

ONDINE

# BRUCKNER

## LATIN MOTETS

LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR  
SIGVARDS KĻAVA





ANTON BRUCKNER

# ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–1896)

1	<b>Os Justi</b> (WAB 30)	4:10
2	<b>Christus factus est</b> (WAB 11)	5:28
3	<b>Locus iste</b> (WAB 23)	3:13
4	<b>Ave Maria</b> (WAB 6)	4:05
5	<b>Libera me</b> (F minor) (WAB 21)	2:18
	<b>Kronstorfer Messe</b> (Messe in D, ohne Gloria & Credo) (WAB 146)	
6	I. Kyrie	1:39
7	II. Sanctus	1:35
8	III. Benedictus	1:06
9	IV. Agnus Dei	2:22
10	<b>Tantum Ergo</b> (WAB 32)	3:07
11	<b>Tantum Ergo</b> (WAB 41)	2:19
12	<b>Tantum Ergo</b> (WAB 42)	2:42
13	<b>Tantum Ergo</b> (WAB 43)	1:35
14	<b>Virga Jesse</b> (WAB 52)	3:51
15	<b>Pange lingua et Tantum ergo</b> (WAB 33)	5:30
16	<b>Salvum fac populum tuum</b> (WAB 40)	3:23
17	<b>Tota pulchra es Maria</b> (WAB 46)	5:20
	(Tenor: Jānis Kurševs)	
18	<b>Vexilla Regis</b> (WAB 51)	4:55

KRISTĪNE ADAMAITE, organ (5, 12, 13 & 17)

LATVIAN RADIO CHOIR

SIGVARDS KĻAVA, conductor

Choral music formed an important part of the output of Anton Bruckner (1824–1896) throughout his career, yet it was in a way doubly disadvantaged. Firstly, Bruckner's status as a composer in Vienna in his lifetime was eclipsed by the near-worshipful adulation afforded to Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). Secondly, choral music as a genre was underappreciated. In a stark contrast to the golden age of Renaissance choral polyphony, the 19th century preferred symphonic music (genres such as the suite, overture, fantasy, solo concerto and of course the symphony itself), chamber music was thriving in music-making in bourgeois homes, salons of the nobility and concert halls, and opera and ballet were hugely popular. As we know, the symphony was the genre of principal interest for Bruckner for much of his career, but it was here that the competition was also the strongest, the concert repertoire being dominated by Johannes Brahms and Petr Tchaikovsky. Having said all that, however, we must note that choral music or, more generally, singing together continued to maintain a strong tradition in the German, Austrian and Swiss cultural sphere. Besides, choral music was of course preserved in the Church and more widely in sacred contexts, while secular choral music was beginning to emerge as a vehicle for interaction in society, even in rural communities.

To take a somewhat anachronistic and sentimental parallel from gardening: the desire for simple yet aesthetically pleasing flower plantings was never completely displaced by the later preference for more elaborate, elitist and flamboyant expression in the form of palm trees, rhododendrons, orchids and tulips. Although the pomp and circumstance of opera and symphonic music made its way into the Church too in masses and oratorios, there was always a need in sacred music for smaller choral works, not only because of listeners' preferences but also because of pragmatic performance considerations. It is significant that much of this sacred music featured well-worn and well-known texts, presenting familiar content on a manageable, almost aphoristic scale.

The **motet** is a genre whose definition has varied hugely over the centuries, and even its etymology is now disputed. The motet was originally a *secular* genre combining multiple texts from a variety of sources and might include a sacred theme together with a melody of questionable origin and virtually anything else. It did not matter much what the texts actually were, since in this confusion the listener would have been unable to understand what was going on; the singers, by

contrast, knew what they were singing and thus enjoyed a privileged position. After a number of twists and turns, the motet genre re-emerged in the 19th century in a guise very different from its origins: as aphoristic settings of proverbs or theological, theosophical, or philosophical theses. As the virtually exclusive language of the Catholic liturgy was still Latin at this time, the principal proponents of the motet genre at this time largely wrote settings of texts in Latin: Felix Mendelssohn, Johannes Brahms (him again) and Anton Bruckner.

None of the works on this album exceeds six minutes, and the vast majority are much shorter, more focused, more concise and often written for a specific need or occasion (a dedication, a commission by a choir or a patron, or simply a pedagogical exercise). It is no wonder, therefore, that many of these works were long forgotten. Yet after a long stretch on the periphery of the choral world, Bruckner's motets have now returned to a broader consciousness in a rising albeit slow trend over the past 50 to 70 years.

Instead of attempting to exhaustively describe the repertoire on this disc, I decided to provide alongside the basic facts (which are often uncertain or unverifiable) a characteristic feature, emotional or compositional hook or significant finding in each piece. All of the pieces featured here are technically motets in the general sense, even though they have various titles according to their function in the liturgy: 'Graduale', 'Hymnus', 'Antiphon' 'Responsorium' and even 'Mass'.

The classic motet *Ave Maria* (motet, WAB 6, 1856/61) for seven unaccompanied voices (solo voices) is a picturesque, poetic version of the prayer, with no exaltation. What is significant is the extended large-scale ascent of the main theme, intercepted in the other voices. *Christus factus est* (graduale, WAB 11, before 1884, 8-part choir with some instruments *ad libitum*) explores extreme dynamic contrasts despite its short duration and concludes in a grand, powerful, almost ecstatic climax. The change in tonal colour here is also truly Brucknerian: unexpected, expressive and effective. The culmination quotes what is known as the *Dresden Amen*, composed by Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741–1801) and widely used by other composers. A particularly celebrated example is its use as the 'Holy Grail' motif in the opera *Parsifal* by Richard Wagner.

**Locus iste** (motet, WAB 23, 1869) is calmer, with explicit allusions to the Classical style, but it is nevertheless unmistakably in Bruckner's original idiom. Scholars and listeners alike have described it in otherworldly terms as mysterious, incomprehensible and disturbing or, in one remarkable note, as “*transparently chromatic*” (Ryan Turner). The characteristic feature of **Virga Jesse** (graduale, WAB 52, 1885) is a secure energetic rhythm of motion, the character of a solemn procession, again quoting the *Dresden Amen*.

**Salvum fac populum tuum** (motet, WAB 40, 1884) is a relatively short piece, setting only a few verses of the *Tē Deum*. It is perhaps the simplest of all, with an ancient chant in unison beginning each verse in free rhythm, contrasting with the colourful choral writing to produce an antiphonal effect.

Formally speaking, **Vexilla Regis** (anthem, WAB 51, 1892) is Bruckner's last motet. The text is by Venantius Fortunatus, a 6th-century poet, and this sequence is usually performed on Good Friday. Some scholars identify echoes here of the *Dresden Amen*, referred to twice above, but here it is not present as a direct quote. Bruckner's writing, so different from Wagner's chromaticism, conjures up vivid and unexpected background colours.

**Os justi** (graduale, WAB 30, 1879) is one of Bruckner's most extensive works in this genre. Alongside the ‘faith motif’ from *Parzifal* (not the *Dresden Amen* as is sometimes claimed), it features a marked and active fugato. In a feature that is quite striking for this period in Bruckner's output (c. 1875–1885), the piece combines the archaic colours of ancient modes (Lydian, Phrygian, etc.) with his characteristic harmonic language.

Bruckner called the motet **Pange lingua et Tantum ergo** (hymnus, WAB 38, 1868) his “*Lieblings-Tantum ergo*” or favourite *Tantum ergo* among his eight settings of the text. Max Auer notes: “The whole work has a much mystical atmosphere and, despite its great simplicity, I would regard it as one of Bruckner's best sacred compositions.”<sup>1</sup> In technical terms, the piece is remarkable for its extremely calm, smooth motion, only rarely highlighting the rhythm or melody with (or directly juxtaposing the E and C triads). **Tota pulchra es Maria** (antiphon,

WAB 46, 1878, T solo, Choir, Org.) is cast as a dialogue between the tenor soloist and the choir; at the beginning, the soloist shows great strength and confidence, but at the end is calm and slow.

***Tantum ergo*** (hymnus, WAB 43, c.1845, Choir, Org.), Bruckner's second setting of the text, is a continuation of the search for its interpretation. A brief fugato in the middle is the only interruption to the otherwise meditative flow. The next ***Tantum ergo*** (hymnus, WAB 42, 1846/88, Choir, Org.) goes even further towards the light of reflection – scholars tend to refer to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as a comparison. All four settings in the collection with the common designation WAB 41 (***Tantum ergo***; hymnus, WAB 41, 1846) are rendered in light, attractive and consistent though passionate colours. The miniature in C major, featured here, is a solemn prayer in a smooth, peaceful motion, albeit marked by rather strong dynamic contrasts. ***Tantum ergo*** (hymnus, WAB 32, 1845) is considered the earliest of Bruckner's settings of this text. It is bright, extended and sprightly and has been appropriately compared to the approach and style of Franz Schubert.

***Libera me*** (text: responsorium from *Missa pro defunctis*, WAB 21, c. 1843, Choir, Org.) is a slow, steady stream with occasional declamatory and almost dramatic moments. The ***Kronstorfer Messe*** (WAB 146, 1843–44) is a *missa brevis (a cappella)*, with duration of about 5 minutes. It omits the *Gloria* and *Credo*, although Bruckner left two empty sheets in the score, presumably for the *Credo*. The work is therefore dominated by a calm, contemplative mood and slow pace. Most likely Bruckner was here consciously or unconsciously looking back to Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina with a predominance of consonances and smooth voice leading.

**Jānis Torgāns**

1) Max Auer, *Anton Bruckner als Kirchenmusiker*. G. Bosse, Regensburg 1927, pp. 54–56.

*"A great musical power."*  
– Washington Post

*"This chorus's expertise in music pushes voices to extremes, from ethereal high tones to uncannily sustained bass drones."*  
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*"One of the world's greatest choirs."*  
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The **Latvian Radio Choir** is a unique, award-winning ensemble of professional singers that offers its audiences an extraordinary variety of repertoire ranging from early music to the most sophisticated scores of contemporary compositions.

The choir has recorded the Grammy Award-winning album *Adam's Lament* (ECM) composed by Arvo Pärt and conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste. It is a repeat winner of the Great Music Award of Latvia (the highest national award for professional achievement in music) and has received the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Award. The choir's recording of Sergei Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* was praised by Gramophone as the best recording of February 2013 and ranked among the 25 best albums of the year by the American radio station NPR.

The Latvian Radio Choir has performed at many of the world's most renowned concert halls: Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw (the Netherlands), Elbphilharmonie (Germany), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and Cité de la Musique-Philharmonie de Paris (France), Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Duke University Chapel and the Walt Disney Concert Hall (USA), Konzerthaus Berlin (Germany), the Library of Congress (USA), Queen Elizabeth Hall (UK) and the Dresden Frauenkirche (Germany).

It is also a regular performer at leading musical events, such as BBC Proms (UK), the Salzburg (Austria) and Lucerne (Switzerland) festivals, the Festival of Radio France Occitanie Montpellier



(France), the Baltic Sea Festival (Sweden), Printemps des arts de Monte-Carlo (Monaco), Klangspuren Festival (Austria), the White Light Festival (USA), Klangvokal Dortmund (Germany), Musikfest Erzgebirge (Germany), OzAsia Festival (Australia) and Soundstreams (Canada).

Often serving as a creative lab, the choir encourages composers to write new music that challenges the capabilities of the human voice. During the past 20 years, the ensemble has evolved into an unprecedented form of a choir where every singer has an individual mission and provides their unique contribution to the group's unique, defining blend of timbral qualities.

The choir regularly releases new recordings with Ondine, Hyperion Records, Deutsche Grammophon, ECM, BIS and Naïve, collaborating with outstanding guest conductors like Heinz Holliger, Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly, Gustavo Dudamel, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Peter Phillips. It has also partnered with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Camerata Salzburg and Concerto Copenhagen.

The Latvian Radio Choir was founded in 1940 by the legendary Latvian conductor Teodors Kalniņš, who led the ensemble until his passing in 1962. Following the artistic direction by Edgars Račevskis (1963–86) and Juris Kļaviņš (1987–92), the choir has had two conductors ever since 1992 – artistic director and principal conductor Sigvards Kļava and conductor Kaspars Putniņš.

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**Sigvards Kļava** is one of the most outstanding Latvian conductors, also a professor of conducting and producer, music director of the Latvian Radio Choir since 1992. As a result of Sigvards Kļava's steady efforts, the Latvian Radio Choir has become an internationally recognized, vocally distinctive collective, where each singer possesses a creative individuality. Under Sigvards' guidance, the choir has recorded a number of choral works by little known or completely forgotten composers of the past, as well as formed a friendly collaboration with a number of notable Latvian composers. Sigvards Kļava is a professor at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. Kļava is a multiple winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award. He has performed at the Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw of Amsterdam, Berliner Konzerthaus and Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Berwaldhallen in Stockholm, Dresdner Frauenkirche as well as in the New York Lincoln Centre.

- 1     **Os Justi** (WAB 30)  
Os justi meditabitur sapientiam:  
et lingua ejus loquetur judicium.  
Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius:  
et non supplantabuntur gressus ejus.  
Alleluia.
- Inveni David servum meum,  
oleo sancto meo unxi eum.  
Alleluia.
- 2     **Christus factus est** (WAB 11)  
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 to death –  
even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest  
place  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name.  
(Text: Philippians 2:8–9, NIV)
- 3     **Locus iste** (WAB 23)  
Locus iste a Deo factus est,  
inaestimabile sacramentum,  
irreprehensibilis est.
- This place was made by God,  
a priceless sacrament,  
beyond reproach.

- 4     **Ave Maria** (WAB 6)  
 Ave, Maria, gratia plena; Dominus tecum:  
 benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus  
 fructus ventris tui, Jesus.  
 Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis  
 peccatoribus,  
 nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, Amen.
- 5     **Libera me** (WAB 21)  
 Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,  
 in die illa tremenda  
 Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra  
 Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per  
 ignem.
- Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo, dum  
 discussio venerit, atque ventura ira  
 Quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.
- Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae,  
 dies magna et amara valde  
 Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per  
 ignem.
- Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine: et  
 lux perpetua luceat eis.
- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with  
 you.  
 Blessed are you among women, and  
 blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
 Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us  
 sinners,  
 now and at the hour of our death, Amen.
- Deliver me, O Lord, from death eternal  
 on that fearful day,  
 When the heavens and the earth shall be  
 moved,  
 When thou shalt come to judge the  
 world by fire.
- I am made to tremble, and I fear, till the  
 judgment be upon us, and the coming  
 wrath,  
 When the heavens and the earth shall be  
 moved.
- That day, day of wrath, calamity and  
 misery, day of great and exceeding  
 bitterness,  
 When thou shalt come to judge the  
 world by fire.
- Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord:  
 and let light perpetual shine upon them.

**Kronstorfer Messe (WAB 146)**

6

**I. Kyrie**

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

7

**II. Sanctus**

Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Sanctus.

Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria, gloria tua.

Osanna in excelsis.

Holy Lord, God of hosts. Holy.

Heaven and the earth are full of your  
glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

8

**III. Benedictus**

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Osanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of  
the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

9

**IV. Agnus Dei**

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi:  
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi:  
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of  
the world: have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of  
the world: grant us peace.

10–13 **Tantum Ergo** (Wab 43)

Tantum ergo Sacramentum, veneremur  
cernui:  
et antiquum documentum novo cedat  
ritui:  
praestet fides supplementum sensuum  
defectui.

Genitori Genitoque laus et iubilatio;  
salus, honor, virtus quoque sit et  
benedictio;  
Procedenti ab utroque compar sit  
laudatio.

Therefore so great the Sacrament, let us  
venerate with heads bowed:  
and let old practice give way to a new  
ceremony:  
let faith supplement where the senses  
fail.

To the Begetter and the Begotten;  
praise, honor, virtue and blessing;  
To the One proceeding from both an  
equal praise.

14 **Virga Jesse** (WAB 52)

Virga Jesse floruit: Virgo Deum et  
hominem genuit:  
pacem Deus reddidit, in se reconcilians  
ima summis.

Sprout from the branch of Jesse: a Virgin  
brings forth God and man:  
God restores peace, reconciling in  
himself the lowest with the highest.

15 **Pange lingua et Tantum ergo** (WAB 33)

Pange, lingua, gloriosi  
Corporis mysterium,  
Sanguinisque pretiosi,  
Quem in mundi pretium  
Fructus ventris generosi  
Rex effudit gentium.

Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory,  
Of His Flesh, the mystery sing;  
Of the Blood, all price exceeding,  
Shed by our Immortal King,  
Destined, for the world's redemption,  
From a noble Womb to spring.  
(Translation: Edward Caswall,  
1814–1878)



16 **Salvum fac populum tuum** (WAB 40)

Salvum fac populum tuum  
et benedic hereditati tuae, Domine  
Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in  
aeternum  
Per singulos dies benedicimus,  
et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum  
et in saeculorum saeculi.

Dignare, Domine, die isto, sine peccato  
nos custodire.  
Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri  
Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos  
Quem ad modum speravimus in te.

17 **Tota pulchra es Maria** (WAB 46)

Tota pulchra es Maria.  
Et macula originalis non est in te.  
Tu gloria Jerusalem.  
Tu laetitia Israel.  
Tu honorificentia populi nostri.  
Tu advocata peccatorum.  
O Maria, Maria!  
Virgo prudentissima.  
Mater clementissima.  
Ora pro nobis.  
Intercede pro nobis  
ad Dominum Jesum Christum.

O Lord, save thy people  
and bless thine heritage.  
Govern them and lift them up for ever.  
Day by day we magnify thee;  
And we worship thy Name  
ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day  
without sin.  
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have  
mercy upon us.  
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us  
as our trust is in thee.

You are all beautiful, Mary,  
and the original sin is not in you.  
You are the glory of Jerusalem,  
you are the joy of Israel,  
you give honour to our people.  
You are an advocate of sinners.  
O Mary,  
Virgin most intelligent,  
Mother most merciful.  
Pray for us,  
Plead for us,  
To the Lord Jesus Christ.

18    **Vexilla Regis** (WAB 51)  
Vexilla Regis prodeunt;  
fulget Crucis mysterium,  
quo carne carnis conditor  
suspensus est patibulo.

O Crux ave, spes unica,  
hoc Passionis tempore,  
auge piis justitiam,  
reisque dona veniam.

Te summa Deus Trinitas,  
collaudet omnis spiritus  
quos per crucis mysterium  
salvas rege per saecula.  
Amen.

The royal banner forward goes,  
The mystic cross refulgent glows:  
Where He, in flesh, flesh who made,  
Upon the tree of pain is laid.

O Cross! All hail! Sole hope, abide  
With us now in this Passion-tide:  
New grace in pious hearts implant,  
And pardon to the guilty grant.

Thee, mighty Trinity! One God!  
Let every living creature laud;  
Whom by the cross Thou dost deliver,  
O guide and govern now and ever!  
Amen.

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