

# The Cambridge Taverner Choir

*Masterpieces of Tudor Polyphony*

*Queens' College Chapel*

*by kind permission of the President and Fellows*

*Saturday, 5 August 1995*

A concert in aid of

**wintercomfort**

*for the homeless*

## *Masterpieces of Tudor Polyphony*

Gloria from Missa Puer natus est nobis	Thomas Tallis (c. 150~1585)
Videte miraculum	Thomas Tallis
Lamentations (1st set)	Thomas Tallis
Laudibus in sanctis Dominum	William Byrd (1543-1623)

INTERVAL OF 30 MINUTES

*Refreshments are available during the interval*

O nata lux	Thomas Tallis
Miserere mei, Deus	William Byrd
Organ: Fantazia of Foure Parts	Orlando Gibbons ( 1583-1625)
Infelix ego	William Byrd

### *The Cambridge Taverner Choir*

*director* Owen Rees

*sopranos*

Josie Dixon  
Helen Garrison  
Caroline Preston Bell  
Rachel Sutton  
Sally Terris  
Tanya Wicks

*altos*

Simon Godsill  
Martin Neill  
Nicholas Perkins  
Rupert Preston Bell

*tenors*

William Byrne  
Vijay Rangarajan  
Edwin Simpson

*basses*

James Durran  
Gary Snapper  
Paul Watson

Very few composers in any age can have witnessed the degree of religious and cultural change that occurred during the working life of Thomas Tallis: born around the beginning of the sixteenth century, he worked at Dover Priory and at Waltham Abbey, until the dissolution of the latter under Henry VIII in 1540. For much of the rest of his life he was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, the most prestigious musical establishment in the country, and there experienced the Protestant reforms of Henry's son Edward VI, the brief restoration of catholicism under Mary I, and the Elizabethan compromise whereby, although the liturgy was a Protestant one and usually in English, Latin was allowed in certain institutions where it was understood, and the performance of sacred polyphony received royal encouragement.

Tonight's recital provides some idea of the huge variety to be heard even within Tallis's Latin-texted vocal music. The grand *Missa Puer natus est nobis* for seven voices is constructed upon a slow-moving chant (the melody which gives the Mass its name), around which Tallis creates rich harmonies and a kaleidoscope of textures, involving in particular contrasts between high and low voices. *Videte miraculum* was, likewise, composed to serve the Catholic liturgy, in this case the afternoon Office of Vespers for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the text celebrates the Immaculate Conception, and the composer conceived a telling climax at the name of Mary. Tallis's setting of a passage from the Lamentations of Jeremiah (texts sung during the last days of Holy Week) reveals a simplified style which is usually presumed to be associated with his later years, a style in which the text—here mourning the desolation of Jerusalem—comes more to the fore. This trait is still more marked in *Onata lux*, a setting of a hymn text in which the texture has become almost the simplest possible, but in which one still hears the love of harmonic richness apparent in Tallis's earlier works.

William Byrd, a pupil of Tallis and—like him—a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, was the greatest and most versatile English composer of the late-Tudor era. His motets reveal the influence of up-to-date continental styles, including in some instances that of the madrigal, heard most clearly in the remarkable *Laudibus in sanctis*, in which the mention of each instrument of music evokes a vivid response from the composer. *Miserere mei, Deus* shows Byrd's mastery of a more pathetic vein, while in *Infelix ego* 'modern' responses to the words are combined with the elaboration and rich scoring (with high trebles) of the English music of his teacher's generation; the piece ends with the opening words of Psalm 50—the same text as *Miserere mei, Deus*—which inspired Byrd to produce one of the grandest climaxes found in the whole Renaissance repertoire.

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*The Cambridge Taverner Choir*, founded in 1986, specialises in the performance of vocal polyphony from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in particular Spanish, Portuguese, and English music. As well as its regular concert seasons in Cambridge, the choir has appeared in the Cambridge Festival, the Cambridge Early Music Festival, and the Hexham Festival, has broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and has released two compact disc recordings, which have attracted considerable critical acclaim. A forthcoming CD (on the *Herald* label; late 1995/early 1996) explores the repertory of Renaissance laments for kings and composers, and settings of King David's laments for Absalom and Jonathan, including works by Josquin, Pierre de la Rue, Victoria, Weelkes, Tomkins, and Ramsey. The choir's principal aim is to present Renaissance music—including unjustly neglected areas of the repertory—in imaginative thematic and liturgical contexts.

Please leave your name and address at the desk if you would like to receive information about the choir's future concerts and recordings.

1995-1996 Season:

Sundays at 8.15 p.m. in Jesus College Chapel  
A Celebration of the Music of John Taverner (d. 1545)

*including*

*Sunday 8 October 1995*  
*Missa Corona spinea*

*Sunday 3 December 1995*  
*Missa Mater Christi*

## CD RECORDINGS *available at the desk*

- *Music from Renaissance Portugal*

Polyphony from the Royal Monastery of Santa Cruz, Coimbra  
(Herald, HAVPCD 155)

Nominated for the *Gramophone* Early Music Award, 1994; selected for *Critics' Choice* in *Gramophone*, December 1993, and for *Editor's Choice* in *Gramophone*, January 1994  
'Displays . . . a profound understanding of the music' (Gramophone)  
'Highly recommended; \*\*\*\*\*' (Classic CD)  
'If you have yet to savour early Portuguese music, now is the time, and this is the disk'  
(Choir & Organ)

- *Music for a Tudor Christmas*

including works by Byrd, Tallis, Sheppard, Browne, and Pygott  
(Past Times/Historical Collections 3589)

'The most refreshing Christmas record to come my way for a long time' (Organists Review)  
'A listener can feel how the performers are themselves moved by the beauty of the marvellous music they are making' (Gramophone)

50% of money from CD sales at this concert will go to

### wintercomfort *for the homeless*

**winterCOMFORT** for the Homeless provides services for homeless people in Cambridge. It was founded in 1989 by local businessman, Henry Rothschild, and has been a registered charity since June 1991.

wintercomfort has 3 projects:

1. *Resource Centre, at Overstream House, Victoria Avenue*

a drop-in centre which provides a warm, safe and friendly environment where people can obtain shelter and reasonably priced food and drink, as well as showers, lockers and laundry facilities. It also offers help and information on benefits, housing and specialist services. A GP or Nurse provide a daily service.

2. *Winter Night Shelter*

operated for the past 5 years in the coldest winter months, usually in a church hall. It provides basic overnight bed and breakfast accommodation to people who would otherwise be sleeping rough, plus general help and support. wintercomfort, in partnership with the Zion Baptist Church, is now building a permanent night shelter due to open in the autumn.

3. *Rent Deposit and Support Scheme (RDSS)*

helps homeless people or those on low incomes to establish themselves in rented accommodation by providing deposit guarantees and on-going support.

Further details of these schemes and of volunteering opportunities, please contact from wintercomfort, Overstream House, Victoria Avenue, Cambridge CB4 1EG Tel: (01223) 518147