CANTANTIBUS ORGANIS

Anthem for St Cecilia’s Day

S.A.T.T.B. and Organ

music by

Peter Tranchell

1922 – 1993

composed in 1987

https://peter-tranchell.uk

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The full anthem *Cantantibus organis* for St Cecilia’s Day was written by Peter Tranchell in 1987 for use by the choir of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was Precentor (Director of Music), and it was sung at Evensong (presumably on St Cecilia’s Day, 22 November) that year.

The final page of the manuscript, reproduced here after the computer-set music, gives the relationship between the music in the anthem and the plainsong settings of some of the proper antiphons for the Feast given in the *Liber Usualis*. For the refrain Tranchell has used a shortened and slightly adapted version of the first antiphon at Second Vespers, *Cantantibus organis, Cæcilia Domino decantebat in corde suo*, and the melody is shown as deriving loosely from the plainsong setting of part of the Antiphon for the Magnificat at First Vespers (*Est secretum, Valeriane...*), specifically *angelum Dei ... amatorem*, followed by the beginning of the second Antiphon at Second Vespers, *Valerianus* – in retrograde. The melodies of the solo verses are shown as similarly related to parts of the plainsong melodies of these two Antiphons together with the second Antiphon at Second Vespers. This is the sort of intellectual exercise that Peter Tranchell revelled in, though it has rarely been so completely documented by him – another example is his exhaustive analysis of the 210 variations of the main theme in his opera *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1951) covering 24 foolscap pages [preserved in the Cambridge University Library, available in the Manuscripts room under Classmarks Tranchell/10/1/10/279 & 280]. In his notes on the composer Edward Johnson, Tranchell wrote “It is possible to write genuinely good music which contains a cryptogram” and may well have been making a self-reference.

The origin of the English words, which tell the story fleshed out from the antiphons and according to various Lives of St Cecilia dating back to Chaucer’s Second Nun’s Tale, Ælfric’s Lives of Saints and before, is uncertain. They are possibly by Tranchell himself, given that they are required to fit the melodies derived from the various plainsong fragments, although the near-doggerel is uncharacteristic of his few poetic writings and nowhere near the class of the works on the subject by Dryden, Pope and Auden.

The texts of all the antiphons for the day in the *Liber Usualis* are given below, with English translations:

**I Vespers**

**Antiphon for the Magnificat**: *Est secretum, Valeriane, quod tibi volo dicere: angelum Dei habeo amatorem, qui nimio zelo custodit corpus meum.*

Valerian, there is a secret I would tell you: It is God’s angel that I hold dear, who guards my body most zealously.

**II Vespers**: the five Antiphons

**Antiphon for the Magnificat**: *Virgo gloria semper Evangelium Christi gerebat in pectore suo; non diebus neque noctibus a colloquis divinis et oratione cessat.*

The glorious maid bore Christ’s Gospel always in her heart, and neither night nor day did she cease speaking and praying to God.

**Antiphon 1** *Cantantibus organis, Cæcilia Domino decantebat dicens: Fiat cor meum immaculatum, ut non confundar.*

As the instruments were playing, Cecilia sang to the Lord, saying: Let my heart be spotless, that I may not be confounded.

Tranchell set a slight variant: *Cantantibus organis, Cæcilia Domino decantebat in corde suo.*

As the instruments were playing, Cecilia sang to the Lord in her heart.

This is cognate with the longer version as set by Lassus: *Cantantibus organis Cæcilia [virgo in corde suo soli domine] decantabat dicens: Fiat cor meum [et corpus meum] immaculatum ut non confundar.*

As the instruments were playing, Cecilia the virgin sang in her heart to the Lord only, saying: Let my heart and body be spotless, that I may not be confounded.
**Antiphon 2** Valerianus in cubiculo Cæciliam cum Angelo orantem invenit.
Valerian found Cecilia in her room with an Angel at her prayers.

**Antiphon 3** Cæcilia famula tua, Domine, quasi apis tibi argumentosa deservit.
Cecilia thy servant, Lord, served thee like the busy bee.

**Antiphon 4** Benedice me, Pater Domini mei Jesu Christi: quia per Filium tuum ignis exstinctus est a latere meo.
I bless thee, Father of Jesus Christ my Lord; for, thanks to thy Son, the fire is extinguished beside me.

**Antiphon 5** Triduanae a Domino poposci inducas, ut domum meam ecclesiam consecrarem.
Three days' respite have I asked from the Lord, that I may dedicate my house as a church.

**Composer’s notes – as referenced in the text.**

1 During Imperial Roman times the organ, called hydraulis or hydra whether it was blown by a water-mechanism or by bellows, was used at public entertainments in theatre or arena. Smaller versions were also commonly in domestic use. Metal flue-pipes in up to four ranks were the norm, some ranks open, others stopped. From the considerable remains of a hydraulis bearing a dedicatory tablet dated 228 AD unearthed by archaeologists earlier this [i.e. twentieth] century at the Roman military site of Aquincum in Hungary [modern Budapest], and from a working replica more recently made of it, it is clear that the organ’s tone especially as regards the open pipes was remarkably shrill.

In Cecilia’s day, the organ had no association with Christian worship

2 The priest was Bishop Urban, then in hiding among the poor near the third milestone of the Appian Way. He regularly administered clandestine baptism. Later he baptized four hundred persons in one day in Cecilia’s house, which may well have intensified the suspicions of the authorities as regards her illicit activities.

3 Valerian’s brother was called Tibertius.

4 The Prefect of Rome at that time was Almachius. The beheading took place at Pagus Triopius, four miles from Rome.

5 St Cecilia was buried in the catacomb of St Callistus [Callixtus].
Cantantibus Organis

Peter Tranchell

Allegro [\( \text{\textit{d} = 72} \)]

Soprano

Alto

Tenor 1&2

Bass

Allegro

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Can-tan-ti-bus or-ga-nis

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,

Ce-ci-li-a Do-mi-no
dec-an-ta-bat in cor-de,
There was in Rome, as tales record, A daughter of a noble Lord. From childhood, she had pledged she would in Jesus' Name keep maidenhood. Her...
fa-ther gave the maid to wed A young pa-tri-cian lord in-stead. Va-ler-ian

was that young man's name, And to Va-le-rian's house she came.

Can-can-ti-bus or-ga-nis
Can-can-ti-bus or-ga-nis
Can-can-ti-bus or-ga-nis
Can-can-ti-bus or-ga-nis

The mer-ry wed-ding mu-sic
play’d, while in her heart Cecilia pray’d. That night her husband

she did tell: ‘A holy Angel guards me. If you re-spect my

chas-ti-ty, He will love you as he loves me. But should you dis-re-spect your

bride, Alas, alas, woe will be-tide.’
said: 'I would agree, If I this Angel could but see.' She told him then the Christian Way, And taught him what the Gospels say.
She said: 'Seek out the priest this night, and be bap-tiz'd to gain true sight.'
When he came home, he sought his bride. And saw the angel at her side. The angel laid upon her hair a crown of rose and lily fair. Valerian and his brother then served Christ by burying martyr'd men. Their pious work anon was cut short.
Prefect haled them to his court. In cor-de,

Prefect haled them to his court. In cor-de,

Prefect haled them to his court. In cor-de,

Prefect haled them to his court. (\( \frac{d}{d} = f \))

In-tro-ga-ted long they were. The scourge they joy-fu-ly did bear. The

Prefect's sen-tence then was pass'd. The Heads-man did his
work at last. Cecilia staying in her home. Re-ceived all Christian
folk in Rome. She built a chapel all could use.
which the Prefect soon had news.
which the Prefect soon had news.
The Prefect's sentence was the

doom of stifling in her own bathroom. They stoked the furnace to a blaze. But she survived it two whole days.
Heads-man, to chop off her head, struck thrice per-force, – and thought her dead.

But three days more she linger'd on, until to

Heav'n her soul was gone.

see Note 5
Thus was to Music giv’n the seal of witness to her first ordeal.

In death it was her last reward To make Heaven’s music with the Lord.

Gloria Patri,
et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in princi-
Antiphons from the Gregorian plain-chant
for St Cecilia’s Day (22 Nov)

1. Antiphon for Magnificat et First Vespers.

Est se-cretum, Va-le-ra-ne, quod ti-bi vo-lo di-ce-re: An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem,

2. Antiphon for Second Vespers

qui ni-mi-o ge-lo cas-to-dix corpus meum. Eu o u a e.

3. Antiphon for Magnificat at Second Vespers

Va-le-ra-ne in su-ci-cu-lo Caeci-li-on cum An-ge-lo o-na-tum in-ver-nit. Eu o u a e.

Virgo glo-ri-o-sa Sem-per e-van-gel-i-cum Chris-ti ge-re-bae in pec-to-re su-o,

et non die-bus necque no-ci-bus a co-lo-qui-di-vi-nis et o-ra-tio-ne ce-ssa-bat.

Eu o u a e.

Relationship of phrases from the Antiphons with the Anthem (here transposed).

(1) (3) (1) (1) (1) (1)

vo-lo Virgo glo-ri-o-sa di-ce-re ti-bi vo-lo ti-bi vo-lo

(1) (1) (2) (1) (1) (1)

An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem Va-le-ra-ne in su-ci-cu-lo An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem

(2) (transposed) (2)

qui ni-mi-o ge-lo Cae-ci-li-on cum An-ge-lo o-na-tum in-ver-nit.

ANTHEM Verse.

(2) (3) (transposed) (1) (1) (2) (transposed)

Va-le-ra-ne in su-ci-cu-lo cum an-ge-lo qui ni-mi-o ge-lo Va-le-ra-ne

(3) (transposed) (1) (1) (1) (4) (3) (reversed)

Virgo glo-ri-o-sa ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem. An-ge-lum De-i a-ma-to-rem

ANTHEM refrain

(2)

(1) (1) (1) (1)

cum An-ge-lo

(1) (1) (1)

Cas-to-di corpus meum An-ge-lum De-i An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem

ANTHEM