



LINN

**William Mundy**

*Vox patris caelestis*

**ROBERT QUINNEY  
CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD**











# **Vox patris caelestis**

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William Mundy (c. 1529–1591)

**ROBERT QUINNEY** director  
**CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD**

1. **A solis ortus cardine** 9:30
2. **Vox patris caelestis** 20:24
3. **Videte miraculum** 4:31
4. **Kyrie** 4:10
5. **Sive vigilem** 2:45
6. **Magnificat** 8:47
7. **O Lord, the maker of all thing** 3:50

Total Running Time 53:59

William Mundy's generation of English musicians, who came of age in the 1540s and '50s, must have been formed at least partly by the turbulent times in which they grew up. Born around 1529 in London, by 1543 Mundy was Head Chorister at Westminster Abbey. In 1548 he was Parish Clerk at St-Mary-at-Hill, where his father Thomas held the inferior office of Sexton; both generations were involved in the music of this wealthy parish, where the young Thomas Tallis had worked for a year or two in the 1530s, and where singers from the Chapel Royal were often engaged.

The musical parameters set in Mundy's early life were broad and long, ranging from plainchant, via semi-improvised masses 'upon the square' (of which two by Mundy, not recorded here, are extant) to the ornate polyphony of votive antiphons and masses by the likes of Ludford and Taverner. Mundy was too young to have produced much music before the Edwardine reforms took hold, which suggests that his Latin sacred music dates from the restoration of the Catholic liturgy under Mary I. It is not difficult to imagine how the reformers' insistence on textual clarity must have frustrated budding musicians such as Mundy, reaching maturity at the very moment at which musical possibilities contracted radically; nor does it take a great leap of imagination to sense the excitement of that same generation as they set about the refurbishment of the Catholic liturgy in 1553.

The earliest music on this recording is probably the *alternatim* (plainchant alternating with polyphony) *Kyrie* and *Magnificat*; both works are transmitted by the Gyffard Partbooks, which – unusually – contain music in only three and four voice parts. In both, Mundy switches between different voice combinations in the course of a movement rather than maintaining a continuous texture, a characteristic of earlier

English polyphony. In the *Kyrie* in particular, as in the much larger-scale *Vox patris caelestis*, the scoring evokes the splendour of pre-Reformation polyphony. In general Mundy writes in an up-to-date idiom, sometimes deploying the famous English Treble voice, but always in the tightly argued, closely imitative style characteristic of the 1550s and later. *Videte miraculum* (at least as it is transmitted, in the Baldwin Partbooks of the late 1570s) gives a clue that the liturgical function of such pieces may have changed: Mundy embeds the plainchant *cantus firmus* in time-honoured fashion, here at the top of the five-voice texture; but he intervenes in its final phrase, producing a cadence in the mixolydian mode rather than the original phrygian, and thus fitting the piece for performance not as a Responsory, with chant verses interpolated, but as a motet, sung once-through.

In *A solis ortus cardine* Mundy sets the same verses of the Christmas hymn as his older contemporary John Sheppard. Whereas Sheppard doubles the highest *Triplex* (Treble) part throughout (with one of those voices carrying the *cantus firmus*), Mundy keeps the texture closer and sets the plainchant in the bass; this highlights the often vigorous interplay of the voices above, and allows for audacious cadences above the chant's final semitone, in particular at the end of the verse 'Foenō jacere pertulit'. We believe this is its first recording. The same can by no means be said for *Vox patris caelestis*, the reputation of which as a monument of mid-sixteenth-century English polyphony has been burnished by repeated recorded performances over the last half-century. It is on a scale approaching the symphonic – 20 minutes in our performance – and employs the largest vocal scoring of Mundy's extant music: Treble, Mean, two Contratenors, Tenor and Bassus. All three sections begin with two passages in a reduced scoring (e.g. at the opening, Mean, Contratenor 1 and Bass, followed by Treble, Contratenor 2 and Tenor) before a closing paragraph for the whole choir. A miraculous sonic expansion occurs before the final full section, when at 'Veni ad me, Assuerum verum, Esther' the three



voices on the extremes of the texture are divided (a technique known as a *Gymel*) and the middle voices silenced; this creates a coruscating six-part texture that inevitably reminds the listener of earlier English polyphony, and serves to highlight this moment.

The text's starting-point is the antiphon *Tota pulchra es*, which in liturgical use is addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but is derived from the Song of Songs. The rich and erotic imagery of that book of love poetry is everywhere in *Vox patris caelestis*. After a brief preface, the text is all direct speech from the 'heavenly Father' to the 'Virgin most holy', and clearly refers to the Assumption, one of the most important feast-days of the Catholic calendar, and one celebrated lavishly at St Mary-at-Hill. But John Milsom's identification of the text's author in 2010 sheds further light on the work's provenance: he was William Forrest, a 'musically literate author-priest', some of whose extant work was evidently written in search of royal patronage. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is also her Coronation – hence the climactic calls 'Veni, veni, veni: caelesti gloria coronaberis' ('come, be crowned with heavenly glory'). Thus the text readily admits an allegorical reading as (to quote Milsom), 'a coronation address to Mary Tudor, studded with allusions to subjects used in civic pageantry staged for the coronations of queens'. In this reading, it is Queen Mary being likened to the Old Testament Queen Esther, an exemplar for English queens mentioned in several texts contemporaneous with Mary's accession in 1553. It is this part of the text that receives the brilliant spotlight of the triple *gymel*. Milsom further suggests the 'tantalizing possibility' that Mundy's music may have been composed for a pageant in the City of London around the feast of the Assumption on 15 August (which falls neatly between the proclamation of Mary on 19 July and her coronation on 1 October), or perhaps as part of the Coronation Procession on 30 September. Whatever its provenance, at over 470 years' distance *Vox patris caelestis* stands as a virtuosic synthesis of a remarkable text with equally remarkable music, and shows Mundy more than equal to the task of holding the listener's attention over an epic span of time.

*Sive vigilem* is likewise a setting of an enigmatic text. No author has been identified, and there is only one other extant setting, by the Flemish composer Derrick Gerarde, who was active in England at the same time as Mundy. They are very different pieces – Mundy’s far more terse, and arguably more responsive to the text’s imagery and general sense of urgency. *Sive vigilem* appears in the partbooks possibly assembled at All Souls, Oxford, by Robert Dow in the 1580s – the only piece by Mundy in that collection – where the scribe adds a pun on the composer’s name:

*Dies lunae  
Ut lucem solis sequitur lux proxima lunae  
Sic tu post Birdum Munde secunde venis.*

Monday [= Moon-day, Mundy]  
As the moon’s light follows next after the sun’s light,  
So you, Mundy, come second after Byrd.

Finally, the only English-texted piece on this recording, *O Lord, the maker of all thing*, points beyond the 1550s to the future of English sacred music as part of the liturgy of the reformed, established Church. The piece was in circulation well beyond Mundy’s lifetime; the earliest source is dated 1625. The text is a verse translation of the Compline hymn *Te lucis ante terminum* that appeared in *The King’s Primer* of 1545. In this exquisite miniature we are a world away from the grandeur of *Vox patris caelestis*, and it was through his Anglican service music that the composer was to be remembered for the first three centuries or more of his after-life. Transcriptions of some of Mundy’s Latin-texted music were made for the ill-fated *Tudor Church Music* edition in the 1920s but never published; so it was not until F. Ll. Harrison’s *Early English Church Music* edition of 1963 that the moon rose again on this distinctive contribution to the repertory.

## A note on voices and performance pitch

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The size and disposition of the choral foundation at New College has changed little since the early fifteenth century. We cannot know, of course, how sixteenth-century choirs sounded, but choirs such as ours represent a continuous tradition of performance that both predated and survived the Reformation, and may thus be considered at least as appropriate a medium for his music as a fully adult professional choir or consort.

At the outer edges of the English sixteenth-century choir were voice types that continue to this day: the high *Triplex* (which term survives today as Treble) and low *Bassus*. There is, on the other hand, much less clarity about what voice types populated the core of the ensemble: the voices ranging downward from *Medius* to Tenor via Contratenor. The distribution of voices on this recording is somewhat experimental, and may be summarized as follows:

- where there is no *Triplex*, the highest part (*Medius*) is sung by the boy choristers alone, except for *Videte miraculum*, where they are joined by two altos
- where *Triplex* exists, choristers sing both that part and *Medius*, the latter in combination with one or two adult altos
- Contratenor is sung almost exclusively by high tenors

Performing pitch in the mid-sixteenth century was probably a sharp semitone above modern ‘concert pitch’. Throughout this recording we adopted a standard of A=466, a semitone above ‘concert pitch’; the one exception is *O Lord, the maker of all thing*, which is recorded at the pitch this music is most often sung by twenty-first-century choirs, a minor third above the notation.



1. **A solis ortus cardine**

A solis ortus cardine  
Ad usque terrae limitem  
Christum canamus principem,  
Natum Maria Virgine.

Beatus auctor saeculi  
Servile corpus induit,  
Ut carne carnem liberans  
Ne perderet quod condidit.

Castae parentis viscera  
Caelestis intrat gratia;  
Venter puellae bajulat  
Secreta quae non noverat.

Domus pudici pectoris  
Templum repente fit Dei;  
Intacta nesciens virum  
Verbo concepit Filium.

Enixa est puerpera  
Quem Gabriel praedixerat,  
Quem matris alvo gestiens  
Clausus Joannes senserat.

Foeno jacere pertulit,  
Praesepe non abhorruit,  
Parvoque lacte pastus est  
Per quem nec ales esurit.

Gaudet chorus caelestium  
Et Angeli canunt Deo,  
Palamque fit pastoribus  
Pastor, Creator omnium.

*From lands that see the sun arise,  
To earth's remotest boundaries,  
The Virgin born today we sing,  
The Son of Mary, Christ the king.*

*Blest author of this earthly frame,  
To take a servant's form he came,  
That liberating flesh by flesh,  
Whom he had made might live afresh.*

*In that chaste parent's holy womb,  
Celestial grace hath found its home:  
And she, as earthly bride unknown,  
Yet call that offspring blest her own.*

*The mansion of the modest breast  
Becomes a shrine where God shall rest:  
The pure and undefiled one  
Conceived in her womb the Son.*

*That Son, that royal Son she bore,  
Whom Gabriel's voice had told afore:  
Whom, in his mother yet concealed,  
The infant baptist had revealed.*

*The manger and the straw he bore,  
The cradle did he not abhor:  
A little milk his infant fare  
Who feedeth even each fowl of air.*

*The heavenly chorus filled the sky,  
The angels sang to God on high,  
What time to shepherds watching lone  
They made creation's Shepherd known.*

Gloria tibi Domine,  
Qui natus es de Virgine,  
Cum Patre et Sancto Spiritu,  
In sempiterna saecula. Amen.

Hymn at Lauds at Christmastide; Coelius Sedulius (d. c. 450);  
translation by J. M. Neale (1818–1866)

*All honour, laud, and glory be,  
O Jesu, Virgin born, to thee;  
All glory, as is ever meet,  
To the Father and to Paraclete. Amen.*

## 2. **Vox patris caelestis**

Vox patris caelestis  
ad sacram Virginem Mariam,  
Filii ejus genitricem,  
in ejus migratione a corpore mortali  
in his verbis prorumpens:  
tota pulchra es, amica mea,  
mihi amabilissima Annae prolis  
Virgo sacratissima Maria,  
et macula ab ineunte conceptionis tuae  
instanti vel usquam non est in te.

Favus distillans labia tua  
ex corde purissimo verba mira  
dulcedinis spiritualis gratia.  
Iam enim hiems terreni frigoris  
et miseria transit;  
flores aeternae felicitatis  
et salutis mecum tibi ab aeterna praeparate  
olfacere et sentire apparuerunt.

Vineae florentes odorem caelestis  
ambrosianae dulcedinis dederunt;  
et vox turturis, quae mea tui dilectissimi  
amatoris sola est exoptatio te amplecti,  
audita est in terra nostra tali sonante gratia.

*The voice of the heavenly Father  
to the holy Virgin Mary,  
the mother of his Son,  
as she was translated from her mortal body,  
broke forth in these words:  
‘All lovely are you, my love,  
child of Anne most dear to me,  
Mary, Virgin most holy,  
and from the moment of your conception  
never has spot or stain been found in you.*

*‘Your lips are as a honeycomb,  
distilling from your more pure heart  
words wonderful in spiritual sweetness.  
Lo, now the winter of earthly cold  
and wretchedness is past;  
flowers of eternal bliss and happiness which  
have awaited you here with me from everlasting  
now appear, beautiful of sight and scent.*

*‘The fruitful vines give their perfume  
of ambrosia, heavenly in sweetness,  
and the voice of the turtle dove, the song of  
your dearest lover’s only desire to embrace  
you, is heard in our land with graceful notes.*

Surge, propera, amica mea,  
columba mea, formosa mea,  
de terra longinqua miseriis plena,  
et veni in terram quam monstravero tibi.

Veni de corpore mortali, et induam te,  
mea corcula, vestitu deaurato  
circumdata varietate caelestis gloriae.

Veni ad me, dilectissimum amatorem tuum,  
prae omnibus adamata,  
et ponam in te thronum meum  
quia concupivi speciem tuam.

Veni de Libano monte mundano quamquam  
altissimo humanae contemplationis,  
ad montem Sion, ubi innocentes  
manibus et corde ascendere deberent.

Veni ad me, Assuerum verum, Esther,  
mea nobilissima, pro populo tuo oratura  
mecum in aeternum manere et delectare.

Te omnes caeli cives summo desiderio  
exoptant videre.  
Veni, veni, veni:  
caelesti gloria coronaberis.  
Amen.

William Forrest (*fl.* 1530–1581)

*'Arise and make haste my beloved,  
my dove, my fair one,  
from that far land full of sorrow,  
and come to this land which I will show you.*

*'Come forth from your mortal body,  
clothed in raiment of gold, my dear-heart,  
surrounded by the rainbow of heavenly glory.*

*'Come to me, your most dear lover,  
for I have loved you above all others,  
and I will bestow upon you my kingdom,  
for I have long desired your beauty.*

*'Come from that earthly mount Lebanon,  
be it ever so lofty in human contemplation,  
to the mount Sion, whither the pure  
hand and heart must ever ascend.*

*'Come to me, your true Ahasuerus, my Esther,  
my most high-born, to pray for your people  
and ever to stay and take your delight with me.*

*'All the hosts of heaven with great desire are  
longing to look upon you.  
Come, come, come:  
be crowned with heavenly glory.'  
Amen.*



### 3. **Videte miraculum**

Videte miraculum Matris Domini:  
concepit Virgo virilis ignara consortii;  
stans onerata nobili onere Maria:  
et matrem se laetam cognoscit  
quae se nescit uxorem.

*Behold the wonder of the Mother of the Lord:  
a Maiden has conceived, knowing no union with a man,  
Mary, standing heavy with her precious load;  
and knowing not herself as wife,  
herself a joyful mother she perceives.*

Anonymous: Responsory at First Vespers, Feast of the Purification  
(Candlemas), translated by Stephen Anderson

### 4. **Kyrie**

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.*

Ordinary of the Mass

### 5. **Sive vigilem**

Sive vigilem, sive dormiam, sive edam aut bibam,  
semper videor mihi audire sonum tubae  
et voce angeli clamantis et dicentis:  
Surgite mortui, et venite ad iudicium.  
Vigilemus et oremus, quia nescimus  
diem neque horam quando Dominus veniet.

*Whether I keep watch or sleep, whether I eat or drink,  
always I seem to hear the sound of the trumpet  
and the voice of an angel calling out and saying:  
Rise up, ye dead, and come to the judgement.  
Let us watch and pray, for we do not know  
the day nor the hour when the Lord will come.*

Anonymous

## 6. **Magnificat**

Magnificat anima mea Dominum:  
et exsultavit 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 ejus.  
Et misericordia ejus  
a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.  
Fecit potentiam in bracchio 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 ejus in saecula.  
Gloria Patri, et Filio,  
et Spiritui Sancto:  
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,  
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

14

Luke 1. 46–55

*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 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.*

7. **O Lord, the maker of all thing**

O Lord, the maker of all thing,  
We pray thee now in this evening  
Us to defend through thy mercy  
From all deceit of our enemies.

Let neither us deluded be,  
Good Lord, with dream nor fantasy;  
Our hearts waking in thee thou keep  
That we in sin fall not on sleep.

O Father, through thy blessed Son,  
Grant us this our petition,  
To whom, with the Holy Ghost, always  
In heav'n and earth be laud and praise. Amen.

Metrical translation of the 5th-century Compline hymn  
*Te lucis ante terminum* in The King's Primer, 1541





## CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD

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The Choir of New College Oxford is firmly established as one of the most acclaimed British choral ensembles. Celebrated for its distinctive sound, it embodies the splendour of the English choral tradition. The choir is renowned for its versatility, reflected in its diverse core repertoire, with a particular scholarly focus on Renaissance and Baroque music.

When William of Wykeham founded his 'New' College in 1379, a choral foundation was at its heart, and daily chapel services have been a central part of college life ever since. The choir comprises sixteen boy choristers and fourteen adult clerks – a mixture of professional singers and undergraduate members of the college.

Touring is an important part of the choir's profile, and highlights have included singing for Pope Francis in the Sistine Chapel, Rome, and concerts in Hungary, Normandy and Malta. In spring 2023 the choir toured the east coast of the USA, culminating in highly acclaimed concerts in New York.

The choir has performed with the UK's finest ensembles, including the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The English Concert and Instruments of Time & Truth. Bach is fundamental to the choir's work, with a regular cantata programme and annual performances of the Christmas Oratorio and St John Passion. Memorable performances in 2024 included a joint concert with the Choirs of Christ Church and Magdalen College in Christ Church Cathedral, concluding with Tallis's 40-part motet *Spem in Alium*.

The choir has an impressive discography of over 100 recordings, reflecting the diversity of its repertoire and performance styles. Notable among the albums released with director Robert Quinney are *John Blow: Symphony Anthems*, and *The Gate of Heaven: Favourite Anthems from New College*, featuring music with an Oxford connection, including two new commissions. The choir's *Parry: Songs of Farewell and other choral works*, celebrated the centenary of C. H. H. Parry with 'laudable precision and unfailing perception ... The performance hits radiant heights ... piercingly expressive' (*Gramophone*). In 2020 the choir made its debut recording for Linn with *John Sheppard: Media vita*: 'A consistently radiant sound with strong, purposeful phrasing ... [it is] thrilling to hear such young voices do justice to one of Sheppard's finest works' (*Gramophone*). In June 2023 the choir released its second recording with Linn, *New College Commissions*: 'a fascinating CD that is well worth exploring where attentive listening will be amply rewarded'.

## ROBERT QUINNEY director

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Robert Quinney was born in Nottingham, UK, and began his musical life as a chorister in Dundee Cathedral Choir. He was subsequently Organ Scholar of King's College, Cambridge, where he completed his undergraduate and graduate studies. A performing career took him to London, where he worked first at Westminster Cathedral, then for nine years as Sub-Organist at Westminster Abbey, during which time he performed at several important national and state occasions – including, in 2011, the Marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. After a short period as Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral he moved to Oxford in 2014.

He directs the internationally acclaimed Choir of New College Oxford, where he is Tutorial Fellow in Music; he is also an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Music. Alongside his work at Oxford he maintains a busy schedule as a solo organist. Since 2022 he has been Director of the Edington Festival of Music within the Liturgy.

His choral and organ recordings have been widely acclaimed: of one album of organ music by J. S. Bach, *Gramophone* wrote that 'Quinney's Bach gets to the heart of the music with refreshing clarity and a communication born of genuine understanding'. He made his debut at the Royal Festival Hall in 2017, returning there with a second all-Bach programme in March 2023. Away from the UK he has recently given recitals in the Netherlands, Geneva and Stockholm.





# CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD

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## **CHORISTERS (TRIPLEX, MEDIUS\*)**

Misha Ardakov  
James Arnold\*  
Jack Baker-Ellis <sup>2,4</sup>  
Andres Bobe Carvalho  
Alexander Compton-Burnett <sup>2</sup>  
Oscar Compton-Burnett  
Toby Conway\*  
Yoav Gal <sup>2,4</sup>  
Thomas Howarth <sup>4</sup>  
Monty Lawrence  
Arran Lusty  
Frankie Phythian-Adams  
Alexander Remoundos <sup>2,4</sup>  
Ambrose Shaw  
Felix Thorpe  
George Walker <sup>4</sup>  
Jacob Whyte\* <sup>2,4</sup>  
Aloysius Willinge  
Ethan Zhang\* <sup>4</sup>

## **ALTO (MEDIUS, CONTRATENOR)**

Lucy Ballard <sup>2</sup>  
Emily Fraser <sup>2</sup>  
William Purefoy  
Zachary Roberts

## **TENOR (CONTRATENOR, TENOR)**

Edward Beswick <sup>2,4</sup>  
Peter Kendall  
Joseph Mason  
Patrick Maxwell  
Dónal McCann <sup>2</sup>  
Theo Peters <sup>2,4</sup>  
Jonathan Venn <sup>2</sup>  
Joseph Wicks <sup>2,4</sup>

## **BASS (TENOR, BASSUS)**

Dominic Grimshaw <sup>2</sup>  
John Johnston <sup>2</sup>  
Piers Connor Kennedy  
Thomas Lowen <sup>2</sup>  
Raphaël Maurin <sup>2</sup>  
Anton May <sup>2</sup>  
Marcus McDevitt  
Robert Quinney <sup>2</sup>  
Jiho Ro  
Daniel Tate <sup>2</sup>

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on 12, 14–16 April 2024

*Recording Producer & Engineer*  
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*Post-production*  
Julia Thomas

*Label Manager*  
Timothée van der Stegen

*Design*  
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