

Allegri | l'Heretier | Palestrina | Pärt | Tavener | Tye

The Erebus Ensemble

Live at the Clifton Festival

hoxa

The Erebus Ensemble has, since its inception, enjoyed devising programmes that combine the musical treasures of the Renaissance period with sacred works by living composers.

One such composer whose work the group has explored in great detail is the Estonian, Arvo Pärt. His language suits small vocal ensembles which focus on excellence in tuning and blend; in this sense, Pärt is the perfect bedfellow of the likes of Tallis and Byrd, and his harmony-driven compositional style also provides a refreshing palate cleanser to the contrapuntal writing of his musical forebears. **The Deer's Cry** is a setting of the final part of St Patrick's Breastplate, a traditional Irish lorica attributed to the Patron Saint of Ireland. A lorica, of Latin derivation meaning shield or armour, would have been recited before the commencement of battle. The work opens with the lower voices prayerfully reciting 'Christ with me' in A minor, before the sopranos enter, outlining the same chord, to carry the lorica's text. The music builds subtly through minimalistic techniques before a rather un-Pärtian harmonic sequence for 'Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me' interrupts the status quo to add a deeply human touch to this prayer.

In the mid 16th century the Roman Catholic authorities convened the Council of Trent to discuss gentle reforms to the Church's policy across a number of areas including the style of sacred music. This Counter-Reformation required the music's texts to be decipherable at all times, and insisted on an approach that moved away from elaborate, florid writing that obscured the words. The legend behind the **Missa Papae Marcelli** celebrates the view that Palestrina saved church music by illustrating that beauty could still be achieved within this new style. Whether it became quickly known to church authorities or not remains a question for some debate, but what is clear is that this setting of the mass was, through the latter decades of the century, to grow in reputation and is now firmly established as the most famous of Palestrina's 104 settings of the mass ordinary.

The *Kyrie* and *Gloria* contain several examples of Palestrina's reliance on thoroughly worked out strands of imitative polyphony that see a melodic figure passed

across all the voice parts in turn. Imitative writing was by no means new, but the great composers of the previous generation used imitation between two or three voices and frequently departed from the melodic integrity of the motif if it suited their artistic purposes. Here we see counterpoint worked out to its fullest potential. The style is beautifully balanced with homophonic writing that often sees one upper voice take on the melody while the other voice parts provide harmonic support; we see examples here of a tune and accompaniment style of choral writing hitherto unexplored in the idiom. But for all the work's cleverness and ingenuity, this is far from an academic exercise. These melodies, typical of Palestrina, ascend and descend across the six-voice texture. They create musical cascades of the utmost beauty securing this work's status as one of the finest achievements in musical history.

As myths and legends go, the Pope Marcellus Mass might only be beaten by the story surrounding Gregorio Allegri's setting of psalm 51, **Miserere mei, Deus**. Written in or around 1638, the work was, by Papal decree, only allowed to be

performed within the walls of the Sistine Chapel; quite why this was the case is anyone's guess. One thing we are clear on is that the original composition was far from special. It was a run of the mill alternatim psalm setting using the falsobordone chant technique, of which there were many at that time. What made this work remarkable was not its original notes but its original performances. Skilled Vatican singers would improvise on this blank canvas of slow-moving chords and create a sound world so special that its reputation reached the far-flung corners of Europe. A legend began to build around the work that now includes tales of the young Mozart transcribing it by ear on one hearing (not actually as impressive as it sounds given that the slow moving chordal theme is repeated several times across the ten minute performance) and transcription errors involving modulations that eventually gave rise to our now celebrated 'top C' version. It is highly unlikely Allegri had conceived a note of that tessitura in his original work, but the improvised elaborations of the singers may well have taken them near it. Despite this, today's audiences simply demand a top C –

in every verse. The Erebus Ensemble, like many of its ilk, have chosen to adopt a halfway house that gives audiences their cherished high C but also gives a nod to the abbellimenti style of improvisation that would have carried this work through the early stages of its legend.

John Sheppard is probably the composer that The Erebus Ensemble has performed most widely to date, and while performance trends have moved away from David Wulstan's theory of 'up a minor third' pitch it is a sound world that the group has continued to explore and enjoy. It remembers fondly renditions of Reges Tharsis and Verbum Caro, among other Latin-texted motets, with the group's founding sopranos Molly Alexander and Daisy Walford soaring frequently to high B flat for some of the most thrilling cadences in the entire Renaissance repertory. All that having been said, the motet on this disc, *Libera nos, salve nos*, is sung at the lower pitch, giving a resonant 'earthiness' to this polyphonic masterpiece. It opens with an incipit in the bass, which subsequently turns into the slow moving cantus firmus. Above this

foundation the other voices weave some of the finest counterpoint of the Tudor period, each vocal part coming to the forefront of the texture in turn, creating a wonderful ebb and flow that renders one totally awestruck from the very first bars.

Christopher Tye was born in the first decade of the sixteenth century and died in 1573, during the reign of Elizabeth I. Consequently, he served all the Tudor monarchs, whose varying religious persuasion was to profoundly affect his compositional development throughout the period. Tye's undoubted masterpiece is the six-voice *Missa Euge Bone*, probably written during the reign of Queen Mary on account of its thematic unity with the motet *Quaesumus omnipotens et misericors Deus* written at the end of Edward's reign. The title of the mass is somewhat curious given that there is no musical reference to the antiphon of the same name, nor is there any known polyphonic material relating to 'Euge serve bone' that might serve as a model for the setting. Tye's close links with the Protestant Bishop of Ely, Richard Cox, are well documented and as a result of this

relationship it has been asserted that Tye's sympathies rested squarely with the Protestant cause. If this was true then maybe the title 'Well done, good servant' was some sort of sarcastic pat on the back to himself for adhering to the Catholic demands of the day. Or, more likely, there's another reason altogether – theories welcome – we may never know the truth. One thing that is certain is that each movement of this glorious setting is a precious gem in the crown of a truly majestic composer whose place in the canon is still greatly overshadowed by his direct contemporary Thomas Tallis.

The *Sanctus* opens with resolute homophony, a change of chord for each syllable of the three declamations of the word Sanctus. Here follows two totally contrasting sections, the first for the upper voices in divisi and the second for the tenor and bass parts. The juxtaposition of the celestial counterpoint in the sopranos and altos with the earthy resonance of the lower voices is a masterful idea that recalls the works of Taverner and the earlier Eton Choirbook composers but through a High Renaissance approach

that gives clarity to the text and the counterpoint.

The shape of liturgies may have changed significantly over the intervening centuries, but we have a clear hint in the *Missa Euge Bone* that the *Benedictus* was written to immediately follow the singing of the Sanctus. The cadence after the Osanna is most peculiar and immediately recognisable as Tye with a glorious interrupted cadence that longs for the resolution of the Benedictus. The subsequent passage is one of exquisite beauty with slow and stately polyphonic entries descending from the uppermost voice to the lowest and culminating in a thrilling false relation before the energetic return of the Osanna.

The structure of the *Agnus Dei* is a bit of puzzle because there are four invocations instead of the usual three: Agnus I for all voices; Agnus II for lower voices, with the trebles silent; Agnus III for high voices divided into four parts, with tenors as the lowest line; and Agnus IV, with the *Dona Nobis Pacem*, for all voices again. The section is a perfect summation of Tye's genius with perfect canons (barely

noticeable in the midst of such melodic beauty), ostinato effects and interrupted cadences not bettered before or since. The succinctness of the last Agnus makes for a stunning effect, and brings to a close this truly extraordinary work.

Jean L'Heritier, a supposed pupil of Josquin des Prez, was born in the Pas de Calais region around 1480, and led a highly successful career across northern Italy before a return to France in the late 1520s. He wrote over fifty motets and of those which have survived **Surrexit pastor bonus** has become his best known and most loved. It was discovered in a choirbook for the Julian Choir of the Vatican by the late, great, David Trendell, former Director of Music at King's College London. The motet provides a reflective look at the resurrection of Christ, not bombastic or even joyful, but rooted in the minor mode with plenteous examples of close harmony and dense vocal textures so archetypal of the Franco-Flemish style.

Arvo Pärt's setting of the **Magnificat**, the canticle of Mary, is the perfect illustration of the composer's self-invented Tintinnabuli style. The technique,

so called because of its soundworld of struck bells, is combined here with a melody deeply influenced by Gregorian chant. The latter moves slowly and linearly, whilst the tintinnabuli inspired parts move across the tones of the tonic triad, creating an oscillating texture that provides beautiful soft dissonances whilst maintaining harmonic stability throughout. There are two principal vocal textures at play throughout the setting. The first of these is written for two voices, one of which clings meditatively to a repeated note whilst the other departs melodically, creating a stunning discantus; and the second, scored tutti, provides striking contrast with sonorous chordal writing.

Sir John Tavener's **The Lamb** is a miniature of great beauty. It takes the text from William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience (1789), but despite its non-biblical source has become a staple of the sacred music canon, sung particularly during the Christmas season owing to its subject matter of new birth. Musically, it recalls the chant and discantus style of the medieval period but with the harmonic language of the twentieth century.

Through deft use of inversion Tavener creates an almost uncomfortable atmosphere of dissonance in the chant-like sections before a richly spaced E minor harmonisation of the melody in augmentation ensues.

The Lord's Prayer, in this setting also by Tavener, is distinguished by the use of suspension. The voices, always together, weave a tapestry of tone under the simple top line. The profundity of the familiar words is mirrored by this simplicity. You can hear the underlying search for meaning and resolution. This search is ended when the texture distills to a unison Amen.

With this calm benediction we leave this compilation of live recordings and look forward to the next chapter for Erebus and the Festival.

Tom Williams, 2020

Although all of these live recordings were made at Clifton Cathedral during the Clifton Festival, you will notice differences between them. A few are acoustically different since the Sanctuary behind the performance space was filled with scaffold during renovation for one year. Additionally, at the time of recording these concerts, an album wasn't envisaged so different recording techniques were used to suit the repertoire of each concert. Audience noise has been kept to a minimum, but some may intrude. All recordings are direct to stereo or from surround sources. We hope you enjoy them.

RJG (Hoxa)

The Deer's Cry

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in me, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me,
Christ with me.

Kyrie *from* Missa Papae Marcelli

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.*

Gloria *from* Missa Papae Marcelli

Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.
Laudamus te,
benedicimus te,
adoramus te,
glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi propter magnam
gloriam tuam,
Domine Deus, Rex cælestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;
qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

*Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive
our prayer.
You are seated at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy on us.*

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus
Dominus, tu solus Altissimus,
Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu:
in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Libera nos I

Libera nos, salva nos, justifica nos,
O beata Trinitas

*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone
are the Lord, you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen*

Free us, save us, defend us, O blessed Trinity.

Sanctus *from* Missa Euge Bona

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus
Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, Heaven and
earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the
highest.*

Benedictus *from* Missa Euge Bone

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Blessed is he who comes in the name
of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

Agnus Dei *from* Missa Euge Bone

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.*

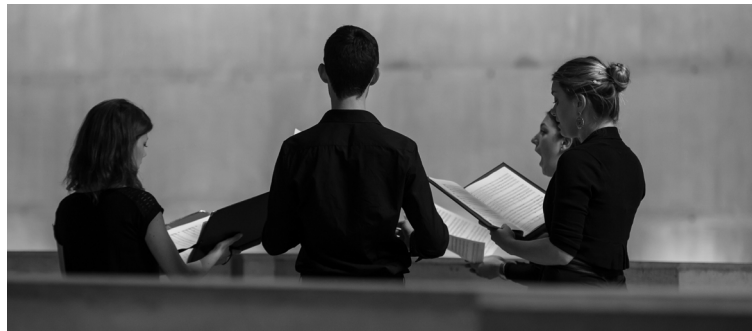
Miserere mei, Deus

Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam
misericordiam tuam; et secundum
multitudinem miserationum tuarum,
dele iniquitatem meam.
Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea:
et a peccato meo munda me.
Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco,
et peccatum meum contra me est semper.
Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci;
ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas
cum judicaris.
Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum:
et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.
Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti; incerta et
occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.
Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor;
lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.
Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam:
et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.
Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis,
et omnes iniquitates meas dele.
Cor mundum crea in me, Deus, et spiritum
rectum innova in visceribus meis.
Ne projicias me a facie tua, et spiritum
sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.
Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui,
et spiritu principali confirma me.
Docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad
te convertentur.

*Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great
goodness: according to the multitude of thy
mercies do away mine offences.
Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness:
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever
before me.
Against thee only have I sinned, and done
this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be
justified in thy saying, and clear when thou
art judged.
Behold, I was shapen in wickedness:
and in sin hath my mother conceived me.
But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts:
and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.
Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall
be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be
whiter than snow.
Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness:
that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
Turn thy face from my sins: and put out all
my misdeeds.
Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew
a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence:
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
O give me the comfort of thy help again:
and stablish me with thy free Spirit.
Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked:
and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus
salutis meae, et exsultabit lingua mea
justitiam tuam.
Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum
annuntiabit laudem tuam.
Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem
utique; holocaustis non delectaberis.
Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus;
cor contritum et humiliatum,
Deus, non despicies.
Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua
Sion, ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.
Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiae,
oblationes et holocausta; tunc imponent
super altare tuum vitulos.

*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou
that art the God of my health: and my tongue
shall sing of thy righteousness.
Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord:
and my mouth shall shew thy praise.
For thou desirest no sacrifice, else would
I give it thee: but thou delightest not in
burnt-offerings.
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit:
a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou
not despise.
O be favourable and gracious unto Sion:
build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice
of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and
oblations: then shall they offer young bullocks
upon thine altar.*



Surrexit pastor bonus

Surrexit pastor bonus
ui animam suam posuit pro ovibus suis,
et pro grege suo mori dignatus est, alleluia,
et enim pascha nostrum immolatus est
Christus. Alleluia.
Et stetit in medio discipulorum suorum
et dixit: pax vobis.
Gavisi sunt discipuli viso Domino, Alleluia.

Magnificat

Magnificat anima mea Dominum
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent
omnes generationes
quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est
et sanctum nomen eius
et misericordia eius in progenies et
progenies timentibus eum
fecit potentiam in brachio suo dispersit
superbos mente cordis sui
deposuit potentes de sede et
exaltavit humiles
esurientes implevit bonis et divites
dimisit inanes
suscepit Israel puerum suum
memorari misericordiae
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

*The good shepherd has arisen,
who laid down his life for his sheep,
and for his flock deigned to die, alleluia,
And for our Passover was sacrificed for us:
Christ. Alleluia.
And stood in the midst of his disciples and
said: Peace be with you.
The disciples were glad when they saw the
Lord. Alleluia.*

*My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages
will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.
My soul glorifies the Lord.*

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, & bid thee feed By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight, Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice, Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee, Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
He is called by thy name, For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild; He became a little child.
I, a child, & thou a lamb, We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee! Little Lamb, God bless thee!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
Amen.



The Erebus Ensemble

The Erebus Ensemble was formed in 2012 and has in the intervening period gained a fine reputation for the clarity and power of its performances. It has given over forty concerts across the UK and Europe, and has appeared on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, and BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. The group regularly performs at the Spitalfields Festival and the Clifton International Festival of Music, and has given concerts at the festivals of Budleigh Salterton, Little Missenden and Lausanne (Switzerland), and Bath's Bachfest.

The group was a prize winner in the inaugural London International A Cappella Choir Competition at St John's, Smith Square and was for three years the Ensemble-in-Residence at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre, performing several times at the Bristol Proms. In 2015 Erebus performed for the last night of the proms, premiering six forty-part commissions by composers including Nick Lloyd Webber, Murray Gold, David Bednall and Josephine Stephenson, as well as performing the great **Spem in alium** by Thomas Tallis.

Tom Williams

Tom Williams is a conductor, singer and educator, with a particular interest in the music of the Renaissance period.

He read music at the University of Bristol and continued to postgraduate level, researching the Magnificat settings of the Franco-Flemish composer, Nicolas

The Erebus Ensemble has become known for its versatility and enthusiasm for multi-discipline performances, and has built a close relationship with Harry Bicket and the English Concert. It has collaborated with the orchestra and theatre director Tom Morris on staged productions of Handel's **Messiah** and Purcell's **Dido and Aeneas**, which have toured the UK and Europe, and recently performed Bach's **Mass in B minor**, under Bicket, for BBC Radio 3.

Gombert. He conducted the University's celebrated vocal ensemble, The University Singers, during his time at Bristol, and founded the chamber choir,

The Fitzhardinge Consort. He was a bass lay clerk at Bristol Cathedral between 2009 and 2013. Tom moved to London in 2013 to pursue a freelance conducting career but maintains a very close relationship with the South West. In October 2012 he formed the Erebus Ensemble there and a year later established the Clifton International Festival of Music with Richard Jeffrey-Gray. He continues to act as the festival's Artistic Director and has attracted some of the biggest names in classical music to perform at the annual event; these include The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, I Fagiolini, The Ayoub Sisters, Figo Baroque, Dame Gillian Weir and Crispian Steele-Perkins.

He is currently Assistant Director of Music at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, where he is responsible for conducting the choir at the Sunday liturgies and for the Church's major festivals. He also acts as a mentor for the Choral Scholars at St Martin's and works with them in services, workshops and concerts throughout the year.

He has conducted religious broadcasts and concert performances for the BBC, Classic FM and French Radio, and given workshops across the UK and in France and Holland. Tom is passionate about multi-discipline

performance and has curated and directed programmes for the Royal Collection of Leonardo Da Vinci sketches for the Bristol Museum and Gallery (with The Fitzhardinge Consort), and the Angel Trail series at the National Gallery (with the Choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields). He has collaborated with the celebrated theatre director, Tom Morris, on many occasions and has staged Purcell's **Dido and Aeneas** and Handel's **Messiah** with Morris, conductor Harry Bicket and the English Concert in recent years. He recently collaborated on a revision of the **Messiah** production, which ran for four performances at the Bristol Old Vic, toured to Manchester's Bridgewater Hall and Cambridgeshire's Saffron Hall, and was shown in cinemas nationwide.

When not waving his arms, Tom is a keen speaker on music and has given lectures on subjects ranging from the use of allegory in the Eton Choirbook collection to the Tintinnabuli style of Arvo Pärt. Outside of music, he is passionate about Welsh Rugby and English Cricket, enjoys reading theology and listening to opera, and balances a great love for tea and real ale (at the appropriate ends of the day).

1	The Deer's Cry	Pärt (b1935)	04:38
2	Kyrie <i>from</i> Missa Papae Marcelli	Palestrina (1525-1594)	04:10
3	Gloria <i>from</i> Missa Papae Marcelli	Palestrina	05:15
4	Libera Nos I	Sheppard (c1515-1558)	03:24
5	Sanctus <i>from</i> Missa Euge Bone	Tye (c1505-1573)	03:41
6	Benedictus <i>from</i> Missa Euge Bone	Tye	02:35
7	Agnus Dei <i>from</i> Missa Euge Bone	Tye	04:42
8	Miserere mei	Allegri (1582-1652)	12:06
9	Surrexit pastor bonus	l'Heritier (1480-1551)	05:53
10	Magnificat	Pärt	07:40
11	The Lamb	Tavener (1944-2013)	03:43
12	The Lord's Prayer	Tavener	03:23
	Total time		01:01:53

hoxa

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

MCPS

DDD

Design:
Lesley Lee

All rights of the producer and owner of the work reproduced reserved.
Unauthorised copying, hiring, lending, renting, public performance and broadcasting of this
product prohibited. HS200516 Produced by Richard Jeffrey-Gray
©© copyright Hoxa, 2020 www.hoxa.net sound@hoxa.net