

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/10/1/1/10/279 & 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 gloriosa semper Evangelium Christi gerebat in pectore suo; non diebus neque noctibus a colloquiis divinis et oratione cessabat.*

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 Cecilia [virgo in corde suo soli domino] 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 *Benedico te, 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 *Triduanas a Domino poposci inducias, 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].

Dynamics in square brackets are editorial, provided by Peter Marchbank

Music setting by John Gwinnell, March 2014

Cantantibus Organis

Peter Tranchell

Allegro [♩. = 72]

Soprano *f* Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis

Alto *f* Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis

Tenor 1&2 *f* Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis

Bass *f* Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis

Organ *f* **I** Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis

8 *f* Ce - ci - li - a Do-mi - no de-can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

f Ce - ci - li - a Do-mi - no de-can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

f Ce - ci - li - a Do-mi - no de-can - ta - - bat in cor-de

f Ce - ci - li - a Do-mi - no de-can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

16

in cor-de, in cor - de su - o.

in cor-de, in cor - de su - o.

in cor-de, in cor - de su - o.

in cor-de, in cor - de su - o, su - o.

SOPRANOS FULL

26 (♩ = ♩) *mf*

There was in Rome, as tales re - cord, A daugh - ter of a no - ble Lord. From

III

p

[senza Ped.]

31

child-hood, she had pledged she would In Je - sus' Name keep maid-en-hood. Her

T&B FULL *mf*

II

mf

35

TUTTI (all voices)

mf

fa - ther gave the maid to wed A young pa - tri - cian lord in - stead. Va - le - rian

40

was that young_ man's name,_ And_ to__ Va - le - rian's house she came.

45

f

(♩ = ♪)

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

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

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

SOLO BASS [*mp*]

Can-tan-ti - bus or - ga-nis The mer-ry wed-ding mu-sic

(♩ = ♪)

I

(♩ = ♪) III

51 [mp] SOLO SOPRANO

play'd, while in her heart Ce - ci - lia pray'd. That night her hus-band

see Note 1

[senza Ped.]

55

she did tell: 'A ho - ly An - gel guards me well. If you re-spect my

III+-

59

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

64

bride, — A - - las, — a - las, woe will be - tide.'

68 (♩ = ♩) TUTTI

f Ce - ci - li - a Do - mi - no

f Ce - ci - li - a Do - mi - no

f Ce - ci - li - a Do - mi - no

f Ce - ci - li - a Do - mi - no

SOLO BASS
[*mp*]

Ce - ci - li - a Do - mi - no

Va - le - rian

I III

74 TUTTI (all voices)
mp

said: 'I would a - gree, If I this An - gel could but see.' She

II

78

told him then the Chris - tian Way, And taught him what the Gos - pels say.

82

[mp] SOLO SOPRANO

She said: 'Seek out the priest this night, and be bap-tiz'd to gain true sight.'

III

see Note 2

86

TUTTI (all voices)

He went at once that thing — to do — And — took — his

II

90

bro - ther with him too. de - can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

bro - ther with him too. de - can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

bro - ther with him too. de - can - ta - - bat in cor-de,

bro - ther with him too. de - can - ta - - bat in cor-de, I

see Note 3

96] *[mp]* SOLO BASS

When he came home, he sought his bride, And saw the an - gel

III

p

100] at her side. The An - gel laid up - on her hair a crown of rose and

104] *mf* TUTTI (all voices)

li - ly fair. Va - le - rian and his bro - ther then serv'd Christ by bu - ry - ing

II

mp

108] *f*

mar - tyr'd men. Their pi - ous work an - on was cut short. The

112

mf *p* *f* ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

Pre - - fect haled them to his court. in cor-de,

mf *p* *f*

Pre - - fect haled them to his court. in cor-de,

mf *p* *f*

Pre - - fect haled them to his court. in cor-de,

mf *p* *f*

Pre - - fect haled them to his court. in cor-de,

118

SOLO BASS

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ [*mf*]

In - ter - ro - ga - ted long they were. The scourge they joy - ful - ly did bear. The

p III

123

Pre - fect's sen - tence then was pass'd. The Heads - man did his

see Note 4

126 *mp* SOPRANOS FULL

work at last. Ce - ci - lia stay-ing in her home, Re - ceiv'd all Chris-tian

II-

p

130 *mf* TUTTI (all voices) *f* *mf* T&B FULL

folk in Rome. She built a cha-pel all__ could use. Of__

135 *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

in cor - -

in cor - -

which__ the Pre-fect soon had news. in cor - -

which__ the Pre-fect soon had news. in cor - -

141 *p* (♩ = ♪)

de su - o. su - o. The Pre-fect's sen-tence was the

p **III**

147

doom of sti-pling in her own bath-room. They stoked the fur-nace

151 *[mp]* SOLO SOPRANO *[mf]* SOLO TENOR

to a blaze. But she sur-viv'd it two whole days. The

154

8
Heds-man, to chop off her head, struck thrice per-force, - and thought her dead.

II-
p

158

8
But three days more she ling - er'd on, un - - til to

p

162

8
Heav'n her soul was gone.

p (♩ = ♪)

see Note 5 (♩ = ♪) **I**

f

168 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ *f* TUTTI (all voices) 3

Thus was to Mu - - - - sic giv'n the seal of wit-ness to her first or-deal.

II

mf

173 *mf*

In death it was her last re - ward To make Hea-ven's

f *mp* *mf*

177 SOLO BASS *f*

mu - sic with the Lord. Glo - ri - a Pa - tri,

I [Trumpet] *p* *mf*

181 *f* $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

et Fi-li-o et Spi-ri-tu-i San-cto, si-cut e-rat in prin-

et Fi-li-o et Spi-ri-tu-i San-cto, si-cut e-rat in prin-

et Fi-li-o et Spi-ri-tu-i San-cto, si-cut e-rat in prin-

et Fi-li-o et Spi-ri-tu-i San-cto, si-cut e-rat in prin-

f

I

187

-ci-pi-o et nunc et sem-per, et in sae-cu-la sae-cu-

-ci-pi-o et nunc et sem-per, et in sae-cu-la sae-cu-

-ci-pi-o et nunc et sem-per, et in sae-cu-la sae-cu-

-ci-pi-o et nunc et sem-per, et in sae-cu-la

mf

194 *ff* *pp*

ff *pp*

ff *pp*

ff *pp*

- lo - - - - rum. A - - - - men. _____

- lo - - - - rum. A - - - - men. _____

- lo - - - - rum. A - - - - men. _____

- rum. A - - - - men. _____

ff *ff*

202

PAUSA LUNGA

pp *pp*

[Reduce Pedal]

Antiphons from the Gregorian plain-chant
for St Cecilia's Day (22 Nov.)

1. Antiphon for Magnificat at First Vespers.

Est se-cre-tum, Va-le-ri-a-ne, quod ti-bi vo-lo di-ce-re: An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem,
qui ni-mi-o ze-lo cus-to-dit cor-pus me-um. Eu o u a e.

2. Antiphon at Second Vespers

Va-le-ri-a-nus in cu-bi-cu-lo Cae-ci-li-am cum An-ge-lo o-ran-tem in-ve-nit. Eu o u a e.

3. Antiphon for Magnificat at Second Vespers.

Vir-go glo-ri-o-sa sem-per e-van-ge-li-cum Chri-sti ge-re-bat in pec-to-re su-o,
et non di-e-bus ne-que noc-ti-bus a col-lo-qui-is di-vi-nis et o-ra-ti-o-ne ce-ssa-bat.

Relationship of phrases from the Antiphons with the Anthem (here transposed).
Eu o u a e.

(1) vo-lo (3) Vir-go glo-ri-o-sa (1) di-ce-re (1) ti-bi vo-lo (1)
(1) An-ge-lum De-i ha-beo (1) ha-beo a-ma-to-rem (2) Va-le-ri-a-nus in cu-bi-cu-lo (1) An-ge-lum De-i ha-beo a-ma-to-rem
(1) qui ni-mi-o ze-lo (2) (transposed) Cae-ci-li-am cum An-ge-lo (2) o-ran-tem in-ve-nit.
ANTHEM verse

(2) Va-le-ri-a-nus in cu-bi-cu-lo (2) (transposed) cum an-ge-lo (1) qui ni-mi-o ze-lo (2) (transposed) Va-le-ri-a-nus
(3) Vir-go glo-ri-o-sa (1) ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem (1) An-ge-lum De-i a-ma-to-rem (2) (reversed) nus --- a ni-k-va
ANTHEM refrain b b b b bbb

(2) cum An-ge-lo
(1) cus-to-dit cor-pus me-um (1) An-ge-lum De-i (1) An-ge-lum De-i ha-be-o a-ma-to-rem
ANTHEM b b # #