

Music Listening for Trinity Sunday

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This is the ninth of a series of articles highlighting sacred choral music which might be performed in the liturgy this week but cannot be heard live at this time. For the past several weeks I have discussed representative choral repertoire for Holy Week through Pentecost and provided YouTube links so that the music can speak for itself through available recordings. This week the church recognizes God the Trinity. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church contains the following entry:

TRINITY SUNDAY. The first Sunday after Pentecost or Whitsun. It was not till the Middle Ages that the Sunday was at all widely observed as a separate feast in honour of the Holy Trinity. Its observance, introduced to mark the conclusion of the liturgical commemorations of the life of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit by a celebration embracing God in all three Persons, was universally enjoined by Pope John XXII in 1334. The feast became specially popular in England, perhaps by its association with St. Thomas Becket, who was consecrated bishop on that day (1162). The restriction of the feast to a single day by the absence of an octave is appropriate to the Unity of the Godhead which the feast commemorates.

I have chosen five choral works for this week's recommended listening; the first is the *Gloria in excelsis* from the *Mass in G minor* by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). The hymn *Gloria in excelsis* probably predates the fourth century. It is regularly sung at Sunday Eucharist, except in Advent and Lent, and is certainly not peculiar to Trinity Sunday. Yet it is one of the earliest and most often sung liturgical hymns to conclude with a clear trinitarian doxology. Vaughan Williams' remarkable *Mass in G minor* has been sung at Saint Mary's on Trinity Sundays in recent time, so I include its *Gloria* in the repertoire for this week. Peter Philips' motet *Tibi laus, tibi gloria* follows the Vaughan Williams. Then, the greatest of classic Trinitarian hymns is *Te Deum laudamus*. Since the ninth century, tradition has assigned the authorship of this hymn to Saints Ambrose and Augustine. Although tradition and modern scholarship diverge on this matter, the hymn itself remains a regular feature of Sunday Morning Prayer and various occasions of great festivity. It is customary at Saint Mary's, and many other parishes, for *Te Deum* to be sung at Eucharist on Trinity Sunday as a festive post-communion act of praise and thanksgiving, including the offering of much incense. I include three different settings of *Te Deum* in my playlist: Herbert Howells' *Collegium Regal* setting uses the words of *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1662; my setting uses the contemporary text of *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979 (Canticle 21); and finally, I include a performance of the Latin text with alternation between verses sung to the traditional simple plainsong tone and verses improvised on the organ.

Here is more information about the Vaughan Williams *Gloria* and the Philips motet, and texts and YouTube links for both.

The noted English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) composed his *Mass in G minor* in 1921. It is dedicated to another noted English composer, Gustav Holst (1874–1934) and the Whitsuntide Singers at Thaxted in north Essex. Its first performance was in a concert by the City of Birmingham Choir on 6 December 1922. While first performed in concert, the *Mass in G minor* was intended to be sung liturgically and was subsequently premiered as such at Westminster Cathedral under the direction of Sir Richard Terry. Vaughan Williams' mass is clearly written in his own distinctive twentieth-century musical vocabulary, but it derives its sonic and affective character from the great heritage of English choral composition of earlier centuries. This mass setting is often considered the most significant English work of its kind since the sixteenth century, and it has been an inspiration to many more recent composers. The *Mass in G minor* is scored for double chorus and four soloists. Its *Gloria in excelsis* is a rich mixture of mysticism and exaltation.

Gloria in excelsis: Mass in G minor—Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

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=F4skHXptTE0>

Tibi laus, tibi gloria is a setting for five voices of the Matins Responsory for Trinity Sunday by Peter Philips (c.1560–1635), organist and composer, who was a contemporary of William Byrd and a fellow Roman Catholic. Philips had a particularly colorful life which included performing, composing, editing, and publishing sacred and secular music in England, the Netherlands and Belgium. Like Byrd, Philips' compositional mastery extended to all the forms he took on, including instrumental, keyboard and choral expressions. Despite his having begun his musical formation as a choirboy at St. Paul's Cathedral, Philips' madrigals and motets are stylistically closer to continental styles than the English examples of his time. *Tibi Laus* is one of the more 'madrigalian' of Philips' motets with its chordal textures and shifts between duple and triple meter. The motet begins with three voices singing root position triads, perhaps a clear reference to the Trinity. The refrain *O beata*

Trinitas is sung full in alternation with verses sung by select voices. The final *et super exaltatum* section is appropriately animated.

Tibi laus, tibi gloria—Peter Philips (c.1560–1628)

Tibi laus, tibi gloria, tibi gratiarum actio, in saecula sempiterna. O beata Trinitas. Caritas pater est, gratia filius, communicatio spiritus sanctus. O beata Trinitas. Vera est pater, veritas filius, veritas spiritus sanctus, O beata Trinitas. Pater et filius et spiritus sanctus, una substantia est, O beata Trinitas, et benedictus nome gloriae. Tuae sanctum et laudabile, et super exaltatum in saecula.

Praise to you, glory to you, thanks be to you for ever and eternity, O blessed Trinity. You are Father of love, son of thankfulness, and wisdom-imparting Holy Spirit, O blessed Trinity. Truth is the Father, truth the Son, and truth the Holy Spirit, O blessed Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in substance, O blessed Trinity, and blessed be your name, O most Glorious. You are holy, worthy of praise, and above all praises for evermore.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtzSNLA5ycl>

Three Settings of *Te Deum laudamus*

Herbert Howells (1892–1983) was a remarkable twentieth century English composer. He was mentored in his youth by some of the prominent English musicians of his youth including C. V. Stanford, C. H. H. Parry, and Charles Wood. Rather than pursuing the more *avant garde* impulses which propelled some young composers of his time, he cultivated a more tonally oriented but distinctively original vocabulary of melody, harmony, and lyrical rhythms for which his music is recognized. He was highly regarded, particularly in Anglican church circles, for his richly expressive anthems and settings of the morning and evening daily office canticles. Howells' great contribution to Anglican church music is his several services designed for particular cathedrals, parishes, and collegiate chapels. Each of these services responds to the architecture, acoustic and musical tradition of the place for which it was composed. Of all these services, those designated *Collegium Regale*, composed for King's College, Cambridge, are the most exhaustive. Howells' association with Cambridge dated from 1941 when he became acting organist at Saint John's College, replacing Robin Orr who had been called away to service in World War II. In 1944, at the urging of the then dean of neighboring King's College, Eric Milner-White, Howells composed the *Collegium Regale* morning canticles, *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*. The following year he added to the *Collegium Regale* settings by composing evening canticles *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. Then finally in 1956 Howells completed his *Collegium Regale* collection by setting *The Office of Holy Communion*. Howells' *Collegium Regale* settings all feature an extraordinarily expressive partnership between voices and organ. They are clearly a family of compositions, all crafted to function in the same household. For example, although separated by twelve years, the 1944 *Te Deum* and 1956 *Gloria in excelsis* are very close siblings which share essential thematic elements. Howells' *Te Deum* has a broadly expressive and lyrical quality, resisting the raw bombast which so often characterizes settings of this text, yet conveying great solidity and power.

Te Deum (Collegium Regale)—Howells (1892–1983)

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting.
To thee all Angels cry aloud : the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim : continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy : Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty : of thy glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles : praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets : praise thee.
The noble army of Martyrs : praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge thee;
The Father: of an infinite Majesty;
Thine honourable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man : thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death : thou didst open the Kingdom of
Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come : to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants : whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious
blood. Make them to be numbered with thy Saints : in glory everlasting.
O Lord, save thy people : and bless thine heritage.
Govern them : and lift them up for ever.
Day by day : we magnify thee;
And we worship thy Name : ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tx_nB038Tfc

My setting of *You are God* — *Te Deum Laudamus*, for mixed voices and organ, was composed in 1991. It was commissioned by Christ Church, Pittsford, New York, in celebration of their new Mander organ. As such, it features a prominent and demanding organ part in collaboration with the voices. This angular and driving organ part provides a foundation for energetic declamation of the text, particularly in the opening and closing sections. The middle incarnational section contains more lyric writing. The 'sting of death,' however, is represented by sharp repeated chords from the organ. The opening of the kingdom of heaven is then represented by close motivic imitation bubbling up

though the choir in a rapid crescendo. This setting of *Te Deum* uses the shorter contemporary text found at Cantic 21 of *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979. It omits the versicles previously appended to the *Te Deum* text which are now found as Suffrages B in Morning Prayer.

You are God—David Hurd (b.1950)

You are God: we praise you; You are the Lord: we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father: All creation worships you.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you;
Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.
You, Christ, are the king of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you became man to set us free you did not shun the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.

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

The last of the three settings of *Te Deum laudamus* is more a 'performance practice' than a composition. In this setting, the choir sings the traditional plainsong for *Te Deum* in alternation with verses played boldly on the organ. This manner of presenting liturgical texts, called *alternatim*, has often been applied to portions of the Mass and Office. *Alternatim* performance practice was well established throughout Europe from the 17th century, documented in part by many organ *versets* which were composed for this purpose by prominent composers of organ music. It has also not been uncommon for organists to improvise verses in alternation with those sung to chant. Saint Mary's is an ideal setting for this sort of performance of *Te Deum* and it has been performed that way very effectively in the past. In the YouTube link given below, Martin Baker improvised the organ verses in an *Alternatim* performance of *Te Deum* at Westminster Cathedral, London.

Te Deum *in alernatim*—Martin Baker (Westminster Cathedral)

*Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.
Te aeternum patrem, omnis terra veneratur.
Tibi omnes Angeli: tibi caeli et universae potestates.
Tibi cherubim et seraphim, incessabili voce proclamant:
“Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae.”
Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,
Te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus,
Te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.
Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia:
Patrem immensae maiestatis;
Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;
Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.
Tu rex gloriae, Christe:
Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.
Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti Virginis uterum.
Tu, devicto mortis aculeo,
aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum.
Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes, in gloria Patris.
Iudex crederis esse venturus.
Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni: quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.
Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.
Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae.
Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in aeternum.
Per singulos dies benedicimus te: et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi.
Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire.
Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri.
Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos: quemadmodum speravimus in te.
In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum.*

You are God: we praise you; You are the Lord: we acclaim you;
You are the eternal Father: All creation worships you.
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you;
Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,

and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.
You, Christ, are the king of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you became man to set us free you did not shun the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.
Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;
Govern and uphold them, now and always.
Day by day we bless you; We praise your Name for ever.
Lord, keep us from all sin today;
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, show us your love and mercy; For we put our trust in you.
In you, Lord, is our hope; And we shall never hope in vain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzmvN9ld5ts>

Organist Martin Baker's bonus 'postlude' following the *alternatum* performance of *Te Deum* on the YouTube is *Choral-Improvisation sur le "Victimae Paschali,"* an improvisation on the Easter sequence by Charles Tournemire (1870–1939) that was reconstructed by Maurice Duruflé (1902–1986).