

*CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR*

*Spem in Alium*

*Music of prayer and hope*

*St John's College Chapel, Cambridge*  
Saturday 30 October 2004  
8.00pm

## PROGRAMME

Salvator mundi	Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)
In ieiunio et fletu	Tallis
In manus tuas	John Sheppard (c. 1515–1558)
Ad Dominum cum tribularer	William Byrd (1539/40–1623)

INTERVAL of 5 minutes

Miserere mei Deus	Byrd
Infelix ego	Byrd
Hear my prayer	Henry Purcell (1659–1695)
Remember not, Lord, our offences	Purcell
Lord, how long wilt thou be angry	Purcell

INTERVAL of 15 minutes

Spem in alium nunquam habui	Tallis
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### *The Cambridge Taverner Choir*

Director: Owen Rees

*sopranos:* Helen Arnold, Diana Baumann, Josie Dixon, Hester Higton,  
Caroline Preston Bell, Louise Reid, Sally Terris, Tanya Wicks

*altos:* Janet Bullard, Rachel Howells, Peter Smith, Zara Wright

*tenors:* Paul Baumann, Mark Dourish, Philip Mills, Tom Salmon, David Thomson

*basses:* Chris Jordinson, Frank Salmon, Gary Snapper, Paul Watson

### Performers in *Spem in alium*

<b>Choir 1</b>	<b>Choir 2</b>	<b>Choir 3</b>	<b>Choir 4</b>
Helen Ashby	Kate Ashby	Caroline Preston Bell	Louise Reid
Rachel Howells	Josie Dixon	Helen Zimmer	Barbara Tuchel
Edwin Simpson	Joe Harper	Peter Ellis	Rupert Preston Bell
Tom Salmon	Nick Marston	Philip Mills	Paul Baumann
Paul Watson	Rupert Beale	Tom Faulkner	Gary Snapper
<b>Choir 5</b>	<b>Choir 6</b>	<b>Choir 7</b>	<b>Choir 8</b>
Tanya Wicks	Sally Terris	Diana Baumann	Helen Arnold
Rachel Beale	Morag Buchell	Hester Higton	Jan Bullard
Zara Wright	David Thomson	Peter Smith	Ben Ryder
Mark Wilderspin	Malcolm Wood	Mark Dourish	Will Hale
Chris Jordinson	Frank Salmon	Sam Queen	Stephen Jones

The Cambridge Taverner Choir is a member of the National Federation of Music Societies.  
Our thanks to the Master, Fellows, Dean, and Director of Music of St John's College for their kind  
permission to use the chapel.

Tonight we perform settings of prayer texts by some of the greatest English composers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The concert opens and ends with works by Thomas Tallis, all probably composed towards the end of his career, during the reign of Elizabeth I. In *Salvator mundi* Tallis repeats the whole opening section for emphasis, before turning to a more declamatory style at 'auxiliare nobis' ('help us'). His *In jejunio et fletu* reflects its penitential text through a remarkable harmonic waywardness, constantly shifting key in disconcerting fashion until the closing section. In contrast, Sheppard creates a sense of calm repose in his beautiful four-voice setting of the Compline responsory *In manus tuas*.

We end the opening group of pieces with the first of two monumental motets by Tallis's pupil William Byrd in tonight's programme: the eight-voice *Ad Dominum cum tribularer*. Both this and *Infelix ego* recall earlier English traditions of vocal scoring by using the high treble voice: in the case of *Ad Dominum* there are two such voices. In its extraordinarily rich and almost continuously dense imitative textures, its muscular disjunct lines, and the frequently pungent dissonances, *Ad Dominum* likewise recalls many motets of the previous generation of English composers. *Infelix ego* is a more overtly dramatic and varied piece, responding vividly to the anguished meditation upon Psalm 50 by Savonarola which forms its text. During the opening sections of the motet the writer laments his sinfulness, but gradually gathers courage, answering in the negative his own question 'shall I despair?' ('desperabo?'), and finally daring to address God in the opening words of the psalm (the climax of the piece): 'Miserere mei Deus' ('Have mercy upon me O God'). Here Byrd refers to famous setting of this Psalm by Josquin Desprez, and he includes the same quotation in his much simpler five-voice setting of these words, *Miserere mei Deus*.

Henry Purcell's justly famous eight-voice setting of *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee* is all that survives of what was apparently intended to be a longer work. This fragment is the last item in an autograph manuscript in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, a manuscript which also contains the exquisite *Lord, how long wilt thou be angry*. It is built from a series of short contrasted sections to create a powerfully rhetorical treatment of this prayer, with dramatic homophony for 'Help us, O God', creeping chromatic lines at 'and be merciful unto our sins', and a transformation of mood—with triple time and a change to the major key—for the final chorus 'So we that are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture shall give thee thanks for evermore'.

Tallis's 40-voice motet *Spem in alium* is the most extraordinary work of the Tudor age. It may have been written in order to out-do the 40-voice *Ecce beatam lucem* of the Italian composer Alessandro Striggio, apparently performed when the composer visited London in 1567. A seventeenth-century source tells us that an unnamed Duke, hearing Striggio's motet, 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. The piece begins with a vast cascade of entries of the simple opening themes ('Spem in alium nunquam habui', and 'præter in te Deus Israel') passing down the voices from choir 1 to choir 8, and after the dramatic double-choir and then full statements of 'præter in te' Tallis mirrors the opening with entries of 'qui irasceris' ascending from choir 8 to choir 3, followed by a calmer double-choir statement of 'et omnia peccata hominum' ('and all the sins of mankind'), once again concluding with a dramatic statement of these words by all forty singers. From this point Tallis pairs the choirs together in grand dialogues, for the phrases 'in tribulatione dimittis' and 'Domine Deus, creator cæli et terræ' ('Lord God, creator of heaven and earth'). There is a general pause before all forty voices enter together to begin the final plea, 'respice humilitatem nostram' ('look upon our humility'), which is then heard again after another dramatic silence.

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**Owen Rees** began his academic and conducting career as Organ Scholar at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, studying with Peter le Huray and Iain Fenlon. After a period as College Lecturer in Music at St Peter's College and St Edmund Hall, Oxford, he joined the Music Department at the University of Surrey. In 1997 he returned to Oxford, where he is Fellow in Music and Organist at the Queen's College, Lecturer at Somerville College, and Lecturer in the Faculty of Music. His published studies include work on musical sources and repertoires from Coimbra, and on the music of, for example, Francisco Guerrero and William Byrd. His work as a scholar has consistently informed his work as a performer. He has conducted at festivals in the UK, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, and the Netherlands. Choirs under his direction have released CD recordings on the Herald, Hyperion, and Unicorn Kanchana labels, to consistently high critical acclaim.

### ***The Choir***

The Cambridge Taverner Choir is one of Britain's leading early music chamber choirs. Like The Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen, the choir emerged from the Oxford and Cambridge choral tradition and has built a reputation for powerful and expressive performances of Renaissance polyphony. Since reaching the shortlist for the Gramophone Early Music Award in 1994, the choir has received acclaim for its concerts and recordings of Renaissance choral music. In 2002, the choir performed at the York Early Music Festival and released its fourth CD, *Music from Renaissance Portugal Vol.2* which was voted one of the top ten CDs of 2002 by the Daily Telegraph. In March 2003 it appeared at the Oslo Church Music Festival to critical acclaim. In addition to appearances throughout Britain and abroad, the choir regularly performs to enthusiastic audiences in the beautiful church of Little St Mary's, Cambridge.

## **NEXT CONCERT**

***in the series***

### **Nativitas**

#### ***The Christmas story through Renaissance music***

***Including motets by Sheppard, Tallis, Guerrero, Victoria, de Monte & Praetorius***

**Sunday 5 December 2004, 7.45 pm. Little St Mary's Church**

*If you would like to receive further information about concerts and are not currently on the choir's mailing list, please speak to someone at the desk at the back of the church. If you would like to receive notification of future events by e-mail (even if you are currently on the mailing list), please fill in the sheet at the desk.*

The choir's CD recordings *Music from Renaissance Portugal II* (including Duarte Lobo's two-choir *Missa Cantate Domino*) and *The Song the Virgine Soong* (Christmas Music from Tudor England) are on sale at the back of church, price £13.