

The Lambeth Anonamous

Recordings from the Arundel Choirbook

Iken Scholars · Matthew Dunn

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World-premiere recordings

Iken Scholars

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Jenny Forsyth, Bethany James

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The Lambeth Anonymous

The Arundel and Caius Choirbooks (Lambeth Palace Library MS 1; Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 667/760) are the two most significant surviving collections of English polyphony from the early 16th century. They are invaluable sources for the masses of Robert Fayrfax (1464–1521) and Nicholas Ludford (*c.* 1490–1557) and offer a wealth of music by lesser-known composers of the period.

Seven anonymous pieces in the Arundel or Lambeth Choirbook, known as the ‘Lambeth Anonymous’ stand alone among the repertoire of these volumes, in that these seven pieces are the only unattributed works across both sources. Any attempt to understand the music of these pieces, therefore, cannot rely on biographical details, but instead must take the manuscript itself, its origin and context as its point of departure.

Alongside the works of Ludford and Fayrfax, the Lambeth Anonymous compositions offer a captivating glimpse into the musical landscape of early 16th-century England. Now, in what is likely the 500th anniversary year of the creation of the Arundel Choirbook manuscript, these pieces have been recorded for the first time by the Iken Scholars. The recording was made in the chapel of Lambeth Palace, which has been the home of the manuscript since the first half of the 17th century. A collection of richly diverse works is revealed within the set. The anonymous composer or composers demonstrate a sensitivity to text, a mature handling of mood, and an ability to assemble musical structures of considerable length and complexity. They are deserving of their place in the wider canon of the period, even if they are arguably not of the calibre of the very first flight of composers of their day.

Strong evidence suggests that both the Arundel and Caius Choirbooks originated at Arundel College, Sussex, in the early 16th century. Beyond a significantly overlapping repertoire, the manuscripts share an exceptional size and a similar layout, and a shared scribe is strongly indicated. This hypothesis is further supported by the discovery in Arundel Castle of a manuscript roll (Arundel Castle MS A340) containing music by Ludford and copied by the same scribe. It is believed the Caius Choirbook was a presentation copy from Arundel College to St Stephen’s, Westminster, while the Arundel Choirbook remained at the college and is thought to have been used in services there before making its way to Lambeth Palace in the late 16th or early 17th century.

Founded in 1380, Arundel College was a thriving collegiate church and religious institution with a substantial endowment and a well-defined structure, including a significant choral establishment. Headed by a Master, the college maintained a formal hierarchy of chaplains, clerks, and choristers. Despite fluctuating financial fortunes over its 164-year history until its dissolution in 1544, Arundel College flourished in the period immediately preceding the English Reformation, under the mastership of Edward Higgons. A prominent lawyer holding senior positions within the Tudor legal system, Higgons also served as a Canon of St Stephen's, Westminster, where Ludford was principal musician. Appointed Master of Arundel College in 1513, Higgons is thought to have instigated the creation of both the Caius and Arundel Choirbooks. An inscription in the Caius Choirbook reads: 'Ex dono et opere Edwardi Higgons' / 'By the gift and work of Edward Higgons'. Though once thought to have indicated that Higgons physically copied the works, the inscription is now thought to signify his patronage and financial support rather than his personal involvement in the copying. The identity of the scribe remains unknown.

The seven Lambeth Anonymous pieces set four votive antiphons to Mary, two Magnificats and an antiphon for Eastertide. Presented in their manuscript order here, they are nestled in the choirbook between mass settings by Fayrfax and Ludford on either side and followed by three other Marian devotional pieces by Walter Lambe, Fayrfax and Edmund Sturton.

The **Salve regina** is a lively setting of this text sung daily from Trinity to Advent at Compline. As was common for the period, the composer contrasts full sections with more intimate duos, trios and quartets; the full sections corresponding to the key declamatory moments in the text, such as the opening ('Salve, regina' / 'Hail, O queen'), and the beginning of the final section ('O clemens, O pia' / 'O merciful one, O dutiful one'). Occasional interjections of the full choir elsewhere add drama and bring the text to life: for example, the 'salve' closing the first trio, or heartfelt 'gementes et flentes' ('groaning and weeping') where the full choir joins the low trio unexpectedly. The text on the first folio of this piece has been obscured for unknown reasons; it is the only text treated in this way in the manuscript.

Ave dei patris filia strikes a more intimate tone from the offset, setting two contrasting verse sections before a full section. This pattern is repeated twice more, thereby dividing the text into three portions. The use of imitation, where the voices copy one another, is not a strong feature of the compositional style of the Lambeth Anonymous. It is present often at the beginning of sections, but usually in a subtle or even vague way. This is markedly contrasted, however, at the end of this piece ('O gloriosissima' / 'O most glorious'), where the composer builds pace and excitement as the motif echoes through the choir from the lowest to highest voice.

The two Magnificat settings sit side by side in the manuscript and would have been used liturgically at Vespers at Arundel. Both employ the common alternatim technique whereby sections of chant and polyphony are contrasted. **Magnificat I** uses the eighth tone and **Magnificat II** the seventh. Among the Lambeth Anonymous pieces, these are the only two to employ gimels (split lines), which gives the composer greater flexibility when building verse sections. For example, the first quartet of Magnificat I ('quia fecit' / 'for he has done') is made up of split treble and bass lines. A common feature of the design of the Anonymous's verse sections is to make balancing patterns of contrasting voices. For example, juxtaposing outer and inner, or high and low voices. In this way, the first ('outer') quartet is followed by a trio of mean, contratenor and tenor voices at 'qui potens est' ('for he that is mighty'); or the 'sicut erat' ('as it was in the beginning') trio in Magnificat II, for split treble and mean voices, is adjacent to the 'et in secula' ('and ever shall be') trio for contratenor, tenor and bass. Such patterns help build a unifying architecture for these compositions, which are conceived on such large canvasses.

The **Vidi aquam egredientem** stands in contrast to the other Lambeth Anonymous compositions on several fronts. It is the only piece not connected with Mary (instead, the text takes the place of the 'Asperges me' at the start of mass during Eastertide) and it is almost entirely composed for full choir throughout. There are a number of compositional 'errors' in this piece (parallel octaves and so on), but the overall effect of energy and joy is irresistible. The two verse sections ('Confitemini domino' / 'Let us acknowledge the Lord', and 'Gloria patri' / 'Glory to the father') offer a welcome, if short-lived, change of timbre, guiding the listener through the key structural moments in the text.

A particular feature of **Ave mundi spes Maria** is its close relationship between text and music. This is true of many passages across the Lambeth Anonymous compositions but is particularly so in this piece. An example would be the tightly intertwined contratenor and tenor duo at 'Cujus iram expavescimus' ('whose anger we fear') with its darkly flattened *ficta*, which is followed by the first full section 'O Maria'; or the extended melisma at 'donum' ('gift') in the section 'quod est super omne donum' ('that is above every gift'). The central full section ('Christe, fili summi patris' / 'Christ, son of the supreme Father') marks an inflection point in the text where the focus shifts from Mary to Jesus. The entry builds imitatively, rather than all voices beginning together, which is more common for the full sections of the Lambeth Anonymous, meaning that the full character of the passage is more gradually revealed to the listener as each voice enters. The last of the seven Lambeth Anonymous pieces is the **Gaude flore virginali**, which is, fittingly, a meditation on the seven joys of Mary. Whilst much of the compositional technique is shared with the pieces already discussed, this piece is set apart from the others in the frequency of changes between verse sections. 'Quod hec septem gaudia non cessabunt, nec decrescent, sed durabunt, et florescent per eterna secula' ('that these seven joys will not cease or diminish, but will last and flourish throughout eternal ages') is a good example that encompasses two verse sections and a full section within the space of a few bars. This technique adds a particular layer of interest and exuberance to the composition that reflects the intent of the text.

The Iken Scholars were pleased to be able to record these pieces in Lambeth Palace Chapel in May 2025. We are grateful to the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library, to Angel Early Music, and to the Church Commissioners for England, whose financial support enabled this project. Our thanks additionally go to the staff at Lambeth Palace and all those who made this project possible, especially Mary Clayton-Kastenholz of Lambeth Palace Library, who initiated this project and drove it through to conclusion. We also thank Jeremy Summerly our producer, Oscar Torres our sound engineer, and Ghislaine Morgan our vocal consultant.

In crafting these notes I am particularly indebted to David Skinner for his introduction to the Arundel Choirbook facsimile (The Arundel Choirbook: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1: a facsimile and introduction) and Nick Sandon for his modern performing editions and enlightening introductions (Antico Edition RCM31-37). Images of the manuscript can be accessed via the Lambeth Palace Library online image gallery (<https://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/>) and the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Manuscripts (DIAMM) (www.diamm.ac.uk).

Matthew Dunn, July 2025

We thank Nick Sandon and Antico Edition for permission to print the editions and translations of the Latin texts.

1-3 Salve regina

Salve regina, mater misericordie,
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus, exules filii Eve.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.

Eya ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte,
et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exilium ostende.

Virgo mater ecclesie,
Eterna porta glorie,
Esto nobis refugium
Apud patrem et filium.

O clemens.

Virgo clemens, virgo pia,
Virgo dulcis, O Maria,
Exaudi preces omnium
Ad te pie clamantium.

O pia.

Funde preces tuo nato,
Crucifixo, vulnerato,
Et pro nobis flagellato,
Spinis puncto, felle potato.

O dulcis Maria, salve.

Salve regina

Hail, O queen, mother of pity,
our life, sweetness and hope, hail.
To thee we cry, exiled children of Eve.
To thee we sigh, groaning and weeping
in this vale of tears.

Behold therefore, our advocate,
turn those merciful eyes of thine towards us,
and show Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb,
to us after this exile.

Virgin mother of the church,
eternal gateway to glory,
be to us a refuge
with the father and son.

O merciful one.

Merciful virgin, dutiful virgin,
sweet virgin, O Mary,
hear the prayers of all
crying faithfully to thee.

O dutiful one.

Pour out prayers to thy Son,
crucified, wounded
and scourged for us,
pierced with thorns, slaked with gall.

O sweet Mary, hail.

4-6 Ave dei patris filia

Ave dei patris filia sublimissima,
dei filii mater dignissima,
dei spiritus sponsa venustissima,
dei unius et trini ancilla subjectissima.

Ave summe eternitatis filia clementissima,
summe veritatis mater piissima,
summe bonitatis sponsa benignissima,
summe trinitatis ancilla mitissima.

Ave eterne caritatis filia desideratissima,
eterne sapientie mater gratissima,
eterne spiracionis sponsa sacratissima,
coeterne majestatis ancilla sincerissima.

Ave Jesu tui filii dulcis filia,
Christi dei tui mater alma,
sponsi sponsa sine ulla macula,
deitatis ancilla sessioni proxima.

Ave domini filia singulariter generosa,
domini mater singulariter gloriosa,
domini sponsa singulariter speciosa,
domini ancilla singulariter obsequiosa.

Ave plena gracia, poli regina,
misericordie mater meritis preclara,
mundi domina a patriarchis presignata,
imperatrix inferni a prophetis preconizata.

Ave virgo feta, ut sol preelecta,
mater intacta sicut luna perpulcra.
Salve parens inclita, enixa puerpera,
Stella maris prefulgida, felix celi porta,

Esto nobis via recta ad eterna gaudia,
ubi pax est et gloria.
O gloriosissima semper virgo Maria.

Amen.

Ave dei patris filia

Hail, most exalted daughter of God the Father,
most worthy mother of God the Son,
most beautiful bride of God the Spirit,
closest handmaid of the one and threefold God.

Hail, most loving daughter of the highest eternity,
most dutiful mother of the highest truth,
most bounteous bride of the highest goodness,
gentlest handmaid of the highest Trinity.

Hail, most longed-for daughter of eternal love,
dearest mother of eternal wisdom,
most holy bride of the eternal Spirit,
purest handmaid of the coeternal greatness.

Hail, sweet daughter of Jesus, thy son,
kind mother of Christ, thy god,
bride of the bridegroom, without any stain,
nearest handmaid to the seat of the godhead.

Hail, uniquely noble daughter of the Lord,
uniquely glorious mother of the Lord,
uniquely beautiful bride of the Lord,
uniquely obedient handmaid of the Lord.

Hail, queen of heaven, full of grace,
mother of mercy deservedly famous,
lady of the world, predesignated by the patriarchs,
empress of hell, foreknown by the prophets.

Hail, fruitful virgin, prechosen like the sun,
untouched mother, most comely like the moon.
Hail, illustrious parent, bringing forth in childbirth,
brightest star of the sea, blessed gateway to heaven.

Be to us a straight road to eternal joys,
where peace is, and glory.
O most glorious ever-virgin Mary.

Amen.

7–10 Magnificat I

Magnificat: anima mea dominum.

Et exultavit spiritus meus: in deo salutari meo.

Quia respexit humilitatem ancille sue: ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

Quia fecit michi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen ejus.

Et misericordia ejus 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 misericordie sue.

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros: Abraham et semini ejus in secula.

Gloria patri et filio: et spiritui sancto.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper: et in secula seculorum. Amen.

11–13 Magnificat II

(same text as above)

14–15 Vidi aquam egredientem

A. Vidi aquam egredientem de templo a latere dextro, alleluia. Et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt [et dicunt] alleluia, alleluia.

Magnificat I

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 away empty.

He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel.

As he promised to our fathers, 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, and is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Magnificat II**Vidi aquam egredientem**

A. I saw water issuing from the temple on the right-hand side, alleluia. And all to whom that water came were saved [and say] alleluia, alleluia.

Ps. Confitemini domino quoniam bonus: quoniam in seculum misericordia ejus.

A. Vidi aquam egredientem de templo a latere dextro, alleluia. Et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt [et dicunt] alleluia, alleluia.

GP. Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto: sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in secula seculorum. Amen.

A. Et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt [et dicunt] alleluia, alleluia.

16–18 Ave mundi spes Maria

Ave mundi spes Maria;
Ave mitis, ave pia;
Ave plena gracia,
Omnis boni copia.

Ave virgo mater Christi,
Tu que sola meruisti
Esse mater sine viro
Et lactare modo miro.

Angelorum imperatrix,
Peccatorum consolatrix,
Consolare peccatores
Et ne tuum honorem des

Alieno aut crudeli.
Precor te, regina celi,
Nos habeto excusatos
Apud Christum tuum natum

Cujus iram expavescimus,
Et furorem pertimescimus,
Nam peccavimus tibi soli.
O Maria virgo, noli

Ps. Let us acknowledge the Lord for he is good: for his mercy is for ever.

A. I saw water issuing from the temple on the right-hand side, alleluia. And all to whom that water came were saved [and say] alleluia, alleluia.

GP. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A. And all to whom that water came were saved [and say] alleluia, alleluia.

Ave mundi spes Maria

Hail, Mary, hope of the world;
hail, gentle one; hail, dutiful one;
hail, full of grace,
overflowing with all good things.

Hail, maiden, mother of Christ,
you who alone deserved
to be a mother without a man
and to suckle in a miraculous way.

Empress of the angels,
comforter of sinners,
comfort sinners
and do not give your favour

to anyone hostile or cruel.
I beg you, queen of heaven,
to have us forgiven
in the presence of Christ your son

whose anger we fear
and whose fury we dread,
for we have sinned to you alone.
O virgin Mary, do not

Esse nobis aliena;
Gracia celesti plena,
Esto custos cordis nostri;
Signa nos timore dei.

Confer vite sanitatem
Et da morum honestatem;
Da peccata nos vitare
Et quod justum est amare.

O dulcedo virginalis,
Nunquam fuit nec est talis
Inter natas mulierum.
Omnium creator rerum

Te elegit genitricem.
Qui Mariam peccatricem
Emundavit a reatu
Ipse nos tuo precatur

A peccatis tergat
Ne infernus nos demergat.
Eya rosa sine spina,
Peccatorum medicina,

Pro nobis Christum interpella
Ut nos salvet a procella
Hujus mundi tam immundi
Cujus fluctus furibundi

Omni parte nos impingunt
Et peccati zona stringunt.
Christe, fili summi patris,
Per amorem tue matris

Cujus venter te portavit
Et te dulci lacte pavit,
Te rogamus supplices
Quia duplex salus tu es:

Salus rerum mundanarum
Atque salus animarum.
Te precamur licet rei
Miserere, fili dei.

be distant from us;
full of heavenly grace,
be the guardian of our heart;
mark us with the fear of God.

Bestow cleanliness of life
and grant uprightness of conduct;
Permit us to avoid sin
and to love what is right.

O maidenly sweetness,
never was there or is there your like
among those born of women.
The creator of all things

chose you as a mother.
May he who cleansed Mary
the sinner from her misdeeds,
may he by your precatur

save us from [all] sins
lest hell overwhelm us.
Behold, rose without a thorn,
remedy of sinners,

intervene with Christ for us,
that he may save us from the tempest
of this so very unclean world
whose raging waves

assail us on every side
and tighten the stranglehold of sin.
Christ, son of the supreme Father,
through the love of your mother

whose womb carried you
and nourished you with sweet milk,
we humbly beseech you [through her],
for you are a twofold salvation:

salvation from the things of the world
and the salvation of souls.
We beseech you, despite sin,
have mercy, Son of God.

Miserere miserator,
Quia quisquis est peccator
Tu peccata dele nostra
Et cor mundum in nos crea.

Da spem firmam, fidem rectam,
Caritatemque perfectam,
Et concede finem bonum
Quod est super omne donum.

Fac nos digne manducare
Corpus tuum salutare.
Ira tua non nos gravet;
Sanguis tuus sic nos lavet

Extra corpus et in corde
A peccatis et a sorde,
Ut dum instat hora mortis
Angelus tunc astet fortis.

Mors si carnem nostram frangat
Mors secunda non nos tangat.
Licet caro computrescat
Spiritus in tua pace requiescat.

Amen.

19–20 Gaude flore virginali

Gaude flore virginali
Honoreque speciali,
Transcendens splendiferum
Angelorum principatum
Et sanctorum decoratum
Dignitate numerum.

Gaude sponsa cara dei,
Nam ut clara lux diei
Solis datur lumine,
Sic tu facis orbem vere
Tue pacis resplendere
Lucis plenitudine.

Have mercy, fount of mercy,
for whoever the sinner is
you wipe out our sins
and create a clean heart within us.

Grant a solid hope, a sound faith,
and perfect charity,
and vouchsafe the good end
that is above every gift.

Make us worthily eat
your health-giving body.
Let your anger not harm us;
let your blood so wash us

both externally and in the heart
from sins and from uncleanness
that when the hour of death approaches
a strong angel may stand by.

If death breaks apart our body,
let a second death not touch us.
Even if the flesh decays,
let the spirit repose in your peace.

Amen.

Gaude flore virginali

Rejoice in maidenly bloom
and in especial distinction,
surpassing in dignity
the glittering elite of angels
and the honourable
company of saints.

Rejoice, beloved bride of God,
for as the bright light of day
is given by the light of the sun,
so you truly cause the world
to be resplendent through the fullness
of the light of your peace.

Gaude splendens vas virtutum
Cujus pendens est ad nutum
Tota celi curia;
Te benignam et felicem
Jesu dignam genitricem
Veneratur in gloria.

Gaude nexu voluntatis
Et amplexu caritatis
Juncta sis altissimo,
Ut ad votum consequaris
Quicquid virgo postularis
A Jesu dulcissimo.

Gaude virgo mater Christi
Quia sola meruisti,
O virgo piissima,
Esse tante dignitatis
Quod sis sancte trinitatis
Sessioni proxima.

Gaude mater miserorum,
Quia pater seculorum
Dabit te colentibus
Congruentem hic mercedem
Et felicem poli sedem
Regnis in celestibus.

Gaude virgo mater pura,
Certa manens et segura,
Quod hec septem gaudia
Non cessabunt nec decrescent
Sed durabunt et florescent
Per eterna secula.

Amen.

Rejoice, shining vessel of virtues,
on whose nod hangs
the whole court of heaven;
it reverences you in glory,
the fruitful and fortunate
worthy mother of Jesus.

Rejoice that by the bond of free will
and by the embrace of love
you are joined to the most high,
so that you obtain as a promise
whatever you request, O maiden,
from Jesus the most gentle.

Rejoice, virgin mother of Christ,
for you alone deserved,
O most obedient maiden,
to be of such distinction
that you are next in place
to the holy trinity.

Rejoice, mother of the wretched,
for the Father of ages
will give to those honouring you
a fitting reward here
and a delightful seat in the city
in the heavenly realms.

Rejoice, pure virgin mother,
remaining sure and safe,
that these seven joys
will not cease or diminish
but will last and flourish
throughout eternal ages.

Amen.



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