

# *Vivaldi Vespers*

including:

**Beatus Vir**

**Stabat Mater**

**Magnificat**



Conductor  
**Jeffrey  
Skidmore**

*alto*



# Antonio Vivaldi

## *Versicle and Response, RV 593*

1	I. Deus in adiutorium meum intende, Domine ad adiuvandum me festina	2:54
2	II. Gloria Patri et Filio	3:48
3	III. Sicut erat in principio	2:14

## *Beatus Vir (Psalm 111), RV 597*

4	I. Beatus vir	2:30	9	VI. In memoria aeternum	4:50
5	II. Potens in terra	2:41	10	VII. Paratum cor eius	2:08
6	III. Gloria et divitiae	2:53	11	VIII. Peccator videbit	3:30
7	IV. Exortum est	3:19	12	IX. Gloria Patri et Filio	2:40
8	V. Jucundus homo	2:40			

## *Stabat Mater, RV 621*

13	I. Stabat Mater dolorosa	2:59	18	VI. Pro peccatis	1:56
14	II. Cuius animam	1:46	19	VII. Eja Mater	2:33
15	III. O quam tristis	1:53	20	VIII. Fac ut ardeat	1:45
16	IV. Quis est homo	2:56	21	IX. Amen	1:15
17	V. Quis non posset	1:51			

## *Magnificat, RV 610*

22	I. Magnificat	1:06	27	VI. Esurientes implevit	1:20
23	II. Et exultavit	2:11	28	VII. Suscepit Israel	0:47
24	III. Et misericordia	3:10	29	VIII. Sicut locutus est	1:42
25	IV. Fecit potentiam	0:31	30	IX. Gloria Patri et Filio	2:04
26	V. Deposuit potentes	1:04			

# Ex Cathedra

Chamber Choir and Baroque Orchestra

Jeffrey Skidmore, *director*

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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Until very recently it seemed that Antonio Vivaldi stumbled almost by accident into writing sacred vocal music. At the Ospedale della Pietà, the Venetian institution for foundlings where he had worked as a violin teacher since 1703, his terms of employment left no opportunity for composing such music, which lay within the province of the choirmaster. However, in 1713 the maestro di coro, Francesco Gasparini, abruptly decamped, leaving a void that was not filled until 1719. During the interregnum Vivaldi acted as the Pietà's principal supplier of new vocal compositions. From this period originate some of his best-known choral works, including the *Gloria* RV 589.

But we know now that this sudden efflorescence did not emerge from nowhere. In his early years Antonio often travelled with his father Giovanni Battista to play the violin at major church festivals in northern Italy. It was perhaps then that the Vivaldis began to assemble the large collection of manuscripts of sacred vocal music by other composers that today coexists alongside Antonio's own works in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Turin. The *Stabat Mater* appears to be the result of one such visit. In 1711 the Vivaldis had been invited to Brescia for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin at the Chiesa della Pace, the church belonging to the Philippine (Oratorian) order. The participation and payment of both men are recorded in the church's book listing expenditure on music between 1694 and 1726, which is preserved in the State Archive of Brescia. Antonio evidently managed to have a word in the right ear, since in the list of general expenses for the following year, 1712, we find a note of 20 lire and 4 soldi paid for a 'Stabat Mater composed by Vivaldi'. The Chiesa della Pace was very sparing with its commissions of new music – more usually, it added to its repertory by having existing works copied – so this acquisition attests Vivaldi's reputation as a composer (and perhaps also his powers of persuasion).

Before its official admission to the Roman Missal and Breviary by Benedict XIII in 1727, the 'Stabat Mater', a medieval sequence of uncertain authorship, existed on the margins of the liturgy. The accounts for 1712 do not show on what date Vivaldi was paid for his new composition, but since the previous payment refers to Holy Week, it is probable that his setting was performed, as later prescribed in the Breviary, at the feast of the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin, which occurs on the Friday preceding Palm Sunday; in 1712 this was 18

March. The fact that only verses 1-10 are set by Vivaldi (unlike the famous versions by Pergolesi and the two Scarlattis, which set all twenty verses) identifies the composition liturgically as a hymn sung at Vespers. This explains what might otherwise be a puzzling feature of Vivaldi's setting: the exact repetition of the music of movements 1-3 in movements 4-6. However, since Vivaldi's other hymns are all purely strophic, the extent to which the *Stabat Mater* departs from this formal principle (movements 7-9 all have new music) is noteworthy.

The present recording attempts to recapture the approximate size and make-up of the ensemble to which it was originally entrusted. The Chiesa della Pace retained a small orchestra comprising four regular violins plus an occasional supernumerary (who may have taken viola parts), a cello, a double bass and organ. Its leader was Giulio Taglietti, its cellist Luigi Taglietti and its organist Paolo Pollarolo: three men who were active as composers. The church employed a highly paid male alto, Filippo Sandri, but since he was frequently absent, we cannot be sure that another singer – perhaps the Domenico Tartana who was paid in 1712 for unspecified services during Holy Week – did not replace him on this occasion.

We have assumed that the *Stabat Mater* performed at Brescia is identical with Vivaldi's setting preserved in Turin. Of this there can be little doubt, however. The style of the latter identifies it clearly as an early work – moreover, one that cannot have been written for the Pietà, whose repertory (ascertainable from surviving musical fragments) includes no settings of the 'Stabat Mater'. Vivaldi achieves a powerful, brooding effect by casting all nine movements in either F minor or C minor. Because of this intensity, reinforced by many thematic similarities between the movements, the major chord with which the *Amen* ends (technically, merely a conventional *tierce de Picardie*) has the effect of a beatific release from the preceding gloom – perhaps a vision of Easter?

The three other works on this recording belong to a large group of sacred vocal compositions from the mid or late 1720s. All are included in the liturgy of the Common of One Martyr, and since certain of them refer to St. Lawrence, the possibility exists that they were composed for celebration of that saint's festival on 10 August, perhaps in Rome at the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, whose patron was Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, one of Vivaldi's main protectors during this period. The compass and character of their bass parts part that they were not

destined for the all-female singers for the Pietà (which could once again call on the services of a *maestro di coro*). This possible 'Roman' group of works is extrovert, sometimes even ostentatious, in character, as if Vivaldi were trying hard to impress. Most noteworthy is the emphasis in certain movements on formal counterpoint. The regular fugue over a running bass with which the *Domine ad adiuvandum me festina* ends and the In memoria aeternum movements of the *Beatus vir*, which combines three subjects with great ingenuity, are cases in point.

The 'Magnificat' is the canticle sung at Vespers. The earliest version of Vivaldi's setting, which has no oboes and employs only a single choir and orchestra, was probably written for the Pietà around 1713-17. In the 1720s the composer adapted it, perhaps in order to bring it into line with the other works in the 'Roman' group, by adding two oboes and dividing the ensemble into two *cori*. The music, however, still reflects the work's 'monochoral' origin. In its structure Vivaldi's *Magnificat* follows the convention by being divided into a series of separate numbers, variously for one or more soloists and choir. Perhaps the most striking movement is the Et misericordia, whose curiously angular vocal lines convey a feeling of suffering, hence of mercy.

The 'Beatus vir' is the third psalm sung at Vespers. Once again, Vivaldi has adapted a work originally written for a single *coro* (which appears to survive in its original form in a manuscript in Dresden attributed, puzzlingly, to Galuppi), but the revision is here more radical, resulting at times in a genuinely polychoral texture. The setting of the opening verse reappears in various guises as a so-called 'antiphon', or refrain, at strategic points in the composition. This is a common manner of treating this psalm, practised since at least the time of Monteverdi. Unlike Vivaldi's other ALC 1176 Booklet.indd 4 surviving *Beatus vir*, a setting in B flat in a single movement, this work is elaborate and showy, full of effective contrasts.

Its words taken from Psalm 69 (70 in Protestant bibles), 'Domine ad adiuvandum me festina', are the Response to the Versicle 'Deus in adiutorium meum intende' with which Vespers begin. Vivaldi set the short text as a cycle of three movements for double choir and orchestra that is as perfect an expression of his art – and also of his skill at writing polychorally – as anything he wrote. How well the opening movement expresses the idea of joyful haste ('festina'), the middle

movement the idea of sanctity ('Gloria ... 'Spiritui Sancto'), and the finale the idea of eternity ('in saecula saeculorum')!

In Vivaldi's day the idea of separating soloists spatially from the choir and allowing them to cultivate a different kind of vocal production would have seemed perverse. Because of the general uniformity of timbre it was normally possible – as occasional cues in Vivaldi's sacred vocal works demonstrate – to allot 'solo' lines to two or more singers, particularly where a better balance or greater firmness of line would result. For pragmatic reasons, and in the spirit of an experiment, the present recording adopts this solution in several movements.

– **Michael Talbot**

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### NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

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From its home city of Birmingham, **Ex Cathedral** has established an international reputation as a leading UK choir and Early Music ensemble. It aims to explore, research and commission the finest choral music and to set the highest standards for excellence in performance and training. Ex Cathedral is known for its passion for seeking out the best, the unfamiliar and the unexpected in the choral repertoire, for its thorough research and for its dynamic performances.

Founded by Jeffrey Skidmore in 1969, Ex Cathedral has grown into a unique musical resource, comprising specialist choir, vocal Consort, period-instrument orchestra and thriving education programme.

Ex Cathedral presents a series of concerts in Birmingham, where it is an Associate Artist at Town Hall, and is delighted to receive invitations to appear at festivals and concert series across the UK and abroad. Recent performances have included the Aldeburgh, Aranjuez, Canterbury, Chelsea, Chichester, Edinburgh International, Kilkenny, Lufthansa, Newbury Spring, Paisley, Santiago de Compostela, Salisbury, Stratford, St David's and Three Choirs festivals, and the group has appeared in Champagne, Poissy, New York and at the Royal Opera House.

Its education programme is central to Ex Cathedral's mission. It has delivered its Singing Playgrounds project to over 180 schools across the UK, and to schools in Bangkok and New Zealand. Singing Medicine has been delivered for over five years at Birmingham Children's Hospital, and recently started at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital. The group runs its own youth training choir, the Academy of Vocal Music

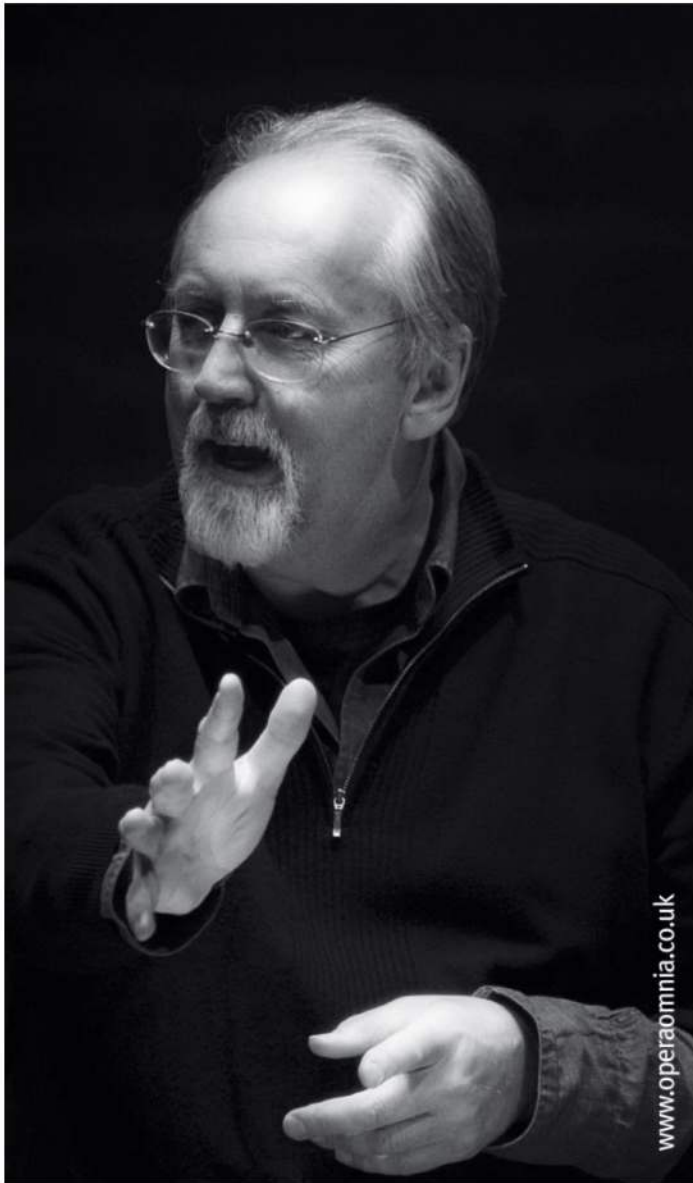
(male and female singers aged 16 and above) and the Junior Academy of Vocal Music (boys and girls aged 7-16), trained by Rebecca Ledgard.

**Jeffrey Skidmore** is one of the country's foremost choral conductors and is highly regarded by instrumentalists, singers and audiences for the high quality of his performances. He is well-known for exciting programming which is often challenging but always accessible. Jeffrey read music at Magdalen College, Oxford, before returning to his native Birmingham to develop Ex Cathedral into the internationally-acclaimed choral group it has become today.

Directing Ex Cathedral and its associated Baroque Orchestra and Consort, Jeffrey has appeared in concert series and festivals across the UK and abroad and made more than a dozen highly-acclaimed recordings. He regularly conducts other ensembles and in the last five years has commissioned more than ten new works and conducted many world premieres by both well-established composers and new, young talent. Composers include Fyfe Hutchins, Gabriel Jackson, John Joubert, Daryl Runswick, Peter Sculthorpe, Philip Sheppard, Peter Wiegold, and Roderick Williams.

Jeffrey is a pioneer in the field of research and performance of neglected choral works of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and has won wide acclaim in particular for his recordings of French and Latin American Baroque music with Ex Cathedral. An Honorary Fellow at Birmingham Conservatoire and a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, he has prepared new performing editions of works by Araujo, Charpentier, Lalande, Monteverdi and Rameau.





**Jeffrey Skidmore**



**Ex Cathedra Chamber Choir**

**Versicle & Response (RV593)**Tenor: Paul Agnew

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| [1] Deus in adiutorium meum intende<br>Domine ad adiuvandum me festina                 | <i>O God, turn to me in my adversity<br/>Make haste to help me, O Lord.</i>                        |
| [2] Gloria Patri et Filio<br>Et Spiritui Sancto:                                       | <i>Glory be to the Father and to the Son,<br/>and to the Holy Spirit:</i>                          |
| [3] Sicut erat in principio<br>Et nunc et semper<br>Et in saecula saeculorum.<br>Amen. | <i>as it was in the beginning,<br/>is now, and ever shall be,<br/>world without end.<br/>Amen.</i> |

**Beatus vir (RV597) – Psalm 111**

Soprano: Helen Groves

Tenor: Paul Agnew

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| [4] Beatus vir qui timet Dominum,<br>in mandatis eius volet nimis.  | <i>Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,<br/>he hath great delight in his commandments</i>  |
| [5] Potens in terra erit semen eius:<br>generatio rectorum benedicetur.   | <i>His seed shall be mighty upon earth:<br/>The generation of the upright shall be<br/>blessed</i>  |
| [6] Gloria et divitiae in domo eius,<br>et iustitia eius manet in saeculum<br>saeculi.                                      | <i>Wealth and riches shall be in his house;<br/>and his righteousness endureth for ever.</i>  |
| [7] Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis,<br>misericors, et miserator, et justus.   | <i>Unto the upright there ariseth light in the<br/>darkness;<br/>he is gracious, and full of compassion, and<br/>righteous.</i>               |
| [8] Jucundus homo qui miseretur et<br>commodat,<br>disponet sermones suos in iudicio;<br>Quia in aeternum non commovebitur. | <i>A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth:<br/><br/>he will guide his affairs with discretion.<br/>Surely he shall not be moved for ever:</i> |

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| <p>[9] In memoria aeterna erit Justus;<br/><br/>Ab auditione mala non timebit.<br/>[10] Paratum cor eius sperare in Domino.<br/>Confirmatum est cor eius;<br/>non commovebitur donec despiciat<br/>inimicos suos.<br/>Dispersit, dedit pauperibus,<br/><br/>justitia eius manet in saeculum saecula.<br/>Cornu eius exaltabitur in gloria.</p> | <p><i>the righteous shall be in everlasting<br/>remembrance<br/>He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:<br/>his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.<br/>His heart is established,<br/>he shall not be afraid, until he sees his<br/>desire upon his enemies.<br/>He hath dispersed, he hath given to the<br/>poor;<br/>his righteousness endureth for ever;<br/>his horn shall be exalted with honour.<br/>The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;<br/>he shall gnash his teeth, and melt away:<br/>the desire of the wicked shall perish.<br/>Glory be to the Father... etc</i></p> |
| <p>[11] Peccator videbit, et irascetur,<br/>dentibus suis fremet et tabescet;<br/>desiderium peccatorum peribit.<br/>[12] Gloria Patri et Filio...</p>   | <p><i>The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;<br/>he shall gnash his teeth, and melt away:<br/>the desire of the wicked shall perish.<br/>Glory be to the Father... etc</i></p>  |

**Stabat Mater (RV621)**

Alto: Nigel Short

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| <p>[13] Stabat Mater dolorosa,<br/>Juxta crucem lacrimosa,<br/>Dum pendebat Filius.</p>   | <p><i>A sorrowing mother stood weeping<br/>beside the cross<br/>while her Son hung there</i></p>  |
| <p>[14] Cuius animam gementem,<br/>Contristatam et dolentem,<br/>Pertransivit gladius.</p>  | <p><i>Her grieving heart,<br/>full of tears and anguish,<br/>pierced through, as with a sword</i></p>   |
| <p>[15] O quam tristis et afflicta<br/>Fuit illa benedicta<br/>Mater Unigeniti.<br/>Quae morebat et dolebat,<br/>Pia Mater dum vivebat<br/>Nati poenas inclyti.</p> | <p><i>O how sad and unfortunate was that<br/>blessed Mother<br/>of an only Son<br/>How she mourned and grieved,<br/>Watching the suffering of<br/>her glorious son.</i></p> |
| <p>[16] Quis est homo, qui non eret,</p>  | <p><i>Who is he who would not weep</i></p>  |

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|      | Christi Matrem si videret<br>In tanto supplicio?   | <i>If he saw the Mother of Christ<br/>in such distress?</i>   |
| [17] | Quis non posset contristari,<br>Christi Matrem contemplari<br>Dolentem cum Filio?  | <i>Who would not feel compassion<br/>at the sight of Christ's Mother<br/>grieving beside her Son?</i>   |
| [18] | Pro peccatis suae gentis<br>Vidit Jesum in tormentis<br>Et agellis subditum.<br>Vidit suum dulcem natum<br>Moriendo desolatum,<br>Dum emisit spiritum. | <i>For the sins of his people,<br/>she saw Jesus tormented<br/>and subjected to scourging.<br/>She saw her dear Son<br/>dying forsaken<br/>as he yielded up his spirit.</i> |
| [19] | Eja Mater, fons amoris,<br>me sentire vim doloris<br>Fac, ut tecum lugeam.   | <i>O Mother, thou fount of love,<br/>Share the depth of thy suffering with me<br/>so that I may mourn with thee.</i>  |
| [20] | Fac ut ardeat cor meum<br>in amando Christum Deum,<br>Ut sibi complaceam.  | <i>Kindle such love for Christ my God<br/>within my heart<br/>that I may be worthy of him.</i>  |
| [21] | Amen.  | <i>Amen.</i>  |

**Magnicat (RV610)**

Soprano: Helen Groves  
Alto: Ruth Gleave & Nigel Short  
Tenor: Paul Agnew

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| [22] | Magnicat anima mea Dominum:  | <i>My soul doth magnify the Lord.</i>   |
| [23] | Et exultavit spiritus meus<br>in Deo salutari meo.<br>Quia respexit humilitatem<br>Ancillae suae:<br>Ecce enim ex hoc beatam<br>me dicent omnes generationes.<br>Quia fecit mihi magna | <i>And my spirit hath rejoiced<br/>in God my saviour.<br/>For he hath regarded the low estate<br/>of his handmaiden:<br/>For, behold, from henceforth<br/>all generations shall call me blessed<br/>For he that is mighty</i> |



**Alto ALC1176**

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