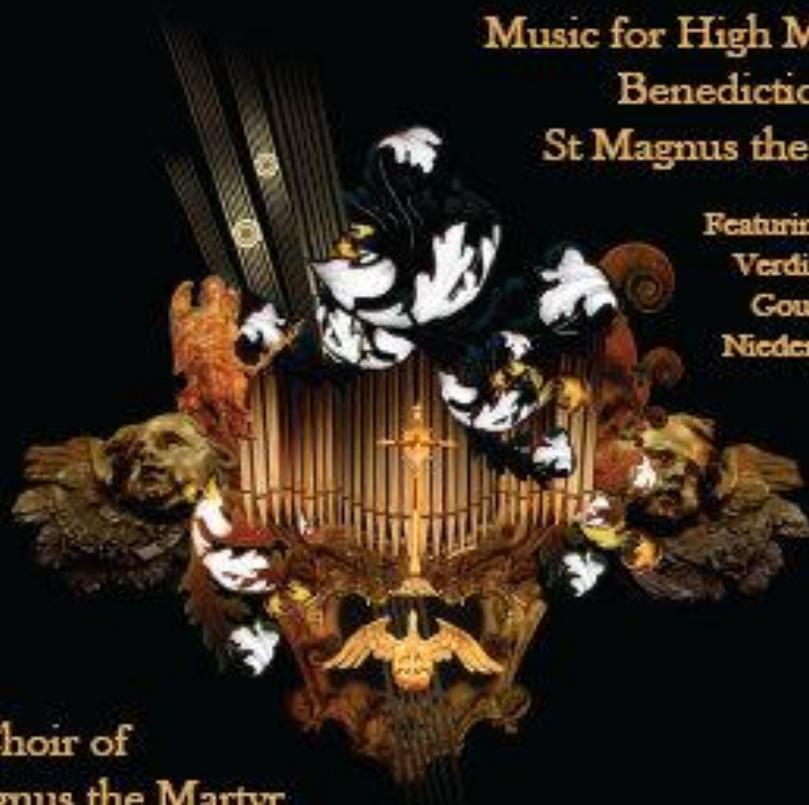


Regina Coeli

Music for High Mass and
Benediction from
St Magnus the Martyr

Featuring works by
Verdi, Donizetti,
Gounod, Elgar,
Niedermeyer and
Giorza



The Choir of
St Magnus the Martyr
John Eady, Organ
William Petter, Director

Additional Sleeve Notes

1. Asperges me (2:57)

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), arr. David Gwesyn Smith (b. 1959)

2. Dixit Dominus (5:58)

Paolo Giorza (1832-1914), from Vespers for 4 voices (1878)

3. Kyrie (4:12)

Louis Niedermeyer (1802-1861), from Mass no. 1 in D Major (1857)

4. Gloria (4:36)

Louis Niedermeyer, from Mass no. 1 in D Major

5. Laudate Dominum (3:11)

Paolo Giorza, from Vespers for 4 voices

6. Alleluia (6:24)

Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

7. Ave Maria (2:54)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

8. Sanctus (1:38)

Louis Niedermeyer, from Mass no. 1 in D Major

9. Benedictus (2:47)

William Petter (b. 1982), written to complete Niedermeyer's Mass in D Major

10. Benedictus (4:19)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), arr. William Petter from Rigoletto

11. Pater Noster (4:22)

Louis Niedermeyer, arr. William Petter

12. Agnus Dei (3:20)

Louis Niedermeyer, from Mass no. 1 in D Major

13. Jesu Dei Vivi (3:03)

Giuseppe Verdi, arr. M H Cross (1833-1897) from Attila

14. O Salutaris Hostia (3:14)

Louis Niedermeyer

15. Tantum Ergo (4:43)

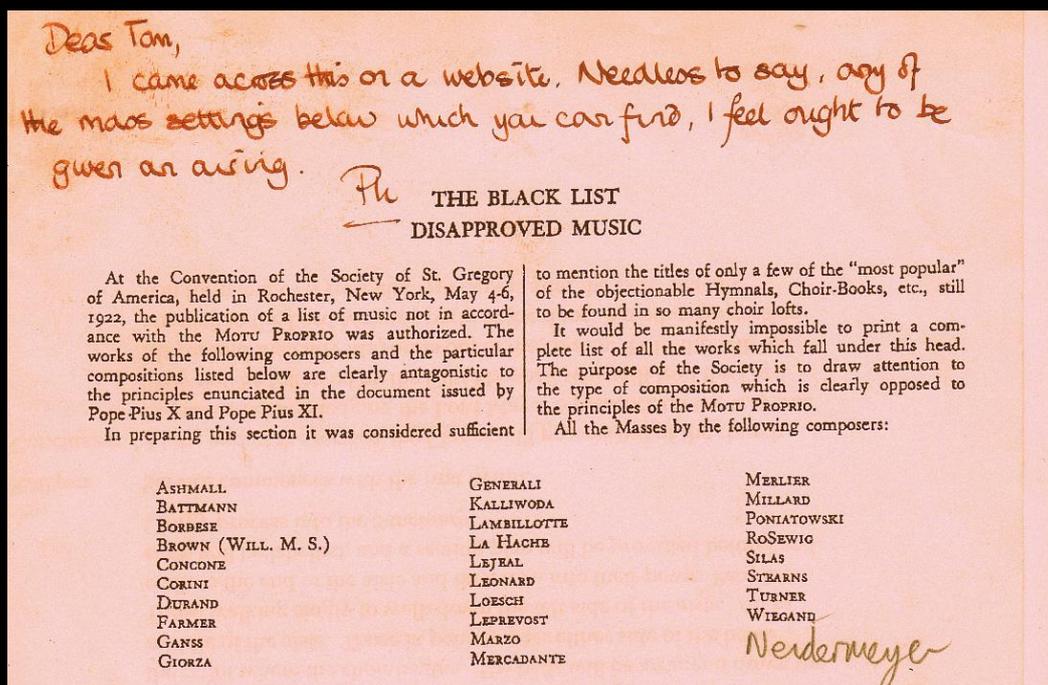
Edward Elgar (1867-1934)

16. Regina Coeli (4:07)

Paolo Giorza

Introduction

It was not long after the choir of St Magnus the Martyr was formed in its current state that there was first talk of making a choir CD. In fact some demo recordings were made in 2007, but perhaps because there was no definite idea for what we would record, this never materialised into a full length recording. During my years singing in the choir before becoming director of music, we would occasionally be presented with music which Fr Philip had found in a car boot sale or some other unlikely source which was quite different from any liturgical music I had previously come across – more direct, dramatic and overtly joyful. One of the first pieces that became a favourite was the Niedermeyer *Pater Noster* and this was soon one of our most requested pieces. Shortly after this the following piece of paper arrived in the organ loft:



Up to that point the only Mass settings from this list that we had done were two by Turner, but since the hunt began for black-listed Masses, we have subsequently sung settings by Battmann, Bordese, Giorza, Marzo, and Wiegand. We added Niedermeyer to the list as we felt that he had proved his credentials with his *Pater Noster* – it was not until a few years later that we discovered his Mass setting which is included on this recording.

As this style of music has become rather popular at St Magnus, it seemed the obvious choice if we were to record a choir CD; after all there seems little point in making yet another recording of the popular classics, and with this material we have music that may not have been heard for a hundred years, let alone recorded, but which would make a very enjoyable CD.

The track listing for this recording largely follows the order of High Mass with Benediction as celebrated at St Magnus the Martyr. We use two of Giorza's psalm settings from his Vespers for the introit and the gradual where we would usually use plainchant on a Sunday morning, and Gounod's reworking of Bach's keyboard prelude into an *Ave Maria* as our offertory anthem where we would usually have a hymn. Purists might also point out that we have a mixture of seasons, as the Regina Coeli would only be used during Eastertide, when the service would start with a *Vidi Aquam* rather than an *Asperges*. Nonetheless it is a good representation of the music that we offer at St Magnus the Martyr, as the handmaid to the liturgy.

Notes

The opening *Asperges* came to us courtesy of David Gwesyn Smith, who was formerly Choir Master at our sister church. He arranged this *Asperges* into a liturgically useful piece from Donizetti's original which is found in his *Miserere*, and it was first performed at St. Paul's Memorial Episcopal church Staten Island on St. Paul's day in 1999. David has also been instrumental in helping us track down some other gems from *The Black List*, most notably Giorza's *Regina Coeli*.

Paolo Giorza was born in Milan in 1832 and was a prolific composer, writing more than sixty ballets, many of which were performed at La Scala and internationally, and working with composers including Rossini, Auber, Meyerbeer, Verdi and Gounod. In 1871 he moved to Australia and became a hugely significant figure in Australian music making. He started to write liturgical music in addition to numerous conducting commitments (including the Sydney Premiere of Verdi's *Requiem*), and was extremely well respected as both composer and conductor. He later moved on to work in Europe and the USA, where he died in 1914. *Dixit Dominus* and *Laudate Dominum* come from his setting of *Solemn Vespers*, and show different sides to the composer. We see many changes in tempo, great drama, grandeur and flamboyance in *Dixit Dominus*, whereas *Laudate Dominum* is gentle, and reminiscent of a Neapolitan ballad.

For our Mass setting we turn to Louis Niedermeyer, who was born in Switzerland in 1802. He studied in Naples and Rome, where he met Rossini, who was very encouraging to the young composer, and instrumental in seeing that his operas were performed. Niedermeyer followed Rossini to Paris, where he settled. After having little success with his operas in Paris, he turned his attention to writing church music and teaching. He reopened a defunct music school which became the École Niedermeyer, specialising in all areas of church music, teaching about its performance, composition and history. Distinguished alumni include Fauré and Saint-Saëns, and the school is still open today.

Niedermeyer's Mass no. 1 in D Major dates from 1857, four years before his death. He wrote at least two other masses. Despite the title, this mass actually opens in B minor with a foreboding Kyrie. The movement relaxes into a more optimistic *Christe Eleison* section, but this soon becomes urgent again leading back into the *Kyrie* which is largely a repeat of the first section, but ends in a more dramatic fashion, pleading for mercy. The Gloria is planted firmly in D major, and for the most part merrily dances along proclaiming the glory of God, a mood broken only by the more reflective *qui tollis peccata mundi* section, and a pleading *miserere* passage. It erupts into a joyful finale, with long *Amen* lines being passed around the choir before a fast and virtuosic finish.

Randall Thompson's *Alleluia* is in many ways the odd one out on this recording, as it is unaccompanied, generally more introspective, and written in 1940, much later than most of the other pieces we hear. It was commissioned for what is now the Tanglewood Festival, a prestigious summer course in America for exceptional young musicians, and Thompson's brief was to write a joyous fanfare using the word *Alleluia*. He felt this inappropriate given the war that was going on in Europe, and wrote something more melancholy. It was however an instant success, and is still performed at Tanglewood every year. We chose to include it on this recording as it has been hugely popular whenever we have sung it at St Magnus, and we also wanted to include some unaccompanied singing to show the strength, versatility and dynamic range our quartet is capable of. In order to attain a more ethereal sound we recorded this at a much greater distance from the microphones than other tracks, an effect also used in passages of the Donizetti and Elgar for changes of texture.

Gounod's superimposition of the *Ave Maria* text onto Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C major, BWV 846 is the only other work on this album that has been regularly recorded in the past. 137 years after it was written, Gounod took Bach's simple-to-play but harmonically rich and complex prelude and wrote a tune that, without altering the original, transforms it into something new and wonderful, demonstrating how Bach created the blueprint for romantic harmony, and in many ways his music sits more comfortably with that of the romantic composers than fellow baroque ones. Gounod himself reflected that 'If all the music written since Bach's time should be lost, it could be reconstructed on the foundation which Bach laid'.

The *Sanctus* of Niedermeyer's Mass follows, and is a fairly straightforward and grand hymn of praise. When we first sung this Mass setting in July 2012, Fr Philip and I had both noticed that Niedermeyer did not write a *Benedictus*, and came up with solutions to this independently. Fr Philip had looked out an *O Salutaris* for solo tenor by Niedermeyer which we could sing in place of the *Benedictus*, and I had written a new *Benedictus* in a style which I hoped would fit in with the rest of the mass. In the event we sang both, and always have done since when performing this mass. The *O Salutaris* is featured later on this disc.

The second *Benedictus* featured on this recording also came about as a solution to a Mass setting which lacked one, this time from Eduardo Marzo. As the rest of his Mass seemed to borrow quite freely from Verdi's operas, including an introduction to the Gloria that would have happily segued into the triumphal march in *Aida*, and a *Miserere* section reminiscent of *Il Trovatore*, it seemed like a good idea to borrow from Verdi for the *Benedictus*, in this case the quartet from *Rigoletto*. We were delighted to discover later that *The Black List* specifies liturgical re-workings of this movement as being particularly disapproved, under 'Miscellaneous Disapproved Music'.

Miscellaneous Disapproved Music	
<p>STABAT MATER—G. ROSSINI All of Rossini's compositions should be excluded from the Catholic choir. These works are unchurchly, to say the least. The "Stabat Mater" is most objectionable from a liturgical standpoint.</p> <p>REGINA COELI—P. GIORZA All compositions by P. Giorza should be eliminated from the repertoire of the Catholic choirs. The composer wrote any number of "Ballets." He did not change his style one iota when he put sacred words to these utterly secular melodies. The worst example of this "Ballet" style in church is the setting of the "Regina Coeli," which, sad to relate, is still sung in many of our churches.</p> <p>JESU DEI VIVI—G. VERDI Taken from the opera "Attila." This number is another favorite among Catholic choirs. Verdi did not write this for use in the church, but for one of his operas. He would have been the first to object to its use in its present form, since it is neither fitting nor appropriate.</p> <p>The AVE MARIAS by LUZZI, MILLARD, VERDI, BACH-GOUNOD, MASCAGNI, ROSEWIG, LAMBILLOTTE, SCHUBERT, KAHN, ETC.</p> <p>All arrangements and adaptations of Operatic Melodies, such as Sextet from "Lucia di Lammermoor," Quartet from "Rigoletto," arias from "Tannhauser," "Lohengrin," "Othello," etc.</p>	<p>HYMNS "Good Night, Sweet Jesus" "Mother Dearest, Mother Fairest" "Mother dear, O pray for me" "Mother at your feet is kneeling"</p> <p>WEDDING MARCHES From "Lohengrin"—R. Wagner From "Midsummer Night's Dream"— F. Mendelssohn</p> <p>NOTE: The Society of St. Gregory, at its convention held in Rochester, New York, May 4-6, 1922, registered an emphatic protest against the efforts made by certain publishers of Catholic Church Music to create an impression that "revised editions" of Masses by Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Weber, Gounod, Millard, Giorza, Farmer, Kalliwoda and other composers of the operatic school were edited to conform to the requirements of the MOTU PROPRIO.</p> <p>Because a certain number of repetitions have been eliminated from these unacceptable works it does not follow that they are metamorphosed, through this process, into liturgical compositions. No amount of revision, editing or truncating can create a devotional composition out of a work that is intrinsically secular in character. Pope Pius X, in his MOTU PROPRIO, made clear the distinction between the secular and the sacred style.</p> <p>The attempt of certain publishers to "hoodwink" a gullible public by using in an indiscriminate manner</p>

We then return to Niedermeyer, hearing first his *Pater Noster*, and then his *Agnus Dei*. The *Pater Noster* is in the form of an aria, but repeated with chorus in the background and some ornamentation, reaching a powerful climax, pleading *Libera nos a malo* (deliver us from

evil). The *Agnus Dei* commences in D minor, and returns to the foreboding mood of the *Kyrie*, before breaking into a the major key with a more optimistic *dona nobis pacem*.

The communion anthem is *Jesu Dei Vivi*, an arrangement from Verdi's opera *Attila* by M.H Cross, who was an American organist and conductor in the 19th century. This opens with a section for solo soprano, followed by a short section for solo tenor; the baritone then joins with the repeated plea '*miserere nobis*' (*have mercy on us*) while the soprano and tenor duet with '*O Jesu mi*' (*O my Jesus*), and all three parts unite at the end. This is another work explicitly forbidden (see above).

For our Benediction music, we commence with Niedermeyer's *O Salutaris*, a solemn and dramatic setting in G minor for solo tenor, followed by Elgar's *Tantum Ergo*. Elgar's style here is very similar to much of the music that is specifically disapproved, being expansive, tuneful and dramatic. This version is a reconstruction by J H T Hooke from the soprano and bass parts used for performance and an early sketch for the piece.

The recording closes with Giorza's marvellous setting of *Regina Coeli*. As this has such prominence on *The Black List* (see picture above) we were delighted to give it a first airing at St Magnus on Easter Day, 2013. A bootleg recording soon became a viral hit on youtube, and cemented it as a favourite of the St Magnus congregation. *The Black List* may well be correct in saying that Giorza did not change his balletic style in his church compositions, but it is hard to argue with the sheer joy and majesty with which his music here exalts the Queen of Heaven.

*William Petter, Choir Director of St Magnus the Martyr
December 2013*



From left to right: Lottie Greenhow (Soprano), Madeline Smith (Mezzo-Soprano), John Murton (Bass), William Petter (Tenor and Director), John Eady (Organ).