



<Nancy Cox, editor <[nrcox@swbell.net](mailto:nrcox@swbell.net)>

## Music in Worship

Paul A. Aitken, National Chair

### The Marian Antiphons Of Compline

by

D. Jason Bishop

Compline is the last of the liturgical celebrations within the daily cycle of the traditional Divine Office in the Roman Catholic Church. As with each of the hours of the Divine Office, which includes Matins, Lauds, Vespers, and other smaller offices, Compline contains a corpus of plainchant in the form of psalms, a hymn, antiphons, versicles, responsories, canticles, and others. Intended for observance at the completion of the day, or prior to sleep, Compline follows the better-known office of Vespers; however, with the exception of the continued devotional practices of monastic communities, Compline has fallen into relative obscurity, especially when compared with the familiarity and ubiquity of Vespers. Indeed, while several composers have produced celebrated polyphonic settings of the material of Vespers (those

of Monteverdi, Mozart, and Rachmaninoff perhaps among the most famous), there exist no comparably notable settings of Compline in the repertoire.

This lack of attention to Compline among composers of choral repertoire is surprising, not only because of the poignant nocturnal imagery in the texts of the office and the stunning beauty of its plainchants, but also because the concluding antiphons of Compline in praise of the Virgin Mary comprise some of the most recognizable texts and chants within the body of choral repertoire. In traditional Roman Catholic Compline, these antiphons are referred to as the "Antiphonae Finales Beatae Mariae Virginis," or "Final Antiphons to the Blessed Virgin Mary," also known as "Marian antiphons." Alternating according to the various phases of the liturgical year, the four Marian antiphons of Compline are *Alma redemptoris mater*, *Ave regina caelorum*, *Regina caeli*, and *Salve regina*.

Sometimes called "votive antiphons" as well, these Marian antiphons are by far the most popular components of the office of Compline, and are among some of the most universally recognized Latin texts found in sacred choral literature. The four antiphons listed above are not, however, the only texts that fall within the category of Marian antiphons: among other notable Marian antiphons are *Sub tuum praesidium*, *Sancta Maria*, *Ave maris stella*, *O virgo virginum*, and *Tota pulchra es*. The four Marian antiphons of Compline are, however, considered the larger and more significant examples within the collection. The subsequent material will provide brief historical information about each of the four individual Marian antiphons of Compline, followed by the present author's

transcriptions of the chants in their simple and solemn (more elaborate) versions and the author's own translations. The music provided here, which has been transcribed into modern notation directly from the *Liber Usualis*, will hopefully enable conductors to make greater use of these chants in worship and performance. Additionally, readers may contact the present author to obtain a repertoire list containing selected polyphonic settings of these Marian antiphons from various historical periods.

It should be noted that the texts, chants, and polyphonic settings of these Marian antiphons possess a universal appeal that is by no means limited to Roman Catholic worship. Many music directors and choral conductors within a wide variety of religious traditions, both Catholic and Protestant, may find special use for the chants as processions or recessions for example, and certainly may have ample opportunity to program several of the suggested polyphonic settings as anthems, introits, offertories, or within any other appropriate musical segments of a given liturgy or worship service.

#### Alma Redemptoris Mater

*Alma redemptoris mater* is used every year in traditional Catholic Compline from the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent until February 1st. While the oldest known manuscript places this chant in the twelfth century, scholars believe the text of the *Alma redemptoris mater* was widely known at an even earlier point, during the late Carolingian era in France. Original authorship is commonly ascribed to Hermann Contractus (Hermann the Cripple, 1013–54). It would appear that

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D. Jason Bishop is the director of choral activities at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College, in Erie, PA, where he also serves as founder and artistic director of the Young People's Chorus of Erie. He holds a DMA from the University of Oklahoma. <[djb46@psu.edu](mailto:djb46@psu.edu)>

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Hermann took phrases from the writings of such figures as St. Fulgentius, St. Epiphanius, and St. Irenaeus to compose the text of this Marian antiphon. References to the Alma redemptoris mater also appear in “The Prioress’ Tale” of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, dating from the late fourteenth century. Although originally used in the office of Sext, Alma redemptoris mater has been assigned to the office of Compline since the thirteenth century. (Figures 1 and 2, <[www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/](http://www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/)>)

Text

*Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae  
pervia caeli porta manes,*  
[Kind Mother of Redemption, you  
who remain the door through  
to heaven,]

*Et stella maris, succurre cadenti,  
surgere qui curat populo:*  
[And star of the sea, come to the

aid of the falling people, who  
strive to rise:]

*Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,  
tuum sanctum Genitorem.*  
[You who gave birth to your holy  
Creator, at the marvel of nature.]

*Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis  
ab ore,*  
[Virgin before and after, from the  
mouth of Gabriel]

*Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum  
miserere.*  
[Receiving that “Ave,” have mercy  
on the sinners.]

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**Ave Regina Caelorum**

In traditional Catholic Compline, Ave  
regina caelorum is appropriate for the  
liturgical calendar from February 2nd until

the Wednesday of Holy Week. The author-  
ship of Ave regina caelorum is unknown,  
although it is often attributed to the  
same author of Alma redemptoris mater,  
Hermann Contractus. The antiphon itself  
dates from the twelfth century, and its use  
in the office of Compline dates from the  
thirteenth century. The text of the versicle  
and response which follow the antiphon in  
liturgical practice—“Dignare me laudare”  
and “Da mihi virtutem”—can be traced  
to the writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian  
(306-373). (Figure 3, <[www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/](http://www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/)>)

Text

*Ave Regina caelorum, Ave Domina  
Angelorum:*  
[Hail Queen of the heavens, Hail  
Lady of the Angels:]

*Salve radix, salve porta, ex qua  
mundo lux est orta:*  
[Hail root, hail gate, through  
whom light has come to the  
world:]

*Gaude Virgo gloriosa, super  
omnes speciosa:*  
[Rejoice glorious Virgin, beautiful  
above all:]

*Vale, o valde decora, et pro nobis  
Christum exora.*  
[Good night, o very graceful one,  
and pray to Christ for us.]

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**Regina Caeli**

Regina caeli is used in traditional ob-  
servance from Easter Sunday until the  
Friday immediately following Pentecost.  
This antiphon is of unknown authorship,  
and the date of its composition can only  
be estimated sometime between the ninth

and twelfth centuries. An interesting legend exists, however, that if true would place the antiphon in the sixth century and ascribe its origins to St. Gregory the Great:

The legend has it that in the year 596, during Easter time, a pestilence was ravaging Rome. St. Gregory the Great requested a procession be held to pray that the pestilence be stopped. On the appointed day of the procession he assembled with his clergy at dawn at the church of Ara Coeli. Holding in his hand the icon of our Lady that is said to have been painted by St. Luke, he and his clergy started out in procession to St. Peter's. As he passed the Castle of Hadrian, as it was called in those days, voices were heard from above singing the Regina Caeli. The astonished Pope, enraptured with the angelic singing, replied in a loud voice: 'Ora pro nobis Deum. Alleluia!' At that moment an angel appeared in a glorious light, sheathed the sword of pestilence in its scabbard, and from that day the pestilence ceased. In honor of this miraculous event, the name of the castle was then changed to Sant'Angelo and the words of the angelic hymn were inscribed upon the roof of the Church of Ara Coeli.<sup>1</sup> (Figures 4 and 5, <[www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/](http://www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/)>)

### Salve Regina

Salve regina, in liturgical effect from the eve of Trinity Sunday through the Friday before the first Sunday of Advent, is perhaps the most popular of the Marian Antiphons. Its authorship is disputed; the antiphon has been attributed to a variety of sources including St. Bernard of Clairvaux; Adhemar de Monteil, Bishop of Le Puy (1087-1100); and Peter of Compostela (930 AD). It is Hermann Contractus, however, the author of *Alma redemptoris mater* and possibly of *Ave regina caelorum* as well, to whom current scholarship ascribes this antiphon. It is certain that the Salve regina was in use by 1135 as a processional chant at Cluny (a reformed order within the Benedictine family); in 1218, it was adopted by the Cistercians (of the Benedictine reformed order of Citeaux) as a daily processional chant and, by 1251, as an ending to Compline. Around the same time, the Dominican, Franciscan, and Carmelite orders were using Salve regina, and Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) prescribed the antiphon for Friday Compline. Salve regina has held a standard place in Compline of the Roman rite since the fourteenth century. (Figures 6 and 7, <[www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/](http://www.acda.org/cj/interactive/dec2008/)>)

[See therefore, our Advocate, and turn those merciful eyes of yours toward us.]

*Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.*  
[And show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb, after this exile.]

*O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*

[O merciful, O holy, O sweet Virgin Mary.]

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Michael Martin, "Regina Caeli," in *Thesaurus Precum Latinarum* (*Treasury of Latin*)

#### Text

*Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia: Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia:*  
[Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia: for the one you were worthy to bear, alleluia:]

*Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia: Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*  
[Has risen, as he said, alleluia: pray for us to God, alleluia.]

#### Text

*Salve Regina, mater misericordiae: Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.*  
[Hail Queen, mother of mercy: our life, sweetness, and hope, hail.]

*Ad te clamamus, exsules, filii Hevae.*  
[To you we cry, exiles, the sons of Eve.]

*Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle.*  
[To you we sigh, groaning and crying in this valley of tears.]

*Eia ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.*



Prayers), 2005 online ed.; available from <<http://www.preces-latinae.org>>; accessed September 4, 2006.

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## Senior High Choirs

Amy Johnston Blosser, National Chair

### Haydn's *Missa Brevis St. Johannis de Deo* and *Te Deum*

**O**n occasion, high school choirs might have the forces to perform a large-scale choral work, but programming such a work can sometimes be daunting for directors. Since 2009 celebrates Franz Joseph Haydn, many choirs around the world will be performing his compositions. Choral conductors are often familiar with *The Creation*, but perhaps not some of Haydn's smaller, more concise

selections. Both Haydn's *Missa Brevis St. Johannis de Deo* (*Kleine Orgelmesse* or "Little Organ Mass") and second *Te Deum* are examples of extended works that are applicable to a younger, more inexperienced ensemble.

There is some debate over when exactly Haydn composed the *Kleine Orgelmesse*. Though clearly it was composed specifically for the Order of the Barmherzige Brüder in Eisenstadt, the autograph has no date. This is unusual for Haydn, and scholars surmise it was written in the mid-1770s (ca. 1775), and certainly no later than 1778.<sup>1</sup> Many Austrian cities and towns had chapters of the Barmherzige Brüder, founded in 1534 by the Portuguese monk Juan Ciudad (1495–1550), better known as St. John of God. He dedicated his life to caring for the poor and sick, and the members of the Order were esteemed for their medical services to the community.<sup>2</sup> Members also believed in the healing power of music, as this became a major part of their worship. Haydn had a relationship with at least two chapters of this order, one in Vienna when he was

younger, and the other in Eisenstadt.

The *Missa brevis* form was popular in the mid eighteenth century in Austria and Southern Germany. Overlapping texts with different voice parts ensures a much shorter version of the mass than if the voices were singing unison text. Length was one of the factors Haydn had to consider when composing this mass for the Barmherzige Brüder. The order felt obliged to leave their patients unattended for no more than half an hour, so any setting of the Ordinary had to be brief.<sup>3</sup> The mass takes less than fifteen minutes to perform, and the Gloria is extremely short, only 1 ½ minutes in length. The Credo section is only eighty-one measures long, which along with the Gloria is common practice for this process.

Another factor Haydn would have considered was the performance space itself, which was rather small. "As the organ loft of this sanctuary was very small, the number of performers had to be restricted."<sup>4</sup> The forces needed for this work are minimal, with a chorus, two violins and bass. The exception is the fifth movement, or Benedictus, which is written for a soprano solo and organ obligato with strings. The nickname given later, "Little Organ Mass" comes from the use of organ in this movement. Haydn composed this work while he was a practicing organist, so one has to assume he wrote this movement with himself in mind as the organist. The Benedictus, perhaps the one place in a traditional Austrian *Missa brevis* where an extended musical treatment is allowed, is considered the highlight of the Mass.<sup>5</sup> This fifth movement would be the one section not readily attainable for some younger singers, and would most likely need a professional soloist and organist for the performance.

Haydn set this work in B<sup>b</sup>, with all movements except the Benedictus adhering to this main key center. Many of Haydn's masses are written in B<sup>b</sup>, including the final