



Thomas Tallis Society Choir  
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



# She, Her, Hers

*Celebrating choral music by women composers across ten centuries, from Hildegard von Bingen to Cecilia McDowall*

## Tonight's Programme

Drop down, ye heavens  
March of the Women  
Miserere mei, Deus  
Media vita  
Silentio nocivo  
Your World  
Abendfeier in Venedig

Judith Weir  
Ethyl Smyth  
Rafaella Aleotti  
Kerensa Briggs  
Barbara Strozzi  
Kim Porter  
Clara Schumann

Abschied  
O eterne Deus  
Hymn to St Alfege  
O dulcis Jesu  
The Lord is Good  
Pied Beauty (world premiere)  
Surge propera, amica mea

Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel  
Hildegard von Bingen  
Roxanna Panufnik  
Chiara Margarita Cozzolani  
Cecilia McDowall  
Kim Porter  
Rafaella Aleotti



**Drop down, ye heavens (1983)**

**Judith Weir (b1954)**

Born in Cambridge to Scottish parents, Judith Weir soon moved with her family to Wembley. There she encountered the composer John Tavener, who encouraged her as a composer. She subsequently studied music at King's College, Cambridge, taking composition lessons with Robin Holloway in her final year.

*Drop down, ye heavens* was written in 1983 while she was on a two-year creative arts fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge (1983-84), and was first performed by the college choir as part of the Advent Carol Service held by Trinity every year. The plainsong it is based on is the *Rorate coeli* taken from the *Liber Usualis*, a book of Gregorian chants compiled by the monks of the Abbey of Solesmes in France: the chant was already well-known in Cambridge, being regularly sung as such during the Advent Sunday Service at Weir's alma mater, King's College, by the choir in those years under Philip Ledger. Weir's treatment of the chant is respectful yet very effective – to a degree sounding similar to the Orthodox style Tavener was developing at that time. Starting in a quasi-organum style (involving the choir singing in parallel fourths) associated with medieval choral music, the voice parts divide further, culminating in eight parts while apparently evolving or blossoming as it goes to an expressiveness of a far more recent vintage before retreating to the organum-like harmonies of the opening.

**March of the Women (1910)**

**Ethyl Smyth (1858-1944)**

Born in Sidcup, Ethel Smyth eventually became Britain's first famous and widely celebrated female composer. In 1877, against her father's will, she travelled to Leipzig to study composition, but soon gave up her official lessons which she found disappointingly rudimentary. She instead took private lessons with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, and through him was introduced to the musical circle of Clara Schumann and Brahms. Back in England, Smyth established herself as a formidable force, composing several operas (of which *The Wreckers* has enjoyed a complete production this year) and gaining the admiration of a range of musicians from Arthur Sullivan to Thomas Beecham.

In 1910, she put her music career on hold to devote herself to the women's suffrage movement. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), and in that year composed *March of the Women*, setting words by fellow suffragette Cecily Hamilton, which became the WSPU's official anthem. Smyth subsequently made several arrangements of this, including a version for chorus and orchestra included as the finale of her choral work *Songs of the Sunrise*, first performed in the Queen's Hall in 1911. In 1912, Smyth was sent to Holloway Prison for her window smashing activities as a suffragette. Beecham went to visit her there, and witnessed a group of suffragettes marching around the prison courtyard, lustily singing Smyth's *March*, supervised by the composer who, from a window above, "beat time in almost Bacchic frenzy with a toothbrush".

**Miserere mei, Deus**

**Rafaella Aleotti (c1570-after 1646)**

Born the daughter of the celebrated Ferrarese court architect, Giovan Battista Aleotti (1546-1636), Rafaella inherited musical gifts from her mother. Ferrara being not only a magnificent centre of Renaissance architecture but also of music, Giovan arranged for Rafaella to receive private tuition in keyboard performance and composition with Alessandro Milleville and Ercole Pasquini.

In about 1590 Rafaella followed the only course then available for women wishing to make music their career, and took vows at the Augustinian convent of S Vito, Ferrara; in about 1593 she became director of the main ensemble there, the 'concerto grande'. By all accounts, it was a fine ensemble consisting of 23 singers and instrumentalists performing on harpsichord, lutes, viols, flutes, cornetts and trombones. A collection of her motets was published in 1593, the first collection of sacred music to be published by a woman. These works combine elements of the long-established polyphonic style, and of the more recently established madrigal style which more readily reflects the character of the words it sets.

*Miserere mei, Deus* is written for five voices. Though some performances, in accordance with the instrumentalists Aleotti had at her disposal, allot a number of those 'voices' to instrumentalists, the music (in this writer's opinion) sounds even more effective when all the parts are sung, so presenting a

community of contrapuntal parts. The music – beautiful and expressive – seems to end with a question rather than a final resolution, which appears appropriate to a work that asks for mercy without assuming that it will inevitably be granted.

## Media vita

Kerensa Briggs (b1991)

Kerensa Briggs is a London-based composer with a rich background in choral singing, having sung with the Gloucester Cathedral Youth Choir, then with Trinity College Cambridge and King's College, London where she held a Choral Scholarship and undertook an MMus in composition. *Media Vita* was composed to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the English Renaissance composer John Sheppard. Its text is attributed to Notker 'the Stammerer', a Benedictine monk of St Gall Abbey (now in Switzerland) who died in 912. It is said that Notker was inspired to write it having watched workmen building the great bridge of Martinsbruck at considerable risk to their lives. For a while the text served as a battle hymn, but by the 13th century it had become part of the German service for the burial of the dead.

As Briggs has noted, her setting for a cappella double choir pays conscious tribute to John Sheppard: 'The piece draws inspiration from both the intensity and ebb and flow found within Sheppard's work and the text itself. False relations and imitative writing remain but these ideas are incorporated into a rich harmonic language and reflective sonority, depicting an awareness of death in life alongside a hope for redemption or salvation.'

## Silentio nocivo

Barbara Strozzi (1619-after 1664)

Born in Venice, Barbara Strozzi was the 'adopted' daughter of the celebrated poet, Giulio Strozzi. He is widely assumed to have been her actual father, Barbara's mother being one of his maids, Isabella Garzoni. In any case, Giulio Strozzi arranged for Barbara's education as a singer and composer (one of her teachers being Francesco Cavalli), and was author of the texts she set in her First Book of Madrigals, Op. 1. Their publication in 1644 marked the start of Barbara Strozzi's career as a professional composer.

Through Giulio, Barbara was introduced to the leading musicians and poets of Venice, and she often sang at gatherings at Giulio's home. Her skill as a composer enabled her to make a living even after Giulio's death, and her various publications are dedicated to such important patrons as Ferdinand II of Austria and Eleanor of Mantua (Op. 2, 1651), Anne of Austria, Archduchess of Innsbruck (Op. 5, 1655), Nicolo Sagredo, Doge of Venice (Op. 7, 1659), and Sophia, Duchess of Brunswick and Lüneburg (Op. 8, 1664).

Her First Book of Madrigals, Op. 1 – from which *Silentio nocivo* is taken – was dedicated to Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Written for a vocal quartet of soprano, alto, tenor and bass with continuo accompaniment, it is an intimate yet ardent setting of words in which a lover says that unless they can give expression to what they feel, either through words or through kisses, they will suffer.

## Your world (2021)

Kim Porter (b1965)

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* sets a poem written by the African-American poet and playwright, Georgia Douglas Johnson, (1880-1966): 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." The Thomas Tallis Society gave the work's premiere at St Alfege's on 2 October last year.

**'Abendfeier in Venedig' from Drei gemischte Chöre (1848)****Clara Schumann (1819-96)**

Celebrated as one of the greatest pianists of her time, Clara Schumann made several acclaimed tours around Europe. She was also wife to the composer Robert Schumann, whose work has very much overshadowed her own – not because of any superior quality, but simply since he did not have the burden of bringing up their seven surviving children or her domestic duties. Robert himself felt some qualms about this, and once observed: 'Clara has composed a series of small pieces, which show a musical and tender ingenuity such as she has never attained before. But to have children, and a husband who is always living in the realm of imagination, does not go together with composing. She cannot work at it regularly, and I am often disturbed to think how many profound ideas are lost because she cannot work them out.'

Clara's compositional mastery, however, is fully manifest in her one venture into choral composition, the *Drei gemischte Chöre*, composed in 1848 when she was 29 and already the mother of four children.

'Abendfeier in Venedig', setting a text by the celebrated poet Emanuel Geibel, paints an evening idyll in Venice suffused with cathedral bells, and suggests that the worshippers are being joined by a heavenly host. Clara Schumann's choral writing, mostly homophonic with apparently straight-forward harmonies, creates a serenity which Richard Strauss would recreate in several of his songs.

**Abschied – 'Abendlich schon rauscht der Wald'****Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel (1805-47)**

Fanny Mendelssohn appears to have been no less a talent than her much celebrated brother Felix. Indeed, she shared his musical education, both being taught harmony and counterpoint by Carl Friedrich Zelter and piano by Ludwig Berger. Their essential difference was one of gender and the prospects therefore available to them. Their father wrote to Fanny in 1820, 'Music will perhaps become his [Felix's] profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament.' In 1829 Fanny married the painter William Hensel, who fortunately valued his wife's musical talents. She soon became an important part of Berlin's musical life, renowned as a conductor and organiser of Sunday concerts, and she wrote a good deal of music. Her early death from a heart attack at the age of 42 shocked her brother Felix so much that it is said to have hastened his own premature death.

'Abschied', setting a poem by Joseph von Eichendorff, is the fifth of her *Gartenlieder*, Op. 3. Though written for a choir in just four parts, its dramatic harmonic changes and use of chromaticism creates an uncanny atmosphere, suggesting the narrator's wild, Romantic heart as he – or she – feels at home in the loneliness of the woods.

**O eterne Deus****Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)**

Hildegard was a visionary nun from the Rhineland, in what is now Germany. Though she was enclosed from age eight, taking her vows at around age 14, the life of a Benedictine nun didn't seem to restrict her creativity or curiosity about the world around her. She wrote texts and letters on many subjects, and in 1141 began having visions from God, which she also recorded. She was eventually endorsed by the Catholic church as receiving Divine revelations, and regarded as a *magistra*, or spiritual teacher. She became highly regarded for her vocation, went on preaching tours and founded two convents of her own.

For Hildegard, music was a gift directly from God and for Him, and she claimed never to have studied neumes or music composition: rather, she wrote and sang chant "for the praise of God and His saints". The sheer variety of her music is staggering in its melodic scope and richness, often florid and soloistic, sometimes ecstatic, sometimes serene, always full of expressive potential for the singer, who Hildegard saw as communicating directly with God through the music.

O eterne Deus is an antiphon (a musical response to various points within the liturgy) which comes from a very large manuscript of Hildegard's work, her writings, her visions, her scientific observations, and her music compiled during the years either before or just after her death in 1179. She herself was author of the texts of her antiphons, often describing the relationship between God and humankind in expressive and passionate terms. *O eterne deus* focuses on the need of humans to be reformed and recreated by God's love and through Christ to be what He originally intended us to be, free of sin and suffering.

## Hymn to St Alfege (2012)

Roxanna Panufnik (b1968)

As daughter of Andrzej Panufnik (1914-91), the distinguished Polish composer renowned for his symphonic works, Roxanna has tilled her own field specialising in vocal and choral music as well as opera.

*Hymn to St Alfege*, for double choir and organ, was composed in response to a commission from this very church – specifically, from St Alfege’s vicar Christopher Moody, and the then director of music Stephen Dagg – for an anthem to celebrate the millennium in 2012 of the saint it is named after. By Roxanna’s own account, she was inspired by the Osborn’s biography of St Alfege as translated by Frances Shaw, being particularly moved by the final paragraph which she describes as ‘an emotional and plaintive prayer to Alfege’; in this, reference is made to how the saint, kidnapped by Danes, refused to reveal the whereabouts of Canterbury’s riches and so was pelted to death with animal bones. Finding the text too long for the proposed piece, Roxanna had her classicist husband, Stephen Mackow-Smith, retranslate the original prayer, which he then paraphrased into ‘a simpler but deeply plaintive poem’ written in ‘the kind of vernacular an ordinary person might use’.

Roxanna has written: ‘It seems there was once a Hymn to St Alfege but no record of the music or the words still exists. I have tried to add authenticity to my Hymn by using a fragment of plainsong (Kyrie “Orbis factor”, Use of Salisbury), which would have been sung in Southern England around the time of Alfege’s death. I have set the first phrase of the original Latin text “Magni Regis, Magne miles;” to the plainsong, as an ostinato that runs throughout the piece.’

## ‘O dulcis Jesu’ from Scherzi di Sacra Melodia

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602-c1677)

The Italian singer and composer Chiara Margarita Cozzolani – like many Milanese patrician women in the early 17th century – became a nun. About two-thirds of the 41 monasteries that housed such women were renowned for music, until their dissolution in the late 18th century. Cozzolani herself was a Benedictine nun in the convent of Santa Radegonda, an institution in the centre of Milan. While her first book of motets (1640) seems irretrievably lost, her publications of 1648 and 1650 survive complete.

‘O dulcis Jesu’ is one of her duets with basso continuo accompaniment. The vocal writing is highly characteristic with its imitative entries and repetitions. The text is a hymn to Jesus, describing him as the fountain of life.

## The Lord is Good (2012)

Cecilia McDowell (b1951)

Born in London, daughter of a professional flute player, Cecilia McDowell read music at the University of Edinburgh, continuing her studies in singing, piano and cello at Trinity College of Music, London. She was encouraged to pursue composition after winning various competitions, and studied under Joseph Horowitz, Robert Saxton and Adam Gorb.

As a trained singer, McDowell has a particular affinity and interest in choral music – a CD devoted to her choral work has recently been released by the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge. In an interview with *Choir and Organ*, she has said: ‘I enjoy the challenges of writing for both amateur and professional choirs and always like to sing through the vocal lines in all the parts to see how they lie on the voice. I really enjoy looking for suitable texts for choral music – it’s half the fun of it. It does take time to find just the “right” words and I do feel they must be “good” words – words which express an idea economically and with beauty. And always when setting a text I try to get as far into the meaning of the words as I can.’

*The Lord is Good*, commissioned by the Oxford-based choir, Sospiri, sets a selection of texts from *Lamentations* for choir and two soprano soloists. The two soloists (tonight Becky Ryland-Jones and Emma Wilkins) sing their twining, ecstatically high-lying parts against a lower-lying but harmonically expressive choral background.



*Pied Beauty* sets one of the most beloved poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), a poet who overturned the idea of a regular metre in poetry, basing his own work on what he called 'sprung rhythm' inspired by his reading of Old English. He also glorified God through his fresh-eyed observation of nature and natural phenomenon. Kim Porter's setting reflects the play of light (suggested by the raised Lydian fourth degree of the opening rising scales) and dancing rhythms implied by Hopkins's imagery.

In this fine double choir setting of verses from the *Song of Solomon*, Aleotti uses antiphonal effects in which one choir responds to the other: sometimes a simple echo, sometimes a complementary response. In all, an appropriate illustration of a pair of lovers who harmoniously respond to one another.

## EAMONN DOUGAN



Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned vocal coach and baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen, founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices, Music Director of the Thomas Tallis Society, and Chief Conductor for Jersey Chamber Orchestra.

Recent conducting debuts include Handel's *Semele* at Sibelius Summer Academy and Haydn's *Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross* with the English National Opera. Forthcoming conducting engagements include performances as part of the Royal Academy of Music's Bach European series, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* with University of York Choir and Orchestra, return visits to the Cumnock Tryst Festival, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, VokalEnsemblet and KoncertKor, Jersey Chamber Orchestra, and a new disc series with De Profundis. He will assist Sir Mark Elder in the next Opera Rara recording *Zingari*. This alongside his continued work educating choral groups across the world.

Further highlights have included the world premiere of James MacMillan *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. With Britten Sinfonia Voices he has conducted world premieres including Sir John Tavener *Flood of Beauty*, Ešenvalds *Aqua*, Nico Muhly *Looking Forward* for the Britten Sinfonia's 20th birthday, and the choral premiere of Jóhann Jóhannsson *Orphée* at the Barbican.

Eamonn has a highly successful five-disc Polish Baroque series with The Sixteen. The first disc, music by Bartłomiej Pekieli, was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award. Subsequent discs in the series include *The Blossoming Vine*, music by Gorczycki, and *Helper and Protector*. The fifth disc, music by Marcin Mielczewski, was released in 2017.

Eamonn is a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort. During the Autumn 2020 term, Eamonn was Acting Director of Music - Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford. 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)

## BENJAMIN NEWLOVE – ORGANIST

Benjamin Newlove enjoys a busy schedule as a freelance harpsichordist, organist and pianist based in London, as well as being recently appointed as the Director of Music 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](mailto: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](http://www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk).

**Sopranos** Phoebe Clapham, Alana Clark, Jan Hart, Claire Jones, Philippa Kent, Rachel Lethbridge, Caroline Molloy, Becky Ryland-Jones, Kathryn Strachan, **Emma Wilkins**

**Altos** Thomas Bridges, Joanna Clark, Miriam Crozier, Susan Dean, Moira Fitzgerald, Sally Hughes, Emma Humphries, Sonia Johnson, Alice Shelton

**Tenors** Henry Chapman, Justin Eeles, Nick Entwisle, Andrew Green, Larry Howes, Chris Huggon, Andrew Lang, David Lowick

**Basses** Rick Brooks, Cyril Cleary, Simon Gallie, Andrew Harper, Daniel Jaffé, Jonathan Louth, Antonio Oliveira

**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](mailto:carolelowe@rocketmail.com).

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

Mrs Daphne Barnett	Dr Thomas Kelen	Dr C and Mrs S Robinson
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**NEXT CONCERT**  
**Saturday 17 September 2022**  
**Elgar:** Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands  
**Vaughan Williams:** Three Shakespeare Songs  
**Jonathan Dove:** The Passing of the Year  
**Thomas Tallis Society Choir**  
**with David Owen Norris (piano)**

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