



OBSIDIAN



# John Taverner

*Imperatrix inferni*  
Votive Antiphons  
& Ritual Music





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## Imperatrix inferni

### Votive Antiphons & Ritual Music

1. Quemadmodum	(0'00)	ALAMIRE, directed by David Skinner
2. Audivi vocem	(0'00)	Grace Davidson, soprano
3. Ave Dei patris filia	(0'00)	Kirsty Hopkins, soprano
4. Dum transisset sabbatum	(0'00)	Eleanor Cramer, soprano
5. Mater Christi	(0'00)	Ruth Massey, contralto
6. Gaude plurimum	(0'00)	Clare Wilkinson, contralto
7. [Hodie nobis celorum rex ...] Gloria in excelsis Deo	(0'00)	Mark Dobell, tenor*
8. O splendor gloriae	(0'00)	Nicholas Todd, tenor
Total	(0'00)	Ashley Turnell, tenor*
		Simon Wall, tenor
		Eamonn Dougan, baritone
		Timothy Scott Whiteley, baritone
		William Gaunt, bass
		Robert Macdonald, bass
		* track 1 only

Producer: Nigel Short  
 Engineer: Jim Gross  
 Executive Producer: Martin Souter  
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 23-25 November 2010  
 Performing editions: David Skinner  
 Cover image: *The Ghent Altarpiece*, The Virgin  
 Mary, 1432 (oil on panel), Eyck, Hubert  
 (c.1370-1426) & Jan van (1390-1441)/St Bavo  
 Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium/The Bridgeman  
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**John Taverner** (*d. 1545*) is, arguably, the most famous of all early Tudor composers, and one who had a rather colourful musical and political career. His music represents the final flowering of late medieval English polyphony before the onslaught of mid 16th-century Reformation. Taverner, a known reformer himself, was the first English composer to stylistically anticipate the musical ideals of the Reformation as more audibly declaimed in the works of Tallis and Tye during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I. Indeed, so contrasting was his compositional style from one decade to the next, much of his music can be fairly confidently dated according to his succession of posts.

While his close contemporaries Robert Fayrfax (*d. 1521*) and Nicholas Ludford (*d. 1557*) had associations with Henry VIII and moved in courtly circles, Taverner seems to have spent his entire adult life in Lincolnshire, apart from a brief stint in Oxford. He is first found in 1524 as a singer in the collegiate chapel at Tattershall, from which place he was coaxed by John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln to be the first Instructor of the

Choristers at Cardinal College, Oxford (now Christ Church). Taverner at first declined as a move from Tattershall would damage his prospects of a good marriage, but in 1526 he changed his mind and spent the next four years in Cardinal Wolsey's magnificent new foundation in Oxford.

Oxford in those years was a hotbed of reformist activity and in 1528 Taverner himself became embroiled in an outbreak of Lutheran heresy in the college. He and others were accused of keeping heretical books in the song school and locked in the college fish cellar, but Wolsey made light of the matter and pardoned Taverner on the grounds that he was 'but a musician'. But it was certainly during his Oxford years that he produced compositions of a very different sort from those of his earlier career. It is believed that the so-called 'Forrest-Heyther' part-books (now in the Bodleian Library), which contain Taverner's Festal Mass settings, were compiled for Cardinal College; certainly the style of these masses represent the composer's early period from the late 1510s and early '20s. His two surviving



large-scale Marian antiphons *Ave Dei patris filia* and *Gaude plurimum* are thought to date from this period, as does much of his ritual music. They are, in style and form, typical of the antiphons represented in the earlier Eton Choirbook (compiled in c. 1502), but, one might argue, without the harmonic rambling and melodic ‘note spinning’ that pervade many of the less polished works in that important collection. *Ave Dei* may be his earliest large-scale work, and is certainly his least known; it is a text set by a number of early Tudor composers including Fayrfax and Tallis, and extols the joys of the Blessed Virgin who is described, among other things, as *Imperatrix inferni* (the Empress of Hell). Also typical of Taverner’s early style are the responds *Hodie nobis celorum* and *Audivi vocem*. The former, for Christmas Day, is particularly florid, while the latter work served a specific liturgical purpose at Matins on the feast of All Saints’ Day (1 November). Here, according to the Sarum Rite, the eighth lesson was directed to be read by a boy; following the lesson the respond *Audivi vocem* was to be sung by five boys from the altar steps ‘their heads covered with white amices and carrying lighted candles’, while



the chant was left to be sung by the clerks or vicars choral.

At Oxford one important concern for Taverner was the clarity of text, which, in much of the church music composed up to 1547, was not a primary objective of many composers; Taverner, however, with his evangelical leanings, seems to have been a leading exponent and inventor of new ways of textual declamation. *Mater Christi sanctissima* is a good example of the new techniques. Such devices as note-against-note counterpoint and antiphonal writing are apparent here, as well as close-knit imitation and an abundant use of homophonic or chordal writing. Taverner’s Mass setting of that name as well as the Mass-motet cycle ‘O Wilhelme pastor bone’ also date from his Oxford years.

With Wolsey’s fall from grace as Henry VIII’s chief minister late in 1529 the college began to run down. The foundations for the new chapel were laid on the north side of the great quadrangle (the dimensions of which would have rivaled King’s College Chapel in Cambridge), but work was suspended. Taverner decided to return to Lincolnshire and spent his remaining years

in Boston, some 15 miles from Tattershall, and in 1545 was buried in the parish church under the great tower.

During these final years Taverner seems to have continued to move in reformist circles. He was apparently known personally to Thomas Cromwell who in 1538 entrusted him with supervising the dismantling and burning of the rood screen in Boston parish church. There is some debate as to whether Taverner continued to compose after his Oxford years; the 16th-century martyrologist John Foxe maintained that Taverner became so influenced by Protestant doctrine as to ‘repent him very much that he had made songs to popish ditties in the time of his blindness’. However, it seems fairly clear that certain works must date from his time at Boston, including the so-called ‘Plainsong’ mass (following Cranmer’s suggestion ‘for every syllable a note’). The Jesus antiphon *O splendor gloriae* – attributed in one later source jointly to Taverner and Christopher Tye – may also date from this period and possibly have been commissioned by the Boston Guild of Corpus Christi, to which Taverner belonged.



Another work that may date from Taverner’s final years is a setting of the first verses of Psalm 41 (42) *Quemadmodum*, which survives in an untexted source as an instrumental work and stylistically seems to be his most mature composition. It may be that his Protestant leanings guided his pen to an instrumental rendition of what is clearly conceived as a vocal work; certainly the text fits the music quite seamlessly. While Tallis is credited, and rightly so, for steering English composition through the turbulent years of the Reformation, it is Taverner who was first to break free from traditional forms of early Tudor composition. Indeed, so forward thinking was he that *Quemadmodum* arguably stands beside anything produced in Mary I’s reign. Taverner, in life, was a quiet genius and his surviving music still maintains an emotional charge that can be felt by 21st-century hearts.



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## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

### 1. Quemadmodum

Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes  
aquarum: ita desiderat anima mea ad te  
Deus. Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fontem  
vivum: quando veniam et apparebo faciem  
Dei?

As the hart panteth after the fountains  
of water; so my soul panteth after thee,  
O God. My soul hath thirsted after God,  
the living fountain; when shall I come and  
appear before the face of God?



### 2. Audivi vocem

Audivi vocem de caelo venientem: venite  
omnes virgines sapientissime.

Oleum recondite in vasis vestris, dum  
sponsus advenerit.

Media nocte clamor factus est, ecce  
sponsus venit.

Oleum recondite in vasis vestris, dum  
sponsus advenerit.

*I heard a voice coming from heaven: come, all you  
most wise virgins.*

*Store up the oil in your vessels until the  
bridegroom comes.*

*At midnight the cry broke forth: behold, the  
bridegroom comes.*

*Store up the oil in your vessels until the  
bridegroom comes.*

### 3. Ave Dei patris filia

Ave Dei patris filia nobilissima  
Dei filii mater dignissima  
Dei spiritus sponsa venustissima  
Dei unius et trini ancilla subiectissima.

Ave summae aeternitatis filia clementissima  
Summe veritatis mater piissima  
Summe bonitatis sponsa benignissima  
Summe trinitatis ancilla mitissima.

Ave aeternae caritatis desideratissima filia  
Aeternae sapientiae mater gratissima  
Aeternae spiracionis sponsa sacratissima  
Coaeternae maiestatis ancilla sincerissima.

Ave Iesu 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  
Misericordiae 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 aeterna gaudia,  
Ubi pax est et gloria,  
O gloriosissima semper virgo Maria.  
Amen.

*Hail, most noble daughter of God the Father,  
most worthy mother of the Son of God, most  
lovely bride of the Holy Spirit, most humble  
handmaid of God the Three in One.*

*Hail, most merciful daughter of the supreme  
eternity, most faithful mother of the supreme  
truth, most kindly bride of the supreme good, most  
gentle handmaid of the supreme Trinity.*

*Hail, most beloved daughter of eternal love, most  
gracious mother of eternal wisdom, most holy  
bride of eternal spirit, most pure handmaid of  
coeternal majesty.*

*Hail, daughter of your dear son Jesus, kindly  
mother of Christ your God, spotless bride of the  
bridegroom, handmaid of the Almighty beside  
his throne.*

*Hail, only noble daughter of the Lord, only  
glorious mother of the Lord, only excellent bride  
of the Lord, only obedient handmaid of the Lord.*

*Hail, full of grace, queen of heaven, mother*



*of mercy, famed for your benefits, lady of this  
world, foretold by the patriarchs, empress of bell,  
foreknown by the prophets.*

*Hail, fruitful maiden, predestined like the sun,  
mother unsullied, lovely like the moon, hail,  
most glorious parent who laboured in childbirth,  
brilliant star of the sea, blessed gate of heaven.*

*Be unto us a true path to eternal joys, where there  
is glory and peace, O most glorious Mary ever-  
virgin. Amen.*

### 4. Dum transisset Sabbatum



Dum transisset Sabbatum Maria  
Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Salome  
emerunt aromata, ut venientes ungerent  
Iesum. Alleluia.

Et valde mane una sabbatorum veniunt ad  
monumentum, orto iam sole, ut venientes  
ungerent Iesum. Alleluia

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.  
Alleluia.

*And when the Sabbath was past Mary  
Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and  
Salome brought sweet spices, that they might come  
and anoint Jesus. Alleluia.*

*And very early in the morning, on the first day  
of the week, they came to the tomb at the rising of  
the sun that they might come and anoint Jesus.*



*Alleluia.*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.*

## 5. Mater Christi

Mater Christi sanctissima, virgo sacrata Maria. Tuis orationibus benignum redde filium. Unica spes nostra Maria. Nam precibus nitentes tuis rogare audemus filium. Ergo fili decus patris. Iesu fons fecundissime a quo vivae fluunt aquae gigantes fida pectora. O Iesu vitalis cibus, te pure manducantibus salutari potu et cibo pavisti nostra corpora. Tua pasce animam gracia tibi consecratos spritu tuo fove munere. Quin et nostras, Iesu bone, mentes illustra gracia, et nos pie fac vivere ut dulci ambrosio tuo, vescamur in palatio. Amen.

*Most blessed mother of Christ, holy virgin Mary, by your prayers make kindly your son, O Mary our only source of hope. For we put our trust in your prayers when we dare to make petitions to your son. And so, Jesus, son and glory of the Father, wellspring of life, from whom life-giving waters flow, bathing faithful hearts; O Jesus, you are the life-giving bread to those who eat in faith: you have nourished our bodies with the food and drink of eternal life. By your grace*

*nourish too our souls; by your self-giving, protect those consecrated to you by the Spirit. And now, good Lord, illumine our hearts by your grace, and make us live in godliness; that at the last we may have sweet mamma to eat in your heavenly palace. Amen.*

## 6. Gaude pluumum

Gaude plurimum, servatoris nostri mater, femina que vixerunt omnium felicissima, sola virgo pre ceteris, que naturali partu sed conceptione celesti mediam divine trinitatis personam, verum Deum, sempiterni patris sempiternum filium, quo nos a perpetua morte servaremur, benignius hominem edidisti.

Gaude, Maria virgo, divinitus hanc tibi prestitam gratiam, ut ipsa preter ceteras omnes unica sis mortalis femina que Christum Iesum in utero gesseris, gravida edideris enixum, materno foveris gremio immortalem sobolem.

Gaude, sacratissima virgo, illum non minus tibi quam ceteris hominibus immortalem filium peperisti, qui celica sua potestate inferni debellavit tyrannidem, cruentas mortis eterne principos vires fregit, vitamque humano generi perpetuam restituit.

Gaude Maria, Iesu mater, talem te genuisse filium, qui divina sua resurrectione future nostre in gloria resurrectionis spem certam tradidit; ad deumque patrem ascendens et deus et homo, misericordia plenus in celum quoque reditum omnibus pollicetur.

Gaudemus itaque, et nos omnes nobis et tue beatitudini, Maria Iesu mater, gracias habentes gratulamur, que supernam adeptam gratiam ad perennem quoque in celum gloriam assumpta es.

Eudem igitur Iesum tuum filium supplices deprecamur ut, quo indigni qui exaudiamur assequi non valemus, tuis benignissimis precibus impetrare possimus eandem tecum celestem gloriam. Amen.

*Rejoice greatly, mother of our Saviour, most blessed of all women who have lived, the one virgin above all others who by natural birth but heavenly conception brought forth as man the middle person of the divine Trinity, true God, eternal Son of the eternal Father; that we might be delivered from ever-lasting death, thou who benignly brought forth man.*

*Rejoice, Virgin Mary, in this outstanding grace from heaven, that before all others you yourself should be the one mortal woman who carried Jesus Christ in your womb, who, being great*

*with child, gave birth, and having borne the child, cherished the immortal offspring in your maternal lap.*

*Rejoice, most holy Virgin, that you bore him who is an immortal son to you, no less than to the rest of mankind, who by his heavenly power overcame the tyranny of hell, broke the bloody powers of the prince of eternal death, and restored everlasting life to mankind.*

*Rejoice, Mary, mother of Jesus, that you gave birth to such a son, who by his divine resurrection gave us the sure hope of our future resurrection in glory; and who, ascending to God the Father, both God and man, full of mercy, promises a return to heaven for all.*

*Therefore we rejoice and congratulate ourselves, giving thanks also to your blessedness, O Mary, mother of Jesus, who has received divine favour and been taken up into heaven to everlasting glory.*

*Therefore we as supplicants pray to the same Jesus your son that we, who are unworthy and cannot reach to be heard, may with your most pleasing prayers attain the same heavenly glory with you. Amen.*

**7. [Hodie nobis celorum rex ...]  
Gloria in excelsis Deo**



Hodie nobis celorum rex de virgine nasci dignatus est, ut hominem perditum ad regna caelesti a revocaret: gaudet exercitus angelorum. Qui salus aeterna humano generi apparuit.

Gloria in excelsis Deo: et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Quia salus aeterna humano generi apparuit.

*Today the King of heaven deigned to be born for us of a virgin, that he might call lost man back to the heavenly kingdom: the host of angels rejoices, because eternal salvation has appeared to the human race.*

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.*

*Because eternal salvation has appeared to the human race.*

## 8. O splendor gloriae

O splendor gloriae et imago substantiae Dei patris omnipotentis, Iesu Christe unice eiusdem filii dilecte, totius boni fons vive, redemptor mundi, servator et Deus noster, salve!

Gloriosa, Domine, tua est majestas et opera mirabilia, ut caelum et terram cum omnibus que in eis sunt creaturis divino tuo verbo ex nihilo fecisti. Que

sapientissime mox disponens, nobis quos ad imaginem tuam novissime formasti, ut deservirent benignissime cuncta subdidisti.

Mortem intulerat protoplasti inobediencia, sed quo facture tue vitam redimeres, de Maria virgine humillia, Iesu sumpsisti carnem. Ex qua enim de spiritu sancto conceptus, natus es Deus et homo, ac illa tua mater integra permansit et perpetua virgo.

Et cum pro nobis duram tolerasses vitam, flagris cecus et tormentis laceratus, qui peccatum non feceris in corpore tuo scelera nostra perferens, ac eadem tuo preciosissimo sanguine effusus abluens, mortem denique infamem agnus mitissimus passus es et crudelissimum. Hinc tuo patri suavis hostia oblatas, pro nobis miseris peccatoribus es afflictus

Dein tertia die a morte exsuscitatus ad celestem patriam cum gloria summa elevatus, ut illi dexter assideas. Inde sanctum paraclitum nobis dedisti, qui ut nostra caelesti doctrina confirmet pectora, te prece precamur humili. Amen.

*O radiance of the Father's glory and very image of God the Father almighty, Jesus Christ, his only beloved son, living fount of all good, redeemer of the world, our deliverer and our God, hail!*

*Glorious, O Lord, is thy majesty, and wonderful thy works: by thy divine word thou madest out of nothing heaven and earth and all the creatures therein; then, having set them in order by thy great wisdom, thou puttest all things in subjection to us, whom thou had created anew in thine own image, that they might serve us.*

*Disobedience brought death to our first forefathers; but in order to redeem the life of thy creation, O Jesus, thou tookest flesh from the most lowly Virgin Mary: for, conceived by the Holy Spirit, thou wast born of her both God and man, and she, your mother, remained inviolate and a virgin for ever.*

*And when for our sake thou badst endured a life of harshness, the strokes of the whip and the searing tortures, though thou badst committed no sin, bearing on thine own body our misdeeds, and washing them away by the outpouring of thy most precious blood, at last thou, the gentle lamb, suffered a degrading and cruel death: and so thou offered thyself as the acceptable sacrifice to thy Father and suffered for us sinners.*

*Then, being woken from death on the third day, thou wast carried up to thy Father with great glory, to sit at his right hand: and then thou gavest us the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and that he may strengthen our hearts by his heavenly wisdom we now pray to thee with humble petition. Amen.*



## BIOGRAPHIES

### ALAMIRE

One of the leading vocal consorts in the UK, **Alamire** has an enviable line-up of some of the finest consort singers under the charismatic directorship of **David Skinner**. Inspired by the great choral works of the medieval and early modern periods, the ensemble expands or contracts according to its chosen repertoire and often combines with instrumentalists, creating colourful programmes to illustrate musical or historical themes. Recent collaborations with Andrew Lawrence-King (*Trinity Carol Roll* CD 2011; *Siglos De Oro* festival, Madrid 2010; *Henry's Music* CD and 500th anniversary celebrations 2009) and QuintEssential Sackbut & Cornett Ensemble (*Henry's Music*) have been extremely well received.

Alamire presents concerts regularly in the UK, USA, and Europe and has enjoyed varied and highly acclaimed projects including soundtracks for TV and film, sound installations for art galleries, festival appearances and radio broadcasts.

David Skinner and Alamire record exclusively for Obsidian Records, with

whom they have released five CDs and won a number of awards. In March 2010 they received critical acclaim (Gramophone Record of the Month) for their ground-breaking CD of the complete motets of the *Cantiones Sacrae* (1575) of Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. This CD of music by Taverner is the second recording in the exciting project entitled *Library of English Church Music* – a series of 30 CDs which will explore the highlights of the repertoire.



#### DAVID SKINNER

David Skinner is well known as a scholar and performer of early music and has already been recognised as one of the UK's brightest stars in the choral world. He was co-founder of The Cardinal's Musick in 1989, and has also worked with

many leading early music ensembles in the UK, including The Tallis Scholars, the Sixteen, the Hilliard Ensemble and the King's Singers.

David is Fellow and Osborn Director of Music at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University where he teaches historical and practical topics from the medieval and renaissance periods. He conducts the Choir of Sidney Sussex College, with whom he has toured and made highly acclaimed recordings (their first CD of Thomas Tomkins, on the Obsidian label, received Gramophone Magazine's Editor's Choice and CD of the Month in February 2008). David is frequently invited to lead workshops and coach choirs throughout Europe and the USA, and is noted for his refreshing and entertaining approach. He has published widely on music and musicians of early Tudor England and is currently editing the Latin church music of John Sheppard for publication in 2012.

*Photo credit:* Christopher Watson  
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Fitzalan Chapel, Arundel Castle

