

# Utrumne est Ornatum

*for mixed choir SSATB*

**Music: Mark Gotham**

**Words: Charles Anthony Silvestri**

# Utrumne est Ornatum

**Music:** Mark Gotham

**Words:** Charles Anthony Silvestri (Latin text and English translation).

## **The Text:**

|                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In parietes, lapides,<br>In stabula caelata,<br>Perfundebamus lacrimas<br>Et gaudia oblata.     | Into these walls, these stones,<br>These carved choirstalls,<br>We have poured out our tears<br>And our joys as offerings. |
| Munera nostra gratiae<br>Diu aggregabantur;<br>Thesauri ipsi idola<br>Ne quando venerentur.     | Our gifts of thanks<br>Have long piled up;<br>May these treasures themselves<br>Never become idols.                        |
| Auratas turres spolia,<br>Evelle pavementum –<br>Permanet numen domini,<br>Utrumne est ornatum. | Tear down the gilded spires,<br>Rip up the fancy floor –<br>The spirit of God remains,<br>Decorated or not.                |

## **Programme note**

This evocative text is a compelling reflection on the permanence (or otherwise) of the material and spiritual things in our lives. The essence is encapsulated beautifully in the final line – *Utrumne est ornatum* (decorated or not).

The text is strongly suggestive of musical and spatial parallels which I have been happy to exploit. There are the obvious implications of ‘tearing down’, and ‘ripping up’, but also subtler ideas like the ‘piling up’ of ‘lacrimas’, ‘gaudia’, and ‘munera nostra’ (here paired with the ‘piling up’ of voice entries and allusions to tonal centres) as well as the numerous repetitions of ‘Permanet numen domini’.

That permanence is also analogised to historical forms of choral music which have continued to be used liturgically, and inspired generation after generation of composer. This is most conspicuous in the use of the ‘Gloria Tibi Trinitas’ plainchant as the melodic basis of the piece, a melody which has enjoyed a particularly long and illustrious history. I was drawn to that use of plainchant particularly given the extended meaning of ‘spolia’ which can refer to the re-use of building material (here compositional material) or decorative sculpture (‘Utrumne est ornatum’).

The piece is intended for performance in both concert and liturgical contexts, especially during the penitential seasons. I hope that church wardens will take the third verse of the text in good spirit!

## **To the performer**

- Initial and final solos should be performed as quasi-plainchant. The final set of Soprano solos may be performed off-stage if appropriate.
- Square brackets are used to indicate where the metrical implication of the text in one part diverge from the notated metre. The metre of the text (and brackets) should be observed.
- The embellishments of the descending scales from bar 34 should sound as natural and improvised as possible.
- Bar 46 is intentionally spaced ‘upside down’ and should sound as such, but the distribution of voices is at the director’s discretion.
- Cut offs should be exactly as specified, especially in b. 50.

# Utrumne est Ornatum

for SSATB unaccompanied choir

Charles Anthony Silvestri

Mark Gotham

**Solemn, ♩ = c.60**

*p* *pp* pure, inexpressive. Scatter breathing as necessary *(p)*

S (1,2) In la - - - - - pi -

**Alto solo *mp***

A In pa-ri - e - tes, in sta-bu-la cae - la - - - ta,

**Tenor solo *mp***

T la-pi-des, in sta-bu-la

*p* *pp* semplice; scatter breathing *(p)*

B In pa - - - - - ri -

**Solemn, ♩ = c.60**

*p* *(p)* *(p)*

Reduction (rehearsal)

8

*(pp)* *pp*

- des ob la -

per - fun-de - ba-mus la - cri-mas et gau - di-a ob la - - - ta.

per-fun-de - ba-mus la-cri-mas et gau-di-a ob - la - - - ta.

*(pp)*

e - - - - - tes

**A** Poco più mosso

15

ta La - cri-mas The-sau - ri ip -  
(tutti) La - cri-mas The-sau - ri ip - si i -  
Mu - ne - ra no - stra gra - ti - ae di - u ag - gre - ga - ban  
Mu - ne - ra no - stra gra - ti - ae di - u ag - gre - ga - ban - tur.

**A** Poco più mosso

si i - do - la - ta ne quan - do ve - ne - ren - tur.  
do - la ne quan - do ve - ne - ren - tur.  
- tur. La - cri - mas La - cri - mas La - cri - mas Gau - di - a ob -  
La - cri - mas Gau - di - a Gau - di - a Mu - ne - ra

26

si i - do - la - ta ne quan - do ve - ne - ren - tur.  
do - la ne quan - do ve - ne - ren - tur.  
- tur. La - cri - mas La - cri - mas La - cri - mas Gau - di - a ob -  
La - cri - mas Gau - di - a Gau - di - a Mu - ne - ra

34 S. 1 *f sostenuto* , (*f*)  
 Au - ra - tas spo - li - a, Au - ra - tas spo - - -

S. 2 *f sostenuto* 3 , (*f*) 3  
 Au - ra - tas tur - res spo - li - a, Au - ra - tas tur - res spo - li -

*f sostenuto* , (*f*) 3  
 tur - res spo - - - li a, tur - res spo - - -

*f* la - ta

*f* no - stra. *f sostenuto* e - vel - le

S. 1 *f*

43 3 *ff* *pp*  
 - - - li - a, spo - li - a, 7/8

5 3 *ff* Soprano solo, or a few voices *p*  
 a, spo - - - li - a, Per - ma - net nu - men do - mi 7/8

*f cresc.* 3 *ff* *pp*  
 - li a, tur - res spo - li - a, 7/8

*f cresc.* *ff* *pp*  
 e - vel - le pa - vi - men - tum 7/8

*ff* *pp*  
 pa - vi - men - tum e vel - le pa - vi - men - tum 7/8

**B** Tempo primo

S. solo, or a few voices

51

*p*

altri S. *pp possibile* Per - ma-net nu-men do-mi - ni.

ni. *pp possibile* In pa - ri - e - tes, la - pi - des, in sta - bu - la cae -

*pp possibile* In pa - ri - e - tes, la - pi - des, in sta - bu - la cae -

*pp possibile* In pa - ri - e - tes, la - pi - des, in sta - bu - la cae -

*pp possibile* In pa - ri - e - tes, la - pi - des, in sta - bu - la cae -

**B** Tempo primo

*pp possibile*

57

*(p)*

Per - ma-net nu-men do-mi - ni.

*poco più*

la - - - ta, per - fun - de -

*poco più*

la - - - ta, per - fun - de - ba -

*poco più*

la - - - ta, per - fun - de - ba - mus la -

*poco più*

la - - - ta, per - fun - de - ba - mus la - cri - mas

*poco più*

62

Per - ma-net nu-men do-mi - ni.

ba - mus la - cri - mas et gau - di - a ob - la -

mus la - cri - mas et gau - di - a ob - la -

cri - mas et gau - di - a ob - la -

et gau - di - a

*pp*

67

rall. . . . . A tempo

rall. . . . .

u - trum - ne est or - na - tum.

ta.

ta.

ta.

ob - la - ta.

rall. . . . . A tempo

rall. . . . .