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CLASSICS

VIVALDI HANDEL

GRACE
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ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC



VIVALDI - HANDEL

	Silete venti, HWV 242	George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)	
1	Sinfonia e Recitativo	[5.23]	
2	Andante ma larghetto	[7.21]	
3	Accompagnato	[0.36]	
4	Andante, Allergo	[9.53]	
5	Presto	[3.14]	

	Gloria, HWV deest	George Frideric Handel	
6	Gloria in excelsis Deo	[2.28]	
7	Et in terra pax	[2.48]	
8	Laudamus te, benedicimus te	[2.18]	
9	Domine Deus, rex coelestis	[1.14]	
10	Qui tollis peccata mundi	[3.26]	
11	Quoniam tu solus sanctus	[3.38]	

	Salve Regina, HWV 241	George Frideric Handel	
12	Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae	[3.01]	
13	Ad te clamamus exsules filii Evae	[2.45]	
14	Eia, ergo, advocate nostra	[3.33]	
15	O Clemens, O pie	[1.34]	

	Nulla in mundo pax sincera, RV630	Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)	
16	Nulla in mundo pax sincera	[6.09]	
17	Blando colore oculos mundus decepit	[1.13]	
18	Spirat anguis	[3.21]	
19	Alleluia	[2.13]	

Total timings: [76.11]

GRACE DAVIDSON SOPRANO · ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC
JOSEPH CROUCH ARTISTIC LEADER

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INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to have recorded these glorious sacred works after performing them before an audience so many times. To make a recording with such a wonderful orchestra and in the pearly acoustic of All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak was a joy. I hope you will share these feelings when you hear the result.

Special thanks to my dearest parents, Nigel and our wonderful children for their constant love and support.

Grace Davidson, 2018



SILENTE VENTI

Silete Venti HWV 242 was composed in London during the 1720s, some of its musical material being shared with the Oratorio Esther, a *Chandos Anthem* and one of the *Bb Organ Concertos*. The instrumentation is economical with a pair of oboes and a bassoon added to the usual strings but the forces are employed imaginatively, the interweaving of lines, with and without the voice, ranking among the finest of Handel's offerings. The *Sinfonia* is in French Overture style, proceeding into a triple-metre section with the depiction of turbulent winds being silenced by the entry of the voice – hence the title of the motet. Such power in the gift of a singer, and the effect is arresting. Indeed this introduction to the voice appears to have the orchestra submit and become breathless – rests are used in a most adventurous, rhetorical manner for the period of composition and, like the rather flowery poetry, possesses an Italian, heart-on-sleeve expressiveness. This is far from a routine example of word-setting. The stamina and flexibility demanded by Handel suggest that this substantial solo Latin motet was intended for an accomplished star of stage or oratorio

and it was perhaps composed with an eye to his return trip to Italy in 1729. The text blurs the conventional distinctions between descriptions of divine love and a somewhat carnal slant to some of the exhortations to the Saviour. Furthermore, there is a more athletic and dramatic slant to the vocal style than his more conservative output, a little as we have come to expect from solo vocal writing by Vivaldi and Monteverdi.

The initial calming of the winds is a remarkable unfurling of the tension of the stormy writing of the opening, reducing the energy of the music in a manner which suggests future depictions of nature by Haydn. The aria *Dulcis Amor* is a soothing dialogue between voice and instruments – classic, noble Handel in brilliant word-setting. An accompanied recitative *O fortunata* separates this from the second, Andante-allegro-andante aria *Date certa*, whose rapid central section, again in a contrasting triple time, gives the listener a taste of the joy of the *Alleluia* as the winds rouse themselves once more. It might be the use of a walking bass in both of the arias which lends such an unmistakably Handelian dignity to the music. The final paean of just one word *Alleluia* allows the voice to have

the upper hand of athleticism over the players, throwing in a high B at the end of the race.

GLORIA

The discovery of Georg Frideric Handel's *Gloria* in 2001, unnoticed for so many years in the library of the Royal Academy of Music in London, is a salutary tale. It continues to be referred to quaintly in the HWV classification as *deest* (Latin for 'doesn't exist'), even after its emergence into the artistic daylight. In this age of easy information, it is still possible that, if somebody allows an original manuscript to be passed down and put in a drawer, there's a chance that it will not arouse any interest for a considerable time. Probably commissioned by Francesco Maria Ruspoli for service in his estate chapel at Vignanello, this Cantata for solo soprano, two violins and basso continuo was bound as part of a volume of Handel's arias, not in the composers hand, in the possession of a William Savage (1729-1789) apparently passing to his pupil, Robert Stevens who seems to have bequeathed the volume to the RAM in 1837. The Principal of the Academy at the time of discovery, Professor Curtis Price expressed the opinion that the work is 'fresh, exuberant and a little

wild in places, but unmistakably Handel'. What is also clear is that it shares an equally unmistakable flavour of Italy in many aspects of its writing. This it shares with such similarly-influenced works by the composer such as 'Dixit Dominus' – extrovert exuberance in the florid coloratura of the vocal line, confident interplay with the obbligato violins and particular harmonic devices which tug at the heart in their emotional power. There is one fingerprint which has become known as a *Neapolitan* in harmonic terms: the first inversion of the flattened super-tonic, a signature which many will associate with Vivaldi, but which makes itself felt as recently as in the music of Italian films of the 20th Century. There is also the use of separated, dry string chords – termed *secco* like the white wine, in both the *Et in terra pax* and the *Cum Sancto Spiritu*, which would have been quite foreign to British audiences of the era and which are more reminiscent of the programmatic picture-painting in Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* than as a mere instrumental accompaniment to a sacred work.

Six titled musical sections subdivide in effect into eight parts, following the text of the *Gloria* from the Mass. Some of this material can be

found, reworked, in *Laudate Pueri* and the Utrecht *Jubilate*. The opening *Gloria* is an exuberant paeon of joy with two outriding violins offering a musical companionship reminiscent of Monteverdi. *Et in terra* combines jabbing, string accompaniment with languishing suspensions. *Laudamus* features a descending triad which might even suggest a bowing or a genuflexion to God. *Gratias* offers grace and gracefulness in triple metre while *Domine Deus* is supported by the *basso continuo* alone, with a sense of prowling in the bass line's chromatic progression. *Qui tollis* allows the violins back into the picture with graded antiphony, the voice retreating into a supporting role. *Quoniam*, and *Cum Sancto* make extreme demands of the singer in *moto perpetuo* passagework which points to Handel's capacity for fresh ideas and techniques, in an athletic offering for which we should be grateful.

SALVE REGINA

This intriguing work for solo soprano, violins in two parts, *obbligato* organ and cello, and *basso continuo* dates from Handel's earlier visit to Italy and was probably first performed on Trinity Sunday, 19 June 1707 in the Church

of Santa Maria in Montesanto, Vignanello. Significantly, this was exactly one month before *Dixit Dominus* was first heard and the sharing of expressive styles and athletic, Italianate flavour is immediately evident. This text, among the most familiar in the Roman Church since it was written in the 11th Century (probably by the monk, *Hermann von Reichenau*) is one of the four Antiphons to Our Lady, this one being used from the Saturday before Trinity Sunday until the Friday before the first Sunday of Advent. Besides concluding the recitation of the *Rosary*, it was, and still is, the final utterance of monastic communities at Compline before the Great Silence of the night. This might have had a significance in the way that Handel scores the music. It seems that he was not merely marrying words and music without an in-depth consideration of the words, previously unfamiliar to him, but without doubt known intimately to those who would hear his setting.

The essence of this prayer, known in English as: *Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy* is that of supplication, imploring Mary to be a divine mediator in our journey through life. The opening movement is itself full of devices which point to a deep sympathy by the

composer for these sentiments. A pulsing, paired-note bass-line possesses something of the heartbeat, the inverted violin interjections with their repeated common notes at the top of the phrases suggesting the merciful Mother of Christ, while the soprano takes on the role of the voice of the person praying. Those very words, *Mater misericordiae*, are set with an anguished, chromatic pulling apart in tandem with the violins who adopt an almost vocal role. *Ad te clamamus* moves into triple metre, yet the layout of the composer's manuscript reveals a much broader sweep to the span of the music as he divides the material on the page not in groups of three but in a broader sweep of twelve beats to a bar. I acknowledge that this is no doubt to save ink, but the impression on the paper can influence the musician's approach, whether or not the listeners are in the know. There is some remarkable melodic writing here and, to most ears, the juxtaposition of F sharp and A flat is a surprise. The actual word *clamamus* (we cry) comes with a gloriously sunny, major 4/2 harmony, radiating for a longer time than expected. The Italian, vocal style was well used to sighings of one sort or another but Handel was brave to set *Suspiramus* with literal breathlessness, leaving complete silences

which must have seemed most romantic in a sacred work. Cascading canonic texture among the violins and the voice are as the falling tears in the valley (also the soprano's lowest note) and the desolation is echoed by the dwindling writing of the violins who merge into a unison, lonely, final note.

All is far from constant gloom as the *Eia Ergo* bursts into a section which is little short of a *concertante* movement with every combination of joyful interaction for solo organ, cello, the violins and the voice. How we are fortunate that George Frideric saw the need clearly to impress his patrons in a style which would have been entirely within their culture, but maybe exceeding their expectations. Again Handel surprises us, using economical but virtuosic forces, and doubtlessly enjoying his own organ showcase.

Nevertheless, the masterstroke is the engineering of the final, meditative section *O clemens*. We are returned to the context of prayerful supplication in the manner of Handel's Italian predecessors. The exuberance of the previous movement is pared down, as in the beginning, to a final, unison note.

NULLA IN MUNDO PAX SINCERA

Nulla in mundo pax sincera is a sacred motet written in 1735 for the Coro of the *Pio Ospedale della Pietà*. It reminds us of the talent which must have been at the disposal of the Maestri of this founding establishment in Venice; the athletic vocal writing and its relentlessly high tessitura reserves it for only the bravest of sopranos. The text is unattributed, like so many of these works – used as an opportunity to escape the restrictions of ecclesiastical texts and is an opportunity to insert a show-piece into the structure of the Liturgy, or an Office such as Vespers. If the general slant of the text escaped the censure of the authorities, then they served composers, performers and church-goers equally well.

The format is conventional – aria, recitative, aria with a final alleluia – and the instrumentation looks on the face of it to be conventional string ensemble, yet much in this work is remarkable. In terms of instrumentation, the two violins provide not only ritornelli and relief for the voice, but are engaged in dialogue with the vocal line, soothing caresses to support the sense of the verse in the opening

phrases and joyous pealing in the final Alleluia section. The viola is no mere textural filler, taking on an elevated bass role at various points, adding to a somewhat heavenly mood throughout.

The first movement's text is directed to Jesus himself, acknowledging that in life's pains, torments and bitterness true peace alone lies in Him. The recitative and second aria warn us of the transitory attractions of the world in which the tempter attempts to trick us with superficial and poisonous pleasures. But, in the end, reassurance gains the upper hand.

In musical terms the melodic and harmonic treatment of the opening *siciliano*, with its dotted lilting shape is a bittersweet blend of anguish and soothing. Optimistic, chromatic ascents are countered by falling intervals in the vocal line. But it is one particularly *Neapolitan*, harmonic feature which lends a feel of suffering. The flattening of the leading note to D natural on the word 'felle' (bitterness) is immediately pulled back to the extreme sharpness of the dominant seventh (G sharp major) of the relative minor key at the words 'Sweet Jesus'. In plainer language, there's a great deal of angst in the design of the music. As the central section of the *da*

capo aria progresses, the texture thins out, with the viola, unusually for this era, stepping up to the plate and supporting the violins and voice when the talk is of the virtue of chaste love. There is an elevated feel to this quasi-choral polyphony, when the purity of the final unison C sharp nods towards the moral advice being given.

The subsequent recitative continues the warning that all that glitters in the world's delights might have a downside. Far from being a structural filler, the movement is replete with *arioso* style, pictorial writing and even some conversational imitation between the voice and the accompanying bassline.

Spirat anguis might be viewed as a little respite for the voice before the final movement, but it shows subtle imagination nevertheless. The vocal line is subsumed into the violins' line and while the feature of the upward flourish on 'spirat' (in effect the snake's hissing) might suggest the creature's uncurling, it is notable that the musical texture for much of this section is in a mere two parts with the viola once more taking the sole, supporting role. This instrument has a solo moment of playful interjection, surely

sliding as the snake in a single bar of a downward scale.

It is in the final *Alleluia* that the soprano's supremacy is reestablished, with coloratura to take her own breath away and a melodic style which is plainly violinistic. Vivaldi at his most joyful and exuberant.

© Greg Murray

SILETE VENTI

George Frideric Handel

1 Sinfonia e Recitativo

Silete venti,
nolite murmurare frondes,
Quia anima mea dulcedine requiescit.

2 Andante ma larghetto

Dulcis amor, Jesu care,
quis non cupit te amare;
Veni, transfige me.
Si tu feris non sunt clades:
tuae plagae sunt suaves, quia totus vivo in te.

3 Accompagnato

O fortunate anima,
O jucundissimus triumphus,
O felicissima laetitia.

4 Andante, Allergo

Date certa, date flores;
me coronent vestri honores;
Date palmas nobiles.
Surgent venti et beatae spirent almae
fortunate auras coeli fulgidas.

5 Presto

Alleluia.

*Be silent, you winds,
and do not murmur, you branches,
because my soul is resting in sweetness.*

*Sweet love, dear Jesus,
who does not desire to love Thee;
Come, transfix me.
If you strike me, there are no injuries:
your strokes are sweet, because I live totally in You.*

*O blessed soul,
O happiest triumph,
O most fortunate joy!*

*Give garlands, give flowers;
may your honours crown me;
give noble palms.
Let the winds arise and the blessed, fortunate spirits
breathe the resplendent breezes of Heaven.*

Alleluia.

GLORIA

George Frideric Handel

6

Gloria in excelsis Deo

7

Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

8

Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
Adoramus te, glorificamus te,
Gratias agimus tibi,
Propter magnum gloriam tuam.

9

Domine Deus, rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.
Domine Jesu, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

10

Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Suscipe deprecationem nostrum.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
Miserere nobis.

Glory be to God on high

And in earth peace, goodwill towards men,

*We praise thee, we bless thee,
we worship thee, we glorify thee,
we give thanks to thee,
for thy great glory*

*O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,*

*Thou takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.*

11

Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,
Cum sancto Spiritu
in Gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

SALVE REGINA

George Frideric Handel

12

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.

13

Ad te clamamus exsules filii Evae,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
In hac lacrimarum valle.

14

Eia, ergo, advocate nostra, illos tuos
Misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
Nobis post hoc exilium ostende.

15

O Clemens, O pie, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

*For thou only art holy;
thou only art the Lord;
thou only, Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Ghost,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.*

*Hail, Queen, merciful mother
our life, sweetness and hope, hail.*

*To you we cry, exiled children of Eve,
to you we sigh, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears.*

*Come, therefore, our advocate, place your
merciful eyes upon us;
And Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb
show (him) to us after this exile.*

O lenient, o pious, o sweet Virgin Mary.

NULLA IN MUNDO PAX SINCERA

Antonio Vivaldi

16

Nulla in mundo pax sincera
sine felle; pura et vera,
dulcis Jesu, est in te.

Inter poenas et tormenta
vivit anima contenta
casti amoris sola spe.

17

Blando colore oculus mundus deceptit
at occulto vulnere corda conficit;
fugiamus ridentem, vitemus sequentem,
nam delicias ostentado arte secura
vellet ludendo superare.

18

Spirat anguis
inter flores et colores
explicando tegit fel.
Sed occulto tactus ore
homo demens in amore
saepe lambit quasi mel.

19

Alleluia.

*In this world there is no honest peace
free from bitterness; true and pure
peace, sweet Jesus. lies in Thee.*

*Amidst punishment and torment
lives the contented soul,
chaste love its only hope.*

*This world deceives the eye by surface charms,
but is corroded within by hidden wounds.
Let us flee him who smiles, shun him who follows us,
for by skilfully displaying its pleasures, this world
overwhelms us by deceit.*

*The serpent's hiss conceals its venom,
as it uncoils itself
among blossoms and beauty.
But with a furtive touch of the lips,
a man maddened by love
will often kiss as if licking honey.*

Alleluia.

GRACE DAVIDSON

"Grace Davidson has one of the most beautiful and pure soprano voices on earth." Eric Whitacre, composer.

"Grace Davidson sings with gorgeous purity and warmth and hits some extraordinarily ethereal high notes." Classic FM

Grace has been delighting audiences and winning wonderful reviews ever since her emergence as a soloist.

Born in London, she studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music and won the Academy's Early Music Prize. Having graduated, she sang with most of the leading Baroque ensembles, under the batons of such as John Eliot Gardiner, Paul McCreesh, Philippe Herreweghe and Harry Christophers. Her discography includes a decade of recordings made with The Sixteen, on many of which she features as a soloist - notably in Handel's *Jeptha* as 'Angel' and in *Dixit Dominus*, in Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, his *Pianto della Madonna* and the *Lutheran Masses* of Bach. On BBC Radio Three's 'Building a Library', her singing in Fauré's *Requiem* (with the

London Symphony Orchestra, Tenebrae and Nigel Short conducting) was reviewed by Richard Morrison quite simply: *"Grace Davidson's Pie Jesu is matchless"*

More recently, Grace's performances have extended into the worlds of contemporary classical and classical crossover music. Her exceptional purity of tone has resulted in a number of recordings with prominent film composers. Max Richter chose her for his *Sleep*, *Woolf Works* and *Memoryhouse* recordings with Deutsche Grammophon. *Sleep* has now been performed all over the world with Grace, just in the last year, singing in New Zealand, the USA, Germany, Amsterdam and Paris.

She lives near Cambridge with her husband and two children.

For more information, please visit:
www.gracedavidsonsoprano.com



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ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC

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Artistic Leader

Joseph Crouch

¹ = *Silete Venti & Gloria*

² = *Salve Regina & Nulla in mundo pax*

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Founded by Christopher Hogwood in 1973, AAM remains at the forefront of the worldwide early music scene over four decades on, under the leadership of Richard Egarr, Music Director since 2006.

The Academy of Ancient Music has always been a pioneer. Established to make the first British recordings of orchestral works using instruments from the baroque and classical period it went on to make more than 300 more, many of which are still considered definitive performances. (Among its countless accolades for recording are Brit, Gramophone and Edison awards.) Today, AAM has established its own record label, AAM Records, and is proud to be the most listened-to orchestra of its kind online.



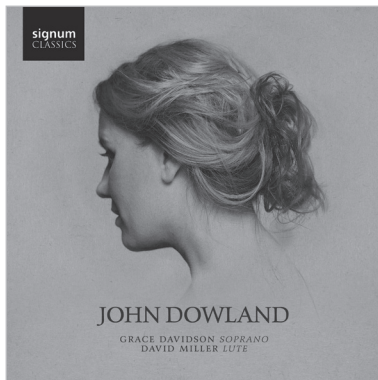
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AAM's education and outreach programme, *AAMplify*, nurtures the next generation of audiences and musicians. With this expanding programme, working from pre-school through tertiary education and beyond, AAM ensures its work reaches the widest possible audience and inspires people of all ages, backgrounds and cultural traditions.

In the 2018-19 Season the AAM collaborates with Christine Rice, Michael Collins, Nicolas Altstaedt, Lucie Horsch, Tenebrae, the BBC Singers, the Choir of King's College, Cambridge

and The Grange Festival. Programmes include large-scale vocal masterpieces including Bach's St Matthew Passion and Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, and concert performances of operas including Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The AAM resides in the historic city of Cambridge and is Orchestra-in-Residence at the city's university. Its London home is the Barbican Centre, where it is Associate Ensemble, and it is Orchestra-in-Residence at The Grange Festival, Chiltern Arts Festival and Music at Oxford.



JOHN DOWLAND
Grace Davidson *soprano*
David Miller *lute*
November 2018 release

Signum Records and Grace thank Roger Mayhew, Mark and Liza Loveday, Monica Darnbrough and various anonymous contributors for the generosity which made this recording possible.

**This album is dedicated to Yon Richard Mayhew (22 July 1924 – 6 November 2013),
a much loved son, brother, husband, father and friend.**

Recorded in All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London from 27 to 29 April 2015 and 14 January 2017

Producer – Nigel Short
Editor – Robin Hawkins
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch

Cover Image – © Nick White
Chamber organ & Hapsichord tuner – Malcolm Greenhalgh & Keith McGowen

Design and Artwork – Woven Design www.wovendesign.co.uk

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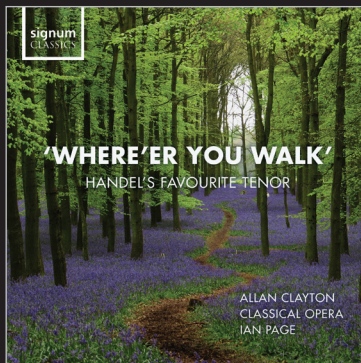
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