

PALESTRINA STABAT MATER ESSENCE OF THE RENAISSANCE

Choral Music of the English
Italian and Spanish Renaissance

AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER CHOIR

Directed by Douglas Lawrence

During the 16th century, much of the Italian peninsula was under Spanish rule, either directly or through pro-Spanish governors. At that time to speak of a discrete country called Italy would have seemed meaningless. ‘Italy’ remained – if we may quote a 19th-century statesman’s contemptuous verdict – ‘only a geographical expression.’ True enough in terms of political autonomy. More than 400 years later, though, we can discern differences (artistically fruitful differences at that) separating Italian and Spanish approaches to music.

Among Italian musicians, sacred and secular composition were neither divorced from one another nor even uneasy bedfellows. Those who spent most of their lives serving the church (such as Palestrina) still produced secular work, while those esteemed primarily for their secular output (such as the madrigalist Luca Marenzio) felt obliged to prove their skill in purveying sacred material also.

In Spain proper, the situation was altogether different. Of the three most celebrated composers from 16th-century Spain, two – Tomás Luis de Victoria and Cristobál de Morales – seem never to have attempted secular composition. The third, Francisco Guerrero, did essay it; but that is not why he is remembered. His chief contributions to music, like theirs, belong strictly to the liturgical sphere. All three masters attained a slow-burning fervency of utterance, the musical counterpart to Zurbarán’s devotional paintings and to St John of the Cross’s poems, with many a ‘dark night of the soul’ (St John of the Cross’s own phrase) detectable. Much the same can be said of Juan Esquivel de Barahona, a far less celebrated figure than Victoria, Morales and even Guerrero, but (as this concert demonstrates) worthy to rank alongside them.

By contrast with the Spaniards, the Englishmen represented in today’s program were generalists. William Byrd excelled in sacred music and instrumental (especially keyboard) music alike; so did Thomas Tomkins, who, though he lived till the mid-17th century, deserves his biographer’s appellation ‘the last Elizabethan.’ Christopher Tye began his career before Henry VIII’s separation from Rome, but greeted the subsequent profound changes of religious allegiances with no apparent qualms.

THE ITALIAN SCHOOL

STABAT MATER – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Born in Palestrina, Italy, c.1525; died in Rome, 2 February 1594.

Although Palestrina enjoyed greater success than most of his contemporaries at achieving publication for his music, most of it remained in manuscript during his lifetime and, for that matter, long after his death in 1594. Neither he nor anyone else in the 16th century regarded this fact as odd or shameful. Among the manuscripts that Palestrina left behind was that of the *Stabat Mater*.

There clung to this piece from the start, nonetheless, a suggestion of something special. For one thing, Palestrina seems to have intended it as a gift for Gregory XIV, who died in 1591 after a mere ten months as pope. For another thing, the pontifical choristers kept it under lock and key, in a manner that they certainly did not do for the bulk of Palestrina's – or anybody else's – output (though their successors would reveal a similarly proprietorial attitude towards Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere*). Third, the choristers sang the opening section each year on Palm Sunday. Finally, whereas by the very nature of his liturgical responsibilities he ended up repeatedly setting the same words to different music, Palestrina never – so far as is known – set the *Stabat Mater* at any other time in his life.

Outside Rome, the score had to wait until the enterprising Englishman Charles Burney had it published in 1771, after obtaining a copy from papal sources the previous year. The music made its way to Dresden, where the young Wagner tracked it down, and found himself so overwhelmed by it that he conducted it with the city's Hofkirche singers in 1848. Curiously, no fewer than six other editions of the *Stabat Mater* had been released between Burney's imprint and Wagner's première. Wagner issued his own (fairly imaginative) edition in 1878, by which time the volumes of Palestrina's collected works had begun to make their way onto library shelves, thanks to the Regensburg-based and Vatican-approved musicologist-publisher Franz Xaver Haberl.

From the work's very opening, one can comprehend why Wagner – like his father-in-law Liszt – was so gripped by it. On paper its chord sequence looks simple almost to the point of tedium; but in practice it rivets the attention (much as Wagner could rivet hearers' attention by devices as straightforward as a rising C major arpeggio). Overall the *Stabat Mater* is less conspicuously polyphonic than much of Palestrina. At times one might almost be in the antiphony-dominated world of Giovanni Gabrieli and his fellow Venetians. Tempo changes are implied (rather than stated); this, in turn, evinces a flexibility of approach in marked contrast to the 16th-century norm, where musicians generally assumed that the basic rhythmic pulse – the *tactus*, to use the technical name – would and should remain constant even if the time-

signature switched from duple metre to triple metre or vice versa. American critic Timothy Dickey summarised the nature of Palestrina's idiom here:

'Eight voices, presumably without accompaniment, follow, as always, perfect counterpoint and careful dissonance treatment; the choir is divided into two groups that alternate often simple and homophonic passages. Yet within that "purity" of basic musical style, the composer relishes the passionate imagery of his text. Right in the first phrase, he uses a strong harmonic contrast between chords with sharps and flats, giving the tenor voice a radical melodic tritone to sing and placing a plangent B flat right on the word *dolorosa* (grieving). Similar harmonic tensions populate the entire piece, with plenty of trigger words for flats (sad, suffering, weeping) or sharps (the sword that will pierce her [Mary's] soul). Often, changes in texture also stem from the text: imitative duos to represent the grieving pair of characters, or full eight-voiced textures when the poem asks for us all to bear the Cross of Christ, for instance.'

But as with any outstanding composition, so with the *Stabat Mater*, words are ultimately inadequate. One must hear Palestrina's achievement for oneself.

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat Filius.

The grieving Mother
stood weeping beside the cross
where her Son was hanging.

Cujus animam gementem
Con tristatam et dolentem
Pertransivit gladius.

Through her weeping soul,
compassionate and grieving,
a sword passed.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa enedicta
Mater Unigeniti!

O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed Mother
of the Only-begotten!

Quae moerebat et dolebat
Et tremebat cum videbat
Nati poenas inclyti.

Who mourned and grieved
and trembled looking at the torment
of her glorious Child.

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Christi Matrem si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Who is the person who would not weep
seeing the Mother of Christ
in such agony?

Quis non posset contristari
Piam Matrem contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?

Who would not be able to feel
compassion on beholding Christ's
Mother suffering with her Son?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis
Et flagellis subditum.

For the sins of his people
she saw Jesus in torment
and subjected to the scourge.

Vidit suum dulcem natum

She saw her sweet offspring

Morientem desolatum
Dum emisit spiritum.

dying, forsaken,
while He gave up his spirit.

Eia, Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris Fac
Ut tecum lugeam.

O Mother, fountain of love,
make me feel the power of sorrow,
that I may grieve with you.

Fac ut aredeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum
Ut sibi complaceam.

Grant that my heart may burn
in the love of Christ my Lord,
that I may greatly please Him.

Sancta Mater istud agas
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Holy Mother, grant that the wounds
of the Crucified drive
deep into my heart.

Tui nat vulnerati
Tam dignati pro me pati
Poenas mecum divide.

That of your wounded Son,
who so deigned to suffer for me,
I may share the pain.

Fac me tecum pie flere
Crucifixo condolere
Donec ego vixero

Let me sincerely weep with you,
bemoan the Crucified,
for as long as I live,

Juxta crucem tecum stare
Et me tibi sociare
In plantu desidero.

To stand beside the cross with you,
and gladly share the weeping,
this I desire.

Virgo virginum praeclara
Mihi jam non sis amara
Fac me tecum plangere.

Chosen Virgin of virgins,
be not bitter with me,
let me weep with thee.

Fac ut portem
Christi mortem
Passionis fac consortem
Et plagas recolere.

Grant that I may bear
the death of Christ,
the fate of his Passion,
and commemorate His wounds.

Fac me plagis vulnerari
Cruce fac unebriari
Et cruor Filii.

Let me be wounded with his wounds,
inebriated by the cross
because of love for the Son.

Inflamatus et accensus
Per te Virgo sim defensus
In die judicii.

Inflame and set on fire,
may I be defended by you, Virgin,
on the day of judgement.

Fac me cruce custodiri
Morte Christi praemuniri
Confoveri gratia.

Let me be guarded by the cross,
armed by Christ's death and
Cherished by His grace.

Quando corpus morietur
Fac ut animae donetur

When my body dies,
grant that to my soul is given

SICUT CERVUS – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Except for the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, this setting of Psalm 42:1 could well be Palestrina's best-known piece; and in terms of performance frequency it is the more often remembered of the two. Like much of Palestrina's output it appeared in print only after the composer's death (in a 1604 collection entitled *Motecta Festorum*). American musicologist James Olesen observed of it:

'The motet's polyphonic flow and gentle melodic arches contain a quiet drama. While the motet's word-painting is not overt, neither is it hidden. There is a deep feel for the words' meaning as the voices begin quietly in imitation for the words *Sicut cervus* (As the hart). At the word *desiderat* (longs), rhythm quickens and the line rises to its peak at the word: *fontes* (streams); as the words seek their object, so the melodic lines seek their goal. As the text's thought turns toward the self with the words *ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus* (Thus longs my soul for Thee, God), shorter motives in closer imitation and intensifying dissonance patterns express the human soul's fervent desiring and end the motet.'

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes
aquarum,
ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

As the hart longs for the running
streams,
Thus longs my soul for Thee,
God.

EXULTATE JUSTI – Ludovico Grossi da Viadana

Born in Viadana, Italy, c.1560; died in Gualtieri, Italy, 2 May 1627.

Like Palestrina, Viadana took his professional surname from his birthplace. Unlike Palestrina, Viadana became a Franciscan friar during his twenties, and (save for a Rome sojourn 1597–1602) spent his career wholly in Italy's north, mostly in Mantua. He earned a small but important place in mainstream histories of music through having been, not the inventor of figured bass, but the first composer to use figured bass systematically in an entire publication (*Cento concerti con il basso continuo*, Venice, 1602). From that publication comes *Exultate justi*, which sets lines from Psalm 32, and which resembles much of Giovanni Gabrieli's choral music in its exuberant dance-like rhythms. But with only four separate vocal lines it eschews Gabrielian antiphonal effects, and the repeated short vocal flourishes of multiple quavers on one syllable bring Viadana closer to Monteverdi.

Exultate justi in Domino
rectos decet collaudatio.
Confitemini Domino

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just; praise
befits the upright.
Give praise to the Lord

in cithara	on the harp;
in psalterio decem chordarum psallite illi.	sing to Him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings.
Cantate ei canticum novum bene psallite ei in vociferatione.	Sing to Him a new canticle, sing well unto Him with a loud noise.

O VOS OMNES – Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa

Born in Venosa, Italy, 8 March 1566; died in Avellino, Italy, 8 September 1613.

The Dickens character who adopts the slogan ‘I wants to make your flesh creep’ might have had Gesualdo’s sanguinary, shocking career in mind. When in 1590 his first wife Maria, incautiously took a lover (the Duke of Andria), the enraged cuckold discovered spouse and lover in flagrante and slew them both. He never went to prison for his double murder, but his guilt tortured him. Increasingly he isolated himself from the world; developed an injudicious belief that obtaining body parts from his canonised uncle Carlo Borromeo would ease his own mental torment (the saint’s cousin Federico Borromeo disobligingly refused all Gesualdo’s supplications for such relics); and paid his servants to flagellate him each day. Gesualdo’s music is often as tortured and agonised in its chromaticism as one might expect from his CV. *O Vos Omnes*, for six voices, is the best-known work from his 1611 motet collection (he had set the same words, from Lamentations 1:12, for five voices eight years earlier) and was designed for performance at the Tenebrae ceremony on Holy Saturday.

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam attendite et videte:	O all you who pass by on the road, behold and see:
Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.	If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.
Attendite, universi populi et videte dolorem meum.	Attend, all ye people, and behold my sorrow.
Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.	If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

TRIBUS MIRACULIS – Luca Marenzio

Born in Coccaglio, Italy, 18 October 1553; died in Rome, 22 August 1599.

‘Il Divino Marenzio’, as his admiring Italian contemporaries called him, achieved most of his long-lasting international renown via his extremely numerous madrigals (he produced around 500 of them altogether). Early in the 17th century an Englishman, Henry Peacham, observed: ‘for delicious aires and sweet invention in madrigals, Luca Marenzio excelleth all others.’

Employed mostly in Mantua and Florence, Marenzio also spent at least a year – to the permanent detriment of his health, his early biographers tell us – in chilly Warsaw, as director of music for King Zygmunt III. Many of Marenzio’s sacred compositions derive from his Polish residence, but not *Tribus miraculis*, a much earlier work (1585) intended for the Epiphany. British scholar William McVicker wrote of it:

‘The musical highlights of this piece are to be found in the astonishing changes in texture: the florid setting of the opening text (describing the “three miracles”) is scored for three voices; two upper parts represent the star leading to the manger; there is an appropriate, startling change at the words ““today water was changed into wine””; and there are inspired chromatic alterations at the description of the baptism “by John in the Jordan” and again at the words ‘our salvation’. By way of a spectacular finale, Marenzio provides an unusual sequential “Alleluia” to complete this vocal tour de force.’

Tribus miraculis ornatum diem
sanctum colimus:
hodie stella Magos duxit ad
praesepium:
hodie vinum ex aqua factum est
ad nuptias:
hodie in Jordane a Joanne Christus
baptizari voluit
ut salvaret nos. Alleluia.

We celebrate a day sanctified by
three miracles:
today a star led the Wise Men to the
manger;
today water was changed into wine
at the marriage feast;
today Christ chose to be baptised by
John in the Jordan
for our salvation. Alleluia.

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THE SPANISH SCHOOL

CANITE TUBA – Francisco Guerrero

Born in Seville, October 1528; died in Seville, 8 November 1599.

Only in recent years has the immense respect that Guerrero enjoyed during his lifetime (not only in Spain but in Latin America as well) translated into analogous esteem from modern musicians. Though he spent most of his career in the Iberian Peninsula, he visited the Holy Land in 1589 and – despite hair-raising misadventures which included capture by pirates – was planning a second visit there at the time of his death. The account he published of his Middle Eastern derring-do enjoyed considerable popular success and is thought to have influenced Cervantes, who had not yet finished *Don Quixote*. *Canita tuba* sets lines from Joel 2 and Isaiah 11; these passages had a special appeal to 16th-century composers, who relished the chance for fanfare-like writing to convey the trumpet's sound.

Canite tuba in Sion
quia prope est dies Domini:
ecce veniet ad salvandum nos.
Erunt prava
in directa
et aspera in vias planas:
veni, Domine et noli tardare.

Sound the trumpet in Sion,
for the day of the Lord is near.
See, He is coming to save us;
winding paths
will be made straight
and rough places smooth.
Come, Lord, and do not delay.

O DOMINE JESU CHRISTE – Tomás Luis de Victoria

Born in Sanchidrián, Spain, c.1548; died in Madrid, 27 August 1611.

Victoria spent much of his youth in Rome, where he came to know and admire – but never, it seems, took lessons from – Palestrina; However, so quintessentially Iberian a spirit as he could not be prevailed on to forsake his native land forever, and the bulk of his music comes from after his return to Spain in 1587, at Philip II's behest. The six-voice *O Domine Jesu Christe*, an early piece, dates from 1576, being thus a product of Victoria's Rome period. It is entirely possible (indeed probable) that Palestrina encountered the work, though Victoria's style already employed passing dissonance with a freedom that Palestrina's fundamentally chaste idiom never allowed itself.

O Domine Jesu Christe
adoro te
in cruce vulneratum
felle et aceto potatum:
deprecor te ut tua vulnera
morsque tua sit vita mea.

O Lord Jesus Christ,
I adore You.
wounded upon the cruel Cross
and given gall to drink:
I beseech You, that Your wounds
And death might become my life.

PECCANTEM ME QUOTIDIE – Cristobál de Morales

Born in Seville, c.1500; died in Marchena, Spain, September or October 1553.

‘The light of Spain in music’: thus the Franciscan friar, composer and theorist Juan Bermudo on his colleague Morales, who spent much time in Rome (he sang in the papal choir) as Victoria would do two generations later. None denied Morales’s creative mastery; but a temper rarely amenable to control, and an imprudent enthusiasm for quarrelling with employers, thwarted the worldly success that this mastery should have given him. Although Morales wrote approximately two dozen Mass settings, it is the consensus of historians that he reached his greatest artistic heights in his motets, and above all in those motets where he chose sombre words. *Peccantem me quotidie*, for four-voice choir, constitutes a good example. Mostly the writing is austere and syllabic, the one slight concession to vocal virtuosity being the five-note rising scale that appears in all the parts by turns. The motet’s exact date of composition is unknown.

Peccantem me quotidie
et non me paenitentem
timor mortis conturbat me:
Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio
miserere miserere mei,
Deus et salva me.

As I was sinning daily
and not repenting,
The fear of death disturbed me:
Because in hell there is no
redemption,
Have pity on me,
O God, and save me.

EGO SUM PANIS VIVUS and DUO SERAPHIM – Juan Esquivel de Barahona

Born in Ciudad Rodrigo, Spain, c.1565; died in Ciudad Rodrigo, c.1625.

It is not clear why posterity should have overlooked Esquivel de Barahona when in his own time his music was disseminated throughout Spain. Though he knew Morales’s and Guerrero’s output, at least in part, his own writing differs from both precursors. It tends to a greater succinctness than theirs, an emphasis (which the Council of Trent encouraged) upon making the words clearer than they would be in a densely contrapuntal texture. *Ego sum panis vivus* (to a text from John 6) dwells upon the melodic interval of a rising fifth; while we might reasonably wonder if the six-voice *Duo Seraphim*, with its intertwining vocal parts, was known to Monteverdi when he came to write his own *Duo Seraphim* setting.

Ego sum panis vivus.
Patres vestri manducaverunt manna
in deserto et mortui sunt.
Hic est panis
de caelo descendens: si quis ex ipso
manducaverit non morietur.

I am the living bread.
Your forefathers ate manna
in the desert and are dead.
This is the living bread that comes
down from heaven:
whoever eats of it shall not die.

Duo Seraphim clamabant
alter ad alterum:
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.

Two angels called
to one another
Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of Sabaoth!
The earth is full of Your glory.

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL

KYRIE, SANCTUS-BENEDICTUS, and AGNUS DEI from MASS FOR FOUR VOICES – William Byrd

Born in London, c.1539; died in Standon Massey, Essex, 4 July 1623.

Byrd was old enough – along with his still older friend Thomas Tallis – to have incurred the most searing blasts of English religious controversy. Born in Henry VIII's reign, he was later a subject of the openly Protestant Edward VI, the no less openly anti-Protestant Mary I, and the compromising Anglicans Elizabeth I and James I. Privately Byrd held fast to the Roman rite, with all the financial penalties and physical risks that this usually involved under Elizabeth and James, though he enriched Anglicanism's repertoire also. Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices* seems to have been written in 1592 or 1593, before either his three-voice or his five-voice Mass settings. Like all of Byrd's pieces meant for adherents of the old faith, this one would have been originally sung in secret by a small group of performers, and probably softly sung at that, since a forte rendition would have been simply asking for governmental informers to come and kick the door down.

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the
sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the
sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the
sins of the world,
grant us peace.

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS – attrib. John Redford

Birthdate and birthplace unknown; died in London, October or November 1547.

This short anthem came down to us through its inclusion in the Mulliner Book, a heterogeneous collection of approximately one hundred compositions assembled early in Elizabeth I's reign – for private use – by one Thomas Mulliner, an Oxford organist. Sir John Hawkins, friend of Dr Johnson and author of *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, seems to have been the first person to ascribe Rejoice to John Redford. It is worth noting that Redford had literary as well as musical talents, being the author of a morality play (*The Play of Wit and Science*), and also of a poem called 'The Chorister's Lament', which indicates the ill-treatment which choirboys could then expect from those in charge of them. The attribution of *Rejoice* to Redford has been disputed, mainly because Redford died two years before Edward VI's Protestant government made the use of English compulsory for sacred choral works. Still, it is entirely possible that clandestine, syllabic vernacular settings had been conceived and sung well before the 1549 Book of Common Prayer mandated them. The text comes from Philippians 4:4 -7, and much later Purcell would set a slightly different version of it (in which, for example, 'softness' becomes 'moderation' and 'with giving of thanks' becomes 'with thanksgiving').

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.
Let your softness be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand.
Be careful for nothing, but in all prayer and supplication,
let your petitions be manifest unto God with giving of thanks.
And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesu. Amen.

AVE VERUM CORPUS – William Byrd

Just as *Sicut cervus* is likelier than any other Palestrina motet to be heard today, so *Ave verum corpus* is more often sung than any other Byrd motet. It comes from Byrd's 1605 collection *Gradualia*, and the timing of its publication has its own significance. In 1605 the English monarch was no longer Elizabeth but James I, who so hated ultra-Protestant encroachments upon his authority that he demonstrated willingness to relax Elizabeth's anti-Catholic legislation (a willingness that the disaster of the Gunpowder Plot would soon end). Hence *Gradualia*'s explicitly Catholic material, including *Ave verum corpus*, written for the Feast of Corpus Christi. (The text is usually credited to Innocent VII, pope from 1352 to 1362.) Most striking of the motet's musical features is a harmonic boldness – in particular the repeated use of cross-relations for such words as 'miserere' – which can nowhere be found in Palestrina and is seldom suggested even in Victoria.

Ave verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis prae gustatum
in mortis examine.
O Iesu dulcis O Iesu pie
O Iesu, fili Mariae.
Miserere mei. Amen.

Hail, true Body, born
of the Virgin Mary,
having truly suffered, sacrificed
on the cross for mankind,
from Whose pierced side
water and blood flowed:
Be for us a foretaste [of paradise]
in the trial of death!
O sweet Jesus, O holy Jesus,
O Jesus, son of Mary,
have mercy on me. Amen.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS – John Amner

Born in Ely, Cambridgeshire, 1579; died probably in Ely, 1641.

As well as achieving the rare feat of acquiring bachelor degrees in music from Cambridge and Oxford, Amner was a clergyman and organist (at Ely Cathedral) whose mostly liturgical compositions remained almost entirely neglected till the late 20th century. *Lift up your heads* employs, of course, the same verses (Psalm 24) that Handel unforgettably treated in *Messiah*; and by contrasting reduced forces with the full choir in the section 'Who is the King of glory?', Amner makes his own distinguished contribution to Anglicanism's Psalm settings. He could well have known the choral works of Orlando Gibbons, to whose manner his own bears more than a passing resemblance.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors:
and the King of glory shall come in.
Who is the King of glory? It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord
of Hosts, He is the King of glory.

WHEN DAVID HEARD THAT ABSALOM WAS SLAIN – Thomas
Tomkins

*Born at St David's, Wales, 1572; died at Martin Hussingtree, Worcestershire, 9 June
1656.*

Called by his recent biographer Anthony Boden ‘the last Elizabethan’, Thomas Tomkins represented the final flowering of that Anglican liturgical heritage which had been established by Byrd, Gibbons, and Thomas Weelkes. Byrd had in fact given lessons to the young Tomkins (who afterwards called him ‘my ancient and much revered Master’) and probably Tomkins knew another Byrd pupil, Thomas Morley, who certainly included a Tomkins madrigal in that highly influential 1601 collection, *The Triumphs of Oriana*. Having become Worcester Cathedral’s organist as early as 1596, Tomkins lived long enough to suffer from the English Civil War, and thus the collapse of the ecclesiastical heritage he had upheld. In 1642 the Parliamentary Army wrecked the cathedral’s organ; four years later the successful Roundheads celebrated their control of the city by locking the cathedral up, and disbanding its choir. Tomkins lamented the judicial murder of King Charles I in one of his keyboard masterpieces, *A Sad Pavan For These Distracted Times*. Yet the comparatively early motet in today’s concert indicates that Tomkins did not need political events as triggers for a melancholy style. Of this work, conductor Peter Phillips – who has recorded it with his own ensemble, the Tallis Scholars – observed: ‘*When David Heard* has long been recognised as one of the supreme examples of late Renaissance composition, a highly expressive blend of polyphony and more harmonic writing, of dissonance leading to consonance as David seems at last to come to accept the reality of his position.’ Published in 1622 (unlike most of Tomkins’ oeuvre, which remained in manuscript during his lifetime), it might well have been written fully a decade earlier, to mourn the premature death of Henry, Prince of Wales, spectacularly at loggerheads with his father James I.

When David heard that Absalom was slain, he went up to his chamber over the gate, and wept: and thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee!

SING UNTO THE LORD – Christopher Tye

Born in Cambridge, c.1505; died probably in Doddington, Cambridgeshire, c.1573.

A single anecdote permanently illuminates Tye's character (let us hope that it is authentic, though it failed to reach print before the 17th-century antiquarian Anthony Wood preserved it). 'Dr Tye,' Wood insisted, 'was a peevish and humoursome [bilious] man, especially in his latter days, and sometimes playing on the organ in the chapel of Queen Elizabeth, which contained much music but little delight to the ear, she would send the verger to tell him that he played out of tune; whereupon he sent word that her ears were out of tune.' That Edward VI's administration and the Protestant bishop Richard Cox actively encouraged Tye suggests that, although he attained his majority in a still-Catholic England, he had none of Byrd's private loyalty to Catholicism. *Sing Unto The Lord* (Psalm 30: 4, 11-13) is declamatory, lively, and consistent with the prohibition of melismas in sacred works during Edward VI's reign ('to every syllable a note', the government commanded). Yet though melismas were forbidden, imitation between parts was not; and Tye takes advantage of this to add to the music's excitement, especially near the end, where the top line sustains an A while the three other lines quick-wittedly vie with one another in proclaiming the Psalmist's gratitude.

Sing unto the Lord, ye that are His saints,
And give thanks with a remembrance of His holiness,
The Lord hath heard me, and hath taken mercy upon me.
The Lord is made my helper.
Thou hast turned my sorrow into joy,
Thou hast put off my sackcloth and hast compassed me with gladness,
That my glory may sing to Thee, without grief, O Lord my God.
I shall ever more give thanks to Thee.

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AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER CHOIR

Douglas Lawrence established the Australian Chamber Choir in 2007. Since then he has taken his singers on six concert tours of Europe. On the last two tours, the choir has been accompanied by a group of Friends.

You can come with us to Europe in July 2019!

We invite you to come with us to Ribe, the oldest town in Denmark. The ACC will sing a matinee concert at Ribe Cathedral (2 July). Dine with us in one of Ribe's rustic restaurants. At sunset, we'll accompany Ribe's night watchman around the cobblestoned streets as he tells us stories of Ribe's past.

In Copenhagen, we sing in Trinitatis (4 July), the church that adjoins the Copenhagen landmark, the Round Tower, built in the 17th century by King Christian IV.

We'll take a ferry across the Baltic to Germany, where performances include Berlin Cathedral (7 July) and Hannover (9 July).

Then it's onward to the most beautiful town in Belgium, with plenty of time to explore Bruges' canal system by boat. The first great master painter of the Northern Renaissance, Jan Van Eyck, lived and worked here and well-known examples of his work are to be found in the Groeningemuseum. Your luxury coach will take you to the Belgian seaside town of Koksijde, where the ACC performs on 12 July.

By popular demand, there will be a Friends Choir. This means singing with members of the ACC – not compulsory – just for fun!

We have plenty more in store for you. Our Friends Tour will end with a service in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris on Bastille Day (14 July). Feast with us and enjoy the spectacular fireworks at the Eiffel Tower.

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