



Thomas Tallis Society Choir

Musical Director: Eamonn Dougan

## NEWSLETTER Spring 2022

Dear concert goers,

Welcome to our newsletter, with a review of our 2021 activity including our recently launched outreach programme, and a look forward to future concerts.

Sadly, during most of 2020-2021, TTS's 55<sup>th</sup> year, we were unable, due to the pandemic, to offer concerts but all our singers have done their best to keep singing. Our Director, Eamonn Dougan, offered Vocal Workshops via Zoom, allowing singers to study repertoire planned for future performance including: Britten - *Five Flower Songs*; Barber - *To be sung on the water*; Elgar - *As torrents in summer*.

### And we were back!!

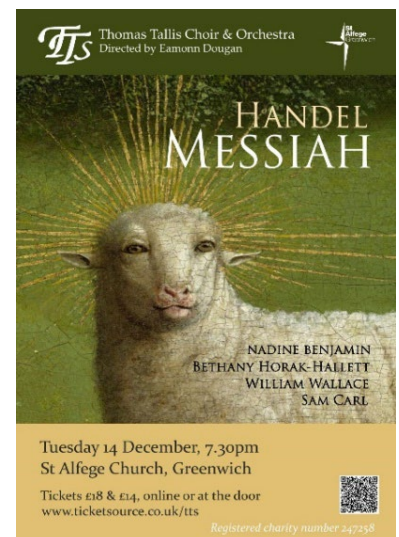
2021-2022, TTS's 56<sup>th</sup> year, saw five concerts performed over the year. Innovations included a mid-week performance of Messiah with full orchestra and the first in what we hope will be a series of concerts which blend art with narration and music. This has also been the sixth year of the Choral Ambassador scheme which we launched in 2015.

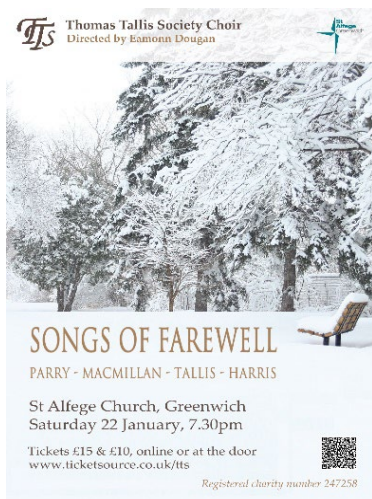


In October, our first concert back after the pandemic, we performed *Hail, gladdening light*, a concert of European works for double choir. Lots of singers signed up, impatient to get back to singing in public after an 18-month break. We performed a capella and with organ; Ben Newlove, Assistant Organist at St Alfege, joined us for the first time.

Eamonn spoke for many of us: *A heartfelt thank you for your wonderful performance on Saturday. It was an absolute joy to hear you in in such (remarkably) good voice after the enforced break. In all honesty, the standard of singing was so much higher than I had anticipated - I think we may all have been pleasantly surprised.*

In December we performed Handel's *Messiah*. It was very difficult to find a weekend date so in the end we decided to try a mid-week concert. Having not performed *Messiah* for three years, we invested in some brilliant soloists. We managed to entice Nadine Benjamin to sing alongside other top-class soloists; mezzo Bethany Horak-Hallett, tenor William Wallace, and bass Sam Carl. The audience was possibly slightly smaller than that at a weekend performance, but many came to St Alfege on what was a wet Tuesday night in December to hear *Messiah* being performed to a very high standard (and at a cracking pace!).





In January we added an unplanned concert and Eamonn chose Parry's Songs of Farewell. It turned out the choice of music was sadly appropriate as we heard of the death of Jacky Flurscheim (Simms), who co-founded TTS in 1965.

Jacky married Philip Simms, a professional musician and organist at St Alfege Church, in 1964 and together they launched the Thomas Tallis Society, named after another (rather more famous) organist of that parish. For years Jacky organised concerts, fixed overseas tours, and threw post-concert parties.

The concert in January was dedicated and performed in memory of Jacky. Philip, and Philip and Jacky's son Ben, were both present. Her obituary was written by her long time friend Carole O'Brien and

published in the Guardian. You can read it here: [www.theguardian.com/books/2021/dec/13/jacky-flurscheim-obituary](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/dec/13/jacky-flurscheim-obituary).

The following concert in April was another new venture for TTS, the performance of music interspersed with reflections on paintings linked to the music. As the concert took place during Lent, the theme reflected the Passion story and our reaction to it, in a sequence of art and music.



Chris Moody, the previous Vicar of St Alfege and long-time member of TTS, provided the art narration. Six paintings were chosen by Chris including Titian's Christ carrying the Cross (1565) left. We give particular thanks to Chris for his insightful and thought-provoking observations on the paintings.

The programme was very well received by the audience and the mixture of visual art and music is a format which we plan to develop.



The final concert of the year will be a concert of music by female composers: **She, Her, Hers** on Saturday 2 July at 7.30pm.

This will contrast ten centuries of music by female composers from the very early (Hildegard of Bingen, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, Barbara Strozzi and Rafaella Aleotti) to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann) to the contemporary (Margaret Rizza, Cecilia McDowall, Kerenza Briggs and Roxanna Panufnik - Hymn to St Alfege).

We will also have the first performance of a new TTS commission.

Tickets are on sale now £15 and £10, online at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/tts](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/tts)

## Provisional concert dates for next season are:

Saturday 17 September 2022

Saturday 12 November 2022

Saturday 3 December 2022

Saturday 18 March 2023

Saturday 24 June 2023

## **A report from Miriam Crozier, TTS Committee Member, on our outreach programme with Thomas Tallis School**

Thomas Tallis School approached us to help them learn more about their namesake in the 50th year since their opening in 1971. Coincidentally TTS had been considering ways in which to become more involved in the local community through outreach.

We agreed that we would become involved in as many ways as possible to encourage singing within the school. We began with several members of TTS performing two pieces by Thomas Tallis in the school's inaugural concert in November, to wide acclaim from the audience. Sadly, we were unable to perform in their Festival of Lights concert in December due to Covid 19 restrictions.

However, TTS was able to fund a day of workshops for all students in years 7 and 8. These are the year groups who have been most affected by the banning of singing during the worst times of the Covid 19 outbreak. Most of the students had had no regular practice since January 2020 and had got out of the habit of singing. The workshops were led by a professional group of singers and music educators from Ex Cathedra, a professional choir. Most of the students responded with enthusiasm and it was a pleasure to watch and sing with them. A week later a small group of TTS members surprised the students by forming a 'Pop Up Choir' and singing the Hallelujah Chorus as the students came into the school's courtyard on their way to lunch. This provoked much attention and some hilarity.

Both events have had a very positive effect on singing within the school. Whilst getting a choir going is still proving difficult, the students are now regularly singing in their music lessons and a culture of singing is being created. It is hoped that TTS can take part in the final fiftieth anniversary celebrations in July, when I understand, many of the school music ensembles will perform their compositions based on the Thomas Tallis Spem in Alium. We plan to continue our commitment to the school in the new academic year beginning in September, with the aim of setting up a tradition of choral singing in a choir.

**Do tell us if you would like to know more about TTS outreach or suggest future projects.**

## **Friends and Patrons**

Many of you support TTS by being a Friend or a Patron. If you're not a Friend or Patron and want to support us in this way, please contact [carolelowe@rocketmail.com](mailto:carolelowe@rocketmail.com) and we will send you the details.

**We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. The next one will go out in Spring 2023.**

**We hope to see you at a concert very soon.**

