



Dominus Possedit Me

A Motet for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

For solo soprano, choir (SATB) and chamber organ

Nigel Morgan

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About the music

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin – not to be confused with the Virgin Birth of Christ – is to the effect that Mary was conceived without inheriting the taint of Original Sin, which has descended to all other human beings from Adam and Eve. It is no wonder that the proper for the Mass for the feast of this mystery has, as its Epistle, the *Dominus possedit me* passage from Proverbs 8: 22-31, in which Sophia (Wisdom), the handmaid of Logos (The Word), declares that she was ‘set up from eternity’ and that ‘he who shall find me shall find life’. For the miracle whereby the Virgin is free from original sin, that she never ‘missed the mark’, is clearly that she is of heavenly or divine origin. Like the Son, she was ‘begotten before all worlds’, for ‘I was set up from of old before ever the world was’.

(from Alan Watts: *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*. Thames & Hudson 1954)

This setting of words from *The Book of Proverbs* brings together both a declaration and exhortation: that the spirit of wisdom has existed since time began; that we should ‘hear instruction . . . and refuse it not’, and through hearing, watching and obedience we may find life and salvation.

This Motet was composed for the installation of the Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd, Jonathan Greener on December 8, 2007 – the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception. In a collaboration with the artist Steve Simpson a version of this score for the web (on the composer’s own site and on YouTube) brings together images that have resonances of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, a tradition celebrated by Wakefield Cathedral in its links with the Church in Georgia and Romania.

The poet Margaret Morgan has written a new interpretation of the text from *The Book of Proverbs*, which can be found at the end of the score.

Dominus possedit me

Dominus possedit me initium viarum suarum . . .
Ab aeterno ordinata sum . . .
. . . et ego iam concepta eram
Quando praeparabat caelos aderam
Cum eo eram cuncta componens
et delectabar per singulos dies ludens
coram eo omni tempore

Nunc ergo filii audite me

beati qui custodiunt vias meas
Audite disciplinam . . . et nolite abicere eam
Beatus homo qui audit me
qui vigilat . . . et observat . . .
Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam
et hauriet salutem a Domino

*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways. . .
I was set up from eternity. . .
and I was already conceived . . .
When he prepared the heavens, I was present:
I was with him forming all things:
and was delighted every day,
playing before him at all times;*

Now, therefore, ye children, hear me:

*blessed are they that keep my ways.
Hear instruction . . . and refuse it not.
Blessed is the man that heareth me,
and that watcheth and waiteth
He that shall find me, shall find life,
and shall have salvation from the Lord.*

Dominus Possedit Me

$\text{♩} = 60$ *mf*

Soprano

Do - mi - nus Po sse - dit me i - ni - ti - um vi - a - rum su - a -

S A

T B

Chamber Organ

7

- rum Ab ae - ter - no or - di - na - to sum et e - go iam con - cep - ta e - ram Quan - do

15

prae - pa - ra - bat cae - los a - - de - ram Cum e - o e - ram cunc - ta con - po - nens et de - lec - ta

22

bar per sin - gu - los di - es lu - dens co - ram e - o om - ni tem - po - re Nunc e - go

fi - li - i au - di - te me

Be - a - ti qui cu - sto - di - unt vi - as me - as Au - di - te

mp *mf* Au - di - te

Be - a - ti qui cu - sto - di - unt vi - as me - as

di - sci - pli - nam et no - li - te a - bi - ce - re e - am

Be - a - tus be - a - tus

mp Be - a - tus *p* Be - a - tus *mp* be - a - tus

di - sci - pli - nam et no - li - te a - bi - ce - re e - am

p Be - a - tus *mp* be - a - tus

p Be - a - tus *mf* be - a - tus ho - mo qui

39 au - dit me *mf* Qui me in - ve - ne - rit in - ve - ni - et

mf au - dit me *mp* Qui vi - gi - lat et ob - ser - vat *mf* Qui me in - ve - ne - rit in - ve - ni - et

au - dit me Qui vi - gi - lat et ob - ser - vat *mf* Qui me in - ve - ne - rit

45 vi - *f* tam S. et hau - ri - et sa - lu - tem a Do - mi - no *molto ritard.*

- et vi - *f* tam *mp* *mf* *mp*

vi - - tam T. et hau - ri - et sa - lu - tem a Do - mi - no

in - ve - ni - et vi - tam *mp* *mf* *mp* a Do - mi - no

Dominus possedit me

I was possessed by him.
He owned me totally.
There was no telling us apart.

He set me square in his mind.
I existed at the core of all things.
I sat in his hands as he worked.

I pictured the dark sky.
He married the stars to my
thoughts,
fixed, exploring, grouped.

I danced my dreams.
He built the earth in my footsteps,
moved it to my choreography.

Therefore, children, listen to me.

Dance to my music and be blessed.
Join in my laughter and be wise.
Watch my workings each moment.
Be vigilant. Be saved. Be his.

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