

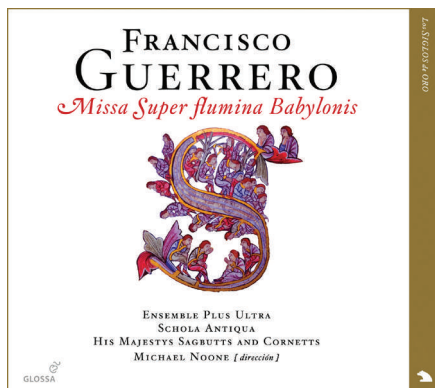
GCD 922005

New release information

August 2007

Francisco Guerrero

Missa Super flumina Babylonis



Francisco Guerrero

Missa Super flumina Babylonis

Ensemble Plus Ultra

Grace Davidson, Julia Doyle,
Kate Hawnt, Mark Chambers, Sally Dunkley,
David Martin, Clare Wilkinson,
Julian Stocker, Warren Trevelyan-Jones,
Giles Underwood, Stuart Young
Michael Noone, director

Schola Antiqua

Juan Carlos Asensio

His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts

Jeremy West

Glossa GCD 922005

Los Siglos de Oro
Full-price digipak

Programme

Francisco Guerrero (1528/29-1599)

Missa Super flumina Babylonis
(Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei)

Ave virgo sanctissima — Regina caeli — Si el
mirar — Aleluya: In exitu Israel — Ofrenda:
Super flumina Babylonis — Celsi confessoris —
Ut queant laxis — In exitu Israel — Adiós mi
amor — Conditor alme siderum

Production details

Total playing time: 78'58

Recorded at Iglesia de San Miguel,
Cuenca (Spain), in June 2006
Engineered and produced by Adrian Hunter
Executive producer: Carlos Céster

Design 00:03:00 oficina tresminutos
Booklet essay by Michael Noone &
Graeme Skinner
English Français Deutsch Español



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NOTES (ENG)

After the brilliant debut by Michael Noone's Ensemble Plus Ultra on Glossa a couple of years ago of with *Morales en Toledo*, the long-awaited second release from one of the current highly-rated British groups is now here. In the same manner as with his earlier effort, Noone dusts off manuscripts in the Toledo archives to unearth for us pieces which a young Francisco Guerrero composed during the course of his brief stay by the banks of the River Tagus, at the time when he was a pupil of Cristóbal de Morales. That, however, is far from the end of the matter: from the period of Guerrero's maturity Ensemble Plus Ultra has chosen the never-before recorded *Missa Super flumina Babylonis*, which it presents to us in a dazzling version assisted by the talents of the instrumentalists of His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts – and in this way, Michael Noone is returning to a way of performing for which he was known during his years of working with the Orchestra of the Renaissance, when together they made memorable recordings of Guerrero, Morales and Vivanco (all issued on Glossa). And just in case that wasn't enough, this disc is also graced with the invaluable presence of Juan Carlos Asensio and his Schola Antiqua, the leading specialists in Gregorian chant from Spain: courtesy of Asensio, for the first time it has been possible to identify the plainchant fragment which serves as the basis for the mass, here offered here as a world première. Highly informed and entertainingly readable notes from Noone himself and fellow researcher Graeme Skinner complete an indispensable disc for all lovers of great Renaissance polyphony.

NOTAS (ESP)

Tras el brillante debut del Ensemble Plus Ultra de Michael Noone en Glossa con *Morales en Toledo*, editado hace un par de años, llega la esperada segunda entrega discográfica de uno de los grupos ingleses de más calidad del momento. En la estela de su primer trabajo, Noone desempolva los archivos toledanos para descubrirnos las creaciones que un joven Guerrero dejó escritas durante su breve estancia a orillas del Tajo, cuando fue alumno de Cristóbal de Morales. Pero eso no es todo, ni mucho menos: de la etapa de madurez del compositor, el Ensemble Plus Ultra ha escogido la nunca antes grabada *Missa Super flumina Babylonis*, que nos ofrece en deslumbrante versión en colaboración con los instrumentistas de His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts – así, Michael Noone recupera una línea de trabajo que le caracterizó durante sus años de colaboración con la Orchestra of the Renaissance, con memorables grabaciones de Guerrero, Morales y Vivanco (todas en Glossa). Y por si fuera poco, para este disco hemos contado con el inestimable concurso de Juan Carlos Asensio y su Schola Antiqua, los mayores especialistas en canto gregoriano de España: gracias a Asensio, se ha podido identificar por primera vez el fragmento de canto llano que sirvió de base para la misa, ofrecido aquí en primicia mundial. Unas informadísimas y amenas notas a cargo del propio Noone y del también investigador Graeme Skinner completan un disco imprescindible para todo amante de la gran polifonía renacentista.

NOTES (FRA)

Le brillant début de l'Ensemble Plus Ultra de Michael Noone chez Glossa *Morales à Tolède* édité il y a deux ans, avait créé une attente finalement comblée par ce second disque de l'un des meilleurs groupes anglais de l'actualité. Dans le sillage de son premier travail, Noone dépoussière les archives de Tolède et nous révèle les œuvres écrites par un jeune Guerrero durant son bref séjour sur les rives du Tage, alors qu'il étudiait avec son maître, Cristóbal de Morales. Mais ces trésors sont loin d'être seuls : l'Ensemble Plus Ultra s'intéresse aussi à l'époque de la maturité du compositeur, et a choisi d'interpréter une œuvre qui n'avait jamais été enregistrée, la *Missa Super flumina Babylonis* : leur version, en collaboration avec les instrumentistes de His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts est absolument stupéfiante. Ainsi, Michael Noone revient à une ligne de travail qui le caractérisait durant ses années de collaboration avec l'Orchestra of the Renaissance, produisant des enregistrements mémorables de Guerrero, Morales et Vivanco (tous chez Glossa). Et, en outre, nous comptons, dans ce disque, sur l'inestimable présence de Juan Carlos Asensio et de sa Schola Antiqua, les plus grands spécialistes du chant grégorien en Espagne : grâce à Asensio, il a été possible d'identifier pour la première fois le fragment de plain-chant servant de base pour la messe, et que nous offrons ici en première mondiale. Des notes aussi amènes qu'érudites, signées par Noone et par le chercheur Graeme Skinner, complètent un disque indispensable à tout amoureux de la grande polyphonie de la Renaissance.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Nach dem brillanten Debut, das das Ensemble Plus Ultra unter Michael Noone bei Glossa vor einigen Jahren mit *Morales in Toledo* hatte, erscheint nun die lang erwartete zweite Aufnahme dieses hochgeschätzten britischen Ensembles. Wie bei seiner früheren Arbeit hat Noone Manuskripte aus den Archiven Toledos ausgegraben und uns Werke zugänglich gemacht, die der junge Francisco Guerrero während seines kurzen Aufenthalts an den Ufern des Tagus komponiert hat, zur der Zeit, als er Schüler von Cristóbal de Morales war. Das ist aber noch lange nicht alles: Das Ensemble Plus Ultra hat die bisher noch nicht eingespielte *Missa Super flumina Babylonis* des reifen Guerrero ausgewählt, die es uns in einer mitreißenden Fassung präsentiert, unterstützt von den Instrumentalisten von His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts. So kehrt Michael Noone zu einer Aufführungspraxis zurück, für die er während der Jahre der Zusammenarbeit mit dem Orchestra of the Renaissance bekannt war, als die denkwürdigen Aufnahmen von Werken Guerreros, Morales' und Vivancos entstanden (alle bei Glossa erschienen). Und wem das immer noch nicht genügt, der kann sich auf dieser CD an dem unschätzbaren Juan Carlos Asensio und seiner Schola Antiqua erfreuen, den führenden spanischen Spezialisten auf dem Gebiet des gregorianischen Gesangs. Asensio ist es zu verdanken, dass das Choralfragment, auf dem die Messe basiert, erstmals identifiziert werden konnte, welches hier auch als Weltpremiere vorliegt. Höchst informative und mit Genuss zu lesende Ausführungen von Noone selbst und von seinem Forscherkollegen Graeme Skinner vervollständigen diese für alle Liebhaber großartiger Polyphonie der Renaissancezeit unverzichtbare Aufnahme.

Michael Noone on Guerrero and other Spanish polyphony luminaries

by Mark Wiggins



Following the revelatory release a couple of years ago of Morales *en Toledo* it is a great pleasure to welcome back Michael Noone and Ensemble Plus Ultra to Glossa for a further demonstration — in the music of Morales' younger contemporary Francisco Guerrero — of Noone's remarkable knack of uniting unknown music from recognized masters in superb performances underpinned by exemplary scholarship. Through his ongoing research in the Cathedral Archives in Toledo, Noone has discovered a group of six hymns by Guerrero (written when he was apprenticed to Morales), recording these in the church of San Miguel in Cuenca along with the previously-unrecorded *Missa Super flumina Babylonis* in the company of plainchant specialist Juan Carlos Asensio's Schola Antiqua and the instrumentalists from His Majesties Sagbutts and Cornetts.

The path of Noone, whose initial introduction to Spanish Renaissance polyphony came whilst organist at St Mary's Cathedral in his native Sydney, has taken him to Toledo, King's College, Cambridge, Hong Kong, and also Phoenix, Arizona in the USA, where a meeting with Richard Cheetham led to the formation of the Orchestra of the Renaissance from which forces emerged Glossa recordings of enterprising programmes of music by Guerrero, Morales and also Sebastián de Vivanco. Ensemble Plus Ultra was founded in 2001 by Noone and tenor Warren Trevelyan-Jones and they have recently provided further proof of their invigorating approach with a performance at the Música Antigua Aranjuez Festival in Spain of an ignored early version of a seldom-performed Mass by Victoria (the *Missa De Beata María*) along with more unknown Morales.

For the new Guerrero recording [*Missa Super flumina Babylonis*, Glossa GCD 922005] Noone has added the superlative eight voice antiphon *Regina caeli* and the motet *Ave virgo sanctissima* in performances which provide convincing proof of the highly-sophisticated nature of polyphony from the Spanish Renaissance. The conductor, along with fellow researcher Graeme Skinner, contributes an essay on the works recorded here.

As a musicologist working on the music of composers such as Victoria, Morales and Guerrero, what led you to want to perform and record music by these and lesser-known composers as well?

Victoria for me was a way into an incredibly rich and dense kind of context. What I want to do with all these pieces is to understand the way that this music was conceived and performed in the fullest way possible. Yet the fact is that we do not even have decent complete editions for Victoria, Guerrero and Morales. With other composers, we have nothing there at all. Take one composer in Bernardino de Ribera whose complete works exist in the Toledo Cathedral archive. De Ribera was *maestro de capilla* in Ávila when both Victoria and Sebastián de Vivanco were young choirboys there. It is quite possible that he was the most influential composer of all — his influence was stronger than anybody else's on Victoria. Nobody — if they want to listen or perform his music — can do so. It simply hasn't been transcribed. Composers such as Ribera interest me not only because they illuminate for us the three peaks — of Victoria, Guerrero and Morales — but because to take the three peaks out of their context doesn't do justice to our appreciation of them, and it also deprives us of the much richer repertory that at least deserves to be heard once and a lot of which, I think, deserves to be heard a lot more than once. I suppose it was my frustration at being a scholar who was digging around in this very solitary world with these incredible riches whilst wanting desperately to share them with others that led me into the whole performing world. I am now realizing, through CDs and concerts, that this music has an extraordinary power to reach ordinary people at quite a deep level, a kind of audience that is simply not open to the scholarly world.

How important for you is this question of context, of how to perform this 16th century music to a modern audience?

Very. How do we communicate this to a 21st century audience? This is something that I continue to struggle with. When we are doing performances in places like the choir of Toledo Cathedral for instance, most of the work is done for you, most of the reason the music is the way it is, is thrown in your face. Yet it is quite a different thing when you take a programme to somewhere like London's South Bank in London. So, this leads me to ask questions such as how do we recontextualize this music for modern concert audiences and what are we actually doing when we are making a recording of the music. I think that we need to work a lot more and we need to realize that this music was never concert music, that the vast majority of Roman Catholic priests have no idea of liturgical Latin, that the whole idea of the liturgy itself is at best curiosity value, even for Roman Catholics. So, what do we do? I think in a post-modern world there are a lot of alternatives open to us and the ones that I particularly want to explore now are working with images, dances, movement and mime and stage sets. Last year Ensemble Plus Ultra carried out a tour of cathedrals in Andalucía — we sang at Guerrero's own cathedral in Sevilla, just near his tomb; as well as Cádiz, Málaga, Granada and Córdoba. There is something to be said a lot about singing this music in its context. Those cathedrals really are theatrical. The music itself is also very theatrical and very functional and I find it very profound, very direct and very moving. One of the things that is absolutely clear when you are in those Spanish cathedrals is that there are multiple meanings, there are many layers. The Guerrero Mass on the new CD, the *Missa Super flumina Babylonis*, has never been recorded before. When

one looks at the standard reference works about the Guerrero Mass on the new CD, the *Missa Super flumina Babylonis*, such books do not even know the source of the Mass — from where it got its name, from where the melodic material came. It was Juan Carlos Asensio of Schola Antiqua, with his amazing knowledge of the Gregorian repertory, who provided the answer to this riddle. When you start to appreciate the fact that Guerrero has built this wonderful five voice multi-layered masterpiece out of a small chunk of Gregorian chant fragment and poured into that all of the layers of meaning of the psalm itself from which it comes, you realize what a sophisticated art form we are dealing with.

What do you believe is the importance of the Guerrero hymns from the Toledo Codex 25?

You should know that the manuscript that these discoveries came from had been allowed to stand in water and most of the pages were fused together. It was extremely difficult — and in some cases impossible — to open them up fully. There were three years of very painstaking work. Intriguingly, there were six completely unknown works by Francisco Guerrero there, written when he was 17 or 18. We knew that Guerrero had studied with Morales — Guerrero had mentioned it a number of times — but what we didn't know was what form that apprenticeship took and where it took place. We can now date it and we can see side by side Guerrero and Morales writing pieces based on the same *cantus firmus*. You can see the younger Guerrero being given compositional exercises by the *éminence gris*, perhaps the most famous Spanish composer of all time in the 16th century and who had recently returned to Spain. This to me is fascinating because it tells us a lot. It is a frozen moment in Spanish musical history; it shows the changing of the guard and the younger composer learning his craft. One of the interesting things about these Guerrero pieces is that later in his life he published revised versions and in some cases we have three revisions. Through these discoveries you can see and feel the development of his musical style.

What kind of sound are you trying to produce with Ensemble Plus Ultra — in concert or on record? What size and configuration of choir do you prefer to use?

I am looking for something that projects the music that isn't the typical English sound (beautiful as it is, it is quite clear that that wasn't what was around in the 16th century). I am interested in constantly pushing the singers, for instance by introducing sixteenth century Spanish pronunciation (there is no final authority here, especially when you have an Australian telling Brits in Spain how to pronounce the words!). You really do manage to get the singers working with the actual sounds that they are making, because although the words are familiar, the pronunciation makes them unfamiliar and it moves the line forward horizontally. With my work in archives I can tell you at any given time how many singers — and often how many instrumentalists — were on the payroll, but not how many performed a piece at any particular time. I am not trying to reproduce the past, but I am convinced that the more we know about the past the better our decisions are going to be. You may notice in the new Guerrero recording that I have gone right back to what I was doing with the Orchestra of the Renaissance. This time it is His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts who are providing instrumental variety (as well as doubling of the voices at times and substituting the voices with instruments) coupled with the use of Spanish plainsong group. So we had three groups — exactly what they had in 16th century Spanish cathedrals.