

# TONUS PEREGRINUS

## Alpha and Omega

Saturday 19 May 2007

London Festival of Contemporary Church Music  
St Pancras, Euston Road, London NW1

Tallis: *Sancte Deus*

Pitts: *The Peace of Jerusalem* (2007, UK première)

Tomkins: *Almighty God, the Fountain of all Wisdom*

Gibbons: *Come Holy Ghost, the Maker, come*

Pitts: *There is a green hill* (1990)

[interval]

Pitts: *The “I AM...” Sayings of Jesus* (1996-2007, world première)

*Before Abraham was, I AM*

*I AM the Bread of Life*

*I AM the Resurrection and the Life*

*I AM the Light of the World*

*I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life*

*I AM the True Vine*

*I AM the Door – I AM the Good Shepherd*

*I AM Alpha and Omega* (world première)

TONUS PEREGRINUS

Rebecca Hickey / Lisa Beckley

Kathryn Knight / Alexander L’Estrange

Richard Eteson / Alexander Hickey

Francis Brett / Nick Flower

Antony Pitts

*The audience is asked to refrain from applause between pieces and to enjoy the silence of this sacred space.*

## Thomas Tallis: *Sanctus Deus*

An early work setting Latin words partly taken from the Good Friday liturgy, and foreshadowing – in its harmonic audacity – Tallis's mature musical language. It has been a favourite in the TP repertoire for a long time.

*Holy God; Holy and strong; Holy and immortal: have mercy upon us.*

*Now, Christ, we beseech Thee, we beg Thee to have mercy.*

*Thou comest to redeem the lost – do not condemn those whom Thou hast redeemed,  
for by Thy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.*

*Amen.*

## Antony Pitts: *The Peace of Jerusalem* (2007, UK première)

The choral coda to a new oratorio-cantata telling the biblical story of **Jerusalem**–**Yerushalayim** from earliest intimations of its significance in the Torah to future visions of the city's history and its transcendent symbolism. **Jerusalem** – placed at the centre of the world on mediaeval maps, a crossroads between Asia, Europe and Africa; **Jerusalem** – occupied by Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Ottomans, British etc.; **Jerusalem** – the scene of central events in Jewish history, in the Christian gospel, and now home to Islamic holy sites; more than any other city, **Jerusalem** has captured hearts and imaginations around the world and continues to reflect the turbulent emotions of our troubled times. Just as the Old City of Jerusalem is now divided into four quarters, so the oratorio is divided into four sections of three movements each: (I) the city in patriarchal times; (II) the city as the capital of Israel up to its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC/BCE; (III) the city rebuilt under occupation until its destruction by the Romans in 70AD/CE; (IV) the city as prefigured by prophets and unfolded in history ever since.

*The Peace of Jerusalem* was premiered in Israel in April 2007 by the Choir of London under Jeremy Summerly. The text is based on a patchwork of many Biblical fragments – mostly from Isaiah.

*Though the mountains be removed...*

*Yet My covenant of peace shall not leave you...*

*Sing, O barren... great shall be your children's peace.* (Isaiah 54:1,10-11,13)

*Jerusalem, the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, the voice of crying no more.* (Isaiah 65:19)

*Comfort, comfort... Jerusalem, proclaim to her that her warfare is over...* (Isaiah 40:1-2)

*The LORD upon this mountain will make a feast for all [peoples]...*

*ADONAI Tzva ot [the LORD of hosts]* (Isaiah 25:6)

*I will lay foundations and your walls with precious stones...* (Isaiah 54:11-12)

*The shroud upon all nations here will the LORD destroy...* (Isaiah 25:7)

*ADONAI ELOHIM [the Lord GOD]*

*I will walk among you, and My people you shall be.* (Leviticus 26:12)

*He, swallowing death in victory, will wipe away all tears [from all faces]...* (Isaiah 25:8)

*'immamu-El* (Isaiah 8:8)

*The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw...*

*They shall not hurt nor destroy on all My holy mountain...* (Isaiah 65:20)

*See, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us...*

*we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.*

*ADONAI* (Isaiah 25:9)

*I create new heavens, and a new earth...* (Isaiah 65:17)

*And in Jerusalem I will rejoice! Yerushalayim!* (Isaiah 65:19)

## Thomas Tomkins: *Almighty God, the Fountain of all Wisdom*

A setting for five voices of one of the most beautiful collects or prayers in the English language. The music climaxes at the section “for the worthiness...” where the conflicting, yet joyful elements of the so-called English Cadence seem to have a symbolic significance, summing up Creation, Fall and Redemption in one extraordinary musical gesture.

*Almighty God, the Fountain of all wisdom, which knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, we beseech Thee to have compassion on our infirmities; and those things, which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Orlando Gibbons: *Veni Creator*

Gibbons's well-known tune (and bass), as used by George Wither in his collection *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* which was printed in London in 1623. The inner parts have been reconstructed (i.e. made up) by Antony Pitts, and this version is recorded by TONUS PEREGRINUS on *Hymns and Songs of the Church* (Naxos 8.557681).

Come Holy Ghost, the Maker, come;  
take in the souls of Thine Thy place;  
Thou whom our hearts had being from,  
oh fill them with Thy heavenly grace.  
Thou art that Comfort from above,  
the Highest doth by gift impart;  
Thou spring of Life, a fire of Love,  
and the anointing Spirit art.

To Thee, the Father, and the Son;  
(Whom past and present times adore)  
the One in Three, and Three in One,  
all glory be for evermore.  
Let us be taught the blessed Creed  
of Father, and of Son, by Thee:  
and how from Both Thou dost proceed,  
that our belief it still may be.

## Antony Pitts: *There is a green hill far away*

This simple setting of C.F.Alexander's famous words was composed on 15 March 1990. It was performed on Good Friday 2007 in Jerusalem by the Choir of London and Jeremy Summerly, and is recorded by TONUS PEREGRINUS on *Hymns and Songs of the Church* (Naxos 8.557681).

There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.  
We may not know, we cannot tell,  
What pains He had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.  
O dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.

[interval]

Antony Pitts: *The "I AM..." Sayings of Jesus* (1996-2007, world première of completed cycle)

### *The words*

Anyone who reads through the Gospel of John should be shocked by the statements of identity uttered continually and uncompromisingly by the young rabbi from Nazareth almost two thousand years ago. Certainly contemporaries of Jesus (or Yeshua) – learned scribes and elders on the lookout for the Messiah – were shocked both to the core of their understanding of God, and to the point of demanding execution for blasphemy. The idea that Jesus ‘was just a good man’ makes no sense next to the evidence recorded in John’s Gospel: clearly this man was utterly delusional – mad, bad, and dangerous to know – unless, of course, it was truth that was being told. “Before Abraham was, I AM” is the clearest statement of all, and comes at the end of a long dialogue in John chapter 8; the reaction to it brings the dialogue to an end, as words are replaced by stones in the hands of an angry crowd. Jesus is specifically referring to the sacred Name of God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush: “I AM who I AM” (Exodus 3:14).

There are seven variations on this theme, scattered throughout John’s Gospel, and summed up with “I AM Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” which comes several times in the Book of Revelation (traditionally also ascribed to John). The seven statements, known as the Great “I AM” sayings of Jesus, are: “I AM the bread of life” (John 6:35,48,51), “I AM the light of the world” (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46), “I AM the door” (John 10:7,9) “I AM the good shepherd” (John 10:11,14), “I AM the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), “I AM the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and “I AM the true vine” (John 15:1,5). In addition, there are two abnormal occurrences in John’s Gospel linked directly to the words “I AM”: when Jesus walks to the disciples in their boat out on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:20), and in Gethsemane when those who have come to arrest Jesus fall backwards to the ground (John 18:5).

### *The music*

In attempting to set these sayings to music – at different times and for different occasions over the past decade – I wanted to convey something of the essence of each statement, and, across the whole series, to trace the identity of the Person making these

extraordinary statements. Each of the eight motets is for a different number of voices (between 1 and 8), and each focuses on a different melodic interval; while at the same time, there is a common harmonic core and an exploration of related rhythmic and structural ratios. Although each piece was written quite separately, when combining them into a whole I discovered significant musical relationships of which I had not been consciously aware (such is the mystery of the creative process), and which have made it a surprisingly natural procedure. I have mostly made notational changes to make it easier to perform the motets together, although in a couple of the more recent settings I have found it necessary to rework the material in more depth. Although each piece can be performed separately, or any number of them in any order, I have settled upon a particular formal order for the cycle which is primarily a musical one, following the expansion of the intervals (from unison, through seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, and sevenths, to octaves) and making sense of the inherent tempo relationships. It is not simply the order in which they appear in John's Gospel (the first four and the second three statements are interleaved), nor is it the order in which the settings were composed (although apart from the final motet to be written, which appropriately stands at the head of the cycle, it is pretty close). The series is framed by *Before Abraham was, I AM* and *I AM Alpha and Omega*, and in-between are the seven 'variations'.

### 1. ***Before Abraham was, I AM*** (2006)

Commissioned by the Edington Music Festival Association for the Edington Festival of Music within the Liturgy; first performed and broadcast live on Choral Evensonsg, BBC Radio 3 in August 2006. Perhaps the clearest and most controversial of all Jesus' "I AM..." sayings, it is set for three voice parts.

*I AM that I AM.*

*I AM; be not afraid. (Alleluia)*

*Even [the same] that I said unto you from the beginning.*

*I AM one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me.*

*...if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins.*

*When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I AM, and I do nothing of Myself;*

*but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things.*

*If ye continue in My word, [then] are ye My disciples indeed;*

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

*Amen, amen, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.*

*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw [it], and was glad.*

*Amen, amen, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.*

*(Exodus 3:14; John 6:20; 8:25b,18,24b,28,31-32,51,56,58)*

### 2. ***I AM the Bread of Life*** (2000)

First performed in Budapest in April 2000 at the wedding of Tim and Viktoria Pitts; first broadcast live in a performance by TONUS PEREGRINUS on In Tune, BBC Radio 3 in June 2003. Set for four voices, it is based on a pealike series of descending and ascending scales.

*I AM the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. I will raise him up at the last day. I AM the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*  
*(John 6:35,40,51,53-54)*

### 3. ***I AM the Resurrection and the Life*** (1996)

Commissioned by Philip Southall; first performed by TONUS PEREGRINUS in Hillesden in 1996; first broadcast on Netherlands Radio 4 / KRO in June 1997. A setting in up to seven parts of Jesus' challenging words to the sister of Lazarus. The middle section depicts Jesus' own grief at Lazarus' death, and finally He commands him to come forth from the grave. There is a brief quote from Machaut's Mass.

*Lazarus is dead.*

*I AM the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

*And whosoever lieth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeest thou this?*

*Jesus wept.*

*Lazarus, come forth!*

*(John 11:14,25-26,35,43)*

#### 4. *I AM the Light of the World* (2001)

First performed out-of-doors at a birthday party in 2001, and first performed publicly in London in May 2002 by TONUS PEREGRINUS. Both the dual nature of light (wave and particle) and of Christ (God and man) are portrayed by an unchanging, yet dynamic set of notes in the soprano and alto parts, while the lower three voices move through the cycle of major triads in the manner of a chorale within a chorale prelude such as Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Gradually the two textures merge into one...

*I AM the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

*As long as I am in the world, I AM the light of the world.*

*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.*

(John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46)

#### 5. *I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (2001-2003)

Commissioned by Peter Johnson Entertainments; first performed by TONUS PEREGRINUS in Southwater in February 2003. Two intertwining voices represent the Son's unity with the Father. An unusual 7-note "sunrise" mode (C, D, Eb, E, G, Bb, B) is used throughout the motet; this mode is directly derived from the bell chords at the end of the composer's first chamber opera, *Anna's Rapid Eye Movement* (also heard during the final cadence of *I AM the Resurrection and the Life*).

*I and the Father are one.*

*I AM the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*

*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*

*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?*

*And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*I and the Father are one.*

(John 10:30; 14:6;9-10,13)

#### 6. *I AM the True Vine* (2003)

Commissioned and first performed by Schola Cantorum of Oxford in Oxford in June 2003. Scored for six voices, it is one of the most intricate pieces in the series – the 'vine' is represented by two 6-part chords which grow into the 'branches' and are increasingly embellished with 'much fruit'.

*I AM the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.*

*I AM the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.*

*If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye*

*bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.*

(John 15:1-8)

#### 7. *I AM the Door – I AM the Good Shepherd* (2003-2007)

Commissioned and first performed by Michael Yare Pits in Formby in May 2004; this is the first performance of the revised version. The only solo vocal piece in the cycle, it has faint echoes of some very early monophonic music...

*Amen, amen, I say unto you,*

*I AM the door of the sheep.*

*I AM the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*I AM the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

*I AM the good shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down*

*My life for the sheep. Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. And other sheep I have which*

*are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

(John 10:7-9,11,13-15,17,16)

## 8. *I AM Alpha and Omega* (2003/2007, world premiere)

Commissioned by Cambridge Voices and revised this year for its first-ever performance tonight. These words from the Book of Revelation seem to sum up the statements of divine identity scattered throughout John's Gospel.

*I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Alleluia)*

*I AM the first and the last. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches. It is done. (Alleluia)*

*I AM the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. And behold, I come quickly.*

*I AM Alpha and Omega. (Alleluia)*

Amen.

(John 18:5; Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:12,13,20)

The complete cycle of The "I AM..." Sayings is to be recorded next month by TONUS PEREGRINUS for release on Hyperion.

(programme notes by the composer)

TONUS PEREGRINUS is one of the most exciting young ensembles in Britain, with major successes in both early music and new music, including the prestigious Cannes Classical Award for the ensemble's debut release of Arvo Pärt's *Passio* (8.555860) on Naxos, and a nomination for the first-ever BBC Music Magazine Awards in 2006. Recent critical acclaim in the BBC Music Magazine, The Telegraph, and The Gramophone speaks for itself: "utterly spellbinding", "utterly beguiling", "captivating excitement", "gloriously sung by this superb choir", as does the selection first of *Passio*, and then of the ensemble's release of Antony Pitts's *Seven Letters* on Hyperion (CDA67507) as Editor's Choices in The Gramophone. TONUS PEREGRINUS has a history of performing at unusual occasions, and was recently privileged to sing at a memorial for former audience member Alexander Livinenko. A second album is being recorded in June for Hyperion, and the ensemble's version of Tears for Fears's *Mad World* will soon be available on iTunes. To be kept up-to-date, send a quick email to: [news@tonusperegrinus.co.uk](mailto:news@tonusperegrinus.co.uk)

In an unparalleled series of recordings for Naxos, TONUS PEREGRINUS has focused on the most important milestones of early Western music including the first music in four separate parts (*Léonin & Pérotin – Sacred Music from Notre-Dame Cathedral* 8.557340), the first-ever opera, Adam de la Halle's mediaeval musical (*Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion* 8.557337), the first complete polyphonic Mass and Passion settings (*The Mass of Tournai* 8.555861), motets and Mass movements by the musical godfather of the Renaissance, John Dunstable (*Sweet Harmony* 8.557341), and a brand-new realization of the first English hymnbook from 1623 – *Hymns and Songs of the Church*. TONUS PEREGRINUS has also made a unique impact on the popular Christmas market with *The Naxos Book of Carols* – commissioned by Klaus Heymann of Naxos and published both as a CD (8.557330) and as a carolbook in partnership with Faber Music (ISBN 0571-52325-0; 0-571-52327-7).

TONUS PEREGRINUS was founded while director Antony Pitts was studying under Dr Edward Higginbottom at New College, Oxford, and early years saw repeated tours abroad in the Low Countries, as well as twice featuring on the cult CD journal Unknown Public. The name *tonus peregrinus* is taken from an ancient plainchant psalm tone dating back to Jewish liturgical sources linked to the Passover, and hence the Last Supper. This chant has a different starting-note in each half, so was called the "wandering tone", and also gained the nickname of *tonus novissimus*, the "newest tone". TONUS PEREGRINUS combines these two characteristics in a repertoire that ranges far and wide from the end of the Dark Ages to scores fresh from the printer, and has an interpretative approach that is both authentic and highly original.

**Antony Pitts** was born in 1969 and sang as a boy in the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace. He was an Academic Scholar and later Honorary Senior Scholar at New College, Oxford and graduated in 1990 with First-Class Honours in Music – in the same year he founded the ensemble TONUS PEREGRINUS. He worked at the BBC from 1992 to 2005, becoming a Senior Producer for BBC Radio 3, and was awarded the Radio Academy BT Award in 1996 and the Prix Italia in 2004. Since 2005 he has taught composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he is currently Senior Lecturer in Creative Technology.

Antony has been composing since he can remember and his music has been performed in Wigmore Hall and Westminster Cathedral in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal in Berlin. He has been commissioned by, among others, the Berlin Radio Choir, Cambridge Voices, the Clerks' Group, the Edington Festival, European Chamber Opera, King's College London, the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, New Chamber Opera, the Oxford Festival of Contemporary Music, Schola Cantorum of Oxford, the Swingle Singers, and the Choir of Westminster Cathedral. Faber Music selected two of his scores to launch the New Choral Works series, and also publish *The Naxos Book of Carols* and his 40-voice motet XL. His next major project is an oratorio *Jerusalem-Yemshalayim* which is scheduled for recording in the autumn.

## COMING NEXT:

a brand-new *a cappella* version of Tears for Fears's *Mad World* – available exclusively via iTunes

[www.tonusperegrinus.co.uk](http://www.tonusperegrinus.co.uk)