

Thomas Tallis Society Choir
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



Hail, gladdening light

European works for double choir



Gabrieli
Victoria
Bach
Britten
Parry
Kim Porter - world premiere

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| O clap your hands | Gibbons | O thou the central orb | Charles Wood |
| O nata lux | Tallis | Hail, gladdening light | Charles Wood |
| O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit | Tallis | To Daffodils | Britten |
| Ave Maria | Victoria | The succession of four sweet months | Britten |
| Jubilate Deo | Gabrieli | Your world (world premiere) | Kim Porter |
| Das ist meine freude | J.L. Bach | Blest Pair of Sirens | Hubert Parry |

O clap your hands

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.

O nata lux

Thomas Tallis (c1505-1585)

Thomas Tallis, one of England's greatest composers, had particularly strong associations with Greenwich, as he lived there at the latter end of his life, and was buried in the chancel of St Alfege Church, as it was (since replaced by the magnificent eighteenth-century building designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor where this concert is taking place). Tallis spent much of his long working as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, which was based in Greenwich Palace during the Tudor reign, and served under the very different regimes of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I. Almost certainly a Catholic throughout his life, he thrived even after Henry VIII broke with the Pope's authority, and continued to provide music for the various liturgies used in service during this turbulent period.

This setting of two verses from an anonymous tenth-century hymn is one of Tallis's most beloved choral works. Rather than make a strophic setting, Tallis wrote a 'through composed' work which travels ever onwards after its haunting opening phrase into a single great arc. It tells of the vision the disciples had of Jesus, bathed in holy light, in conversation with Moses and Elijah. Tallis use of 'false relations' here add an unearthly 'gleam' to the music.

O Lord, give thy Holy Spirit

Thomas Tallis

It is uncertain when Tallis composed this fine setting: but the fact it follows Archbishop Cranmer's 1548 prescription less than strictly – that settings of religious texts (compulsorily in English) should have "a plain and distinct note for every syllable one" – and its ABB form (in which the music falls into two sections, the second of which is repeated) is one that was widely used by early Elizabethan anthem composers, suggests this was composed relatively late in his career. One can again hear Tallis's characteristic use of spicy 'false relations'.

Ave Maria à8

Tomás Luis da Victoria (c1548-1611)

Ave Maria is one of the most familiar prayers of the Catholic church. This double choir setting, first published in Venice in 1572, is from Victoria's first published volume, entitled '*Motetca*' – a set of 33 motets and antiphons for various points in the liturgical year. This motet is for the Feast of the Annunciation. The whole volume showcases the mastery of polyphonic writing that Victoria had already achieved by age 24, and also shows the influence of Palestrina, who may have taught Victoria. At the time of publication, Victoria was living in Rome, enrolled as a singer whilst training for the priesthood at the Jesuit Collegio Germanico Romano. He lived and worked in Rome for 22 years, and among several posts was Palestrina's successor at the papal Seminario Romano.

Although Victoria perfectly mastered the techniques of Palestrina, he retained a distinctly individual, Spanish sound and refused to be constrained by either contemporary or traditional ways of setting mass and motet texts, often being more daring with his use of harmonies, more profound in his sorrowful settings, and more ebullient in his joyful 'Alleluias'.

The sense of devotion and prayerfulness in this Ave Maria is created by the exchange of phrases between the choirs, one choir either echoing or expanding upon the musical ideas of the other with an answering phrase. Sometimes voice parts from one choir will pair up with voice parts from the other; for example, Alto and Tenor 1 with Soprano and Bass 2 at the words 'dulcis et pia' (sweet and merciful), and all eight parts come together powerfully to emphasise significant moments, such as the words 'ora pro nobis peccatoribus' (pray for us sinners).

King João IV of Portugal, an extremely accomplished musician, commented in 1649: 'although there is much in his [Victoria's] Holy Week volume [published 1585] that exactly suits the text, nonetheless his disposition being naturally sunny he never stays downcast for long'.

This Ave Maria concludes with a radiant G major final chord, like the sun suddenly coming out after rain.

Jubilate Deo à8

Giovanni Gabrieli (c1557-1612)

Giovanni Gabrieli was a master of Venetian Renaissance music, excelling in his often vast-scale ceremonial compositions. He was taught by his uncle, Andrea Gabrieli, and went on to succeed him as second organist at the Basilico San Marco, a post he held for the rest of his life. He became the teacher of eminent musicians and composers such as Heinrich Schütz, one of J.S. Bach's most significant musical inspirations. Gabrieli was especially gifted in using the space in which his music was performed to the greatest possible effect. St Mark's had two choir lofts, opposite one another, and a third group could be positioned by the altar. He was also very specific about his instrumentation, as choral pieces were very often doubled by instruments, and Gabrieli scored his works to create the perfect blend and balance for the acoustics of the basilica, even if it looked bizarre on paper!

'*Jubilate Deo*' was first published in 1613, and then twice more in different volumes of Gabrieli's works in 1615 and 1621. The joyful text is taken from several Psalms, calling on the listener and performer alike to praise the Lord who created heaven and earth, and to serve Him with gladness. The constant interplay between voice parts, passing flourishes and fanfares of melody back and forth, is a perfect example of the delight with which Gabrieli illustrates the soaring architecture around him. Special points of interest are the spine-tingling shift of harmonies at 'Servite Domino' (Serve the Lord) and the dancing triple time sections for the words 'in laetitia' (with gladness).

Das ist meine freude

Johann Ludwig Bach (1677-1731)

Born in Thal, Johann Ludwig Bach was a cousin of Johann Sebastian. Aged 22 he moved to Meiningen, and was appointed cantor there then later Kapellmeister. He wrote a large amount of music and regularly oversaw performances, both at Meiningen and neighbouring courts, where he evidently came into extensive contact with Italian music.

Johann Sebastian Bach made copies of many of Johann Ludwig's cantatas - 18 of which have thus survived to our day - and performed them at Leipzig. Whether J.S. equally had a hand in the propagation of Johann Ludwig's motets is uncertain, since their earliest surviving manuscripts are in the hand of an unknown copyist.

Johann Ludwig's motet, '*Das ist meine Freude*', sets a verse from Psalm 73. Though typical of the genre in being scored for double choir and continuo, it again reflects the influence of Italian music, most particularly in Johann Ludwig's dramatic style of word setting, starting with a rhetorical repetition of the word "Das" (similar to J.S. Bach's repetition of "Komm" in his motet 'Komm, Jesu, komm'), and his melismatic decoration of the word "Freude" ("joy"). The Italianate influence is equally evident in his rhetorical, almost madrigalian, use of the antiphonal choirs.

O thou the central orb

Charles Wood (1866-1926)

Although born and educated in Armagh, Ireland, Charles Wood became a leading composer of English liturgical music, following in the footsteps of Charles Villiers Stanford under whom he studied 1883-87 at London's Royal College of Music. He went on to teach at the RCM, where his most famous pupils were Ralph Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells. From 1888, his musical home was Cambridge, where he was initially organ scholar at Selwyn College. Fun fact: he wrote the chimes of the college clock at Gonville and Caius, where he became the first Director of Music.

Though by all accounts a quiet and unassuming man, Wood's music is full of powerful emotion and character, and his appreciation for poetry and the spoken word can be detected through the way he sets texts with great skill and sensitivity. Many of the anthems he composed were for the excellent collegiate-style choirs cultivated in Cambridge, and therefore are written to exploit the antiphonal effects available from a double choir. 'O Thou the Central Orb' was originally written in 1914 or 1915, but was first published in 1933 in *The Church Anthem Book*. The text was penned by Oxford poet and priest Henry Ramsden Bramley. It's a grand, dazzling vision of the majestic glory of Christ, surrounded by His saints, reminiscent of similar descriptions in the book of Revelation. There are many depictions of light in the poetry, such as 'beam', 'radiance', 'glory', 'lustre' etc and Wood's music illustrates the text with brilliant clarity and richness, saving the highest note in the piece for the word 'pure' in the final line.

Hail, gladdening light

Charles Wood

'Hail, gladdening light', again, exploits the antiphonal effects available from a collegiate choir. Its opening emulates Stanford's forthright yet fluent choral style. The other great influence is Parry, whose 'Blest Pair of Sirens' composed in 1887 and to be performed at the end of this programme, evidently inspired Wood's dramatic key change at the words 'we hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine'.

Five Flower Songs, Op.47

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

1. To Daffodils

2. The Succession of the Four Sweet Months

Benjamin Britten was already the composer of several operas – most notably *Peter Grimes* and his chamber operas *The Rape of Lucretia* and *Albert Herring* – and had started on his second large-scale opera, *Billy Budd*, when from 1949 he 'took a break' and composed a number of occasional pieces. These included *Five Flower Songs*, which he completed in 1950 as a 25th wedding anniversary gift for his friends Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst of Dartington Hall, both of them keen amateur botanists. The first two of these, performed tonight, set texts by Robert Herrick.

First 'To Daffodils', one of Herrick's most frequently set poems. Britten marks his setting with the tempo *Allegro impetuoso*, and the music expresses the sudden burgeoning vibrancy of the flowers which, in Herrick's works, 'haste away so soon'. Gentler and more limpid in style is Britten's setting of 'The Succession of the Four Sweet Months', those being April, May, June and July: each voice part, starting with the sopranos, followed by altos, then tenors, then basses (each entering in fugue-like imitation of the preceding part), extols a particular month and singing their own two lines of text from Herrick's poem.

As a postgraduate composer at Manchester University, Kim Porter wrote music for the drama department's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Buchner's *Woyzeck* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Lorca. She joined the BBC Singers as an alto and was commissioned by the BBC to write a cantata, *The Ballad of Bethnal Green*, for the Singers and school choirs in the East End of London. Kim continues to write music whilst still an active singer in The Sixteen, ORA and the Gabrieli Consort.

'Your World' is a poem written by the African-American poet and playwright, Georgia Douglas Johnson: she was a prominent figure within the anti-lynching movement in the United States, and was part of the 'Harlem Renaissance' which celebrated literature by black women.

Kim Porter writes: "My piece seeks to reflect 'Your World's' journey from a state of claustrophobic enclosure and the battle for freedom and space. It was a joy to write this for the TTS, who I used to sing with before working professionally as an alto."

*Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.*

*But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the skyline encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.*

*I battered the cordons around me
And cradled my wings on the breeze,
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!*

Georgia Douglas Johnson
(1880-1966)

Hubert Parry's setting of Milton's *Ode at a Solemn Music* for double choir, known by its opening line 'Blessed Pair of Sirens', was hailed by the British musicologist Donald Tovey as "an epoch in British musical history". (Tovey's engaging and thought-provoking essay on this choral work, published in the volume of his essays *Concertos and Choral Works*, is warmly recommended.)

Parry took at least twenty years to compose this masterful work. Having originally sketched ideas for a setting of Milton's poem in 1867, he left this until 1886 when he was nudged by a commission from his colleague Charles Villiers Stanford. Now in charge of the London Bach Choir, Stanford was determined to raise its standards as well as programme a work suitable to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in the following year. Fortuitously, when Stanford consulted Sir George Grove, editor of the now famous dictionary of music, as to what might be an appropriate text, Grove suggested Milton's *Ode at a Solemn Music*.

Parry composed his setting fairly rapidly, only stumbling when it came to the final line of Milton's text. Yet with encouraging feedback from his close colleague and former piano tutor Edward Dannreuther, he was able to send the complete vocal score to Stanford in time for rehearsals starting on 1 March 1887. When Grove attended a rehearsal on 29 March, as Parry recalled, "G. jumped up with tears in his eyes and shook me over and over again by the hand and the whole choir took up the cue...and applauded vociferously. It was encouraging."

Setting Milton's poem is no easy task. Its very first sentence runs, without a stop, for a good eleven lines before reaching – as Tovey says – "the first possible stopping-place after telling what Voice and Verse are to do". Even that is not the end of the sentence, but a comma! Parry's triumph was to effectively mirror the masterful structure of Milton's poem while setting his words to a natural-sounding and unceasing flow of melody. He uses dramatic key changes as "punctuation" to mark the poem's structure, and such is his consummate mastery that his mischievous allusion to Wagner's *Tristan* chord at the words "harsh din" is reached quite naturally. Then follows perhaps the most quintessentially English passage, the yearningly falling phrase that sets the words "O may we soon again renew that song": that phrase not only caught Elgar's ear (Parry being one of the few fellow English composers he consistently admired), but also appears to echo in English music through much of the following century.

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.

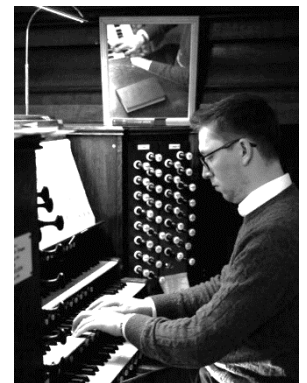
Recent highlights have included the world premiere of James MacMillan's *All the Hills and Vales Along* at the Cumnock Tryst Festival; he assisted Sir Mark Elder for the world premiere concert and recording of Puccini *Le Villi* with Opera Rara and the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and conducted the 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. Eamonn directed De Profundis on their recent Hyperion release Juan Esquivel's *Missa Hortus Conclusus* to critical acclaim.

Other conducting engagements have included BBC Singers, 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 a specially curated programme, *'Sun, Moon and Sky'*, for Salisbury Festival with violinist Harriet McKenzie 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' and curating and conducting *'A Weekend of Excessively Good Taste'* (French Baroque) at Kings Place, London. Eamonn's developing opera work has included *Dido and Aeneas*, 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

BENJAMIN NEWLOVE – ORGANIST

Benjamin Newlove enjoys a busy schedule as a freelance harpsichordist, organist and pianist based in London, whilst holding the position of Assistant Organist at the Royal Church of St Alfege, Greenwich. Previous posts include positions at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, St Michael's Church, Cornhill, St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, St Stephen's Church, Gloucester Road and St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Currently Benjamin is studying for an MMus in harpsichord performance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Prior to this, Benjamin studied at King's College London and the Royal Academy of Music. At the ages of 17 and 20 respectively, Benjamin gained his Associateship and Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists, in which for the former he was a multiple prize-winner for both paperwork and performance. He also holds the Associateship diploma of Trinity College London in piano performance.



Originally from Warrington, Benjamin began studying the organ with Michael Wynne and Robert Birbeck, moving to Chetham's School of Music in 2014 where he spent his sixth form years. Here, Benjamin studied the organ with Christopher Stokes, piano with Masayuki Tayama and Jonathan Middleton and harpsichord with Charlotte Turner. Benjamin currently receives harpsichord tuition from James Johnstone and organ tuition from Stephen Farr. Recently, Benjamin has taken part in masterclasses from Simon Johnson, Bine Bryndorf and Martin Schmeding as well as the New Paths, Greenwich Early Music and London Contemporary Music festivals acting as both a recitalist and accompanist. In 2019, Benjamin appeared as an accompanist on the CD *'Cornhill Visions'* with the Choir of St Michael's, Cornhill.

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 at 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 around 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 owing to the high standards it maintains. All singers are required to have very good sight-reading abilities as the choir works on a few concentrated rehearsals before each concert.

We are always keen to recruit new voices. If you are interested, please contact our membership secretary Kathryn Strachan strac157@ntlworld.com.

Follow us on Twitter: @TTSoc. Look out for updates on [facebook.com/ThomasTallisSociety](https://www.facebook.com/ThomasTallisSociety) and www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk.

Sopranos Phoebe Clapham
Alana Clark
Imogen Faris
Sabrina Hadimadja
Jan Hart
Emily Jennings
Claire Jones
Philippa Kent
Rachel Lethbridge
Caroline Molloy
Jill Pollock
Naomi Quant
Becky Ryland-Jones
Ley Spicer
Anne Whyte
Jenny Wegg
Emma Wilkins

Altos Thomas Bridges
Caitlin Brooks
Joanna Clark
Miriam Coe
Jessy Croghan
Susan Dean
Sian Evans
Barbara Gormley
Emma Humphries
Emily John
Philippa John
Sonia Johnson
Sophy Miles
Katherine Pile
Alice Shelton
Ruthie Smith

Tenors Justin Eeles
Nick Entwisle
Andrew Green
Larry Howes
Andrew Lang
David Lowick
Alexander MacLaren
Chris Moody
John Parsons
Graham Voke

Basses Dermot Agnew
Rick Brooks
Cyril Cleary
Quentin Evans
Will Ford
Andrew Harper
Daniel Jaffé
Jonathan Louth
Nigel Press
John Sutton
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, especially throughout the pandemic. 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 of the Society you receive additional benefits in recognition of an annual donation of £150:

- A complimentary top price ticket to all concerts
- Free concert programmes
- Separate interval or pre-concert complimentary drinks table
- 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.

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

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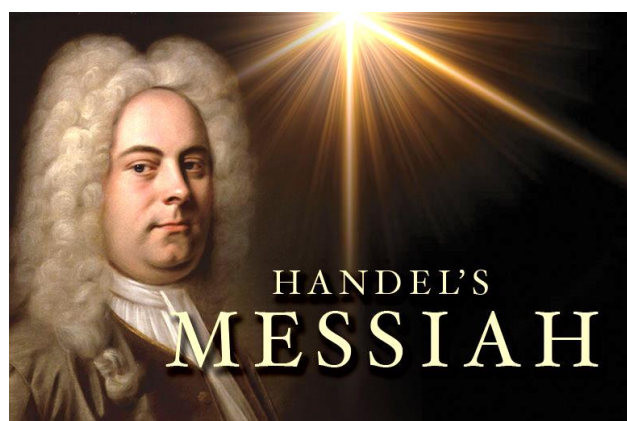
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FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 14th December 2021

Join the TTS Choir and Orchestra for a performance of this festive favourite.



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