



**Thomas Tallis Society Choir**  
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



# CELEBRATIONS & COMMEMORATIONS

A SEQUENCE OF CHORAL LAMENTS, TRIBUTES &  
MEMORIALS FOR SPECIFIC OCCASIONS

Whether during the height of Elizabeth I's reign, or in our own time, the very human need to celebrate and commemorate remains strong. Our programme explores the highways and byways of British music, ranging from John Bennet (c1575- after 1614) to Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012) and beyond, with works written for royal occasions jostling with more private celebrations, including the first birth in a generation on the remote Orkney island of Hoy, a wedding of a composer's friend, and a heart-felt commemoration of a composer's mentor.

## THE HERITAGE OF THOMAS MORLEY

Although not a note of his music is included in tonight's concert, it seems appropriate to commemorate\* and celebrate Thomas Morley. Widely known as the composer who popularised the madrigal in Tudor England, one of Morley's last and arguably most seminal achievements was to publish madrigals written specially by 23 composers in honour of Queen Elizabeth I: this appeared in 1601 as *The Triumphs of Oriana*. As detailed in the programme inside, Morley's collection inspired two subsequent collections of short choral works - *A Garland for the Queen*, and *A Garland for Linda*. All three collections are represented in tonight's concert, which more generally includes both public and personal responses by major British composers to landmark occasions, whether a coronation, a wedding, the untimely death of a public figure, or the loss of an influential colleague. Sometimes both public and personal intertwine to powerful effect, most notably in the work that is the culmination of this programme, Herbert Howells's *Take him, Earth, for cherishing*.

\*As indeed we do, by including Thomas Weelkes's *Death hath deprived me*, written to commemorate Morley following his death in 1602.

**O clap your hands together**

**Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625)**

Born to a musical family in Oxford, Orlando Gibbons was taken by his family to Cambridge in about 1590. The family had a particularly strong connection with King's College in that city, and Orlando was a chorister there from 1596, becoming a student at the same college. In about 1603 he moved to London and became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. Awarded a Bachelor of Music of Cambridge in 1606, Gibbons became Doctor of Music at Oxford in 1622. Gibbons's setting of Psalm 47, '*O clap your hands together*', was apparently first performed on that occasion, though several scholars suggest that this was written not for himself but for his friend William Heyther, who had just instituted the Chair of Music at Oxford, and wished to pass the anthem off as his own work (with Gibbons's cooperation) to qualify himself as a Doctor of Music.

Gibbons's setting for double choir (that is, for two choirs of four voices each) makes masterful use of those forces with many instances of 'word painting', whether its vigorous opening which illustrates the physical action described, or the phrase 'sing praises' tossed between the two choirs.

**Death hath deprived me – A Remembrance of my Friend Thomas Morley**

**Thomas Weelkes (1576–1623)**

As well as creating *The Triumphs of Oriana* (see *The Heritage of Thomas Morley* above), Thomas Morley composed such celebrated madrigals as '*My bonny lass she smileth*' and '*Now is the month of Maying*', He was also, as described by Percy M Young in his monumental *A History of British Music*, 'an impeccable and often gravely impressive composer of church music'. Born in Norwich, possibly c1557, Morley was organist of St Paul's Cathedral (the building eventually destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666) before he joined the Chapel Royal in 1592. He served there for ten years before resigning, it seems, due to ill health; he died the following year in 1602.

Though Weelkes appears not to have been a full Gentleman of the Chapel Royal as he described himself on the title page of one of his published books of madrigals, he certainly knew Morley, most probably as a Gentleman Extraordinary: that is, as a musician or singer who had been asked to temporarily fill a place until a permanent member was appointed. Weelkes was in his mid-twenties when Morley died, and he paid tribute by composing *A Remembrance of my Friend Thomas Morley*, an anthem in madrigal form better known as '*Death hath deprived me*'. The music has a sincere tenderness, as well as striking moments of word painting: note how the opening section the choir gradually descends in its tessitura to a low chord at the word 'grave'; then, following this, the more hectic quality of the setting of the words 'until the world shall end', a point illustrated as the progression abruptly stops.

**Here rolls the sea (2019)**

**Roderick Williams (b1965)**

As well as being one of today's leading baritones, Roderick Williams is a respected composer in his own right. He has written several choral works including two specifically for the Thomas Tallis Society: '*O Saviour of the World*', to be performed later this evening, and '*Here rolls the sea*', originally premiered on 16 June 2019.

'*Here Rolls the Sea*' was commissioned in memory of Hilmary Quarmby, a long-term supporter of the Thomas Tallis Society, who died suddenly in 2018. It sets words by the Bengali writer and artist Rabindranath Tagore, known to be a favourite of Hilmary's since she first saw the words engraved on the entrance to Dartington Hall (the founder of Dartington having had strong links with Tagore).

Tagore spent much time living by the sea, and wrote evocatively and extensively of its nature and motion. The text set by this choral work, though, is more metaphysical in character; Williams captures its quality by evoking the ebbing of the sea and also its ever present yet subtly changing character to suggest 'the everlasting present'.

### How are the mighty fall'n

Robert Ramsey (1590s–1644)

When King James VI of Scotland came to London to become King James I of England, he was followed by several of his musicians including the Scottish-born Robert Ramsey. '*How are the mighty fall'n*', setting the celebrated text from the *Book of Samuel* in which David mourns for his friend Jonathan, was almost certainly composed to commemorate the death of the 18-year-old Prince of Wales, Henry, who had died in 1612 of typhoid fever.

Apparently a slightly younger contemporary of Orlando Gibbons, Ramsey in this anthem, a relatively early work of his, makes striking use of the archaic 'false relation', albeit to very modern expressive purpose. This is first heard in the expressive phrase 'O Jonathan', where the sopranos' A sharp clashes with the altos' A natural.

### A Good-night (1999)

Richard Rodney Bennett (1936–2012)

A distinguished composer for both the concert hall and for film – including *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* – Richard Rodney Bennett was also one of several musicians who collaborated with Paul McCartney in realising the rock musician's essays in classical-style music. While supervising the orchestration of McCartney's large-scale choral work *Standing Stone*, Bennett became friends with Linda McCartney, bonding with her over their shared enthusiasm for cooking. After Linda's death from cancer, Bennett was approached to compose a short choral work for *A Garland for Linda* (the title deliberately recalling *A Garland for the Queen*), a choral anthology created to spearhead The Garland Appeal to raise money for two UK cancer charities.

Of the nine contributing composers, Bennett was one of four, including Paul McCartney, who actually knew Linda. As he himself said, 'I felt at ease with Linda who was always warm and spontaneous. I wanted my work to be a gentle goodbye to a remarkable woman.' The quiet, understated character of *A Good-night*, setting a text by the 17th-century writer Francis Quarles, reflects his tender affection for her, as well as suggesting the disconcerting effect of bereavement in its unexpected key changes and subtle use of dissonance.

### Ye sacred muses (c1585)

William Byrd (1543–1623)

One of the most distinguished Catholic composers in Tudor England, William Byrd began his career as organist in Lincoln Cathedral before he was appointed joint organist at the Chapel Royal in February 1572 alongside Thomas Tallis. Byrd and Tallis became great friends, and in 1587 they jointly published a collection of motets, *Cantiones sacrae*, dedicated to Elizabeth I.

Tallis's death in 1585 was a considerable emotional blow to the younger composer: 'Tallis is dead and music dies' Byrd wrote at the time. Yet he responded with a lament of grave beauty and restraint. Originally written for four viols and solo voice – just the highest of the five parts is provided with a text in the original source – the contrapuntal character of all five parts means they can be easily distributed to five vocal parts.

## Suscipe quaeso

Thomas Tallis (c1505–1585)

Queen Mary, who reigned 1553-58, has traditionally been given a bad press by the English, famously being given the epithet 'Bloody Mary'. Yet her restoration of the Catholic religion and its rites prompted a renaissance of sumptuous choral music that had been repressed under the previous reign of Edward VI. Among the works created in this resurgence were two settings for seven-voiced choir by Thomas Tallis: one of a Mass known as *Puer natus est nobis*; the other his motet *Suscipe quaeso*, probably written for the ceremony in which Cardinal Pole absolved England from schism in November 1554. Notice how Tallis gives particular emphasis to key phrases and words in the text, such as at each appearance of 'peccavi' ('I have sinned') sung in solidly homophonic style rather than in independently voiced counterpoint.

*Receive, I beseech, O Lord, the voice of one who confesses.  
I do not defend my misdeeds: I have sinned. O God, have mercy on me.  
By thy grace blot out my sins.  
For if thou shalt remember iniquities, who could endure it?  
For who is so righteous that he dare say that he is without sin?  
For none is pure in thy sight.*

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\* \* \* INTERVAL \* \* \*

(Drinks served in the Church Hall directly opposite the church)

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## O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth

William Byrd (1543–1623)

Despite Queen Mary's marriage to Philip II of Spain, she failed to produce a male heir and her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth, succeeded her to the throne. Whatever his personal feelings as a devout Catholic, William Byrd played his part in celebrating the new monarch. '*O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth*' was written either just before he joined the Chapel Royal in 1572, or soon after he had done so – either way, clearly he wished to ingratiate himself with Elizabeth. To do so, he adapted the text from Psalm 21 to make it refer to Elizabeth rather than King David, setting it for six voiced choir in a relatively sober manner in approved Protestant style.

The ploy evidently worked, for he was employed by the Chapel for the rest of his life, and was regularly asked by Elizabeth to compose specific pieces, on occasion setting texts she herself had penned. The anthem itself outlived Byrd, being performed regularly in the court of every succeeding monarch, with the name cited in the anthem appropriately changed.

## All creatures now

John Bennet (c1575–after 1614)

Very little indeed is known about John Bennet, who is known principally through the excellent madrigals he composed and had published in his lifetime. Among these is '*All creatures now*', published in *The Triumphs of Oriana* in honour of Elizabeth I. Extremely effectively written, much of it suggests the brilliance of Venetian fanfares perhaps written by a near contemporary Italian such as Gabrieli or Monteverdi.

## The Hills

John Ireland (1879–1962)

Just over 350 years later, *Triumphs* inspired another collection of part-songs, *A Garland for the Queen*, this time celebrating the coronation in 1953 of Elizabeth II. The Arts Council of Great Britain commissioned ten leading British composers – including Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax,

Gerald Finzi and John Ireland – to compose part-songs in the spirit of the earlier collection. Ireland responded with this short, simple yet touching setting of a poem by James Kirkup. This speaks of the constancy of the hills, ‘the earth’s enduring thrones’ – a metaphor for the bedrock of the British monarchy.

### **O Saviour of the World (2015)**

**Roderick Williams (b1965)**

Composed to mark the 50th anniversary of the Thomas Tallis Society, ‘*O Saviour of the World*’ appropriately takes inspiration from Tallis’s ‘*Salvator Mundi*’. The choir first performed Roderick Williams’s piece, alongside the Tallis work, here at St Alfege Church on 17 October 2015. One does not need to hear the works side by side, though, to hear how Tallis’s polyphonic style informs Williams’s piece; yet, as the composer has written, it soon shifts ‘into a more contemporary and impassioned plea for salvation’. Part of the piece’s disquieting quality is from the almost ever-present diabolus in musica – the augmented fourth – and the closely related flattened second degree of the scale, both of which challenge the choir to maintain its tuning and thereby creates the piece’s fraught atmosphere.

### **Be strong and of a good courage (1603)**

**Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656)**

Born in St Davids in Pembrokeshire, Thomas Tomkins began his musical career as a chorister at the Cathedral. He left St Davids with his family when in his early twenties, and became organist at Worcester Cathedral, then became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. He composed *Be strong and of a good courage* for the coronation of James I, which took place on 25 July 1603.

The text, a prayer for the monarch regularly used in its Latin form *Confortare et esto vir* during medieval coronations, is roughly based on texts from *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua*. Tomkins’ setting has survived to our time through its inclusion in a collection of his music, *Musica Deo Sacra*, published in 1668 after his death under the not very careful supervision of his son, Nathaniel. Fortunately that same score’s organ reduction has made a coherent reconstruction of the music possible – the edition used tonight is by the distinguished editor and choirmaster Bernard Rose. Hearing this splendid anthem, one may note the rhythmic quickening (in more than one sense) and the rising phrases which seem to appropriately suggest growing confidence.

### **Set me as a seal (1938)**

**William Walton (1902–1983)**

Like Tomkins, Walton began his musical career as a chorister – at Christ Church, Oxford. By his own account, he took up composing to make himself ‘interesting’. to avoid having to return to his home town in Oldham once his voice had broken. His career took off under the patronage of Sacheverell Sitwell, whom he met while a student at Oxford, and his siblings Osbert and Edith: setting Edith Sitwell’s brilliant poetry in the ‘entertainment’ *Façade* established him as the most talented rising English composer of his generation.

By his thirties, Walton was no stranger to love, being involved in a torrid and increasingly fraught affair with Baroness Imma von Doernberg, followed by a relationship with Alice Wimborne, wife of Viscount Wimborne and a good 22 years older than Walton. Two years into his relationship with Alice, he composed *Set me as a seal* as a present for her son, Ivor Guest – who was in fact very close to Walton’s own age – on the occasion of his wedding on St Cecilia’s Day, 22 November 1938, to Mabel Fox-Strangeways. Setting a selection of lines from the eighth chapter of *Song of Songs*, Walton sets them in a restrained yet warmly assured manner with bitter-sweet harmonies unmistakably his own.

## Lullabye for Lucy (1981)

Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016)

Once widely known for such avant garde works as *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, and for his scoring of films such as Ken Russell's *The Devils*, Peter Maxwell Davies is now quite widely known and loved for his piano piece *Farewell to Stromness*. In fact Maxwell Davies always had a desire, like Benjamin Britten, to write music that was 'useful' – whether to children or the wider community. In his latter years he made his home in the remote Orkney island of Hoy. It was there that he composed *Farewell to Stromness* in 1980, followed by *Lullabye for Lucy*. As Maxwell Davies himself explained: 'In setting George Mackay Brown's acrostic lines for the birth of Lucy Rendall (the first child born in Rackwick, Hoy, for 32 years) I set myself the uncharacteristic problem of banishing all "black" notes – that is, the work uses only the "white" notes on the piano – a symbolic "conceit" I had not tried before. The music has the gentle rocking rhythm suitable for its purpose, and I enjoyed writing the tune so much I repeated all of the text in order to hear it twice.'

## Take him, earth, for cherishing (1964)

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

The assassination of the much-loved President John F Kennedy in 1963 was a trauma for both Americans and the world at large. The English composer Herbert Howells, known for his large-scale choral work *Hymnus Paradisi*, was subsequently invited to compose an a cappella work for a memorial service to be held in Washington. With the choice of text left to the composer, Howells turned to a poem by Prudentius (348–413) which had long served him as a 'safe refuge' since 1935, when he himself had been grieving over the sudden death of his own son, Michael, from polio. Howells had made an earlier attempt to set the text in its original medieval Latin form, but had broken off, unable to get past the creative block caused by Michael's death. Now, having composed his long-gestated memorial to his son, *Hymnus Paradisi*, which he completed in 1950, he felt able to return the Prudentius, albeit via what he described as 'Helen Waddell's faultless translation'.

Howells begins his setting in relative calm, much of the music based on a pentatonic scale. But then at the words 'Guard him well, the dead I give thee' the choral writing becomes anguished, and having been in four parts now has the sopranos and sometimes the tenors split into two parts to make up to six independent parts, enriching the texture. The anguish continues with 'Comes the hour', set to angular part-writing and use of fraught dissonance, until, with 'Body of a man', we enter the bitter-sweet world of *Hymnus Paradisi*: one moment consoling, then a brief moment of ecstatic hope, then grief. A penultimate section, 'Take, O take him, mighty Leader', is set to noble if disquieted music, before the opening statement 'Take him, earth, for cherishing' brings this great work to a conclusion that seems to glow from the almost blazing harmonies that precede its final B major chord.

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## EAMONN DOUGAN



Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned vocal coach and baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen and founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices. Informed by his singing, Eamonn is an engaging communicator with a particular passion for Bach, the French Baroque, and 16th- and 20th-century English repertoire.

Forthcoming conducting engagements include debuts with Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa and Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, and return visits to the Cumnock Tryst Festival, BBC Singers, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, VokalEnsemblet and KoncertKor, Orquesta y Coro de la Comunidad de Madrid (ORCAM) and Jersey Chamber Orchestra.

Recent highlights have included the world premiere of James MacMillan's *All the Hills and Vales Along* at the Cumnock Tryst Festival; he assisted Sir Mark Elder for the world premiere concert and recording of Puccini *Le Villi* with Opera Rara and the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and conducted the off-stage chorus for Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ* with The Hallé, Britten Sinfonia Voices and Genesis Sixteen for BBC Proms 2019 at the Royal Albert Hall.

In 2019 he directed The Sixteen's highly acclaimed tour of Australia and Singapore, *Messiah* with Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León and Cappella Amsterdam, and made his Paris debut at the La Seine Musicale with renowned ensemble Accentus and in Copenhagen with Danish National Symphony Orchestra, VokalEnsemblet and KoncertKor. This year he has staged *Dido and Aeneas* for the Ryedale Festival and a specially curated programme, '*Sun, Moon and Sky*', for Salisbury Festival with violinist Harriet Mackenzie and the London Chamber Orchestra which featured Deborah Pritchard's double concerto for violin and harp alongside projections which were inspired by Maggi Hambling's series of paintings 'EDGE'.

Other conducting engagements have included Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Irish Baroque Orchestra, Corinthian Chamber Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Trondheim Barokk, and Wrocław Philharmonic Chamber Choir. Programming highlights have included curating and conducting '*A Weekend of Excessively Good Taste*' (French Baroque) at Kings Place, London, while Eamonn's developing opera work has included Mozart *La finta giardiniera* and *Così fan tutte* with Ryedale Festival Opera.

Eamonn is a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort. Eamonn read music at New College, Oxford, before continuing his vocal and conducting studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Eamonn Dougan is managed worldwide by Percius. [www.percius.co.uk](http://www.percius.co.uk)

## THOMAS TALLIS SOCIETY CHOIR

The Thomas Tallis Society, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in the 2015-16 season, takes its name from the 16th century composer who worked in the Royal Court in Greenwich and is buried in the crypt of the Parish Church of St Alfege.

The choir was founded by Philip Simms, who was organist and choirmaster at the church from 1964 to 2000, and our links with the church continue to the present. Philip was succeeded by Stephen Dagg, Director of the Centre for Young Musicians, Morley College, London and organist at St Alfege Church, in 2006. During our 50th anniversary year we were delighted to appoint Eamonn Dougan as our new Musical Director.

With over 60 auditioned voices, TTS presents four or five concerts a year in the beautiful setting of St Alfege Church. Although many of the choir members live locally in Greenwich, TTS attracts musicians from all over London and the south east, owing to the high standards it maintains. All singers are required to have very good sight-reading ability, as demanded by the concentrated rehearsals schedules.

We are always keen to recruit new voices. If you are interested, please see the "Sing with TTS" page of our website. [www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk](http://www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk). Please join our general emailing list via the website too.

We're also on Twitter: @TTSoc Look out for updates on [facebook.com/Groups/ThomasTallisSociety](https://facebook.com/Groups/ThomasTallisSociety)

**Sopranos** Eleanor Caine, Phoebe Clapham, **Emily Jennings**, Claire Jones, Philippa Kent, Rachel Lethbridge, Rosemary Naylor, Romy Nuttall, Naomi Quant, Becky Ryland-Jones, Kathryn Strachan, Jenny Wegg, **Emma Wilkins**

**Altos** Caitlin Brooks, Rosemary Burch, Miriam Coe, Jessy Croghan, Susan Dean, Sally Hughes, Emma Humphries, Emily John, **Angharad Rowlands**, Alice Shelton, Ruthie Smith, Alice Wright

**Tenors** Justin Eeles, Andrew Greene, Larry Howes, **Chris Huggon**, Nathan Killen, Andrew Lang, John Parsons, Paul Renney, Graham Voke, **Will Wright**

**Basses** Dermot Agnew, Rick Brooks, **George Cook**, Quentin Evans, **Will Ford**, Simon Gallie, Andrew Harper, Daniel Jaffé, Philip Kay, Jonathan Louth, Geoff Woodhouse

**Bold denotes TTS Ambassadors**

## FRIENDS AND PATRONS



We are very grateful to our faithful group of Patrons and Friends that have been loyally supporting us for a number of years. Their generosity and support have really helped the Society to keep going. A reliable yearly income is a huge benefit in planning programmes and means we can budget more accurately.

**We are very keen to increase the number of Patrons and Friends to help us go forward in a sustainable manner and we would love your support as either a Patron or Friend.**

A Friend contributes £30 per year and this special relationship with the choir is recognised by:

- A newsletter with early notification of concerts
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party
- Recognition of support in TTS programmes.

As a Patron you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
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- Acknowledgment of support of the Society in the programme
- An invitation to the annual Friends and Patrons party.

Please consider whether you could support TTS by becoming a Patron or a Friend of the Society. Speak to Carole tonight or contact her at [carolelowe@rocketmail.com](mailto:carolelowe@rocketmail.com).

**We would like to recognise the important contribution of the following TTS Patrons:**

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**Saturday 27 June 2020**

**Mass in C.** Marking Beethoven's 250th anniversary.

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**A little night music:** A jazz influenced programme.

**Saturday 7 November 2020 (TBC)** London International Early Music Festival.

With thanks to the Churchwardens of St Alfege for their continued unremitting and enthusiastic support.