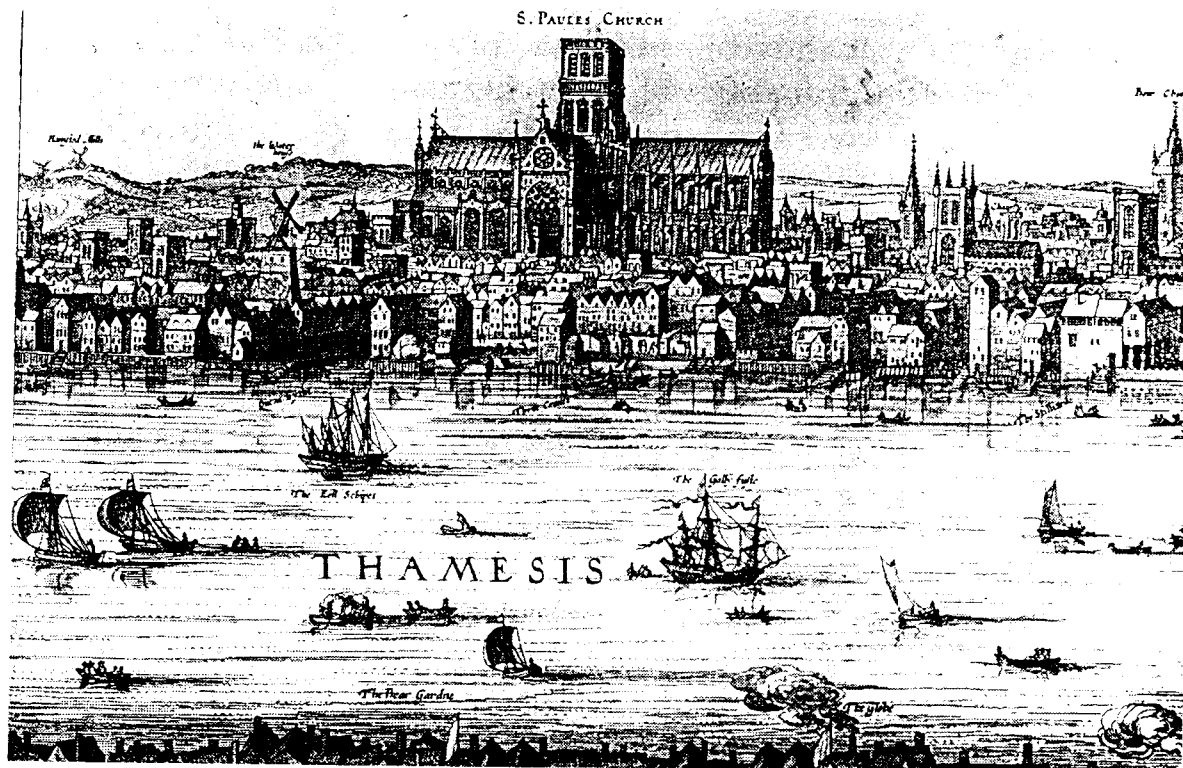


CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

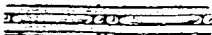
Owen Rees *director*



EUROPE 1600



LONDON



Sunday, April 20th, 8.15 pm
Jesus College Chapel



PROGRAMME

Laudibus in sanctis	William Byrd
Salve Regina	Byrd
Miserere mei Deus	Byrd
In te Domine speravi	John Mundy
Infelix ego	Byrd

INTERVAL

O sing unto the Lord	Thomas Tomkins
Nunc dimittis (Great Service)	Byrd
When David heard	Tomkins
This day Christ was born	Byrd

The Cambridge Taverner Choir *conductor* Rupert Preston Bell

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Diana Baumann	Jennie Cassidy	Paul Baumann	James Durran
Julia Caddick	Simon Godsill	Tim Crossley	Frank Salmon
Josie Dixon	David Skinner	Finlay Lockie	Gary Snapper
Helen Garrison		Tom Salmon	Paul Watson
Rachel Godsill		David Thomson	
Caroline Preston Bell			
Tanya Wicks			

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

This city of London is so vast and nobly built, so populous and prosperous and so pre-eminent in its crafts and merchant citizens that it can fairly be accounted, not only the chief city in the whole realm of England, but also one of the most famous in the whole of Christendom.

So claimed Thomas Platter in the description of his visit to England in 1599.¹ It was in London that the majority of English composers of the period were based, for it offered unrivalled opportunities for employment (most prominently the court, including the Chapel Royal) and other forms of patronage. The career of William Byrd, the greatest English composer of the age, reveals the ‘pull’ of London clearly: a Londoner by birth, Byrd was taught music by Thomas Tallis before securing the post of Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral in 1563. Less than ten years later (in 1572) he gained that most coveted of positions, as a Gentleman of Queen Elizabeth’s Chapel Royal, and until the early 1590s he worked to establish his musical reputation through a series of publications, including volumes of motets of which the last appeared in 1591. The first half of tonight’s concert focuses on works published in that volume of *Cantiones sacrae* (‘sacred songs’).

Byrd’s volume is a remarkable display of compositional virtuosity, not least in the variety of types of writing which it contains. On the one hand there is an extraordinary example of the influence of the madrigal: *Laudibus in sanctis*. The most virtuosic aspect of the piece is its rhythmic flexibility, apparent from the very opening and nowhere more so than in the syncopations of ‘cymbala dulcisona lauda’. The vivid response to text seen here is also found in *Infelix ego* (for example, in the extraordinary monumental setting of ‘miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam’ with which it ends), but in other respects this piece has a very different stylistic lineage, drawing on techniques of contrasting groups of voices which were peculiarly English and decades old by the time of publication. Such techniques survive in an even clearer form in John Mundy’s *In te Domine speravi*, which—for example—has a traditional ‘gimell’ section (i.e. where some of the voice-parts are split into two) at its heart. Mundy was Organist at St George’s Chapel, Windsor for some four decades before his death in 1630. The setting of the opening of Psalm 50—‘miserere mei Deus...’—with which Byrd’s *Infelix ego* ends includes a quotation of the basic subject of the famous setting of this psalm by Josquin Desprez, and this subject appears again at the opening of Byrd’s *Miserere mei Deus* in another highly expressive setting.

Byrd’s inclusion in the 1591 *Cantiones* of a setting of *Salve Regina*, the famous antiphon to Mary, shows remarkable daring given the religious climate of Protestant England at the time. It is one of the finest pieces in the collection, although rarely heard now. Those singers and listeners who knew the original chant must have been expecting a reference to its famous opening phrase (which falls a step, rises to the original note, and then falls a fifth), and Byrd does not disappoint, although his one such reference is hidden away towards the end of the opening trio section.

While Byrd increased his reputation through publishing Latin motets and songs, he also provided music for the establishment in which he was employed: the Queen’s Chapel Royal, much the finest church choir remaining in England. The strictly liturgical music composed for this context was of course in English, and respects the desire for clearly audible presentation of the words which was an important theme of the Reformation. This is true even of Byrd’s most elaborate work for the Anglican liturgy, the so-called ‘Great’ Service. Grandeur is here achieved through texture (with parts splitting in a way that is reminiscent of *gimell*), and the monumental scale of the work relies on repetition of text rather than other types of musical elaboration which might obscure the words.

It is often difficult to be sure whether those works of the period which have sacred texts in English but which do not fit into a specific liturgical context were intended principally for use in church or in other contexts. Byrd’s *This day Christ was born* is headed ‘a carol for Christmas Day’ in the printed source. Of the two pieces by Thomas

¹Quoted by Craig Monson in ‘Elizabethan London’, chapter 12 of Iain Fenlon (ed.), *The Renaissance* (Macmillan, 1989), p. 304.

Conte 2 x
Tanjungas Wick,

Tomkins (a pupil of Byrd's, and a Gentleman and Organist of the Chapel Royal) performed tonight, *When David heard* is one of a large group of settings of King David's laments which may have been prompted by the death of Henry, Prince of Wales (eldest son and heir of James I) in 1612.

* * * * *

LAST CONCERT in the series *Europe 1600*

VENICE

Sacred music from St Mark's by Monteverdi and Giovanni Gabrieli
Including Monteverdi: *Adoramus te Christe*, *Cantate Domino*, and *Letania della Beata Vergine Maria*

Jesus College Chapel
Sunday 8 June 1997
8.15 p.m.



The National Federation of Music Societies represents and supports amateur choirs, orchestras and music promoters of all kinds throughout the United Kingdom.

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