



harmonia
mundi

ARVO PÄRT

DA PACEM



Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir **PAUL HILLIER**

with Christopher Bowers-Broadbent *organ*

PRODUCTION **USA**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Nigulistekirik Organ by Rieger-Klosa, 1981. 4 manuals
(including a Vox Humana register
heard in "Salve Regina" at 3:18) and Pedal.

Tracks 1 & 5:

Recorded January 2006, Nigulistekirik, Tallinn, Estonia

Tracks 2-4, 6, 8 & 9:

Recorded September 2005, Nigulistekirik, Tallinn, Estonia

Track 7:

Recorded October 2004, Tallinn Methodist Church, Estonia

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ARVO PÄRT

(b. 1935)

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| 1 | Da pacem Domine (2004) | 5:45 |
| 2 | Salve Regina (2001/2) | 12:51 |
| | Zwei slawische Psalmen (1984 / 1997) | 7:53 |
| 3 | Psalm 117 | 3:47 |
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| | • Kaia Urb <i>soprano</i> | |
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| 7 | Dopo la vittoria (1996 / 1998) | 11:11 |
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| 9 | Littlemore Tractus (2000) | 5:27 |

ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent *organ* (2, 6, 9)

PAUL HILLIER

DA PACEM Motets by Arvo Pärt

THIS COLLECTION of shorter sacred works by Arvo Pärt includes some of his newest compositions as well as a sprinkling of works from earlier in his career. Together with my two earlier CDs of Pärt's music on **harmonia mundi**, they provide a comprehensive survey of his choral music both a cappella and with organ accompaniment. While some of the newer pieces demonstrate a more colourful and nuanced approach to the setting of texts to music, the influence of early music on his style is a constant presence and returns with renewed strength in these recent works. This influence operates at three levels and the most significant of them concerns what may be described as Pärt's rhetorical position as reflected in the way in which he uses a text for music. His music rarely illustrates the surface meanings of words – there are no madrigalisms, very little sense of declamation or recitative – instead he reflects the overall character and function of a text, articulating its form in the structure of the music. While this is not the exclusive property of 'early music,' it does reflect a set of priorities that operated strongly in the music of the medieval church.

They are ideals, furthermore, which have surfaced again and again where some sort of ritual purpose has dominated a composer's activity. But in Pärt's case, the exact nature of his purpose is strangely obscure, as all his music is written for performance in the context of public concerts, with a paying audience, applause, and so on. Are we intended to have our conscience pricked? How are we to view (and thus to use) music which in effect dramatizes the history and practice of religion down the ages? – a music which (infamously in some people's eyes) brings a sense of religious liturgy into the concert hall, or at least makes us pretend that it does. What is the role of the performer in all this, especially as he or she stands up and faces the audience, obscuring the path to whatever altar may be available? Would these questions be less important if Pärt also composed music to 'worldly'

texts? What for example is the listeners' opinion of Mary and her song [cf. *Magnificat*]? Must they simply tell themselves, if they are not practicing Christians, that they share her joy because we can all experience those feelings at the birth of a little child? Surely the point of the text is somewhat different? And how do we deal with Simeon's song [cf. *Nunc dimittis*], radiating as it does from the other end of life's cycle? Might some of us not be turned to bitterness by our failure to find such spiritual compensation? Must we assume in fact that most people simply listen to this music, as to early music, as an aesthetic experience in which a rather generalized spirituality awakens our nostalgia for what might be or might once have been? Do we trudge through the snow with Thomas Hardy to see the oxen? – as he wrote in a poem of that name, in 1915:

If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel"

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

Or do we believe, as I'm sure some do, that the music's religious essence or content does in fact touch us and, however briefly, brings us some measure of consolation?

These questions are brought about not by the music as abstract sound, but by the words. Yet, as I have pointed out, it is the meaning, historical purpose and ritual context of those words that Pärt seems rather directly to anticipate in composing the music. His instrumental music does not pose the same questions, and yet its effect on the listener is, perhaps, of the same general order of things. I am often asked in interviews about Pärt's music, and expected to explain or at least comment on its spirituality. I answer always that all great music,

including instrumental music (perhaps especially including that), is spiritual (whatever that means), and if I am lucky the journalist will let me leave it at that. But this merely returns us to the original question – where does that leave the actual words themselves? I am sure Pärt's engagement is with the words in their original sense and their accumulated liturgical purpose. As with all such utterances, and any religious art, it is placed at our disposal and it's up to us what use we make of them.

The other levels of early-music influence concern first the vocal style of performance, and second, certain musical gestures. The former needs little comment except to say that the general idiom of choral and indeed solo singing which serves medieval and early-renaissance music is also a useful background for singing Pärt's music, although there is a degree of intensity which is more modern, and certainly the demands made on the voice, especially with regard to range, are more considerable. As for the musical gestures, there are several that have acquired an almost emblematic role within Pärt's oeuvre, especially the use of a sequence of parallel 6/3 (or first-inversion) chords and a special melodic turn resolving with a so-called Landini cadence, both of which are deeply redolent of 14th-century English music. Pärt uses the same technique even more openly in the recent *Zwei Wiegenlieder* (2002), and also in the early *Third Symphony* (1971).

Da pacem Domine

The title track is an eloquent example of Pärt at his most characteristic – a simple texture (four parts throughout), a slow straightforward pattern with almost no rhythmic variation, and near harmonic stasis in which each pitch is carefully placed in position like stones in a Zen garden. There are two basic elements in the work: the first is a manner of composition that immediately calls to mind the organ piece *Pari intervallo* (1976), and the second comprises passages of *faburden* (a short succession of

parallel chords with the root note either in the top voice or in the middle), resolving with a Landini cadence. The text is a prayer for peace and has been set by numerous composers over the ages. The original version is scored for choir and full orchestra.

Salve Regina

After the brief organ introduction the choir starts to sing a melody in unison, which seems like a dream sequence from a film about a peasant community crooning a half-remembered song. The underlying waltz rhythm is unexpected to say the least. Gradually, the singing asserts itself and the words move more into the foreground, rising to a fervent climax before evaporating once again into a murmur. This piece is quite unusual in Pärt's oeuvre and at first hearing seems unexpectedly sentimental. I find that it digs into much deeper soil than that, however, using the idea of collective sentiment to establish a lyrical movement that is both supported and darkened by the organ accompaniment. Guided by the composer we tried to find suitable organ registration to colour the music appropriately, and I asked the choir to imagine they were singing in a film by Fellini... Which one I leave the listener to decide.

Two Slavonic Psalms: Psalms 117 & 131

These two settings, which form a pair, were composed in 1984, originally for solo voices, and premiered by Collegium Vokale, Köln – the group that made its name as the first performers of Stockhausen's *Stimmung*. This was Pärt's first setting of a Russian Orthodox text and also the first a cappella work in *tintinnabuli* style. The listener may consider that there is, appropriately enough, a more Slavonic sonority in these pieces than in any other of his music before *Kanon Pokajanen* (1989–95), though technically both works use a very pure *tintinnabuli* technique. It is interesting also that the dancing rhythms in the first psalm are obtained by composing against the grain of 'correct' text accentuation.

Magnificat

It is possible to analyze this work, but impossible to explain why the result is so lovely. It is a prime example of Pärt's ability to seize the essence of a text and express its significance in what seems like a single moment of inspiration. The underlying form is the ancient technique of call and response. In this case the 'call' is a two-part texture in which a solo soprano is accompanied by one other voice part, and the tutti 'response' is a three-part texture sometimes doubled at the octave for fuller sonority.

An den Wassern zu Babel

This is one of the earliest *tintinnabuli* pieces from the mid-1970s. It was originally performed and published in Tallinn under the non-religious title *In Spe*, to avoid censure by Soviet officials. The new title refers us to Psalm 137, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion," but the voices sing only the vowels of *Kyrie eleison*. In such a song of exile it is interesting to consider that, in effect, two texts are embedded in its wordless melismas, while, with a mixture of drones and conductus-style homorhythmic patterns, the influence of early-medieval polyphony, Perotin especially, is strongly in evidence.

Dopo la vittoria

This work is described as a "piccola cantata" and was commissioned by the *comune* of Milan to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of the death of Saint Ambrose (Milan of course being the home of the Ambrosian rite). The text is taken from a 1902 Historical Dictionary of Church Singers and Chants published in St. Petersburg – but set in Italian – and recounts the story of the composition of the famous hymn *Tē Deum*. The work was first performed in 1997 in the concert series organised by Sandro Boccardi, who for many years has been a pivotal figure in the Milanese early-music scene, hosting groups from around the world, including the Hilliard Ensemble, Theatre of Voices, and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir.

Nunc dimittis

This piece, written in 2001, is a setting in Latin of the *Nunc dimittis*, the words of Simeon, an old man, who holds the baby Jesus in his arms, and recognizes him as the Son of God. The influence of early music here is almost completely hidden, like a memory that is buried but not forgotten. Pärt is still using the same basic technique he created back in 1976, but in those three decades he has opened it up to a wealth of new colours and textures. With both a *Magnificat* and a *Nunc dimittis* now in his oeuvre, it might appear to an Anglican that Pärt has composed an Evening Service. However, while there is nothing to prevent both pieces being used in such a context, their tonalities are distant (F minor and C-sharp minor), and there is no direct musical link between them, apart from the use of a soprano solo.

Littlemore Tractus

The title is that of the poem by John Henry Newman that Pärt set to mark the bicentenary in 2001 of Newman's birth. Newman was one of the leading figures of the Oxford Movement in the mid-19th century, which sought to restore a sense of ritual and dignity to the church service, and to re-establish the roots of Anglicanism within the ancient Catholic Church – of which, by implication, Roman Catholicism was but a branch – and move it away from its posture as a purely Protestant antagonist. Newman was savagely criticized for his views and withdrew more and more to Littlemore, the small village close to Oxford and attached to the parish of St. Mary's Oxford where he was priest. Here in 1836 he had a small church built, and lived increasingly in retreat from the world and its attacks. Eventually, in 1843, after three years of painful deliberation spent largely in seclusion at Littlemore, Newman decided that he was left with no choice but to join the Roman Catholic Church. He went on to become a Cardinal, and to compose his finest prose work, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864), from which Elgar (also a Roman Catholic) took the text of his famous oratorio, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

– Paul Hillier © 2006

Paul Hillier's book *Arvo Pärt* was published by Oxford University Press, 1997.



Arvo Pärt

Arvo Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia on September 11, 1935, but spent most of his childhood in the little town of Rakvere. He studied in Tallinn, where his teachers included Harry Otsa, Veljo Tormis, and Heino Eller. Even while still a student, Pärt found work at Estonian Radio as a recording engineer, and also composed music for theatre and film productions, freelance employment which continued for a number of years. His children's cantata *Meie Aed* (1959) won an all-State competition, but he also received censure for *Nekrolog* (1960), an orchestral work espousing serial technique. Throughout the 1960s he wrote a number of increasingly modernist instrumental works which culminated in the 1968 *Credo*, controversial for its religious title. He then partly withdrew from composition, to study plainsong, early music, and generally to rethink his life and approach toward composition. In 1976 he produced the first pieces in a style he called 'tintinnabuli' – these pieces earned him renewed criticism for their tonal simplicity and religious content, and his freedom of movement was continually restricted by the Soviet authorities. Eventually he and his wife were able to emigrate in 1980, first to Vienna, then settling in Berlin, which has remained their principal home ever since. During the 1980s and '90s Pärt's *tintinnabuli* music became internationally famous. The composer now divides his time between Berlin, England and Estonia, as well as making numerous foreign journeys to attend performances of his work.



Paul Hillier

His musical interests range from medieval to contemporary music and include singing, conducting, and writing. In 1990, after many years as Music Director of the Hilliard Ensemble, he founded the Theatre of Voices and began his series of acclaimed recordings for **harmonia mundi usa**. From 1996 to 2003, Hillier was Director of the Early Music Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington. In September, 2001 he was named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, with which he launched a cycle of recordings exploring the choral tradition of the Baltic Sea countries. *Baltic Voices 1* and *Baltic Voices 2* met with unanimous praise and each won Hillier a GRAMMY® nomination. *The Powers of Heaven*, a much-admired program of Russian Orthodox sacred music, was followed by Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*, Op. 37 and, most recently, by *Baltic Voices 3*. In 2004 Paul Hillier was awarded the Estonian Cultural Prize.

In 2002 he was made Honorary Professor in Music at the University of Copenhagen, and in 2003 accepted the post of Chief Conductor of Vocal Group Ars Nova (Copenhagen). Hillier is the author of a monograph "Arvo Pärt" (1997) and editor of "The Collected Writings of Steve Reich" (2002), both published by Oxford University Press. His latest project is a book about consort singing. For more information, please visit [www. paulhillier.net](http://www.paulhillier.net)



Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir

Soprano

Kaia Urb
 • Solo: tracks 5, 6, 8
 Vilve Hepner
 Eha Pärig
 Kristiina Under
 Annika Ilus
 Hele-Mall Leego
 Hele-Mai Poobus
 Maarja Kukk

Alto

Iris Oja
 Juta Roopalu-Malk
 Karin Salumäe
 Tiiu Otsing
 Marianne Tomikas
 Agnes Toomla

Tenor

Tiit Kogerman
 • Solo: track 6
 Toomas Tohter
 Kaido Janke
 Raul Mikson
 Martin Lume
 Arvo Aun

Bass

Aarne Talvik
 • Solo: track 6
 Rainer Vilu
 Allan Vurma
 Kalev Keeroja
 Ranno-Eduard Linde
 Tõnu Tormis
 Märt Krell
 Uku Joller

PAUL HILLIER Principal Conductor & Artistic Director

Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir

The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (*Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor*) is recognized as Estonia's best-known classical music ensemble and one of the finest choral groups in the world. Founded in 1981 by Tõnu Kaljuste, its principal conductor and artistic director until 2001, when he invited conductor Paul Hillier to take over the post, the Choir has an extensive repertoire ranging from Gregorian chant to twentieth-century music, with special emphasis on Estonian composers, including Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis. The Choir tours regularly in Europe, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia. In addition to concertising, the Choir has made numerous recordings, many of which have received the highest critical acclaim, including six GRAMMY® nominations. The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir works with many world-class conductors and orchestras, and has a long-standing partnership with the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra. For more information about the EPCC, please visit www.epcc.ee

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent

Christopher Bowers-Broadbent has been the foremost British organist to specialize in the contemporary repertoire for over 30 years. He has commissioned new works, given many first performances, and is often the first to give new works their important second and subsequent performances. Constantly composing, his most recent completed pieces are two substantial works for the organ.

1 Da pacem Domine 2004

Da pacem Domine
in diebus nostris
quia non est alius
qui pugnet pro nobis
nisi tu Deus noster.

2 Salve Regina 2001/2002

Salve Regina,
mater misericordiae;
vita, dulcedo,
et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus,
exsules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus,
gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte.
Et Iesum,
benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens: O pia,
o dulcis Virgo Maria.

Da pacem Domine

Give peace in our time,
O Lord,
because there is none other
that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O Lord.

Salve Regina

Hail, queen,
mother of mercy;
Our life, our sweetness,
and our hope, hail.
We cry to thee,
the exiled children of Eve,
We send up our sighs to thee,
mourning and weeping
in this vale of tears.
Turn then, our advocate,
those merciful eyes of thine
toward us,
And after our exile,
show us the blessed fruit of thy womb,
Jesus,
O mild, O loving,
O sweet virgin Mary.

Two Slavonic Psalms 1984/1997

3 Хвалите Господа вси языцы,
похвалите Его вси людие,
яко утвердися милость Его на нас
и истина Господня пребывает во век.
Аллилуйя.

Псалом 117

4 Слава Отцу и Сыну и Святому Духу
и ныне и присно и во веки веков.
Аминь.

Господи, не вознесся сердце мое,
ниже вознесется очи мои:
ниже ходих в великих,
ниже в дивных паче мене.

Аще не смиренно мудрствовах,
но вознесох душу мою,
яко отдоеное на мать свою,
такое воздаси на душу мою.

Да уповаает Израиль на Господа,
от ныне и до века.

Псалом 131

5 Magnificat 1989

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 dimisti inanes. Suscepit Israel, puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae. Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Two Slavonic Psalms

O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Alleluia.

Psalm 117

Glory to the Father, the Son and
the Holy Ghost, now and for ever.
Amen.

Lord, my heart is not haughty,
nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
or in things too high for me.

Surely I have behaved
and quieted myself,
as a child that is weaned of his mother:
my soul is even as a weaned child.

Let Israel hope in the Lord
from henceforth and for ever.

Psalm 131

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. 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 seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed for ever.

Luke 1, 46-55

6 An den Wassern zu Babel
1976 / 1984 / 1991

The voices sing only the vowels of Kyrie eleison.

7 Dopo la vittoria 1996/1998

Dopo la vittoria definitiva sugli Ariani, Sant' Ambrogio compose un inno solenne di ringraziamento: "Te Deum laudamus"; da allora questo canto viene ripetuto in occasione di cerimonie solenni di ringraziamento. Trascorsi due anni, quando davanti al consesso dei potenti di Milano venne battezzato Agostino, quelle strofe di ringraziamento furono cantate dagli officianti e dai battezzati e quindi entrarono a far parte da quel momento del cerimoniale religioso. L'antico e ignoto biografo di Agostino scrive: "Sant' Ambrogio allora con voce lieta lodò la Santissima Trinità e indusse lo stesso Agostino a proclamare la sua fede nella gloria di Dio." Lodando e ringraziando il Signore, Sant' Ambrogio diceva: "Lodiamo Te, o Signore, in Te crediamo, o Signore." Agostino proseguiva: "A Te, Padre Eterno, tutta la terra rende gloria." "A Te cantano gli angeli e tutte le potenze dei cieli." Così entrambi cantarono l'intero inno di gloria alla Santissima Trinità. Sant' Ambrogio diceva il primo verso e Agostino cantava quello seguente. L'ultimo verso venne proclamato da Agostino: "In Te, o Signore, ho posto la mia speranza e mai dovrò dolermene. Amen." ...da allora questo canto viene ripetuto in occasione di cerimonie solenni di ringraziamento.

History of Church Singers and Chants,
by Archbishop Philaret, published 1902,
St. Petersburg, Russia

An den Wassern zu Babel

The voices sing only the vowels of Kyrie eleison.

Following the victory

Following the decisive victory over the Arians, Saint Ambrose composed a festive song of thanksgiving: "Te Deum laudamus"; from that time forward, this hymn has come to be sung on festive occasions of offering thanks to the Lord. Some two years later when all the faithful of Milan were assembled to witness the baptism of Saint Augustine, this song of praise was sung to the baptised and to the baptising, and thus entered the repertoire of church chants. An anonymous early biographer of Saint Augustine wrote, "On that occasion [of Augustine's conversion], the blessed Ambrose praised the Holy Trinity with joyful singing and urged Augustine to proclaim his faith in the glory of the Lord." Exalting and praising the Lord, Saint Ambrose said, "We praise you, O Lord, we acknowledge you, O Lord." Saint Augustine continued, "To you, Father Immortal, the world sings praises." "To you the angels and heavenly host offer songs of praise." Thus alternating, the two sang the entire hymn to the glory of the Holy Trinity, Saint Ambrose singing the first line, and Saint Augustine the next. The last line was delivered by Augustine: "In you, O Lord, I have placed my faith; I shall not want. Amen." ...from that time forward, this hymn has come to be sung on festive occasions of offering thanks to the Lord.

History of Church Singers and Chants,
by Archbishop Philaret, published 1902,
St. Petersburg, Russia

8 Nunc dimittis 2001

**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.**

Nunc dimittis

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;
A light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2, 29–32

9 Littlemore Tractus 2000

**May He support us all the day long, till the shades
lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy
world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and
our work is done! Then in his mercy may He give
us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the
last.**

John Henry Newman (1801–1890),
Wisdom and Innocence,
sermon preached on 19 February 1843 in Littlemore