of each of the composers.

Supporting the work of living composers has been an important part of the Marian Consort's concert performances for many years, and many of the works recorded here have a long relationship with the group. Cecilia McDowall's *Alma redemptoris mater* was the first piece ever composed for the group, commissioned for them by the Conwy Classical Music Festival where the Consort has performed annually since its founding.

The votive antiphon *Alma redemptoris mater* is one of four seasonal Marian antiphons – the others being *Ave Regina caelorum*, *Salve Regina* and *Regina coeli* – that between them divide the church year. The text is a prayer of intercession, a plea to the Virgin for deliverance and redemption; deliverance that, in McDowall's setting, is never in doubt. The motet opens quietly, but with a sense of barely restrained delight. The music opens outwards into a delicate 6/8 dance, glinting with bright cross-rhythms and metrical flourishes. An echo of the original

plainchant can be heard in the soprano line, but its simplicity is gradually adorned with florid gestures, musical jewels that deck the poetic descriptions of the Virgin – 'stella maris' (star of the sea), 'natura mirante' (to the astonishment of nature). The work's imitative polyphony and the contrapuntal interplay between the parts glance back to the fifteenth century, but the effect is unmistakably contemporary.

Generally sung between Candlemas and Easter, *Ave Regina caelorum* is one of the loveliest Marian texts, and the most effusive in its praise of the Virgin. If the McDowall feels like a suppressed dance, Judith Weir's is one released with exhilarating energy. The opening triplets catch the listener by the hand, drawing them into their pulsing frenzy as they pass between the six voices. A central section ('Ex qua mundo') briefly urges a more contemplative mood, unbending into an exquisite plainchant-inspired duet for the upper voices. But the dance cannot be stilled for long, and the final bars see it begin again – an irrepressible eruption of joy.

There's a wonderful whimsy, even a wit, to Lennox Berkeley's *Regina coeli, laetare*, which combines with a disarming spiritual sincerity to make something very special of this antiphon for Easter and Pentecost. The text is punctuated by repeated refrains

of 'Alleluia', and Berkeley makes a feature of these, setting them to exuberant little scalic runs that grow in ambition and intensity as the work progresses. The mock-Tudor spirit of the opening music is set against a darker central section. The text turns to thoughts of Christ ('Quia quem meruisti') and the harmonies tangle into knots – an anticipation, perhaps, of the Crucifixion to come? But doubts are banished with the return of the opening musical gambit, and we close with general rejoicing and a final shout of joy.

The last of the four seasonal antiphons is *Salve Regina* – the only text to appear twice in this programme. The settings by Gabriel Jackson and Herbert Howells offer a striking contrast between their two treatments. Each remains faithful to the spirit of the prayer, while bringing out two very different characters. There is an overwhelming tenderness and warmth to Jackson's setting that seems to take its inspiration from the image of the Virgin as 'our life, our sweetness and our hope' ('Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra'). The music glows with consonant harmonies, their warmth amplified by a homophony that scarcely breaks throughout, giving the work a hymn-like feel that is only intensified by the solo soprano, whose chant-inspired melody flowers briefly above the choral texture. As the music progresses and the prayer reaches its climax, the vocal parts split,

Notes on the music

fanning out into new, ecstatic radiance, before an ending that returns us to the simplicity and directness of the opening.

Howells' youthful setting takes a much more episodic approach to his text, sensitive to the drama of each of its individual phrases. A bittersweet, exploratory opening gains confidence with an emphatic celebration of Mary as the hope of mankind ('spes nostra') that draws the basses right to the top of their register. But sin is not forgotten, and man's weeping and mourning briefly curdles the harmonies, before the music remembers the Virgin, advocate for her people, leading to an exquisite, affirmative ending.

The vesper hymn **Ave maris stella** celebrates Mary as the 'star of the sea', lingering on ideas of her meekness and chastity. These ideas resonate through the unassuming simplicity of James MacMillan's setting, whose dynamics never reach above mezzo piano throughout except in the final bars, and whose high-lying lower voice parts lend it a real sense of fragility. The prayer is voiced in hushed homophony, chords flushing occasionally into suspensions, but otherwise remaining white and pure. Only in the closing Amen does the music warm into passion, with the sopranos freed from their melodic restriction into an expansive melisma, reaching boldly upwards to a top A.

Mary's story begins with the Annunciation, an episode captured vividly in the **Magnificat** – the Virgin's song of joy in the Lord. The tone of Roxanna Panufnik's radiant setting is set by the opening choral flourish. Scales scatter in contrary motion, flowering into a fanfare that rejects the conspicuous femininity so often associated with this text in favour of a muscular shout of excitement. The speaker's youth and humanity shine through the chattering, contrapuntal 'Quia respexit' – music that tumbles over itself with joy. Modal harmonies and scalic, often chant-like melodies give the work a timeless feel, accented with occasional acid-bright shards of chromaticism.

Song to the Virgin Mary, by Roxanna Panufnik's father Andrzej, a setting of one of Poland's oldest hymns, 'Mother of God', is an extraordinary, hypnotic work that unfolds with such organic, almost improvisatory spontaneity as to belie the meticulous musical construction that underpins it. The work is shaped like a palindrome, opening and closing with music in its mirror image. The characterful, pentatonic theme, that the composer himself related both to Polish music and to plainchant, works its way around the six vocal parts, passing through each of the 12 keys as it does so, before revisiting the music of the start with new intensity and urgency. The central section, with its litany-like chant, recalls 'a peasant congregation in a

country church'. The effect is mesmerising, its musical sophistication lightly worn.

Nowhere is Mary the mother painted more tenderly than in the anonymous verse **Dormi, Jesu**. In two short stanzas of rhyming poetry it captures the familiar humanity of a scene in which a mother sings to her child, imploring him to sleep. There is little sense in this simple scene that this infant is the son of God. Stephen Dodgson responds sensitively to the text in his treatment, setting it for just three voices – soprano, alto and tenor. The lack of a bass part gives the music an innocence and freshness mirrored in the gently rocking rhythms of this cradle song. A single voice gradually becomes a duet, then a trio, as the song gains in confidence, before relaxing into a refrain, repeated ever more softly, drifting into silence.

Motherhood is also at the core of the **Ave Maria** – perhaps the best-known of all Marian prayers. Commissioned by the Marian Consort in 2012, Hilary Campbell's setting is a spacious, luminous affair that uses the full breadth of its six voices to give a real sense of scope to the text. The division of parts is dominated by upper voices, who introduce the central motif – treated, initially, almost as a litany, in a musical call and response. The melodic fragment gains in confidence, swelling through the choir into free-flowing

counterpoint, whose chant-like arcs meditate on the opening theme. The rhetoric of the text shapes music that seems to hang in the air, at once static and in motion. But it never drifts far, returning with the reassuring inevitability of a litany to the 'Ave Maria' melody.

Commissioned by the Marian Consort in 2016, Cheryl Frances-Hoad's **Gaude et laetare** is a thrill-ride of an anthem – a rhythmic tour de force that keeps all its voices in constant motion from start to finish. 'Rejoice and be glad' exhorts a text of celebration at the birth of Christ, and Frances-Hoad obeys in triple-time rhythms that set up a buoyant dance. But constantly shifting time-signatures keep things fluid and unexpected, adding to the sense of gleeful, even anarchic, energy. Glissandi punctuate the texture with shimmering cries of joy – a thrilling point of unison after the giddy cross-rhythms the composer carefully builds up within her glittering texture.

Most famously set by Spanish Renaissance composer Francisco Guerrero, **Ave virgo sanctissima** is an exquisite Marian verse, whose rhyming lines gives it a distinctive sweetness and order. Matthew Martin underscores this regularity and balance, opening his commission in the style of Venetian polychoral work, passing each phrase between two choirs. Although briefly

Notes on the music

coming together for ecstatic cries of 'Maria!', the upper and lower voices remain discrete throughout, the lower voices sustaining a hypnotic chant, while sopranos and alto swoop and dive above in graceful dovetailing exchanges. The effect is of rapt ecstasy, in a work whose delicate beauty is the musical mirror of its sacred subject.

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Alexandra Coghlan is a music journalist and critic who has contributed to publications including The Spectator, Prospect, Opera, the New Statesman and The Independent. She is the author of Carols from King's (Ebury Press, 2016).

Texts & translations

1/3 **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.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte.
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsiliium ostende.
O Clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Antiphon at Compline from Trinity Sunday to the week of the last Sunday before Advent

2 **Ave Regina caelorum**

Ave, Regina caelorum,
Ave, domina angelorum:
Salve, radix, salve, porta
Ex qua mundo lux est orta:

Gaude, Virgo gloriosa,
Super omnes speciosa,
Vale, o valde decora,
Et pro nobis Christum exora.

[?] Twelfth century; antiphon at Compline from Candlemas until Maundy Thursday

*Hail, Queen, mother of mercy,
our life, sweetness and hope, hail.
To you we cry, exiled children of Eve.
To you we sigh, groaning and weeping, in this
valley of tears.
Come then, our advocate, turn your merciful
eyes towards us.
And after this exile show us Jesus, the blest
fruit of your womb.
O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

*Hail, Queen of heaven,
hail, mistress of the angels:
hail, holy root,
from which sprung the light of the world:*

*Rejoice, glorious Virgin,
beautiful above all others,
hail, most honoured,
and ever pray to Christ for us.*

4 **Song to the Virgin Mary**

Maria! Maria!
Tu luna pulchrior,
Tu stellis purior,
Tu sole clarior, Maria:
Te sonent omnia
Laudum praeconia,
Hymni et cantica, Maria.

Tu coeli gloria,
De stirpe regia,
Tu Patris filia, Maria:
Te omne canticum,
Collaudat coelicum,
Melos angelicum, Maria.

O castum liliū
Ora convallium
Pro nobis filium, Maria:
Sint pura mentibus,
Corda clientibus,
Te invocantibus, Maria.

Imple formidine,
Cor paenitudine,
Amaritudine, Maria:
Cordis contritio,
Haec est perfectio,
Atque refectio, Maria.

Hic in exilio,
Adsis auxilio,
Cum tuo filio, Maria:
Inter pericula,

*Mary! Mary!
You are fairer than the moon,
you are purer than the stars,
you are brighter than the sun, Mary:
let every paean resound
in praise for you,
every hymn and song, Mary.*

*You are the glory of heaven,
from royal stock,
you are the Father's daughter, Mary:
every song in heaven
praises you,
the melody of angels, Mary.*

*Chaste lily
of the valley, pray
your son for us, Mary:
may your suppliants
be pure in heart and mind,
who call upon you, Mary.*

*Fill our heart with fear,
repentance
and bitterness, Mary:
it is the heart's contrition
that is perfectness
and salvation, Mary.*

*Here in our exile,
be present to help,
along with your son, Mary:
among our perils*

Et mortis spicula,
Sonet haec vocula, Maria.

Mater altissimi,
Sponsa sanctissimi,
Thronus celsissimi, Maria:
Post tot pericula,
Fracta navicula,
Sis nobis portula, Maria.

Lingua cum langueat,
Ut loqui nequeat,
Cor verbu[m] suppleat, Maria:
In morte optimum,
Ad te sit ultimum,
Vitae suspirium, Maria.

Anon., Polish

5 **Alma redemptoris mater**

Alma redemptoris mater quae pervia caeli
porta manes et stella maris succurre cadenti
surgere qui curat populo: tu quae genuisti
natura mirante tuum sanctum genitorem
virgo prius ac posterius Gabrielis ab ore
sumens illud Ave peccatorum miserere.
Alma mater!

Antiphon at Compline from Advent and Christmastide,
attr. Hermann of Reichenau (Hermannus Contractus,
1013–1054)

*and the thorns of death,
let this little word sound: Mary.*

*Mother of the highest one,
bride of the holiest one,
throne of the most exalted one, Mary:
after so many dangers
for our shipwrecked vessel,
be our safe haven, Mary.*

*When the tongue falls silent,
and can no longer speak,
may the heart supply the word, Mary:
in death may our best,
last breath of life
be towards you, Mary.*

*Loving mother of the Redeemer, open gateway
to heaven and star of the sea, help your fallen
people who strive to rise again. You who bore,
to the astonishment of nature, your own holy
creator: Virgin first and last, who received that
greeting from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy
on us sinners. Loving mother!*

Texts & translations

6 **Ave virgo sanctissima**

Ave virgo sanctissima,
Dei mater piissima,
maris stella clarissima,
Maria!
Salve semper gloriosa,
margarita preciosa,
sicut liliū formosa,
nitens, olens velut rosa.

Anon., Spanish, antiphon for the Nativity of
St John the Baptist

*Hail holiest virgin,
most loving mother of God,
most glorious star of the sea,
Mary!
Hail ever glorious,
precious pearl,
beauteous as the lily,
resplendent, fragrant as the rose.*

7 **Gaude et laetare**

Gaude et laetare, exultatio
angelorum.
Gaude domini virgo, prophetarum gaudium.
Gaudeas benedicta, Dominus tecum est.
Gaude, quae per angelum gaudium mundi
suscepisti.
Gaude, quae genuisti Factorem et Dominum.
Gaudeas quae digna es esse Mater Christi.
Gaude mater luminis.

Byzantine, sixth century or earlier; in Latin translation
used in the Ambrosian Missal as the Transitorium for
the Third Mass of Christmas, with additional final line

*Rejoice and be glad, you who are the angels'
exultation;
rejoice, the Lord's virgin, the prophets' joy;
may you rejoice, blessed one, the Lord is with you;
rejoice, you who received the world's joy
through the angel Gabriel;
rejoice, you who bore the Creator and Lord;
may you rejoice, you who are worthy to be
mother of Christ;
rejoice, Mother of Light.*

8 **Ave Maria**

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum,
benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus
fructus ventris tui Jesus. Sancta Maria, mater
Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in
hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

*Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you,
blest are you among women, and blest is the
fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of
God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of
our death. Amen.*

9 **Dormi, Jesu**

Dormi, Jesu! mater ridet
Quae tam dulcem somnum videt,
Dormi, Jesu, blandule!
Si non dormis, mater plorat
Inter fila cantans orat,
Blande, veni, somnule!

*Sleep on, Jesus! Mother smiles
to see such sweet sleep.
Sleep on, Jesus, sweet little one!
If you don't sleep, Mother will cry,
and pray, singing amid her needlework:
Come, sweet little sleep!*

From an engraving by Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1619);
text reprinted in Achim von Arnim and Clemens
Brentano, eds., *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805)

10 **Magnificat**

Magnificat anima mea Dominum:
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen eius.
Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies
timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede:
et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis:
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus
misericordiae suae:
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros Abraham
et semini eius in saecula.
Gloria Patri et Filio: et Spiritui Sancto;
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper:
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Luke 1: 46-55, with doxology

11 **Regina coeli, laetare**

Regina coeli, laetare, alleluia:
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia;
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Twelfth century; antiphon at Compline from
Easter to Pentecost

*My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall
call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout
all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his
servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and
his seed, for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the
Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.*

*Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia:
for he whom you were worthy to carry as child,
has risen again as he foretold, alleluia;
pray God for us, alleluia.*

12 **Ave maris stella**

Ave maris stella,
Dei mater alma
atque semper virgo
felix caeli porta.

Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore,
funda nos in pace,
mutans Hevae nomen.

Solve vincula reis,
profer lumen caecis,
mala nostra pelle,
bona cuncta posce.

Monstra te esse matrem,
sumat per te preces
qui pro nobis natus
tulit esse tuus.

Virgo singularis
inter omnes mitis,
nos culpis solutos
mites fac et castos.

Vitam praesta puram,
iter para tutum,
ut videntes Jesum
semper collaetemur.

Sit laus Deo Patri,
summo Christo decus,
Spiritui Sancto
tribus honor unus. Amen.

Hymn at Vespers on feasts of the Virgin

*Hail, star of the sea
loving mother of God
and, ever virgin,
blessed gate of heaven.*

*Taking that 'Ave'
from the mouth of Gabriel,
establish us in peace,
reversing the name of Eva.*

*Loose the bonds of the guilty,
bring light to the blind,
drive away our ills,
pray all good things for us.*

*Show yourself to be our mother,
may he receive the prayers through you
who for us
bore himself to be your son.*

*Virgin unique,
gentlest among all,
free us from our sins
make us gentle and chaste.*

*Grant us a pure life,
prepare us a safe journey,
that when we see Jesus
we may forever rejoice together.*

*Let praise be to God,
glory to Christ on high,
and to the Holy Spirit
and to all three one single honour. Amen.*

Translations © 2017 Delphian Records

Biographies

Rory McCleery began his musical career as a chorister at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh under Timothy Byram-Wigfield and Matthew Owens. He gained a double first in music at Oxford University as both Organ and Domus Academic scholar of St Peter's College, subsequently completing an MSt in Musicology with Distinction. He is the founder and musical director of The Marian Consort.

As a countertenor, Rory greatly enjoys working as a soloist and consort singer in concert and recording with ensembles including The Dunedin Consort, Contrapunctus, The Monteverdi Choir, The Sixteen, The Gabrieli Consort, The Tallis Scholars, Le Concert d'Astrée, The Academy of Ancient Music, The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and The Cardinal's Musick.

Recent solo performances have included Bach *St John* and *St Matthew Passions* and *Christmas Oratorio*; Handel *Messiah*, *Dixit Dominus* and *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*; Pärt *Passio*; Purcell *Come ye Sons of Art*, *Ode to St Cecilia* and *Welcome to All the Pleasures*; Monteverdi *Vespers of 1610*; Rameau Grands Motets; and Britten *Abraham and Isaac* in venues across the UK and Europe. Rory has appeared as a soloist for broadcasts on ARTE, Radio France, BBC Radio 3 and German and Italian radio, and collaborates regularly with the Rose Consort of Viols.

Rory is much in demand as a guest conductor, chorus master and workshop leader, and is a

passionate believer in the importance of music education and singing for young people. He is the Associate Director of the Oxford Youth Choirs, and also acts as an academic and programming consultant to festivals and many of the ensembles with whom he performs.

Taking its name from the Blessed Virgin Mary, a focus of religious devotion in the sacred music of all ages, **The Marian Consort** is a young, dynamic and internationally-renowned early music vocal ensemble, recognised for its freshness of approach and innovative presentation of a broad range of repertoire. Under its founder and director, Rory McCleery, this 'astounding' (*The Herald*) ensemble has given concerts throughout the UK and Europe, features regularly on BBC Radio 3, and is a former 'Young Artist' of The Brighton Early Music Festival.

Known for its engaging performances and imaginative programming, the group draws its members from amongst the very best young singers on the early music scene today. They normally sing one to a part (dependent on the repertoire), with smaller vocal forces allowing clarity of texture and subtlety and flexibility of interpretation that illuminate the music for performer and audience alike. The Marian Consort is also committed to inspiring a love of singing in others, and has led participatory educational workshops for a wide range of ages and abilities.

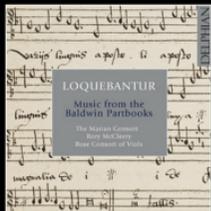
Their repertoire encompasses the music of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries with a particular focus on the exploration of lesser-known works, often bringing these to the attention of the wider public for the first time. The Marian Consort is also a proud exponent of contemporary music, juxtaposing latter-day pieces and Renaissance works in concert in order to shed new light on both. As part of this commitment to new music, the group has commissioned works from several leading British choral composers, including Cecilia McDowall, Gabriel Jackson, Cheryl Frances-Hoad and Matthew Martin.

The Marian Consort performs across the UK and Europe: recent highlights have included recitals at King's Place, the Tage Alter Musik Regensburg and the Festival de Música Antiga Valencia; concerts for the Leipzig A Cappella Festival and the St Magnus International Festival; and performances at the Wellcome Collection and the British Academy.

The Marian Consort has to date released seven CDs with Delphian Records which have met with considerable critical acclaim. Its disc of English and Continental Renaissance music from the Dow Partbooks (DCD34115) received outstanding reviews in all of the major broadsheets, with *The Scotsman* giving it 5 stars for 'performances that glow with golden purity and soul', the *Sunday Times* commenting 'exquisite ... the ensemble

sings with eloquence and expressive finesse', and *Gramophone* calling it 'superb'. A 2013 release of music by the Parisian Renaissance composer Jean Maillard (DCD34130) attracted praise from Richard Morrison in *The Times* for its 'precision and pellucid textures', with the *Guardian* noting that 'the performances are models of discretion and musical taste, every texture clear, every phrase beautifully shaped'. The ensemble's recording of a Christmas mass and motets by Jean Mouton, Cristóbal de Morales and Annibale Stabile (DCD34145) was Christmas Choice in *BBC Music Magazine*, which commented that 'the works are melliflously performed by The Marian Consort, who shape the sinuous polyphony with winning pliability', while the *Sunday Times* described the disc as 'sublime – sung with impeccable polish and blend' and the Observer lauded the group for 'drawing the listener in by quiet persuasion and musical intelligence of the highest order'. 2016 saw the release of Gesualdo's *Sacrae Cantiones* for five voices, Book I (DCD34176), praised by *Gramophone* as 'impeccable performances, easily the finest on record', and of *Stabat Mater: sacred choral music by Lennox and Michael Berkeley* (DCD34180) in collaboration with the Berkeley Ensemble, conducted by David Wordsworth.

Also available on Delphian

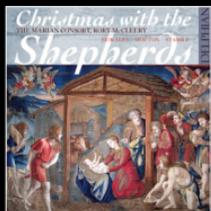


Loquebantur: Music from the Baldwin Partbooks

The Marian Consort, Rose Consort of Viols
DCD34160

John Baldwin was a lay clerk at St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1575 and became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1598. The so-called 'Baldwin partbooks', held at Christ Church, Oxford, were his creation – a very personal collection, representing his individual tastes and interests from a wealth of English and Continental polyphony and consort music. As in their previous collaboration, an exploration of the similarly conceived partbooks of Robert Dow, the Rose Consort of Viols and The Marian Consort have kept faith with Baldwin's own intentions, bringing to light some of the rarer gems preserved by this great advocate and music-lover and providing the listener with 'such sweete musicke: as dothe much delite yeelede'.

'spartan but severely beautiful ... The acoustic of Merton College chapel provides ideal focus and warmth'
—The Observer, November 2015



Christmas with the Shepherds: Morales – Mouton – Stabile

The Marian Consort, Rory McCleery *director*
DCD34145

A Christmas programme with a difference: Rory McCleery and his acclaimed consort echo the shepherds' noels through a motet by Jean Mouton which, astonishingly, remained in the repertoire of the Sistine Chapel for over a hundred years after its composition around 1515. By the middle of the sixteenth century, it had formed the basis for a mass by Cristóbal de Morales, then engaged as a singer in the papal chapel, while later still its text was re-used in a new, grander motet by Annibale Stabile. A world premiere recording of the latter work crowns this unique programme, for which McCleery himself has prepared new performing editions.

'The delivery is clean, unadorned, unaccompanied and undemonstrative, drawing the listener in by quiet persuasion and musical intelligence of the highest order'
—The Observer, December 2014



Stabat Mater: sacred choral music by Lennox & Michael Berkeley

The Marian Consort; Berkeley Ensemble / David Wordsworth
DCD34180

Lennox Berkeley's *Stabat Mater* derives from one of the most fertile and inspired periods of his compositional life. A masterpiece, and until now the last of his major works to go unrecorded, it was written for a concert tour by his close friend Benjamin Britten's English Opera Group; hence the unusual but effective scoring for six solo voices and twelve instrumentalists. Delphian artists The Marian Consort – with five acclaimed discs of early music to their credit – now show their versatility in a *cappella* and accompanied music by both Lennox and his son Michael Berkeley. They are partnered in the larger works by the Berkeley Ensemble, whose performances are enriched by their intimate knowledge of these composers' music. The same can be said of conductor David Wordsworth, who has known and worked with both composers, and who here fulfils a long-cherished ambition to direct this important addition to the catalogue.

'A beguiling, solemn work, sparsely written but deeply felt ... impeccably performed.'
—BBC Music Magazine, November 2016



O Virgo Benedicta: Music of Marian Devotion from Spain's Century of Gold

The Marian Consort, Rory McCleery *director*
DCD34086

A six-strong Marian Consort makes its Delphian debut in a programme celebrating the rich compositional legacy of the Siglo del Oro's intensely competitive musical culture. These luminous works – centred on the figure of the Virgin Mary – demand performances of great intelligence and vocal commitment, and the youthful singers respond absolutely, bringing hushed intimacy and bristling excitement to some of the most gorgeously searing lines in the history of European polyphony.

'Precision of tuning and purity of tone ... I gained a great deal of pleasure from listening to this flawlessly executed programme'
—John Quinn, MusicWeb International, June 2011

