

FRANCIS ROUTH (1927 -)

A Sacred Tetralogy (IV)

Notes by the composer

(IV) Gloria tibi Trinitas Op.29

Three years separated the fourth from the third work of my Tetralogy. *Gloria tibi Trinitas*, celebrating the Festival of the Trinity, was first heard on 9 June, 1974 Trinity Sunday, in the Royal Festival Hall, London, performed by Christopher Bowers-Broadbent for whom it was written.

Like *Aeternae Rex Altissime*, it is based on a plainchant; in this case the Antiphon theme which appears in the *Mass Gloria tibi Trinitas* composed in 1525 by the Tudor composer John Taverner.

Gloria tibi Trinitas
Aequalis, una Deitas,
Et ante omnia saecula,
Et nunc et in perpetuum

Glory to thee
Equal Trinity, one Godhead,

Both before all time,
And now and for ever

was the Antiphon for the first Vespers for the Feast of the Holy Trinity. In deciding to write this fourth piece round the theme of the Trinity, and not Pentecost as might be expected, I was partly swayed by the somewhat self-indulgent desire to make use of Taverner's melody which had been the source of inspiration for so many English composers of the 16th and 17th centuries, who used it for their *In Nomine* compositions.

Another feature singles out *Gloria tibi Trinitas* from the other three works of the Tetralogy. Apart from the plainchant it has no secondary theme. This makes it shorter and simpler than the preceding pieces. After the expository Introduction, the three

movements represent three different presentations of the melody.

First movement

Senza misura - Allegro, poco vivace

First the Introduction, *senza misura* for manuals only, in which the melody is announced in four stanzas, each with its answer.

Allegro, poco vivace A double canon, like a Trio Sonata in *scherzando* style, with the melody, again in four stanzas, divided between a double pedal part.

Second movement

Lento espressivo

The music is a study in sustained quietness unique to the organ. Against held chords, Flute, Celeste, the theme is used in the tenor register, in free recitative style. There follows some melodic development and increase in intensity, to which the use of a 16' manual reed, in this case Corno di Bassetto, lends characteristic colour.

The addition of the Tierce to the pedal, after the initial exposition of the theme, provides extra edge to the texture, as well as creating a tonal overlap which knits the parts together. When this stop is taken off, the intensity of the music dissolves, as the mood and level of tone of the opening is resumed.

Third movement

Vivace, senza misura

The toccata section (bars 1-59), driven forward by even semiquavers in free metre, falls approximately into two halves. The second half, beginning at bar 36, recapitulates the opening material a fifth higher, on a C tonality instead of F.

The concluding section, starting at bar 60, is a chordal chorale-like summary of the theme, drawing together all that has gone before in a long, final statement. The term "chorale" is here used in the free, Franckian sense. The music veers towards a D tonality with short, quick

motifs for the pedals, derived from the chromatic semiquaver movement which makes up the earlier part of the toccata section. Only for the coda chords in the last bars - a feature common to all the pieces in my Tetralogy - does the pedal line broaden out in a recollection of the answering phrases of the Introduction. In this way the whole work is framed by the Introduction and Coda.

Four Marian Antiphons Op.50

i *Alma Redemptoris Mater*
(Advent - Purification, 2 February)

Moderato - Allegro moderato

- 1 Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia coeli porta manes,
- 2 Et Stella maris succurre cadenti surgere qui curat populo;
- 3 Tu quae genuisti natura mirante tuum sanctum genitorem

4 Virgo prius ac posterius Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.

- 1 Gracious Mother of the Redeemer, Gateway of Heaven
- 2 Star of the sea, arise and rescue a fallen people
- 3 You who wonderfully bore your Holy Creator,
- 4 Virgin first and last, hearing that summons from the mouth of Gabriel, Have mercy on our sins.

The use of plainchant is confined to my organ works. I do not use it in other compositions. The attraction it has for me as the material for organ compositions is that it is pure music, detached from all ostentation and artificial effect. The melodies derive from the mediaeval church, and I am attempting to capture something of the collective expression and tradition .

Gregorian chant was the work of countless musicians over many centuries. Starting with the accession of Constantine in 312, and the first Schola Cantorum in Rome in 314, what we know as Gregorian plainchant is a later (8th/9th century) synthesis. Pope Gregory himself died in 604. The ideal was the pure musical expression and projection of the words, in a single melodic line, whose shape and structure coincide with the flow and meaning of the text. Gregorian chant itself derived chiefly from two earlier musical cultures, the Greek and the Jewish. From the Greeks it inherited, first, the indissoluble link between poetry and music, second the formulation of the modes and scales, which were a Greek invention. From the Jews it inherited a liturgical ritual that was elaborate and sophisticated, and made use of monotonic recitation, antiphonal and responsorial chanting, and certain practices such as the use of refrains in the Psalms - the origin, indeed, of the Gregorian Antiphon.

In the classical Gregorian rite, the Antiphon was sung before or after a psalm or canticle. Musically speaking it completed the melody of the Psalm tone, bringing it to a close on the final of the scale. Separate Antiphons in praise of the Virgin Mary were a later addition to the main body of the Gregorian repertoire. Many were written in the 11th and 12th centuries; and of these, of which there are over 2,000, four in particular have survived in general use to the present day. Each was used in the work of later Renaissance composers such as Palestrina and Victoria. Each is assigned a time of year, and is sung independently, often at the end of Office Hours - Lauds at sunrise, and Compline at the end of the day.

Of the four *Marian Antiphons* the first and fourth are the oldest, being the work of a monk from Reichenau on Lake Constance, Hermannus Contractus, Herman the cripple (1013-1054). His melody for *Alma Redemptoris*

Mater proved very popular in the Middle Ages, and three centuries later was referred to by Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* (*The Prioress's Tale*). It is one of the earliest formal compositions, of great strength and beauty, and enshrined by musicians into the Gregorian tradition. Hermannus was a scholar as well as a composer, and we today are no more remote from him than he was from earlier Greek and Jewish traditions, with which he forms a 1,000 year link.

The melody is constructed in four phrases, variable in length, each corresponding to a line of the text, each starting on the final of the scale, closing with a different cadential figure, and expressive of a different idea and mood. Each phrase is given a dual structure, a question and answer. I have represented this with a dual organ registration; the first part *mf* (Tempo I), the second part *pp* (Tempo II). For the first three lines of the Antiphon this procedure is repeated without alteration; at the fourth line a change

happens, with the words "Virgo prius ac posterius". For this central moment the pace slackens and the first part of the phrase is heard not *mf* as might be expected but with a single flute *p*.

In transferring this melody into a fantasia for the present day organ, an instrument of such colour and power, the harmonies implicit in Hermannus' melody are developed in terms of the extended tonality of the late 20th century. The piece falls into two halves, each half being a complete statement of the melody. The first half has already been described; the second is a polyphonic development for full organ of the first half. What was at first an extended cadential melisma on the word "alma", with inwardly caressing manuals-only registration (*celeste*, *pp*), a slow rate of harmonic change, and gently falling phrases, becomes in the second half a passage of bold counterpoint, the brilliant registration of full principals and mixtures, a taut rate of harmonic change, and rising phrases, which lead inevitably to a

climactic outburst for the reeds. This is another expression of the word "alma", laudatory not penitential. The music expresses in the first part serenity, in the second part the joy of Christmas.

ii *Ave Regina Coelorum*
(Purification - Holy Week)

Vivace

- 1 Ave Regina coelorum
 - 2 Ave Domina Angelorum
 - 3 Salve radix, Salve porta
 - 4 Ex qua mundo lux est orta.
 - 5 Gaude Virgo gloriosa
 - 6 Super omnes speciosa
 - 7 Vale O valde decora
 - 8 Et pro nobis Christum exora.
- 1 Hail Queen of Heaven
 - 2 Hail ruler of the Angels

- 3 Hail thou root, hail thou gateway
- 4 Through whom a light has arisen over the world.
- 5 Rejoice glorious Virgin
- 6 Comely above all
- 7 Exceedingly fair
- 8 Intercede for us with Christ.

The construction of this plainchant is more diffuse than that of *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, and of a much later date (15th century). Moreover each phrase has an identical cadence, making for monotony. For this reason a dual exposition, such as was used in the first Antiphon, would be inappropriate. Instead the melody is used in a ternary structure:

A (lines 1-3) - B (lines 4-6) - A (lines 7-8).

The repeat of A is *mf* instead of *ff*, and at a lower octave; and the music dies away with the words "Christum exora", appropriate for Holy Week.

iii *Regina Coeli Laetare*
(Easter Eve - Trinity)

Moderato

- 1 Regina Coeli Laetare, Alleluia.
- 2 Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia.
- 3 Resurrexit, sicut dixit, Alleluia.
- 4 Ora pro nobis Deum. Alleluia
- 1 Rejoice Queen of Heaven, Alleluia.
- 2 Because He whom you were worthy to bear, Alleluia.
- 3 Has risen, as He said, Alleluia.
- 4 Intercede for us with God. Alleluia

There can be no doubt of the joyful, festive nature of this Antiphon. After a short fanfare-prelude, the statements of lines 1 and 2, with quiet solo mutations,

are followed by a free section, leading to the Alleluia refrain. After some development of the free material, and fanfare chords for line 3, line 4 begins with a reprise of line 1, and soon increases in colour and power up to the concluding bars, and the final statement of the fanfare, with Great reeds ff brillante.

iv *Salve Regina* (Trinity - Advent)

Moderato

- 1 Salve Regina, mater misericordiae;
- 2 Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
- 3 Ad te clamamus, exsules, filii Hevae.
- 4 Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.
- 5 Eia ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.
- 6 Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventri tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.

7 O clemens, O pia,

8 O dulcis Virgo Maria.

- 1 Hail Queen, Mother of mercy;
- 2 Life, gentleness, and our hope, hail.
- 3 We cry to thee, exiles, children of Eve.
- 4 We sigh to thee, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears.
- 5 Come therefore, our Advocate, turn your eyes upon us in pity.
- 6 And after our exile here, show us Jesus, blessed fruit of thy womb.
- 7 O gentle, O holy,
- 8 O sweet Virgin Mary.

Hermannus Contractus has carefully structured the eight lines that make up this Antiphon. Line 2 is virtually a

repetition of line 1, encompassing a fifth. Lines 3 and 4, at the word "sigh", extend the range to a seventh, while beginning and ending on the same note, the final of the scale E. Lines 5 and 6 begin on a higher note, the third degree of the scale, and encompass an octave for the first time. Line 7 reverts to the compass of a seventh, with a repetition of the half line. The final line 8 reverts to line 1. The mood is of sustained solemnity.

Anything more than a simple statement of this melody would be redundant. Its gentle undulating character, its carefully structured mirrors, require only that the tone-colour of the solo should be melodically distinctive, not strident, and that the movement of the tempo should be steady enough to allow the progressions of the chordal harmonies that make up the countersubject, and the characteristic rhythmic freedom of the plainchant, to be heard unimpeded. An increase of pace and dynamics is suggested at line 5, with a corresponding

decrease at line 7 to match the words "O clemens, O pia". For the rest, the expressivity of the melody speaks for itself.

Exultet coelum laudibus Op.63

Moderate Slow Lively

This work was first played on 11 February 1996 at St Thomas' Church, New York, by David Herman, for whom it was written. The three movements are studies in classical organ styles established by Bach. First, the bravura toccata style, in which short, rhythmically articulated motifs, at a high velocity and a dynamic range *f-ff*, alternate freely between one division of the instrument and another. Each division has its own characteristic and distinctive tone colour - Great: principals, Positive: flutes, Swell: reeds. At Coventry the tonal contrast between

the Great and the Positive is not so pronounced as it would be on an instrument designed on more classical lines. The melody is also used to build clusters.

Next the embellished chorale style, *mp cantabile*, in which the melody is allowed to grow freely and expressively, often decoratively within the shape of the original contours, and with a sustained *cantabile* unique to the organ. Here the theme grows melodically, with the characteristic potential of solo mutations such as the Nazard (2).

Third the very familiar keyboard style of polyphonic virtuosity, at all dynamic levels, up to full organ in each division. The four line plainchant is given out in its original form for the first time by the pedals as the foundation for the polyphonic development on the manuals.

EXULTET COELUM LAUDIBUS

Office Hymn: Apostles and Evangelists

Trad. (10th Century)



Exsultet coelum laudibus,
Resulet terra gaudiis:
Apostolorum gloriam
Sacra canunt solemnia.

*Let heaven with Alleluyas ring,
And earth with joy responsive sing:
The Apostles' deeds and high estate
This festal tide we celebrate.*

Vos saeculi justi iudices
Et vera mundi lumina,
Votis precamur cordium,
Audite preces supplicum.

*O ye who, throned in glory dread,
Shall judge the living and the dead,
True lights, the world illumining,
Regard the suppliant prayer we bring.*

Qui coelum verbo clauditis,
Serasque ejus solvitis,
Mos a peccatis omnibus
Solvite jussu, quaesumus.

*The gates of heaven, at your command,
To all or closed or open stand:
May we, at your august decree,
Be loosed from our iniquity.*