

Music Listening for Pentecost

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This is the eighth of a series of articles which were begun during Holy Week in recognition that, due to the protocols required by the current health crisis, live choral music would not be possible in our liturgies. In effort to highlight some of the choral music which would normally animate these important days, I have written about select compositions, and included YouTube links so that readers can easily experience these pieces through recorded performances. Now that the Day of Pentecost comes into view, I turn my attention to choral music specifically for that day and music addressing or imploring the Holy Spirit. As such, I include a discussion of a motet by Tomás Luís de Victoria which tells part of the Pentecost story, *Dum complerentur* (Acts 2:1-2), and the *Gloria in excelsis* of his mass built on the themes of that same motet. This is followed by a setting of a Responsory for First Vespers of Pentecost, *Loquebantur variis linguis*, by Thomas Tallis. Another Tallis piece with an English text follows, *O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit*, and reveals a quite different aspect of Tallis' art. Four more Pentecost and Holy Spirit-related pieces follow: *Litany to the Holy Spirit* by Peter Hurford, *Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest* by Alec Wyton, and *Eternal Spirit of the live Christ* and *Come, thou Holy Paraclete* by me.

Here is more information about these pieces and their composers, followed by their texts and YouTube links to recordings:

Tomás Luís de Victoria (1548–1611) is considered the most important Spanish composer of Renaissance polyphony. Born in Avila, the seventh of eleven children, he began his musical education as a choirboy at Avila Cathedral and his classical education at San Gil, a Jesuit school for boys founded in 1554. By 1565 Victoria had entered the Jesuit Collegio Germanico in Rome, where he was later engaged to teach music and eventually named *maestro di cappella*. Victoria knew and may have been instructed by Palestrina (1525–1594) who was *maestro di cappella* of the nearby *Seminario Romano* at that time. During his years in Rome Victoria held several positions as singer, organist, and choral master, and published many of his compositions. He was ordained priest in 1575 after a three-day diaconate. Victoria's five-voice motet *Dum Complerentur* was published in his first book of motets in 1572. Its text derives from the Pentecost narrative in the second chapter of Acts and occurs as an antiphon for Pentecost Vespers. The second part of the motet, with text based upon John 20:19, ends with a reprise of the latter part of the first section. Victoria captures the drama of the biblical event and presents it powerfully in the musical language of his time, with *alleluias* appropriately like rushing winds. Victoria's *Missa Dum Complerentur* is one of his twelve "parody masses" in which he quotes musical ideas from a pre-existing musical composition. In this case, Victoria's musical quotes are from his own motet of the same name. The mass is set for a rich texture of six voices, expanding to seven voices for the final *Agnus Dei*. The *Gloria in excelsis* of this mass is a large setting and unusually dramatic. Its closing *Amens* mimic the rush of *Alleluias* which conclude both sections of the motet.

Dum complerentur—Tomás Luís de Victoria (c.1548–1611)

Dum complerentur dies Pentecostes, erant omnes pariter dicentes alleluia: et subito factus est sonus de coelo, alleluia. Tamquam spiritus vehementis et replevit totam domam, alleluia.

*Dum ergo essent in unum discipuli congregati, propter metum iudaorum sonus repente de coelo venit super eos, alleluia. Tamquam spiritus vehementis, et replevit totam domum.
Alleluia.*

Now when the day of Pentecost came, they were gathered all together, saying, alleluia, and suddenly came a great sound from heaven, alleluia, like a hurricane in its fury, and encompassed all the dwelling, alleluia.

When therefore the disciples were gathered together in one for fear of the Jews, a sound from heaven came upon them, alleluia, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
Alleluia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOZMoGk6xOk>

Gloria in excelsis: Missa Dum complerentur—Tomás Luís de Victoria

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris; qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram; qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus Altissimus, Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqSPgN5Xmpw>

Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585) was one of the most foundational composers of English church music as we know it. His long life and musical career included service under four English monarchs –

Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary Tudor, and Elizabeth I – with all the shifts in the church’s liturgical and institutional life which these different reigns occasioned. Along with William Byrd, Tallis enjoyed an exclusive license to print and publish music which was granted by Elizabeth I in 1575. While he was one of the first musicians to compose for the new Anglican rites of the mid sixteenth century, Tallis retained an affection for the Latin forms and continued to compose extensively for them. Tallis is represented here by two distinctly different pieces. *Loquebantur variis linguis* is a Latin setting of a Responsory for First Vespers of Pentecost with text based on Act 2:4. The choral texture is a sumptuous seven voices. Following the customary format of such responsories, these polyphonic sections surround a chant verse and an abbreviated *Gloria Patri*. The second Tallis piece is one of relative simplicity. In four voices and with English text, this is a setting of a prayer for enlightenment by the Holy Spirit from Lidley’s Prayers (1566). Though suitable at all times, this prayer for the Spirit’s help is often associated with the season of Advent.

Loquebantur variis linguis apostoli—Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585)

Loquebantur variis linguis apostoli, alleluia, magnalia Dei, alleluia. Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto et ceperunt loqui, alleluia. Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto. Alleluia.

The disciples spoke with divers tongues the wonderful works of God. Alleluia. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak. Alleluia. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83yNzuiZZ9Y>

O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit—Thomas Tallis

O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and lighten our understanding, that we may dwell in the fear of thy Name, all the days of our life: that we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOLNSh-W5r8>

British organist Peter Hurford (1930–2019) was born in Minehead, Somerset. He received degree both in music and law from Jesus College, Cambridge. In 1958 he was appointed organist and choirmaster at Saint Alban’s Cathedral where he served for 20 years. In 1963, when the new Harrison & Harrison cathedral organ was being celebrated, Hurford initiated an organ competition at Saint Alban’s which rapidly became, and continues to be, one of the world’s most prestigious organ performance competitions. Hurford’s career after leaving Saint Albans included worldwide travel, teaching, and performing. He was recognized, as the headline of his *Telegraph* obituary read, as one “who brought the pipe organ out of the Sunday service into the musical mainstream.” Known for his performances of baroque music, he distinguished himself in his recordings of the complete organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach made for Decca and BBC Radio 3 in the 1970s. Hurford is

also remembered for several organ and choral compositions. *Litany to the Holy Spirit* (1958) is a charming setting for unison treble voices of a three-stanza text by Robert Herrick (1591–1674).

Litany to the Holy Spirit—Peter Hurford (1930–2019)

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
 Comfort me!

When I lie within my bed,
Sick in heart and sick in head,
And with doubts discomfited,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
 Comfort me!

When the house doth sigh and weep,
And the world is drowned in sleep,
Yet mine eyes the watch do keep,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
 Comfort me!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfZ7LAdEpls>

Alec Wyton (1921–2007) was, for many years, a major figure in the New York City musical scene and in the national life of the Episcopal Church. From 1954 until 1974 he was organist and choirmaster at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, after which he held a similar position at Saint James' Church, Madison Avenue until 1987. Then for the next decade he was organist and choirmaster at Saint Stephen's Church, Ridgefield, CT. While a resident of New York, he also taught at Union Theological Seminary and the Manhattan School of Music. He was active in many musical organizations including the American Guild of Organists of which he was the national president from 1964 until 1969. Wyton served as Coordinator of the Standing Commission on Church Music during the period leading up to and during the revision of *The Hymnal 1940* which produce *The Hymnal 1982*. Wyton grew up in London and Northampton and was educated at the Royal Academy of Music and at Oxford before coming to the United States in 1950. In addition to many organ works, Wyton composed extensively for congregations and choirs. His 1959 setting of *Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest* was written for the Texas Diocesan Choral Festival. The text is a paraphrase of the 9th century *Veni Creator Spiritus* text, the traditional office hymn for Terce on Pentecost, translated by Edward Caswall (1814–1878). (This text was found in *The Hymnal 1940* but was supplanted by more recent translations in the current Episcopal hymnal.) Wyton's setting of Caswall's five stanzas begins with a simple soprano unison melody. Each following stanza shifts this melody to a different register with the three remaining voices supplying imaginative harmonies.

Basses sing the melody in stanza 2, tenors in stanza 3, altos in stanza 4, and sopranos in stanza 5. The setting is dedicated to William Barnard and is intended “For Whitsunday, Ordination or Confirmation.”

Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest—Alec Wyton (1921–2007)

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
Vouchsafe within our souls to rest;
Come with thy grace and heavenly aid,
And fill the hearts which thou hast made.

To thee, the Comforter, we cry;
To thee, the Gift of God most high;
The Fount of life, the Fire of love,
The soul's Anointing from above.

The sevenfold gifts of grace are thine,
O finger of the Hand Divine;
True Promise of the Father thou,
Who dost the tongue with speech endow.

Thy light to every sense impart,
And shed thy love in every heart;
Thine own unfailing might supply
To strengthen our infirmity.

Drive far away our ghostly foe,
And thine abiding peace bestow;
If thou be our preventing Guide,
No evil can our steps betide. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP-nUoAqoFA>

My setting of *Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ* was commissioned by the 2006 Association of Anglican Musicians Conference and the Anglican Musicians Foundation in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Association of Anglican Musicians. It was premiered at the Association's annual conference that year in Indianapolis, Indiana. In this choral setting of a hymn by the Finnish theologian Frank von Christierson (1900–1996), the text of each of the three stanzas is treated twice: first each stanza is heard in a chant-based statement, and then in a freely-composed repetition of the same words. The melodic foundation of the chant-styled sections is based upon the traditional plainsong melody for the Lord's Prayer as adapted by Winfred Douglas and sung by generations. Since Christierson's text centers on the pursuit of right prayer, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the musical reference to the most foundational prayer of all Christians—the prayer which

Jesus himself taught his disciples—seemed particularly congruent with Christierson’s hymn. This piece is not specifically intended for Pentecost, but it centers on seeking the Holy Spirit in daily life beyond the day of Pentecost.

Eternal Spirit of the living Christ—David Hurd (b.1950)

Eternal Spirit of the living Christ, I know not how to ask or what to say;
I only know my need, as deep as life, and only you can teach me how to pray.

Come, pray in me the prayer I need this day; help me to see your purpose and your will-
where I have failed, what I have done amiss; held in forgiving love, let me be still.

Come with the vision and the strength I need to serve my God, and all humanity;
fulfillment of my life in love outpoured- my life in you, O Christ, your love in me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKy8hb9dZL0>

My setting of *Come, thou Holy Paraclete*, a translation of the 12th century Latin “Golden Sequence” (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*) by John Mason Neale (1818–1866), was commissioned by John and Adair Saviola in thanksgiving for the Choir of Men and Boys of Saint Paul’s Cathedral, Buffalo, New York. It begins with strong downward rushing scale patterns played on the organ, representing the dramatic descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The key words from the text which define the character of this opening section are the rhyming words “brilliancy” and “radiancy,” which are given melodic prominence. The voices and organ continue to tone-paint the imagery of the text through the following three stanzas with relative restraint and introspection. However, the concluding stanza returns to the exuberant character of the opening. Heavenly “felicity” is literally the high note of this final stanza. This anthem was premiered at Evensong on Pentecost at Saint Paul’s Cathedral, Buffalo, in 1986.

Come thou Holy Paraclete—David Hurd

Come, thou Holy Paraclete,
And from thy celestial seat
 Send thy light and brilliancy.
Father of the poor, draw near;
Giver of all gifts, be here;
 Come, the soul's true radiancy.

Come, of comforters the best,
Of the soul the sweetest guest,
 Come in toil refreshingly:
Thou in labour, rest most sweet,
Thou art shadow from the heat,

Comfort in adversity.

O thou light, most pure and blest,
Shine within the inmost breast
 Of thy faithful company.
Where thou art not, man hath nought;
Every holy deed and thought
 Comes from thy Divinity.

What is soiled, make thou pure,
What is wounded, work its cure;
 What is parched, fructify;
What is rigid, gently bend;
What is frozen, warmly tend;
 Straighten what goes erringly.

Fill thy faithful, who confide
In thy power to guard and guide,
 With thy sevenfold Mystery.
Here thy grace and virtue send;
Grant salvation in the end,
 And in heaven felicity.

Amen. Alleluia.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJjUA_rb3JM