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MUSIC AND ALUMNI CHAIR IN THE HUMANITIES PRESENT

# THE MARIAN CONSORT



*Roger Glass Center for the Arts*  
*10 November 2024*  
*3pm*

## AN AULD ALLIANCE: CHORAL MUSIC FROM SCOTLAND

The award-winning voices of The Marian Consort present a programme of sumptuous Renaissance polyphony from some of Scotland's few surviving sixteenth-century manuscripts, alongside luminous works by modern Scottish composers. The so-called 'Dunkeld' Part books give a glimpse of the musical riches being performed in Scotland in the mid-sixteenth century, including motets by Continental composers sourced directly from Paris and the beautiful anonymous *Missa Felix namque*. Alongside these are works from the 'Wode' Partbooks, a collection which showcases the works of more local musicians responding to the changing musical styles and requirements after the Reformation, and the 'Carver' Choirbook, a manuscript of gloriously extrovert pre-Reformation music possibly intended for the Scottish Chapel Royal. From our own time, music by renowned composer James MacMillan rub shoulders with Phillip Cooke's *Canticum Mariae Virginis*, commissioned by The Marian Consort. This last looks to various aspects of Scottish cultural heritage for inspiration, including *Cantemus in omni die*, the earliest known Latin hymn to Mary (written on Iona in the eighth century), and the sixteenth-century Bannatyne Manuscript.



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JOSQUIN DES PREZ (C1450-1521)

BENEDICTA ES CAELORUM REGINA

PLAINCHANT

FELIX NAMQUE

ANONYMOUS

MISSA FELIX NAMQUE, KYRIE

JOHN BUCHAN (FL 1562-1608)

PSALM 128

ANONYMOUS

MISSA FELIX NAMQUE, GLORIA

JAMES MACMILLAN (1959-)

AVE MARIS STELLA

ANONYMOUS

MAGNIFICAT A4 (7TH TONE)

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## INTERMISSION

PHILLIP COOKE(1980-)

CANTICUM MARIAE VIRGINIS

DAVID PEEBLES(D 1579)

PSALM 150

PIERRE CERTON(D 1572)

INVOLATA

ANONYMOUS

MISSA FELIX NAMQUE, SANCTUS&BENEDICTUS

JOHANNES LUPI(C1506-1539)

SALVE CELEBERRIMA VIRGO

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Our programme presents a sequence of music from two distinct periods in Scottish history, one rather better known than the other, with modern pieces interleaved between music intended to show the breadth and quality of the works being written and performed in Scotland across the sixteenth century, a relatively unknown period of Scottish music history.

A lack of awareness on the part of modern audiences is, perhaps, a testament to the relative success and seriousness of purpose of the Calvinist reformers in their mission in Scotland post-1560, certainly as compared to their Protestant counterparts south of the border: whatever the reason, unlike the many English music manuscripts and prints which exist from both pre- and post-Reformation, only three major sources of sacred music from sixteenth-century Scotland have survived to the present. Among these, the best-explored in modern times is the eponymous Carver Choirbook, named after Robert Carver, a canon at the Augustinian Abbey at Scone at the very beginning of the sixteenth century. Our Magnificat, an alternatim setting—meaning that sections of polyphonic music alternate with chant—is anonymous, like many of the works in the Carver Choirbook, and combines wonderfully dynamic four-voice writing with beautiful and often rhythmically-complex duos in typical pre-Reformation style. Two of the sections also involve that most British of phenomenon, the ‘gemel’ or ‘gymel’ (from the Latin *gemellus*), where a single voice splits into two to provide a novel variety of texture. The fact that Carver, who for a long time was thought to have been the same person as Robert Arnot, a canon at the Scottish Chapel Royal in Stirling, knew of and had access to works by Guillaume Dufay, Robert Fayrfax and Walter Lambe among others (these latter also contributors to the Eton Choirbook), speaks to how strong the cultural connections were between Scotland and both England and the Continent at this period (especially given the lack of any privilege afforded by moving in royal circles).



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These connections are also very much at the heart of the repertoire contained in a much less well-known Scottish pre-Reformation source, the so-called “Dunkeld Partbooks”. This set of individual partbooks (with each voice part compiled separately in its own book, as opposed to the choir book format, where all parts are grouped together on the much larger pages, so all the singers could read and perform from the same book) suffers from the same fate as the other surviving Scottish sources in being known by multiple names (the Carver Choirbook also being called the “Scone Antiphonary” and this set also being known as the “Dunkeld Music Book” and the “Douglas-Fischer partbooks”), a confusion which has perhaps also played a part in stymieing modern performance of this repertoire. Doubly confusing is that the manuscript set has nothing whatsoever to do with Dunkeld: this name stems from a misreading of an abbreviation in the partbooks by nineteenth-century Scottish antiquarian David Laing. The books instead have their origin at Lincluden, a Benedictine monastery near Dumfries not far from the Scottish border: they paint a picture of a rich and internationally-connected musical life, containing mostly Marian polyphonic works for six to eight voices by a range of the most popular Continental composers of the mid-sixteenth century, including Josquin Desprez, Pierre Certon, and Johannes Lupi.

Josquin’s *Benedicta es, caelorum Regina*, the inspiration for both a mass setting by Palestrina and a magnificat by Orlandus Lassus, is as ingenious as it is beautiful, with an almost-canon between Superius and Tenor voices quoting the chant melody while the other four voices weave a texture of vital polyphony around them, building to the moment of direct speech at the close of the first section. What follows is an intimate duet between upper voices for the moment of the incarnation, which opens out again to the full six voices as the prayer becomes intensely personal in the third and final section.

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Pierre Certon's *Inviolata* is a similar combination of the cerebral and the sublime, as he pays homage to Josquin's earlier setting of this luminous Marian prayer by preserving the canon at its heart (itself based on plainchant), while expanding the texture from five to six voices and clothing it in his own beguiling mid-sixteenth-century counterpoint (another nod to Josquin is found at the beginning of the middle section, where the duet writing between the uppermost voices seems to recall the opening of 'Benedicta es'). Johannes Lupi's *Salve celeberrima virgo* is an astonishing eight-voice tour de force, employing skillful variations of scoring and texture, as well as many colourful 'false relation' semitone clashes, across its two sections. The second of these sections breaks into triple time (a conceit also found in both Josquin and Certon's motets) towards the end, before unifying the two by reusing musical material from the end of the first section to close the second, now given additional finality through repetition.

It's very likely that Robert Douglas, Provost of Lincluden College, who spent a considerable period of time at the University of Paris in the 1540s, brought back with him several collections issued by the French Royal printer Pierre Attaignant, with the motets found in the *Dunkeld Partbooks* copied from these into the manuscript collection. Alongside these are several anonymous pieces, including an exquisite mass based on the Marian Felix *Namquechant* which show traces of both English and Continental influence, making it very possibly the work of a local composer. The movements of the *Missa Felix Namqueare* are linked musically through their use of the same opening motif, a device designed at least partly as a means of unifying them in the mind of the listener, in the knowledge that they would be separated by in some cases considerable spans of time within the liturgy. Sadly, one of the partbooks has been lost (a common pitfall of the format for modern scholars, as you need all of the separate books in order to perform the pieces contained within them), making it necessary to reconstruct the Bass part of this unique work.

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The final of the three surviving manuscript collections is the “Wode Partbooks” set, (also known-of course!—as the “St Andrews Psalter”), which date from after 1560. These were compiled in St Andrews by Thomas Wode, as part of a project by James Stewart, the 1st Earl of Moray, to provide simple metrical tunes in four parts for the newly-translated Scottish psalms. Nearly all the 150 tunes, along with several Latin motets, are by David Peebles, a canon of the Augustinian Priory of St Andrews before the Reformation, described by Wode as ‘ane of the cheiff musitians into this land’. Alongside this compendium of service music, Wode and other, later scribes collected Latin motets and songs by composers as diverse as Philip van Wilder, Lassus, and Jean Maillard in the partbooks. All three of these collections speak to flourishing musical traditions in their places of origin and offer a tantalising glimpse of the unknowable broader musical landscape of Scotland in the sixteenth century, as well as a clear rebuttal to any idea that Scotland was devoid of high-level musical culture in this period. Nearer to our own time, we hear the music of two Scottish composers very much influenced by the past. For many, the music of Sir James MacMillan is synonymous with modern Scottish choral music, and his Ave maris stella sets this Marian hymn to a relatively simple four-part homophonic texture, with the soprano voice alternating between only two different pitches while the lower voices explore harmonic possibilities around this. This restraint in the upper voice makes the departure from it in the final ‘Amen’ all the more striking

Philip Cooke’s Canticum Mariae Virginis was written for The Marian Consort in 2021 for performance as part of a residency at the University of Aberdeen. In the composer’s words, it “blends the formal Latin of Cantemus in omni die, the earliest known Latin hymn to Mary originally composed in the Western Christian Church (written on Iona in the eighth century), with excerpts of the Magnificat in archaic Scots, taken from the sixteenth-century anthology the Bannatyne Manuscript.



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The Marian Consort (TMC) is an award-winning vocal ensemble that presents bold and thrilling performances of music from across the centuries. Led by founder and director Rory McCleery, TMC is noted for its flexible, intimate approach, with a clarity of texture and subtlety of interpretation that illuminates the music for performer and audience alike.

TMC features regularly on UK and international television and radio (including BBC Two's recent flagship documentary series 'Art That Made Us'), and has released fourteen recordings to critical acclaim, garnering a variety of accolades and awards including the Diapason D'Or, Presto Classical Album of the Year and the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik. Recent highlights of TMC's live performance schedule include appearances at London's Wigmore Hall, the BBC Proms, Festival Europäische Kirchenmusik Schwäbisch Gmünd (broadcast on German national radio), the Miller Theatre series at Columbia University in New York and Tokyo's Bunka Kaikan Recital Hall (filmed for Japanese television).

Noted for 'performances that glow with golden purity and soul', TMC performs music from the twelfth century to the present day, with a focus on bringing to light and championing marginalised and lesser-known Renaissance composers such as Vicente Lusitano, Raffaella Aleotti, and Jean Maillard. Praised for its engaging and innovative programming, TMC also works with living composers through its New Music Programme, commissioning extensively alongside mentoring developing composers through the Emerging Voices scheme: TMC has premiered over 30 works to date and in recent years has commissioned Dani Howard, David Fennessy, Anna Semple, Laurence Osborn and Electra Perivolaris. In 2024 TMC is New Music Partner with Choir & Organ magazine and a Royal Philharmonic Society Composers Programme Partner.

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TMC is also a pioneer of projects which move beyond the confines of the traditional concert, notably 'Breaking the Rules', a staged concert-drama based on the life and crimes of Carlo Gesualdo called 'daring and vivid' by The Guardian; 'Lusitano Remixed', a touring surround sound installation made with Roderick Williams; and most recently 'Face to Face', a multimedia performance experience combining film, sound art, movement, Italian Renaissance madrigals and new music by Joanna Ward developed in collaboration with Britten Pears Arts. TMC joins forces with ensembles and soloists of international repute to give concerts, commission and record: recent collaborations have included Daniel Pioro, Britten Sinfonia, {oh!} Orkiestra and Illyria Consort.

TMC is committed to inspiring a love of singing and creativity in people of all ages, with a particular focus on children and young people, and leads workshops, performs school concerts, and co-creates new music with partners in West Somerset and Oxford. We have an avid online following, and present performance videos and podcasts online, in collaboration with prize-winning poets, actors, writers, artists, academics, composers and musicians, reaching an audience of millions.

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## Upcoming ArtsLive Concerts

Alicia Olatuja and the UD Faculty Jazztet January  
29th 7:30pm

OWLS String Quartet February 5th 7:30pm