

Sub tuum praesidium

Edited by Jason Smart

John Taverner (c.1495-1545)

Treble [Missing]

Mean

Countertenor

Tenor [Missing]

Bass

Sub tu - um prae - si - di - um

Sub tu - um prae -

Sub

Sub tu - - um prae - -

Sub tu - um

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of a musical score for five voices: Treble, Mean, Countertenor, Tenor, and Bass. The Treble and Tenor parts are marked as '[Missing]'. The other parts have musical notation with lyrics. The lyrics for the first system are: Treble: 'Sub tu - um prae - si - di - um'; Mean: 'Sub tu - um prae -'; Countertenor: 'Sub'; Tenor: 'Sub tu - - um prae - -'; Bass: 'Sub tu - um'. The music is in 4/4 time and features a variety of note values including quarter, eighth, and half notes, with some rests.

3

con - fu - gi - mus,

- si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus, san - - -

tu - um prae - si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus, san -

- si - di - um con - fu - - - gi - - -

prae - si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus,

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, starting with a measure rest (3). The lyrics for the second system are: Treble: 'con - fu - gi - mus,'; Mean: '- si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus, san - - -'; Countertenor: 'tu - um prae - si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus, san -'; Tenor: '- si - di - um con - fu - - - gi - - -'; Bass: 'prae - si - di - um con - fu - gi - mus,'. The musical notation continues with various note values and rests, maintaining the 4/4 time signature.

7

san - cta De - i ge - ni -
 - - - - - cta De - i ge - ni -
 - - - - - cta De - i
 mus, san - cta De - i
 san - cta De - i ge - ni - trix:

11

- trix: no - stras
 - trix: no - stras
 ge - ni - trix: no - stras de - pre-ca - ti - o -
 ge - ni - trix: no - stras de - pre -
 no - stras

15

de - pre - ca - ti - o - nes
 de - pre-ca - ti - o - nes
 - - - - - nes ne de - spi - ci - as
 - ca - ti - o - nes ne de - spi - ci - as in ne -
 de - pre-ca - ti - o - nes ne de - spi-ci-as in ne - ces-si -

Critical Commentary

Translation

We flee into your protection, O holy mother of God: despise not the prayers we offer in our need, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever-blessed Virgin.

A Note about the Music

The text of *Sub tuum praesidium* was not widely used in pre-reformation England. One looks for it in vain in the service books of the Use of Sarum, the liturgy observed throughout most of the realm. Nor does one expect to find it in the books of hours of Sarum Use. It is also absent from the Use of Hereford. In the Use of York, however, it was sung as the Nunc dimittis antiphon at Compline on the Feast of the Assumption.¹ Taverner's is the only known setting by an English composer. The plainsong melody that he incorporated as a cantus firmus differs considerably from the chant found in the late fifteenth-century York Antiphonal now held in the archives of Arundel Castle, but, less expectedly, it is identical in every respect to that found in a thirteenth-century French manuscript.

Since the psalm and canticle antiphons of the office were not normally sung in polyphony in their ritual position we can be confident that Taverner's work was composed for use as an extra-liturgical votive antiphon to the Virgin. The York connection may date it to the period 1525–1530 when he was *informator choristarum* of Cardinal College, Oxford (now Christ Church). The college's founder, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, held several ecclesiastical positions in plurality, one of which was the Archbishopric of York. His statutes for Cardinal College required the singing each evening of a votive antiphon of St William of York (one of Wolsey's predecessors as archbishop). Taverner's antiphon might also owe its existence to this affinity. A further consideration is that the partbooks in which it uniquely survives are considered to have been compiled largely from a repertoire sourced in Oxford.²

After the first double bar, Taverner halves the note values of the cantus firmus. This treatment is unusual, but it is also found in the settings of *Christus resurgens* by John Redford, Christopher Tye and William Parsons.

Editorial Conventions

The nomenclature of the voice parts follows the Tudor convention.

The original clef, mensuration symbol and first note of each part are shown on the prefatory staves at the start of the piece.

Editorial accidentals are placed above the notes concerned and remain operative throughout the bar.

Ligatures are denoted by the sign \ulcorner .

Missing voices parts have been reconstructed editorially in small notation.

Spelling of the text has been modernised.

Sources

Cambridge, Peterhouse, Perne Library MSS 31, 32, 40, 41 (c.1540).

40	—	—	
41	(M)	f.102	in index: <i>Tauernor</i> at end: <i>Tauernor</i>
31	(Ct)	f.122 ^v	in index: <i>Tauernor</i> at end: <i>Tauernor</i>
32	(B)	f.95	in index: <i>Tauernor</i> at end: <i>Tauernor</i>

A number of pages have been lost from the Treble book; these included Taverner's setting. The Tenor partbook from the set is also lost.

The cantus firmus in the Tenor part has been supplied editorially from London, British Library Add. MS 23935, f.344^v, a thirteenth-century Dominican service book from Paris.

Notes on the Readings of the Sources

11 Bass *-stras* below D, (12) *deprecatio*- undivided below G-rest-GFED (not in 15-16)

19–20 Bass *necessitati*- all one note earlier

28–29 Mean *benedicta* undivided, final syllable perhaps intended for minim C

¹ Stephen Lawley (ed.), *Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesie Eboracensis*, 2 vols., Surtees Society, lxxi & lxxv (Durham, London & Edinburgh, 1880 & 1883), ii, col.478.

² Nick Sandon, 'The Henrician Partbooks at Peterhouse, Cambridge', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 103 (1976–77), pp.106–140.