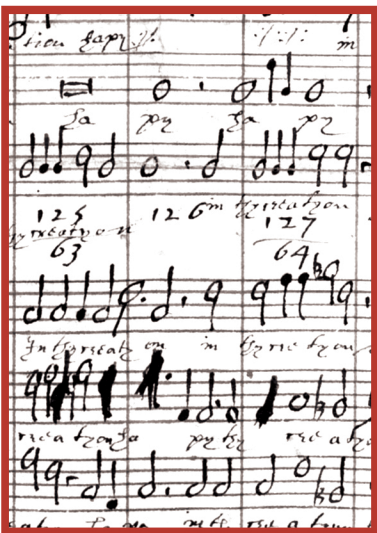


MOTET IN 40 PARTS



BY



Thomas Tallis



EDITED BY

Hugh Keyte

PREFACE
MMXX

THOMAS
TALLIS
SOCIETY
EDITIONS



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE TAVERNER CHOIR
I FACIOLINI



Spem in alium

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

Hugh Keyte's edition of this famous motet, made freely available by the Thomas Tallis Society to celebrate the likely 450th anniversary of the first performance.



Foreword

Most choral singers will have heard Tallis's celebrated motet on record or in concert, but relatively few will have had the opportunity to get to know it through performance, if only because of the difficulty of meeting up with at least thirty-nine other singers who can hold the often complex polyphonic lines. Members of the Thomas Tallis Society chamber choir are lucky in this respect, being able to join with enough singing colleagues who can do this, and to do so before a loyal audience of Friends and Patrons in the wonderful Hawksmoor church of St Alfege in Greenwich beneath which Tallis and his wife lie buried. (We perform the complete range of choral works, ancient and modern, though we do have a special allegiance to the music of Tallis.)

As part of our programme of outreach and social connection we have long wished to find a way of sharing our experience and pleasure of music-making with others, and of Tallis's choral masterpieces in particular. This became especially pertinent with the advent of Covid-19, with lock-downs and the need for social distancing making it impossible for singers to join together to sing at all, let alone perform works on the scale of 'Spem in alium', at least in the short term. Hence our *Tallis' Virtual Voice* programme, which aims to enable anyone, singer or instrumentalist,

individual or small group, to join in a virtual performance of Tallis's monumental work – or, indeed, to create their own customised version.

All this is being done online, and there are two main elements. Firstly, we are making freely available for the first time Hugh Keyte's edition of the motet. This differs radically in many respects from all other available editions in that, surprisingly, it is the first to have been produced directly from the earliest surviving source, which Hugh asserts has allowed him to get much closer to what Tallis will actually have written. We are presenting this in a user-friendly way that relieves individual singers of the need to wrestle with a vast landscape of paper, though full scores can be downloaded, but may need to be printed at A2 size for practical use. The work and the edition are described briefly in Hugh's *Preface* below, and in much greater detail in his *Introduction*, which is available on our website, alongside the freely downloadable scores in a variety of formats.

Secondly, we have commissioned from Andrew Leslie Cooper, a remarkable singer with the requisite three-octave range, a recording of all forty voice parts of the motet in a single performance. This can be listened to complete, but each individual voice part can also be downloaded as a single track to which users can sing (or play) along; or they might use it to learn that particular part, which they can then add to the other thirty-nine as sung by Andrew to create a bespoke virtual performance. Alternatively, new parts such as a saxophone improvisation might be added to Andrew's 40 recorded parts to produce a truly personalised performance.

The combination of online recording, musical edition, and *Introduction* is very much a technological 'work in progress', and we plan to make all of this freely available in the most convenient and easily-accessed ways we can achieve. In order to cater for musical taste, two versions of Hugh's edition will eventually be available. One is the version he produced for the Taverner Choir double LP of the complete Latin church music of Tallis in 1986, and this is the one that Andrew Leslie Cooper has recorded. The other is the revision which Hugh made for the I Fagiolini CD of Striggio's 40-part mass in 2011, which differs both in the amount of editorial sharpenings (*ficta*), in underlay, and in the suggested use of instruments. A similar downloadable recording of this version will be made by the choir of the Thomas Tallis Society as soon as the abatement of the present pandemic allows.

I encourage you to seek out all these resources via our websites www.thomas-tallis-society.org and www.tallisvirtualvoice.org, and particularly to read Hugh's *Introduction*, which (for one thing) will explain Botticelli's painting of Judith with severed head of Holofernes on the front of this copy, that may have been puzzling you. It is a fascinating musical, historical and social journey that involves cryptology and regicidal intrigue, and explains how Tallis's musical masterwork may have come about: which is far different from what has been generally assumed.

Nigel Press, Chairman TTS.

Text

Spem in alium nunquam habui
praeter in te, Deus Israel,
qui irasceris et propitius eris,
et omnia peccata hominum
in tribulationis dimittis.

Domine Deus, Creator caeli et
terra

respice ad humilitatem nostrum

In none other have I placed my trust
save in thee, thou God of Israel,
who wilt be angry and [yet] gracious,
and all the sins of suffering mankind
wilt take away.

Lord God, Creator of heaven and
earth

look mercifully upon our wretchedness

Vocal Ranges



Original clefs; G2 (top), C2, C3, C4, F4 (lowermost)

PREFACE

by Hugh Keyte

Origin

Tallis's motet is universally recognised as the outstanding musical achievement of 16th century England, but its origins are tantalisingly mysterious. The sole clue that we have is a garbled anecdote that was entered in the commonplace book of a resident in the Middle Temple in 1611, some forty years after the composer's death. This record is at best unreliable, and may at worst derive from a deliberate fabrication. See the online *Introduction* for a detailed consideration of the anecdote and of the motet's likely true origin. The first performance will, I believe, have been in 1571, or possibly late 1570, at some kind of ceremony of self-dedication and penitence by the Ridolfi plotters for which the motet had been commissioned to form the climax. (The Ridolfi Plot to restore Catholicism as the state religion by assassinating Queen Elizabeth and replacing her with Mary Stuart was exposed in 1571.) The online *Introduction* sets out the reasoning behind this, and considers the probable performance location.

Source

The original score of *Spem in alium* is lost, and no early source survives with the original Latin text. The motet seems to have been quite unknown till 1609, long after Tallis's death, when what is assumed to have been his autograph score was discovered in the library of Nonsuch Palace. Contrary to what has long been believed, that score will have been used when *Spem* was performed the following year (with the Latin text) at the banquet following Prince Henry's creation as Prince of Wales. This score, with the performing parts that will have been made in 1610, will have been used to create the English-texted version of the motet that was sung at the creation banquet for the short-lived Henry's younger brother, the later Charles I, in 1616. As I suggest in the on-line Introduction, both the Latin- and English-texted versions of the motet may very likely have been sung on this occasion, one after the other, the first as a tribute to the late Prince Henry,

who had discovered the Nonsuch score. The English-texted version will no doubt have been made because the 1610 performance had revealed the unsuitability of the penitential Latin text for so festive an occasion, and a celebratory substitute was thought preferable. (We know that the motet was sung twice on this occasion, but it has always been assumed that King James merely ordered an encore.) After 1616 the Latin-texted score and parts seem to have been lost or destroyed. The 1616 English-texted score is therefore the earliest source to survive; the British Library's 'Egerton' score (BL Egerton MS 3512).

The present edition is unique in having been almost exclusively based on the Egerton score. Previous editors have chosen to base their work - partly or largely - on an unknown 18th-century musical antiquarian's cavalier and unsystematic attempt at restoring the original Latin (BL Royal Music MS 4 g.1), with additional use of the 'Gresham' MS, an early-17th-century set of master parts in the Guildhall Library, London, (G. Mus. 420) that derived from the now lost 1616 performing parts. Even the editors of the Tallis volume of the pioneering Tudor Church Music series of the 1920s chose to follow unquestioningly a general editorial ordinance that the earliest manuscript source with the Latin underlaid to the music (in this case the Royal Music MS) should always be taken as 'copy text', a policy that was never intended to be applied in such a unique circumstance.

The TCM edition was taken over verbatim (though re-engraved) by Oxford University Press, and was later given a light revision by the young Philip Brett, subsequently a distinguished scholar and editor of Tudor music but then a PhD student with too limited a 'pull' to demand an extension of the mere five weeks he was allocated for the herculean task. (See the online *Introduction* for a fuller account of this.) A recent published edition of the motet would seem to have followed the TCM editors in taking the Royal Music MS as principal source, to judge by its striking similarity to the revised but still unsatisfactory 'standard' version.

Precedents

The most obvious precedent probably dates from 1565, the 40-part mass with 60-part final *Agnus Dei* by the Mantuan composer employed by the Medici court, Alessandro Striggio. He made a fortnight's visit to England in June, 1567, but it is virtually certain that he did not then perform either his mass or the work on which it is partly based, his 40-part motet of 1561

which has come down to us as *Ecce beatam lucem* (a retexting that appears to date from the mid-1570s). There is no evidence that Striggio even carried a copy of the motet with him on his arduous winter's journey of 1566-7 which culminated in an unscheduled extension to England.

Exactly what material Striggio carried with him is unknown: probably three full scores, plus one or more sets of performing parts. To the Emperor, Maximilian II, whom he tracked down in winter quarters at Brno, he presented at least a score, and probably also a set of parts. Maximilian had too few musicians with him to perform the work, but Striggio subsequently heard Lassus direct it at a high mass before the Munich court, and himself directed an outdoor 'concert' performance before the French court, leaving scores (at least) behind him in each place. See the online *Introduction* for speculation as to how Tallis might have obtained sight of Striggio's works and similar continental polychoral music.

Four ten-part choirs

This is the first edition to retain Tallis's own division of his 40 parts into four ten-part choirs. Each choir is, certainly, subdivided into two five-part sub-choirs which are occasionally deployed as such, but the essential division throughout the motet is unambiguously into ten-part choirs. This can clearly be seen in the antiphonal exchanges beginning at bar 78, and in three of the great chains of fugal entries: 'Spem in alium', bars 1ff; 'qui irascere', bars 44ff, and the 'ad humilitatem nostram' entries of the first of the two concluding 'respice' sections, bars 100ff. In these three chains of fugal entries a rigid procedure obtains as the musical points make their way from choir to choir: as soon as there is an entry in a new 10-part choir all entries in the previous choir cease and the succeeding entries are in the new choir. So rigorously is this rule observed that Tallis must have envisaged a not-inconsiderable distance between the choirs.

A direct precedent for Tallis's four choirs with division into sub-choirs is a 50-part motet by a contemporary of Striggio at Florence – see the online *Introduction*, which also contains a suggested lay-out of forces that differs from the customary semicircle.

Clefs and pitch

Each 5-part sub-choir has the same combination of clefs: G2, C2, C3, C4, and F4, a configuration that allows a rich, close-packed spread of voices but carries no implication of transposition. The overall range is of three octaves. Since *Spem* is in no sense church music, it would be rash to assume that normal Elizabethan church pitch applies, which would raise the pitch by rather less than a semitone. It is perfectly possible (as I argue in the online *Introduction*) that the motet was designed for performance by recusant Catholic forces who were resident in the Arundel family's country seat of Nonsuch Palace, many of them presumed to have been Netherlanders or from elsewhere on the continent. We can only guess at the likely pitch-standard that obtained there. Tallis will have notated his motet in G in imitation of his Striggian model(s), but that does not necessarily imply that he was thinking of the prevailing Florentine pitch standard (which approximated to our modern A440). It is not impossible that he envisaged performance a tone or so below A440, which would certainly have made life easier for singers coping with sustained high notated Gs at the final cadence.

Ficta

Renaissance composers did not need to annotate every accidental, knowing that singers and instrumentalists would add them according to well-understood conventions. Such alterations, which in the present case are mostly sharpenings at perceived cadence points, are known as 'musica ficta' and performers were by no means unanimous in the way they applied the conventions. This edition distinguishes between three types of accidental in the usual way. Those printed before a note are in the Egerton score and would seem to have been taken over from Tallis's autograph. Accidentals in brackets before a note are cautionary. Those placed above the note are editorial, and should be as scrupulously observed as the others.

In the interests of musical choice, two distinct versions of my edition are being made available on-line, designated **VERSION A** and **VERSION B**. Andrew Leslie Cooper has laid down all forty parts of **VERSION A**, which may be freely accessed for use with the downloaded music. The choir of the Thomas Tallis Society will record **VERSION B** post-Covid 19, and it will be similarly accessible.

VERSION A was made for the Taverner Choir recording of 1986, VERSION B a revision for the I Fagiolini recording of 2011. The amount of added editorial ficta (unnotated sharpenings) in VERSION A is more generous, and closer to what performers will have been accustomed in existing editions, while that in VERSION B is severely restricted, in line with more recent perceptions, both my own and general.

I have in fact come to believe that Tallis was in this particular work expecting even less cadential sharpening than what we assume was the norm by the 1570s – that he was deliberately reverting, in fact, to the kind of minimal sharpening of ‘leading notes’ (mainly at major structural cadence points) that was a distinctive feature of English sacred polyphony of the Eton Choir Book period and a little later. Verging on the ‘modal’ to modern ears, this deliberately regressive fashion of around 1500 was out of sync with continental practice, and seems to have reflected a renewed reverence for the ancient plainchant¹. In *Spem*, the resulting idiom – late 16th-century florid counterpoint allied to early-16th-century ‘modalism’ – allowed Tallis enormous freedom in his part writing while helping to impart a particular harmonic flavour to the work that we find nowhere else in his output. (His remarkably bold use of discord is another factor.) Perhaps in this masterwork, the consummation of a lifetime’s composing, Tallis was looking back to the kind of harmonic idiom that still obtained in his early youth, bringing it to a fresh flowering by wedding it to more modern procedures that were unknown in the England of Henry VIII: regular chains of fugal entries; polychoral exchanges; a carefully balanced formal plan; lucid harmonic progressions; leading voices.

It is also worth noting that the minimal ficta in VERSION B greatly reduce the amount of ‘false relations’ (typically F natural against F sharp in simultaneous parts) that are traditionally beloved of choral scholars. This results in a much more powerful effect at the climactic cadence in bar 130 (a calculated structural effect without precedent at the period), where there are enough conflicting F sharps and F naturals to satisfy the most clash-addicted: though with authentic 16th-century temperament the effect of even this cosmic clash will be less acute than with anything approaching equal temperament.

¹ See: Roger Bray, The Interpretation of Musica Ficta in English Music c.1490-c.1580, Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association Vol 97 (1970) pp 29-45.

Text underlay

VERSIONS A and B also differ markedly in the way the text has been underlaid in problematic passages. The underlay in both versions has essentially been determined by the resubstitution process explained below (see Substitution of Text), but it differs where that process cannot be applied, most obviously in extended melismas, such as those in the freely composed extensions of the initial ‘*spem in alium*’ and ‘*praeter in te*’ entries. In VERSION A the underlay is in line with generally prevailing scholarly practice, while that in VERSION B is less doctrinaire, with a good deal more of the kind of repetition of text which Tallis may well have expected singers to introduce in protracted melismas in this particular work. (Such melismas will have been sung without textual repetition in expansive settings of the Eton Choir Book era, of John Taverner and his contemporaries, and of Tallis himself in much of his pre-Elizabethan output, but *Spem* is in many ways *sui generis*, combining earlier and more recent procedures, and among the latter – I would argue – will have been a greater degree of textual repetition, whether notated or left to the performers’ discretion. I have striven in the 2011 revision to make such editorial repetitions reflective of the shape of the melismatic writing and convenient for the singers in such matters as breath control and articulation of the text.)

VERSIONS A and B therefore allow users the choice of a more conventional and a rather more speculative approach to *ficta* and underlay, but it is worth stressing that as regards *ficta* in particular there is wide-spread agreement among scholar-performers such as Andrew Parrott, Robert Hollingworth and Eamonn Dougan (Andrew having, like me, modified his view over the 45 years or so since he directed the Taverner Choir’s recording of what is now designated VERSION A).

Leading voices

Another novel feature of this edition is the indication of leading-voice passages by the small sign \neg on the top line of the stave. The use of leading voices (which, crudely, ‘carry the tune’) is a major – almost a defining – feature of the motet. Tallis exploits this still-burgeoning continental procedure with consummate skill to give *Spem* a striking formal coherence. The leads are obviously meant to stand out in performance, however that is

to be achieved. Ensuring that they are heard is particularly challenging in the antiphonal ‘Domine Deus’ section (bars 87ff) with its many tenor (C3 clef) leads. A performance in which the soprano and tenor leads do not stand out is woefully emasculated, but artificial means of achieving this are self-defeatingly at variance with historical convention: close-miking, for example, or some kind of ‘orchestrated’ instrumental doubling. Long experience of attempts to solve the problem in performance (rarely entirely successful) have led me to propose a radical scoring of the motet which is spelled out in the online *Introduction*, one that should allow all the leads to sound through even the densest of surrounding polyphony.

Substitution of text

The key to recovering what Tallis actually wrote is the English verse text of the Egerton score. With admirable skill, the unknown poet produced a meaningful celebratory text that would (in theory) allow the Egerton scribe to substitute English for Latin in his new score by means of an automatic, rule-of-thumb substitution of English for Latin. To recover what Tallis wrote, therefore, the modern editor (again in theory) has merely to reverse that process. In practice the scribe encountered all kinds of problems – where Tallis repeats part of a phrase, or has rests in the middle of a word, or (most grievously) where the word ‘ad’ had been accidentally omitted from the final phrase of the Latin that was given to the poet, from which to make his English verse substitute.

But there is a unique advantage in working exclusively from the Egerton MS, provided that rigorous logic is applied: one can see from the scribe’s multitudinous alterations and corrections what was in the autograph score in front of him, thanks to his practice of first entering the music, then returning to add the text and alter the music to fit as necessary. This editorial approach has produced three important differences from previous editions: in the chain of ‘qui irasceris’ entries (in the course of which the underlaid text changes, with unmistakable symbolic intent); in the ‘Domine Deus’ antiphonal exchanges (in which a wrongly-texted leading voice has obscured the regularity of Tallis’s scheme); and – most tellingly in performance – in the two concluding ‘respice’ sections (in which the first word, ‘ad’, which Tallis set has been restored and the music adjusted to something close to the original).

Andrew Parrott, director of the Taverner Choir writes;

If Hugh Keyte's edition was not actually commissioned by the Taverner Choir (neither of us can now remember) we were certainly the first to record it. This was made (in 1986/7) with 40 solo singers distributed in a semicircle in a North London church. Among its more distinctive features are the restoration of the missing 'ad' in the final 'respice' sections (which makes a much greater difference than one might suppose) and the special attention given to the structurally important leading voices that dominate so much of the motet. In the great antiphonal 'Domine Deus' section, for example, each soprano and tenor part surely needs somehow to stand out – something which will be fascinating to hear in Hugh's newly proposed scoring with just 14 solo voices and all remaining parts given to instruments. Spem has a special place in the history of the Taverner Choir, as our performance (of the OUP edition) in the 1973 Bath Festival was our first professional engagement, under the characteristically fluid direction of Michael Tippett – and with a certain H.Keyte on part 40.

Robert Hollingworth, director of I Fagiolini writes;

Spem is one of those timeless pieces of music that will take a lot of different approaches - voices, instruments, string groups, electric guitars - and still survive. This of course is a different issue from how Tallis might have meant it to sound or how his contemporaries might have preferred it to sound - don't go looking for one answer in the 16th century. Modern performers have found it hard to get away from voices-only, but new solutions throw new light on the processes in the piece itself so that it becomes more than just a wall of choral sound. I first talked with Hugh Keyte about Spem when preparing for our Striggio 40-part Mass recording in 2009 and our resulting vocal/instrumental version of Spem with viols, cornetts and sackbuts was a revelation then but will no doubt be superseded as time passes. Meanwhile, the re-publishing of that version with Hugh's thoughts on 'leading voices' made clear for singers and conductors and the crucial 'working-backwards' from the English scribe's version helps us all get a little closer to understanding one of the great cultural achievements of the 16th century.

Eamonn Dougan, musical director of TTS writes;

Singing (or playing) in a performance of Spem in alium is to be part of an extraordinary sonic experience. However, the size and complexity of Tallis' motet means that it is relatively rarely performed and it can appear to be a daunting undertaking to anyone approaching it for the first time. The Thomas

Tallis Society has a rich history of performing works by Tallis and it is our hope that the publication of Hugh Keyte's edition, alongside the online learning resources we have created, will open the piece up to those who have perhaps admired the work from a distance, but been nervous of getting too close to it, those discovering it for the first time, or indeed those wishing to look at it with fresh eyes. Spem has been Hugh's constant companion for decades - conductors, singers and players can now enjoy the benefits of those many years of research and consideration with a new approach to the underlay of the text, practical advice on which are the "leading voices" and the formation of the work into four groups of ten parts, an important distinction when planning the layout of performers for a live rendition.

Acknowledgements

The entire TTS 'family' has been involved in this project one way or the other in large part or small, but we are most especially grateful to our Friends and Patrons, whose support scheme over the years has enabled us to produce adventurous concerts and now embark on this internal development and external outreach programme.

The key players are obviously Andrew Leslie Cooper and Hugh Keyte, backed by the advice from performance experience from our Musical Director Eamonn Dougan. The collaboration of Robert Hollingworth and I Fagiolini has been much appreciated. The TTS Committee must be especially thanked for their forward thinking in agreeing to push ahead with this project.

The digital 'engraving' of the scores has been carried out by Chris Davey, who has supplied much useful advice along the way, John Fletcher and Andrew Leslie Cooper, who also created the keyboard reduction.

N.P. 12.xii.20.

Front Cover - original art work by Hugh Keyte, improved and digitally edited by Greg Browning and with grateful thanks to Het Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam for permission to reproduce 'Judith with the head of Holofernes' by Sandro Botticelli (c.1500).



Conjectural model of Nonsuch Palace as created by Ben Taggart and now on display at the Whitehall Museum, Cheam, Sutton SM3 8RD.

Image kindly supplied by Ben Taggart – www.modelhouses.co.uk