

Ave Maria

Edited by Jason Smart

Anon. (16th cent.)

Mean

Countertenor

Tenor

Bass

A - - - - - ve,

A - - - - - ve,

A - - - - - ve,

A - - - - - ve,

5

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - a,

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - [a,]

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - a,

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - a,

10

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - -

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - -

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - -

a - ve, Ma - ri - - - - -

14

18

Translation

Hail, hail, Mary. Hail, Mary, full of grace.

Liturgical Function

This setting, by an anonymous English composer of the sixteenth century, is a votive antiphon to the Virgin. It survives only in the Gyffard Partbooks, which are considered by some to include repertoire acquired in pre-Reformation Oxford. Since the setting is in three sections, it is conceivable that it was composed during 1527–1532 for Thomas Wolsey's Cardinal College in Oxford, or after the college was refounded by Henry VIII in 1532. Wolsey's statutes required the singing of several votive antiphons each evening, including 'Ave', sung solemnly three times while kneeling, the iterations separated by the sounding of a bell. Henry's statutes retained the *Ave* with more specific instructions. One of the bells was to be rung nine times in three groups of three, each group separated by an interval. After the first two groups the choristers were to sing *Ave Maria*, and, after the third, *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum*. The brevity of the present setting is unexpected, but it is hardly shorter than Henry's requirements.

Editorial Conventions

The nomenclature of the voice-parts follows the Tudor convention.

The original clef, staff signature, mensuration symbol and first note of each part are shown on the prefatory staves.

Editorial accidentals are placed above the notes concerned.

Ligatures are denoted by the sign \frown .

Spelling of the text has been modernised.

Underlay between square brackets is entirely editorial.

Source

London, British Library Add. MSS 17802–5 (the 'Gyffard Partbooks', c.1570–c.1578).

17802 (Ct) f.239v; 17803 (M) f.237v; 17804 (T) f.228; 17805 (B) f.218v.

Notes on the Readings of the Source

The limited range of note values employed, the large number of ligatures, the completely concordant style and the use of the semibreve (in the original notation) as the basic unit of movement all strongly suggest that the original might have been written in 'strene' notation.

16 M -a below A (perhaps correctly despite the ligature)