

Eleanor Daley: *Os justi* (1994)

This concert begins with the promise of wisdom and justice. Seraphour begins with a Gregorian chant, *Os justi* ('The mouth of the righteous') which dates back to the Middle Ages, here set to music by the Canadian composer, Eleanor Daley (b. 1955). The text for *Os justi* is taken from Psalm 36 of the Vulgate and has been the subject of public fascination since Anton Bruckner's 1879 motet setting the same text. Listen as the lower voices carry the text and the soprano soars above, a celestial filigree atop our earthly proclamations to speak nothing but the truth.

Os justi meditabitur sapientiam; Et lingua ejus loquetur iudicium. Lex Dei ejus in corde ipsius; Et non supplantabantur gressus ejus. Alleluia.	The mouth of the righteous articulates wisdom; And their tongue speaks what is just. The law of God they keep in their heart; And their feet do not falter. Hallelujah.
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Allegrì (arr. Vass): *Miserere mei* (c. 1630)

Gregorio Allegrì (c. 1582-1652) was an Italian church composer of the Renaissance period and *Miserere mei, Deus* ('Have mercy upon me, God') remains one of his most enduring compositions to date. Allegrì's setting of Psalm 51 is often performed at commemorative events as its original form features two choirs singing five- and four-part polyphony in turn. Allegrì's setting relies on alternation between these two choirs and a monophonic (single voice) declamation of every other line in the style of a Gregorian chant. Let the rich *falsobordone* harmonies (sequences of root position triad chords) wash over you and listen for the soprano as she sings out above the group. This melody reached viral fame a few years ago and you may remember having seen the amusing video circulating the internet of King's College Choir featuring a young chorister with a helium balloon.

Aidan Vass: *Veni Creator* (2023)

Veni Creator Spiritus celebrates the arrival of Pentecost with a setting of the chant *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Aidan Vass' setting of the iconic Liturgical text begins with the traditional chant. With mixed meters and a contemporary use of contrapuntal techniques the piece expands throughout the stanzas culminating in the haunting final statement. This setting of *Veni Creator* is a dialogue between the ancient and modern. It's a piece that feels both timeless and fresh and it speaks to the ethos of the piece - an echo of the infinite.

-Aidan Vass and Seraphour

John Taverner: *Audivi vocem de caelo* (c. 1530)

John Taverner (1490-1545) was one of the most renowned English composers of the Renaissance, and his four-voice setting of *Audivi vocem de caelo* ('I heard a voice from the sky') was composed for All Saints Day which falls on the first of November. Little is known about Taverner's life before 1524, when it was recorded that he traveled to Boston, England as a guest singer at the Church of St. Botolph. *Audivi vocem de caelo* heralds the coming of Jesus into the world, just a few weeks before the celebration of Advent. Listen for the ways that Taverner plays

with the four voices – he begins with a four-voice polyphonic setting, but puts the lower three voices in counterpoint with each other as the top-most voice sings the chant in augmentation over them. He then splits the four voices into a series of duets, returning to the full four-voice texture only with the final line of the text: *Media nocte clamor factus est* ('In the middle of the night there was a cry').

Johannes Brahms: *O bone Jesu* (1866)

O bone Jesu miserere nobis ('Oh good Jesus, take pity upon us') is one of three short choral works Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) composed for women's choir. This and the *Adoramus Te* were written for the Hamburg Women's Choir in the 1850s. In this short work, Soprano 1 and Alto 1 sing together in canon with their second counterparts, neatly imitating the polyphonic styles of Renaissance music.

Johannes Brahms: *Adoramus Te* (1866)

Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi ('We adore you, Christ, and are blessed by you') is the second of Brahms' *Drei geistliche Chöre*, Op. 37. He adopts a clearly contrapuntal texture across all four voices, rather than collapsing them down into fewer parts as he did for *O bone Jesu*, retaining imitative canon entries across them. This liturgical antiphon is often sung on Good Friday.

Bruce Vandervalk: *Kyrie*

The *Kyrie* is the first movement of every Mass Ordinary setting, and also the only part of the Mass to be sung in Greek rather than Latin. The movement consists of only three distinct words: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison* ('Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy'). Bruce Vandervalk's (b. 1935) interpretation is the first piece on this program to present itself as unabashedly modern as opposed to the neo-Classical (even medieval) compositions that preceded it. Listen for Vandervalk's individualistic approach to harmony and rhythm, especially when compared to the more "faithful" interpretations of medieval polyphony that came before. What does Vandervalk's *Kyrie* remind you of?

Anonymous: *In Paradisum* (c. 1000)

In Paradisum ('Into Paradise') is the final chant sung in the Mass of the Dead as the deceased is processed out of the church and to their final resting place. This antiphon dates from the eleventh century Gregorian chants. The text begs the inhabitants of Heaven to accept the departed, and that the *Chorus angelorum te suscipiat, et cum Lazaro quondam paupere aeternam habeas requiem* ('Chorus of angels receive you, and that, just like Lazarus who was once a beggar, rest in eternal peace'). The antiphon is sung in the seventh church mode (VII), more commonly known today as the *Mixolydian mode*. This mode begins and ends on the fifth scale degree of the major scale (and in medieval harmony, this was a natural scale beginning on G).

Sungji Hong: *Lux Aeterna* (2022)

Lux Aeterna ('Eternal Light') was born in 2022 when iSing Silicon Valley commissioned the South Korean composer Sungji Hong (b. 1973) to write a piece for their concert "Love & Light." Hong writes, "The piece is dedicated to those who lost their lives in Ukraine and also those we loved in our lives." Like the *In Paradisum*, the text for this piece is taken from the Requiem Mass, sung at the very end of the funeral liturgy. *Lux Aeterna* is a supplication to the skies, asking for the departed to be bathed in the everlasting light of bliss. Hong's setting veers away from traditional Gregorian chants and instead introduces an almost operatic character to the soprano voice. Listen as the three accompanying voices venture into their lowest tessitura, smoothly undulating from one harmony to the next, while the solo soprano beseeches the heavens atop it all.

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1540-1611): *O Vos Omnes* (1585)

'All ye who walk this road, wait and see if there is any sorrow like mine.' The text to Tomás Luis de Victoria's motet, *O Vos Omnes* ('O All Ye'), is taken from the Matins prayer recited on Holy Saturday, at the end of the Catholic holiday of Lent. Before the resurrection of Jesus came the deepest darkness, and it is precisely this moment of extreme grief captured in the prayer and motet. Victoria (1540-1611), one of the foremost Spanish Renaissance composers, painted the movement of Christ's soul into the very music of this motet. Listen as the soprano voice spreads its wings to take flight – soaring over the earth – only to return back to its source.

Tomás Luis de Victoria: *Tenebrae factae sunt* (1585)

O Vos Omnes and *Tenebrae factae sunt* were both composed as part of an eighteen-motet cycle known as the *Tenebrae Responsories*. These motets were each dedicated to a different part of the Catholic hours during Holy Week, specifically the Matins and Lauds on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, the final three days of Lent leading up to Easter Sunday. Sung during Matins on Good Friday, *Tenebrae factae sunt* ('Darkness fell') recounts the dying moments of Christ upon the cross. *Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti? Et inclinato capite, emisit spiritum* (My God, why have thou forsaken me? And inclining his head, he gave up the ghost.) Victoria generates a haunting atmosphere of grief and lamentation by leaving out the soprano for the majority of this motet. Rarely utilizing the full four-voice polyphonic texture, Victoria instead focuses on the counterpoint between two, or at most three, voices at a time, either leaving one silent or collapsing two voices into one. By keeping the tessitura relatively low, Victoria evinces our deepest grief, encouraging us to let it all out on this moment before happiness returns once more.

Randall Thompson: *Alleluia* (1940).

The American composer, Randall Thompson (1896-1989) was commissioned in the summer of 1940 by Serge Koussevitsky, director of the Tanglewood Institute, to write a celebratory work in honor of the Berkshire Music Center's inauguration. That June, Paris fell to Nazi forces and the events of World War II grew more brutal by the day. In such a climate, Thompson felt unable to compose a jubilant anthem, and instead produced his *Alleluia* – a solemn contemplation of what

life gives us and takes away from us. Despite the celebratory nature of the word itself – Alleluia antiphons are traditionally sung during Easter – Thompson wrote that, “The music in my particular Alleluia cannot be made to sound joyous. It is a slow, sad piece...” For him, *Alleluia* represents a quotation from Job 1:21, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Despite its tragic conception, *Alleluia* has become an integral part of the Tanglewood Institute and is always performed at the beginning of its annual Festival.

Javier Busto: *Missa Minima* (2018)

Javier Busto Sagrado (b. 1949) composed *Missa Minima* to be performed during short liturgical services. In order to maintain accessibility for a wide range of choirs, Busto writes, “It [*Missa Minima*] was written without complexity, expressing the possibilities of rhythmic and melodic changes but always respecting the classical concept of the Mass.” Busto writes in a neo-classical style, but with a far greater degree of homophony across the voices than his Renaissance counterparts. The *Missa Minima* follows an abridged version of the Mass Ordinary, consisting of *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*.

Kevin Siegfried: *Shaker Songs* (1997)

The Shakers (a portmanteau of “Shaking Quakers”) are a religious sect dating back to the eighteenth century in England and the United States. The Shakers are known – apart from their tendency towards ecstatic reactions during religious services – for the simplicity of their art. Shaker style is unadorned, constructed of simple parts, and deeply connected to nature. In 1997, Kevin Siegfried (b. 1969) composed a cycle of five short musical episodes known as *Shaker Songs*. The five movements: *Peace*, *Love is Little*, *Heavenly Display*, *Lay me Low*, and *Benediction* progress through different polyphonic textures, but always keep in mind the stylistic tenets of Shaker art.

Yoni Fogelman: *The Song of Miriam* (2023)

The up-and-coming composer, Yoni Fogelman (b. 2002) wrote *The Song of Mirriam* with one ear to the past and one ear listening forward. Based on the Old Testament’s *Song of Mirriam*, the piece opens with the implosion of language, as the text is syllabized and constantly repeated across all four voices to create an atmosphere where time stops momentarily still. The music then shifts to feature solo voices, moving clearly out of the realm of diatonic notes and venturing into the creative space of microtones and modal harmonies. An exciting way to close an introspective program covering five centuries worth of vocal music.

-All notes without specific attribution by Saagar Asnani, UC Berkeley