

THE OLD SCIENCE OF SOUND: 450 years of **Tallis & Byrd's** *Cantiones Sacrae* (1575)

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At the *National Centre for Early Music*, Walmgate.

Tuesday 28th October, 7:30pm.

Catterwall is an ensemble and charity dedicated to sounding the music of the English Renaissance, with a particular focus on vocal practices from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries (www.catterwall.org).

Artistic Director — Benjamin Maloney

Benjamin is a doctoral researcher at the University of York, specialising in the intersection of English historical linguistics and musical performance practice. He holds a master's degree in keyboard performance from the Royal Northern College of Music and serves as a Musicality judge for the British Association of Barbershop Singers.

Academic Advisor — Michael Winter

Michael Winter is a musicologist and editor of early music, nearing the completion of his doctoral studies at Newcastle University. His research examines fragmentary works from the Eton Choirbook, using the reconstruction process to study fifteenth century compositional decision-making and contemporary reconstruction practices.

Trebles — **Isabel Clarke, Amy Walker**

Meanes — **Sophie Mahar, Sam Hubbard**

Contratenors — **Jacob Carter, Matt Friend**

Tenors — **Angus Champion, Nick Bryant**

Basses — **Michael Winter, Matthew Pandya**

Viols — **Holly Lawson, Sue Perutz, Daniel Saleeb, Fintan O'Hare**

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-1585)

Very little is known about Tallis's early life. He was probably born around 1505 and first appears in records in the 1530s as organist of the Benedictine priory at Dover. When the priory was dissolved in 1535, he moved on to Waltham Abbey, Essex which was subsequently dissolved only a few years later. After short appointments at St Mary-at-Hill in London and the Augustinian abbey at Canterbury, Tallis joined the Chapel Royal in the early 1540s. He remained there for the rest of his career, serving four successive monarchs: Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. Tallis's long service meant that he witnessed (and had to adapt to) the rapid changes of the English Reformation. He provided music for both the Latin rites of the Catholic church and the new English liturgy of the Reformed church. His ability to move between these traditions helped secure his position and reputation in unstable times.

William Byrd (c. 1540-1643)

Byrd was born around 1540, probably in London, into a musical family. One of his brothers, John, was a singer, and another, Symond, worked as an organist. Byrd himself became a fine player from an early age, and his reputation as a gifted organist remained with him throughout his life. Byrd's first major post came in 1563 when he was appointed organist and choirmaster at Lincoln Cathedral. It was a demanding job, and the Cathedral Chapter records show that his time there was not without tension: he was sometimes fined for neglecting his duties or for taking unauthorised leave, and the clergy also complained that his music was too elaborate for services. Nevertheless, his

talent was clear, and in 1572 he was called to London to join the Chapel Royal, one of the highest musical appointments in the land. At court, Byrd thrived. Alongside Tallis he received the protection and favour of Queen Elizabeth I, and the two composers were granted a monopoly on music printing in 1575. Yet Byrd's Catholic faith often brought him into conflict with the authorities. He was fined repeatedly for failing to attend Anglican services, and his associations with known Catholic families placed him under suspicion. Despite this, he was shielded by powerful patrons and continued to enjoy royal favour. In the 1590s Byrd moved with his family to Essex, where he lived in relative seclusion but remained active as a composer. He died there in 1623 at about eighty years of age and was buried in the parish churchyard, though no gravestone survives.

John Mundy (c. 1555-1630)

Mundy, son of the composer William Mundy, was part of a distinguished musical family. Born around 1555, he was educated as a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral in London, where his father was employed. By 1585 he had taken the degree of Bachelor of Music at Oxford, and later, in 1624, proceeded Doctor of Music. Mundy spent most of his career at St George's Chapel, Windsor, where he served as organist and choirmaster. In 1585 he succeeded John Marbeck in this post and remained there until his death. He was also appointed a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, which placed him among the leading professional musicians of his generation. Mundy died in 1630 and was buried in St George's Chapel, Windsor, where he had served for nearly half a century.

***Emendemus in Melius* (1575)**

William Byrd (c. 1540–1632)

Emendemus in melius is a powerful reflection on repentance and the fragility of human life. The text, used as the Fourth Responsory for Matins on the First Sunday of Lent in the Roman Rite, carries a clear warning: leaving repentance until the last moment may be too late. During the striking opening, the first word ('let us amend') is sung in plain, simple harmony, confronting the listener with the possibility of being judged unrighteous at the moment of death.

Emendemus in melius quae	<i>Let us amend what we have</i>
ignoranter peccavimus,	<i>transgressed through ignorance,</i>
ne subito praeoccupati die mortis	<i>lest, should the day of death suddenly</i>
quaeramus spatium poenitentiae	<i>overtake us, we seek time for</i>
et invenire non possumus.	<i>repentance and cannot find it.</i>
Attende, Domine, et miserere,	<i>Hearken, O Lord, and have mercy,</i>
quia peccavimus tibi.	<i>for we have sinned against thee.</i>
Adiuva nos, Deus salutaris noster, et	<i>Help us, God of our salvation, and,</i>
propter honorem nominis tui	<i>for the glory of thy name,</i>
libera nos.	<i>deliver us.</i>

Reading from **Anthony Munday's *The English Romaine Lyfe*** (1590)

Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter (1567) **Thomas Tallis** (c. 1505–1585)

Among the few collections by Tallis to appear in print during his lifetime is a series of eight metrical psalm tunes and a *Veni Creator*. These settings are very different from the elaborate Latin motets of the *Cantiones*. They were designed

for everyday use, setting English translations of the psalms in a clear, one-note-per-syllable style that reflected the new Protestant directives laid out in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It is uncertain whether Tallis composed the tunes specifically for Parker's *Psalter* or whether these melodies were repurposed without Tallis's permission or knowledge. The third tune later inspired Vaughan Williams's famous *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, while the eighth is a hymn tune still sung today, known as the 'Tallis Canon'.

Man blest no dout: who walkth not out: in wicked mens affayres:

And standth no day: in sinners way: nor sittth in scornors chayres:

But hath his will in Gods law still: this law to loue aright:

And will him vse: on it to muse: to kepe it day and night.

Let God aryse in maiestie: and scatred be his foes:

Yea flee they all, hys sight in face: to hym which hatefull goes,

As smoke is driuen: and comth to nought: repulse their tyranny:

At face of fire: as waxe doth melt: gods face the bad mought fly.

Reading from *The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ* (Douay–Rheims, 1582)

In manus tuas (1575)

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

In manus tuas is a setting of Christ's final words on the Cross: 'into your hands I commend my spirit'. The text is often heard during the service of Compline, and with its repeated first-person 'I/me', draws the listener directly into the scene, inviting them to witness Christ's final moments. Tallis heightens the emotional effect with harmonies that seem to ache with sorrow. The music

builds to a repeated close marking the death of Christ, with the striking clashes (or ‘false-relations’) placing the auditor in a position of profound grief.

In manus tuas, Domine,
commendo spiritum meum.
Redemisti me Domine,
Deus veritatis.

*Into thy hands
I commend my spirit:
thou hast redeemed me,
O Lord, the God of truth.*

Siderum rector (1575)

William Byrd (c. 1540–1632)

Siderum rector is a hymn for Matins (morning prayer), associated with the feast of the Holy Women. Its opening words, ‘ruler of the stars’, picture Christ enthroned as judge, yet also as one who can show mercy and pardon. Byrd, like Tallis, was skilled at adapting hymn texts to maintain a narrative line, here setting stanzas from *Virgines proles*. The listener is confronted at once with Christ’s majesty, before the music turns toward humility and the hope of grace.

Siderum rector, Deus alme, nostris
Parce iam culpis, vita remittens:
Quo tibi puri resonemus almum
Pectoris hymnum.

*Ruler of the stars, gracious God,
Spare our sins, pardon our offences:
So that with a pure heart we may sing
Unto thee a gracious song.*

Gloria patri,
genitaeque proli,
Et tibi, compar utriusque semper,
Spiritus alme, Dus unus omni
Tempore saeculi. Amen.

*Glory be to the Father,
and to his begotten offspring,
And to thee, always equal to both,
Gracious spirit, one God
For all eternity. Amen.*

Fantasy for viols

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

This work circulated widely in the sixteenth century as a vernacular anthem under several English texts — most famously *I call and cry* — but is best and most authoritatively known in its Latin form *O sacrum convivium*, published in the *Cantiones* of 1575. The Latin version likely dates from the mid-1550s, but the music itself appears to have begun life as an instrumental fantasia.

Reading from **Anthony Munday's** *The English Romaine Lyfe* (1590)

Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter (1567) **Thomas Tallis** (c. 1505–1585)

*Why fumeth in sight: the Gentils spyght: in fury raging stout,
why takth in hand: the people fond: vayne thinges to bring about,
The kyngs aryse: the Lordes deuyse: in counsayles met therto:
Agaynst the Lord: with false accord: agaynst hys Christ they go.*

*O come in one, to prayse the lord, & him recount: our stay & [w]ealth,
All harty ioyes, let vs record: to this strong rocke: our Lord of health.
Hys face wyth prayse: let vs preuent, his factes in sight, let vs denounce,
Joyne we I say: in glad assent: our psalmes & hymnes, let vs pronounce.*

Reading from *The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ* (Douay–Rheims, 1582)

Evening Service in Latin

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

Tallis's settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* are preserved only in the Baldwin Partbooks. While it survives incomplete, the Tenor part can be

reconstructed without too much trouble, due to Tallis's use of structural devices (such as imitation) throughout. The surviving music makes clear that they were conceived as a pair, with matching openings and a shared concision of style. While it is common for settings of the 'Mag and Nun' to pair today, this was much rarer in Tallis's time; the two texts were only formally paired in the same service with the publication of the first *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) in 1549. A Latin version of the BCP was published in 1560 for use in the collegiate chapters of the Universities and Eton and Winchester Colleges. Perhaps it was this translation that inspired Tallis to write this setting. Or perhaps it was written earlier, in the 1550s, when Latin worship was briefly restored under Mary Tudor. Musically, the settings are restrained and transparent. Tallis avoids elaborate counterpoint, instead favouring short points of imitation, keeping the text clear and direct. Their inclusion in Baldwin's manuscripts highlights the scribe's instinct to preserve unusual and distinctive music and reminds us of Tallis's ability to adapt his style to the shifting religious demands of his age.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name. And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him. He hath shewed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy. As he spoke to our fathers: to Abraham

and to his seed for ever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

20 MINUTE INTERVAL

De lamentacione

John Mundy (c. 1555–1630)

Despite its title, Mundy's 'Lamentations' is not actually a setting of the biblical Lamentations of Jeremiah. Instead, it is a prayer against schism from *De Veritate Astronomiae* by Jean de Bruges. To this text, Mundy adds the opening *De lamentacione* sequence, verses from Zephaniah 1:14, Psalm 121 (122), as well as Hebrew letters. The result is a curious patchwork that does not fit the normal liturgical pattern. Why Mundy chose this mixture is uncertain. He may have wanted his piece to sit alongside the famous English *Lamentations* by Tallis, White, and Byrd. The theme of a schism may have carried resonance to recusant Catholic communities in England. There is, however, no evidence for Mundy himself was a recusant Catholic or that his music circulated in Catholic circles (for example, Mundy's works do not appear in any of the Paston

manuscripts or in the Sadler Partbooks). It is more likely that this piece was intended for private performance, but we can only speculate for whom.

De lamentacione Jeremie prophete. Daleth. Juxta est dies Domini, [juxta] est et velox nimis, rogate que ad pacem sunt, Jerusalem, et ecclesiam iam dolentem confortate, iam errantem informate, iam divisam integrate, naufragantem ad portum reducite, ne fiat illud schisma magnum quod praeambulum erit Antechristi. Lamed. In cuius ad ventum de ecclesia, verificabitur illud jeremie prophete, omnes porte eius destructe, sacerdotes eius gementes, virgines eius squalide, et ipsa oppressa amaritudine, tunc petri navicula schismatico turbine diutius agitata, dissipatur in proximo submergenda.

From the lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet. Daleth. The day of the Lord is at hand, it is near and exceeding swift. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee; and comfort thy Church that is now grieving; instruct it, that is now in error; put it back together that is now divided; lead it back to port that is now shipwrecked, so that this should not lead to a great schism, which will herald the coming of the Antichrist. Lamed. At whose coming the saying of the prophet Jeremiah about the church shall be made true: all her gates are ruined, her priests groan, her virgins are in rags, and she is overwhelmed with bitterness. Then the little ship of Peter, tossed about for too long in the storm of the schism, is split apart, ready soon to sink.

Reading from **Anthony Munday's *The English Romaine Lyfe*** (1590)

Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter (1567) **Thomas Tallis** (c. 1505–1585)

Euen like the hunted hynd: the water brokes desire:

Even thus my soule: that faintie is: To thee would fayne aspire,

My soule did thirst to God: to God of lyfe and grace:

It sayd euen thus: when shall I come, to see Gods liuely face.

Expend O Lord: my plaint of worde: in grieve that I do make,

My musing mynd: recount most kynd: geue eare for thyne owne sake,

O harke my grone, my cryeng mone, my king, my God thou art,

Let me not stray, from thee away: to thee I pray in hart.

Reading from ***The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*** (Douay–Rheims, 1582)

Mihi autem nimis (1575)

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

Mihi autem nimis sets verse from Psalm 138 (139) that had long been used as an introit for celebrating the Apostles. The motet might also invoke the Harrowing of Hell, portraying the righteous dead just before they encounter the 'light' anticipated with Christ's arrival.

Mihi autem nimis honorificati sunt
amici tui, Deus,
nimis confortatus
est principatus eorum.

*But to me thy friends, O God,
are made exceedingly honourable:
their principality
is exceedingly strengthened.*

[*Candidi*] *facti sunt Nazarei* (1575)

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

Candidi facti sunt Nazarei sets a text associated with feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists, and with Easter. The words dwell on the colour white, a central symbol in the Book of Revelation where the righteous all appear in shining, white robes. In this motet, purity and salvation are at the forefront, though the text itself comes not from Revelation but from the Book of Lamentations (4:7), where Nazarites are ‘purer than snow’. The Nazarites were figures known for their strict vows of devotion. During the Easter season, those baptised on Holy Saturday wore white robes for a week, removing them at Vespers on the following Saturday. When this respond was sung, the imagery of the Nazarites could be understood as a reflection on the newcomers’ purity, freshly clothed in baptismal grace. Tallis anchors the setting in tradition by weaving the Sarum chant melody into the tenor line as a *cantus firmus* (steady plainchant melody).

Candidi facti sunt nazarei eius.

Radiant white became his Nazarites.

Alleluia.

Alleluia.

Splendorem dei dederunt. Alleluia.

They gave splendour to God. Alleluia.

Et sicut lac coagulati sunt. Alleluia.

And are curdled like milk. Alleluia.

Fantazia 4. Voc. (1611)

William Byrd (c. 1540–1632)

Byrd described his final publication, *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets* (1611), as his *ultimum vale* (‘last farewell’). Among its vocal works he included two instrumental fantasias in four and six parts. This *Fantazia à 4*, played here by a consort of viols, displays Byrd’s late mastery of the form. A flowing opening motif blossoms into counterpoint before being interrupted by jaunty off-beat

rhythms, recalling the lively accost to ‘let the saints rejoice’ in Byrd’s anthem *Arise Lord into Thy Rest*. A second motif trips over itself in a lazy back-time, only to yield to a third that surges forward in a rush of quavers. An inside joke amongst viol players comes in the sudden general pause — a moment to find your fellow players if you have strayed before the final rush to the finish.

Reading from **Anthony Munday’s *The English Romaine Lyfe*** (1590)

Tunes for Archbishop Parker’s Psalter (1567) **Thomas Tallis** (c. 1505–1585)

*Why bragst in malice hie, O thou in mischief stout,
Gods goodness yet is nye, all day to me no doubt,
Thy tongue to muse all euill, it doth it selfe in vre:
As rasor sharpe to spill, all guile it doth procure.*

*God graunt with grace, he vs imbrace: in gentle part: blesse he our hart,
with louing face: shyne he in place: his mercies all: on vs to fall:
That we thy way: may know al day: while we do saile: this world so fraile
Thy healthes reward: is nye declard: as playne as eye, all Gentils spy.*

Reading from ***The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ*** (Douay–Rheims, 1582)

In ieunio et fletu (1575)

Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

In ieunio et fletu sets a penitential text from the Book of Joel (2:17), used in Lent, and particularly on Ash Wednesday. Its text describes the fasting and weeping of priests in intercession, drawing the listener into an atmosphere of solemnity and gravity. One hears the influence of the one-syllable-per-note style, yet within this constraint Tallis creates powerful imitative polyphony, enriched by colourful harmonic twists.

In ieiunio et fletu	<i>In fasting and weeping</i>
orabant sacerdotes:	<i>the priests prayed:</i>
Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo,	<i>Spare, O Lord, spare thy people,</i>
et ne des hereditatem tuam	<i>and give not thine inheritance</i>
in perditionem.	<i>to perdition.</i>
Inter vestibulum et altare	<i>Between the porch and the altar</i>
plorabant sacerdotes, dicentes:	<i>the priests wept, saying:</i>
Parce populo tuo.	<i>Spare thy people.</i>

Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter (1567) Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–1585)

*Come holy ghost eternall God, which doost from God procede,
the father first, and eke the Sonne, one God as we do rede.*

*Thou art O sprite: the comforter, In woe and hard distresse:
The heauenly gift: of God so highe, Which tongue cannot expresse.*

THE END

Manuscripts and printed books containing items performed in this programme can be viewed in a **public exhibition** at the **York Minster Library and Archives** (Old Palace, Dean's Park, YO1 7JQ) **until the end of November**. Many thanks to the *Society for Renaissance Studies* (SRS), *The Company of Merchant Taylors in the City of York*, the University of York's *Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies* (CREMS), and other generous donors for making this concert project possible.