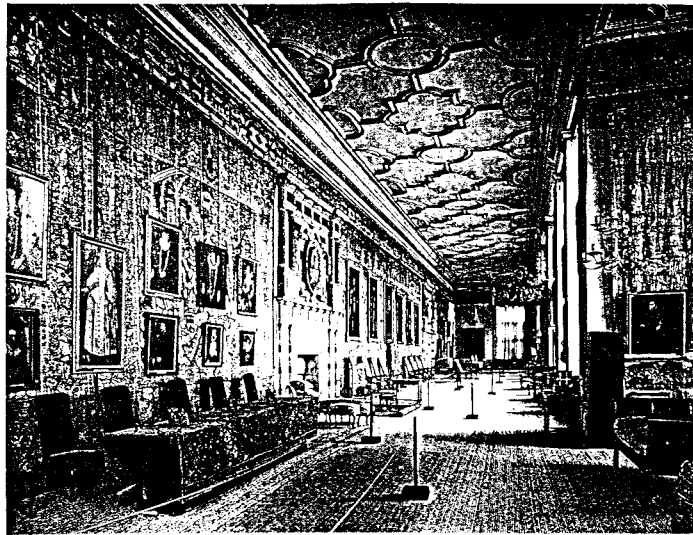


# **CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR**

*Owen Rees – director*

## **SPEM IN ALIUM**



**Polychoral works by  
Tallis, Victoria, Palestrina  
Duarte Lobo, Gombert,  
and Guerrero**

**Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge  
21 June 1998  
8.15 p.m.**

# PROGRAMME

Salve regina (8 voices) Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

Missa Cantate Domino (8 voices) Duarte Lobo (c. 1565–1646)

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Spem in alium (40 voices) Thomas Tallis (c. 1500–1585)

INTERVAL

Salve regina (12 voices) Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina  
(1525/6–1594)

Gloria, from Missa Salve regina Victoria

Lugebat David Absalon (8 voices) Nicolas Gombert? (c. 1490–c. 1560)

Duo seraphim (12 voices) Francisco Guerrero (1528–1599)

## **The Cambridge Taverner Choir**

*Director - Owen Rees*

*Sopranos* - Diana Baumann, Julia Caddick, Josie Dixon,  
Helen Garrison, Rachel Godsill, Hester Higton, Caroline Preston Bell, Sally Terris  
*Altos* - Toby Gee, Simon Godsill, Nicholas Perkins, Rupert Preston Bell  
*Tenors* - Paul Baumann, Philip Mills, Tom Salmon, David Thompson,  
Micahel Thompson, Mark Wilderspin  
*Basses* - James Durran, Piers Master, Frank Salmon, Gary Snapper, Paul Watson

We are most grateful to the Master, Dean of Chapel, and Fellows of Jesus College for their permission to perform in the Chapel.

## TEXTS

**Salve Regina**, misericordiae vita dulcedo et spes nostra, salve. Ad te clamamus exsules filii Evae. Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes, in hac lachrimarum valle. Eia ergo advocata nostra illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui nobis post hoc exilium ostende. O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.

*Hail, Queen of mercy; hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. We cry to you, exiled children of Eve. We send up our sighs to you, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Therefore, as our advocate, turn your merciful eyes towards us and, after this life of exile, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb. O merciful, O holy, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

**Spem in alium** nunquam habui praeter in te, Deus Israel, qui irascaris, et propitius eris, et omnia peccata hominum in tribulatione dimittis. Domine Deus, creator caeli et terrae, respice humilitatem nostram.

*I have never put my trust in any but thee, O God of Israel, who will be angry and yet become gracious again, and who forgives all the sins of suffering men. O Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, look upon our humility.*

**Lugebat David Absalom**, pius pater filium, tristis senex puerum; heu me fili mi Absalon, quis mihi det ut ego pro te moriar, O fili mi Absalon? Rex autem David filium cooperto flebat capite. Porro rex operuit caput suum, et clamabat voce magna: fili mi Absalon.

*David mourned for Absalom, a pious father for his son, a sad old man for his boy: Alas, my son Absalom, would that I might die for you, O my son Absalom. King David wept with covered head for his son. Then the King uncovered his head, and cried with a great voice: my son Absalom!*

**Duo Seraphim** clamabant alter ad alterum: Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth: Plena est omnis terra gloria eius. Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in coelo: Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt. Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Plena est omnis terra gloria eius. Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto: Plena est omnis terra gloria eius. Amen.

*Two seraphim cried out, one to the other: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts: All the earth is full of his glory. There are three who give testimony in heaven: The Father, The Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. Holy, Holy, Holy.... Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.... Amen.*

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## Singers in *Spem in alium*

- Choir 1:** Helen Garrison, Hester Higton, Edwin Simpson, Tom Salmon, Paul Watson  
**Choir 2:** Andrea Cockerton, Josie Dixon, Simon Godsill, Michael Thompson, Dan Jordan  
**Choir 3:** Caroline Preston Bell, Lora Sansun, Nick Perkins, Philip Mills, Michael Probert  
**Choir 4:** Bryony Lang, Julia Caddick, Rupert Preston Bell, Keri Dexter, Gary Snapper  
**Choir 5:** Tanya Wicks, Katy Cooper, Barbara Shepherd, Mark Wilderspin, Michael Surcombe  
**Choir 6:** Sally Terris, Sarah Probert, David Thompson, Paul Arnold, Frank Salmon  
**Choir 7:** Diana Baumann, Jane Christie, Paul Baumann, Piers Master, Pegram Harrison  
**Choir 8:** Rachel Godsill, Celia Springdale, Toby Gee, Sam Laughton, James Durran

\* \* \* \* \*

The most famous polychoral repertoires of the late Renaissance and early Baroque are those from Venice, and in particular the music associated with St Mark's. However, composers in many parts of Europe explored the possibilities of writing for several choirs. In Rome, the polychoral works of Palestrina (a relatively little-known part of his output) stood at the head of a vast polychoral repertory produced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: this is music which reflects the renewed confidence of the reformed Catholic Church, the desire to move listeners to piety through splendid and affecting music, and also the need (emphasised during the Counter-Reformation period) to present the text clearly (the texture in these works is often chordal). Palestrina's three-choir setting of the famous Marian antiphon *Salve regina* begins with relatively dark and subdued (but highly expressive) sections for each choir in turn, but builds to a climax of great power with all three choirs combined. It seems likely that Victoria (long based in Rome, and certainly acquainted with Palestrina) knew the piece, since there is a notable similarity between the way Palestrina sets the words 'O clemens' and Victoria's setting of 'O dulcis' in his famous eight-voice *Salve regina*. The two settings allow a fascinating comparison between these two composers' approaches, often held to be so clearly contrasted. Tonight's programme also provides the opportunity to hear how Victoria used his own music when writing a 'parody' Mass: we perform the 'Gloria' from his own Mass based on the eight-voice *Salve regina*.

Rome may have provided an influential model for the cultivation of polychoral textures in other Catholic countries, including Portugal. Tonight's is only the second modern performance of the eight-voice *Missa Cantate Domino* by the Portuguese Duarte Lobo (*mestre de capela* at Lisbon Cathedral). Perhaps the most striking aspect of the piece is the juxtaposition of passages in the stately note-values of the *stile antico* with bursts of declamation in crotchets and quavers (which first occurs in the 'Christe').

The most famous polychoral work of the entire period is Tallis's *Spem in alium*, using 40 voices. There is some evidence, albeit anecdotal and dating from the 17th century, that the composition of *Spem in alium* was prompted by a spirit of competition. In 1567 the composer Alessandro Striggio (1535–1592) visited London, and apparently performed there his forty-part motet *Ecce beatam lucem*. According to our 17th-century anecdote, an unnamed Duke was moved to ask whether no English composer could match this achievement. Tallis's motet was—supposedly—the result, and since we are told that the first performance took place in the long gallery of Arundel House, the London home of the Early of Arundel, the unnamed Duke of the story was most likely the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Howard, an eminent patron of music who was son-in-law to Arundel.

Tallis scored his motet for eight five-voice choirs (each made up of treble, mean, contratenor, tenor, and bass), which sometimes sing as units or paired with the adjacent choir to produce antiphonal dialogues (as at 'Domine Deus') and sometimes divide into their constituent parts to build vast series of imitative entries (as at the start of the piece, where the entries move from choir 1 to choir 8). The most dramatic moments of all are the chordal entries of all forty parts after rests, at the repeated plea 'respice humilitatem nostram' which concludes the motet.

A piece of extraordinary declamatory power is the eight-voice *Lugebat David Absalon*, the text of which describes King David's mourning for his son Absalon. The setting exploits the rhetorical device of insistent repetition (for example the statements of 'O fili mi' which end the first part). The music of the first part is a *contrafactum* of the chanson

*Je prens congie* by Nicolas Gombert, although we cannot be certain who made the adaptation or composed the music of the second part; nor, given these uncertainties, can we know whether the work as it stands was a lament for a particular figure.

A colourful use of polychoral textures to 'paint' the meaning of the words is found in Guerrero's *Duo seraphim*: At the opening, the sopranos of choirs 2 and 3 portray the two seraphim calling one to another, while at 'tres sunt' ('there are three') these sopranos are joined by a tenor. A musical 'pun' still typical during the Baroque is that at 'plena est omnis terra gloria tua' ('the whole earth is filled with Thy glory') the whole ensemble of 12 voices enters.

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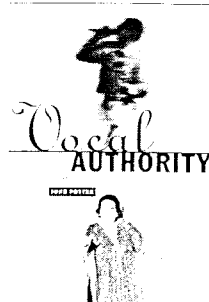
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