

O Regem Coeli - Tomas Luis de Victoria

Performed by: *The Ravenstreet Singers*

Mistress Anne of Carthew, Lady Celia of Rosedale

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Documentation by: Mistress Anne of Carthew

AUTHENTICITY

***O Regem Coeli* was published by Victoria in 1589.¹**

This motet was included in his ninth volume of published works. The cover over the volume is listed as:

Thomae Ludovici | de Victoria, | Abulensis, | Motecta | Quae Partim Quaternis, | partim quinis, alia senis, alia octonis, alia duodenis | vocibus concinuntur, | Quae quidem nunc vero melius excussa, & alia quam plurima | adiuncta, noviter sunt impressa. || Mediolani, Apud Franciscum, & haeredes Simonis Tini. | MDLXXXIX.

This particular piece is the 16th item in the volume, listed as:

In festo natalis Domini. O regem coeli / Natus est nobis a'4

The Composer. Tomas Luis De Victoria was born in Avila Spain in 1548. He began his early musical training in Spain, but at the age of 17 he traveled to Rome to continue his studies, where he was accepted into the *Collegium Germanicum*. While there, he may have studied under Perluigi Palestrina. He later achieved positions as choirmaster and organist at various churches in Rome. He eventually succeeded Palastrina at the *Collegium Romanum*.

Victoria's first volume of Motets was published in Venice in 1572. He was ordained as a priest at the age of 28.

Although Victoria spent much of his career in Rome, he returned to Spain in 1586 and entered service as a priest to the Empress Maria, sister of Philip II, as she entered the convent of *Descalzas Reales* in Madrid. Victoria served the convent as priest, choirmaster and organist until his death in 1611.

Victoria was known as a prolific composer of sacred motets with works printed through Italy Spain and Germany. It is interesting to note that although many of his contemporaries were known to publish secular Madrigals, Victoria only composed sacred music.

O Regem Coeli : The lyrics, language, melody, harmony are performed here as written by Victoria. **Voicing:** We have found this motet in modern publications pitched both for SSAA and for TTBB. Since we have yet to find a facsimile of the original, we are unable to say definitively which range may have been the original or if it had been written intentionally towards either range. However, since this motet was published in 1589, three years after Victoria returned to Spain and was working as a composer for a convent, we hypothesize that it was composed for use within the convent, sung by women, and it is thus very appropriate to perform this motet as a treble quartet sung by women.

¹ Cramer, Eugene. Tomás Luis De Victoria: A Guide to Research. (New York: Garland Pub, 1998), Page 13.

COMPLEXITY

Several items make this a complex motet to perform:

- 4 parts, one voice per part. There is no additional support to maintain the line: each singer must maintain strict rhythm and pitch to be able to achieve the quality desired. Some entrances are very exposed.
- Lengthy piece, all *a cappella*. Each vocalist must maintain the appropriate pitch over a long period.
- Singing in Latin also adds to the difficulty in ensuring the pronunciation is correct and smooth.
- This piece requires a wide range of the singers' voice: each part covers far more than an octave. The moving parts require much vocal dexterity.
- The passages are frequently intertwined, with lower voices singing above the higher.
- Rhythms are very intricate vary widely across the parts; singers must know the rhythm of their own part, and not rely on following the movement of another singer.
- Further, the Rhythms must be very precise on the runs, where multiple parts are moving, or it will create a very muddy sound.
- The meter changes several times from a feel of "2" to "3" and back.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reese, Gustave. *Music in the Renaissance*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1959.
Cramer, Eugene. *Tomás Luis De Victoria: A Guide to Research*. New York: Garland Pub, 1998.

TEXT / TRANSLATION

O regem coeli	
(<i>In Festo Natalis Domini</i>)	<i>For the Feast of the Birth of the Lord</i>
O Regem coeli, cui talia famulantur obsequia.	O King of Heaven, Served by such great honors:
Stabulo praeponitur.	Placed in a stable
Qui continent mundum:	Which contains the whole world:
Jacet in praesepio,	He lies in a cradle,
Et in coelis regnat. Alleluia.	And reigns above the heavens. Alleluia.
Natus est nobis hodie salvator.	There is born to us today a savior,
Qui est Christus Dominus.	Who is Christ the Lord.
In civitate David:	In the city of David:
Jacet in praesepio,	He lies in a cradle,
Et in coelis regnat. Alleluia.	And reigns above the heavens. Alleluia.

The score is attached.