

Hymn to the Guardian Angels



The text for "Hymn to the Guardian Angels" is based on the *Parvum Officium Sancti Angeli Custodes*, the Little Office of the Guardian Angels, dating from the seventeenth century: the Latin is taken from a 1741 edition of the *Caeleste Palmetum*.

The Text has been altered in only one aspect. Despite being accepted as one of the archangels by the Church for many centuries, Uriel was removed from the records in 745 as the Church became increasingly concerned with the prominence the public was placing upon angels. Why Uriel was expunged from the list of angels and not, for example, Michael, remains a matter of some debate. In this work, however, Uriel has been restored to his original place as one of the four Guardian Angels.

First Performed January 15th 2005, in Greyfriar's Kirk Edinburgh.

Angels and Art Songs: a programme of vocal works, including the world premier of "Hymn to the Guardian Angels"

Soprano - Julie Ogilvie

Contralto - Fiona MacPherson

Tenor - Peter Robinson

Baritone - Phil Carr

Piano - Dorothy Moncrieff



also featuring

Soprano – Jan Stuart

Tenor – Iain Hughes

Tenor – David Mitchinson

These performances were given to raise funds for the Consortium for the Street Children of Honduras.

Fringe 2006 performances held in St Marks ArtSpace, Castle Terrace.

Selected new works featuring "Hymn to the Guardian Angels", a setting for four voices of Parvum Officium Sancti Angeli Custodes; sung in Latin.

Soprano - Luisa Martin

Contralto - Gillian Haycock

Tenor - Peter Robinson

Baritone - Philip Carr

Piano - Margaret Donaldson



Other works featured:

Domine Deus – from Gloria

The Apple

Monday's Child – from Cradle to Grave,

Love Charm – from Carmina Gadelica

Caro Mio Ben

Let Not the Dragons

Recordare – from An AIDS Requiem

Remember

Gif ye Listen in the Dark

Laudamus Te – from Gloria

Not What I am

Quis Est Homo – from Stabat Mater

The Colours in the Wine

In Paradisum – from Stabat Mater



A Note on Angels

Angels: Beings which are somehow an embodiment of God's spirit and goodness have been seen and felt for many thousands of years. The first reference to angels in the Bible is in Genesis, where, after the expulsion of Adam and Eve, God places an angel with a fiery sword at the gates of the Garden of Eden to bar entrance and to protect the tree of knowledge. Angels brought messages to Old Testament prophets and to Mary and Joseph about Jesus' birth. Angels, however, are rarely given names; they are mostly referred to simply as "an Angel of the Lord". There are some angels which are more important than others; there are Archangels, there are Cherubim and Seraphim. There are countless tales of people visited by angels, strengthened in adversity, protected from danger. Many believe that we each have our own, personal, guardian angel.

Angels, however, have not always had good press. During the Eighth century there was widespread concern about the prominence the public was placing on angels. Some believed that the reverence given to angels was subverting the honour due to the Holy Family. In 744, there were several challenges to the authority of Bishop Boniface (later a saint) who administered large tracts of Germany. Two other bishops, Adelbert and Clement, were particularly troublesome. Although Boniface was himself under suspicion for 'superstitious writings' (ordered burned by the Roman Synod of 745, but secreted in pontifical archives), the claims of Adelbert and Clement could not be ignored. Clement, a Scotsman, rejected the canons of the Church about marriage and other disciplinary questions and maintained that Jesus, during his descent into Hell, had already set free all the souls confined there, even the lost and the unbaptised. Adelbert, who was a Gaul, claimed to have been honoured with supernatural favours from his birth. He drew the people away from the churches, gave them pieces of his nails and hair as holy relics, and told them that it was unnecessary for them to confess their sins to him because he already read their hearts. He claimed also to be the possessor of a letter from Jesus himself which had fallen from heaven, been picked up by the Archangel Michael and delivered to him. Needless to say, Clement and Adelbert were excommunicated, and the notoriety of their case undoubtedly added to concerns of the time that while the word of God was sacrosanct, angels were popping up far too often. Attempts were made to actively discourage discussion of angels—all references to angels (other than those specifically named in the Bible) were removed from services and liturgical writings. Although, for a time, Angels went 'underground', their popularity remained.

The Council of Trent (December 1545 to December 1563) was a council of bishops from across the world who met with the main intent of making a definitive determination of the doctrines of the Church. This was principally because it was coming under more and more frequent attack from what they saw as Protestant heresies. The original bone of contention between Catholic and Protestant was that Protestants believed that the Bible and Prayer gave mankind direct access to God, while the Catholic Church believed that some sort of intercession was required. Although a further object of the Council of Trent was to put into place a thorough reform of the inner life of the church by removing the numerous abuses which had developed within it (one of the reasons for 'protesting'), one of the biggest results of the Council of Trent was the discussions which led to the fixing of the books of the New Testament. It is probably because the Archangel Uriel* was not mentioned in the new 'fixed' New Testament that his name was dropped from the 'official' list of Archangels.

** In tonight's work Uriel has been restored to his original place as one of the four Guardian Angels.*

