

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Owen Rees *director*

John Taverner MISSA GLORIA TIBI TRINITAS



Saturday 3 August 1996

The Lady Chapel

Ely Cathedral

PROGRAMME

Programme

O nata lux	Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)
Gloria tibi trinitas	chant
Kyrie: Deus creator omnium	chant
Gloria: Missa Gloria tibi trinitas	John Taverner (c. 1490–1545)
Collect	chant
In place of Gradual: Miserere (organ)	William Byrd (1542/3–1623)
Credo: Missa Gloria tibi trinitas	Taverner

INTERVAL of 15 minutes

Salve Regina	Byrd
Preface	chant
Sanctus: Missa Gloria tibi trinitas	Taverner
Pater noster & Pax Domini	chant
Agnus Dei: Missa Gloria tibi trinitas	Taverner

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The Cambridge Taverner Choir
director Owen Rees

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Diana Baumann	Toby Gee	Paul Baumann	James Durran
Josie Dixon	Martin Neill	Finlay Lockie	Frank Salmon
Helen Garrison	Nicholas Perkins	Philip Mills	Gary Snapper
Rachel Godsill	Rupert Preston Bell	Edwin Simpson	Paul Watson
Margaret Simper		Tom Salmon	
Sally Terris		David Thompson	
Tanya Wicks			

The choir is most grateful to the Dean and Chapter of Ely Cathedral for their kind permission to perform in the Lady Chapel.

In June 1986 a group of singers from St Catharine's and other Cambridge colleges was assembled to take part in a special event: the performance of John Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi trinitas* within a reconstruction of Mass for Trinity Sunday according to the Use of Salisbury, sung in the church where Taverner worked: Tattershall in Lincolnshire. The concert was organised by Alastair Harper, and conducted by John Butt. Although no future events were planned at that time, the group—under its original name chosen for this first concert—began to give concerts in Cambridge from the next academic year onwards, under the directorship of Owen Rees and administered by Gary Snapper, and the regular series of Cambridge concerts has continued ever since. The Cambridge Taverner Choir marks its tenth anniversary—and concludes its commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Taverner's death—with tonight's performance of the same Taverner Mass, and indeed a number of tonight's singers took part in the original concert. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of our extremely loyal audience.

Tudor music has remained one of the choir's principal specialisms, but the repertoire has always been wide, with particular emphasis on music from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Portugal and Spain. In 1990 the choir first performed the newly-transcribed Portuguese repertory which formed a principal subject of Owen Rees's research, and there followed in 1991 an extremely successful tour of Portugal on which this repertory was performed in its original context; after this came a broadcast of the Portuguese repertory on BBC Radio and the release of the choir's first CD recording in 1993. The choir has just returned from a tour of Italian Switzerland and Italy, performing music from Italy, Spain, and England, and its next season of concerts in Jesus College Chapel takes as a theme 'Music from the great port cities of Europe, c. 1600': Lisbon, London, Seville, Antwerp, and Venice. The first concert—on Sunday 13 October—will include Cardoso's six-voice *Missa Paradisi portas*.

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The largest-scale works in the surviving output of John Taverner (a surviving output which is small by continental standards) are three six-voice Masses which adopt a grand florid style: *Corona spinea*, *Gloria tibi trinitas*, and *O Michael*. All three are constructed upon a chant cantus firmus placed in a single voice (although quite frequently imitated in the other parts) and usually in longer note-values than those employed by the remaining voices. The chant from which the *Missa Gloria tibi trinitas* takes its name was to become the basis for a whole repertory of textless pieces which had its origins in the four-voice setting of the words 'In nomine Domini' in the Benedictus of Taverner's Mass, where the chant—beginning with a rise and fall of a third—can be heard in the Mean (that is, the second-highest voice). We perform this chant—which would have been heard towards the beginning of the celebration of the feast of the Holy Trinity, as antiphon to the first psalm at First Vespers—near the opening of the concert.

Although the melodic and rhythmic writing in *Gloria tibi trinitas* is often extraordinarily virtuosic—especially at moments of climax such as the rising scales setting 'Amen' at the end of the Gloria—there is a remarkable degree of variety within the Mass as a whole, and among the sections for reduced numbers of voices there occur passages of expressive simplicity: not only the famous 'In nomine' just mentioned, but also for example the four-voice setting of 'miserere nobis' in the second Agnus Dei. The scoring ranges from duets to motivically dense writing involving all six voices, and one hears a wide variety of vocal combinations, including the striking 'gapped' texture of treble and bass or—in the 'Crucifixus' section of the Credo—two trebles in 'gimel' and a bass. Although the impression is often one of melodic spontaneity and variety, there are prominent examples of Taverner's love of sequence, where a motive will be repeated many times in one or more voice parts; some of the most extended examples are in the bass, as at 'de celis' in the Credo where a rising sequence covers the whole range of the voice.

In tonight's concert we perform sufficient plainchant to give some impression of the effect that festal polyphony of this type would originally have had within the celebration of Mass. Taverner's device of employing the same basic idea for the opening of each 'movement' of the Mass becomes all the more telling when the 'movements' are thus separated. We have also included Byrd's setting of the great Marian antiphon *Salve regina* to reflect the architectural context in which this concert takes place.

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