

Cambridge Taverner Choir

Saturday 2 October
at 8.00pm
Stamford Arts Centre



The Cambridge Taverner Choir

Director - Owen Rees

Sopranos – Julia Caddick, Josephine Carpenter, Jane Christie, Bryony Fisher,
Rachel Godsill Alice Gribbin, Lucy Rice, Sally Terris
Altos – Amanda Baker, Ally Barrett, Tim Dallosso, Simon Godsill
Tenors – David Allinson, Finlay Lockie, Tom Salmon, Jos Sanders
Basses – Sam Barrett, Frank Salmon, Gary Snapper, Paul Watson

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Music from the 'Golden Age' of Portugal

Although the music of Portugal's 'golden age' is becoming better-known, a large proportion of the repertory has not yet been performed in modern times, or recorded. Through the research of Owen Rees, director of the Cambridge Taverner Choir, a great deal of this music is being brought to light. Of the greatest composers working in Lisbon in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Duarte Lobo (chapelmaster at Lisbon Cathedral from at least 1594 until his death in 1646) has fared worst: there is still no modern edition of most of his surviving output, which includes a substantial number of pieces for two or more choirs, such as the *Missa Cantate Domino* performed tonight. A striking aspect of this work is the alternation of passages in the stately note-values of the 16th-century *stile antico* ('old style') and others where the text is declaimed in a much more exuberant manner (as in the 'Christe').

On the same side of Lisbon as the Cathedral stands the imposing Augustinian Monastery of São Vicente, where the chapelmaster was—for several periods in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—the eminent composer Pedro de Cristo. Lobo would certainly have had contact with his counterpart at São Vicente, who likewise produced a significant number of works scored for two choirs. Tonight's concert begins with his dramatic setting of *Osanna Filio David*, setting the acclamation of the crowd at Jesus's entry into Jerusalem.

Among the other most significant composers working in Lisbon at this time was Filipe de Magalhães, who was chapelmaster of the Royal Chapel. His six-voice motet *Commissa mea pavesco* is a wonderfully poignant setting of a penitential text.

Programme

Music from the 'Golden Age' of Portugal

Osanna Filio David	Pedro de Cristo (c. 1550–1618)
Missa Cantate Domino (8 voices) Kyrie Gloria	Duarte Lobo (c. 1565–1646)
Commissa mea pavesco	Filipe de Magalhães (c. 1571–1652)
Missa Cantate Domino Credo	Duarte Lobo
Audivi vocem de cælo	Duarte Lobo
Missa Cantate Domino Sanctus Benedictus Agnus Dei	Duarte Lobo

INTERVAL of 15 minutes

Music from Tudor and Stuart England

Laudibus in sanctis	William Byrd (c. 1540–1623)
Sleep, fleshly birth How are the mighty fallen	Robert Ramsey (<i>fl.</i> c. 1612–1644) Robert Ramsey
O nata lux Salvator mundi	Thomas Tallis (c. 1500–1585) Thomas Tallis
Infelix ego	William Byrd

Music from Tudor and Stuart England

In the second part of tonight's concert we sing music by three generations of English composers. Thomas Tallis, working in the early part of his career for Catholic establishments such as Dover Priory and Waltham Abbey, lived through the whole process of Reformation and was one of the most favoured musicians of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I. The Queen granted to Tallis and to his pupil William Byrd a monopoly for the printing and selling of music (and music paper!), the result of which was a joint publication of motets by the two composers—the *Cantiones sacrae* ('Sacred songs')—of 1575, which they dedicated to the Queen. Pride of place at the opening of the publication was given to Tallis's motet *Salvator mundi, salva nos*, a plea for salvation, and Tallis also included in the collection an extraordinary 'miniature': *O nata lux*.

After the death of his teacher in 1585, Byrd continued to publish motets under the royal monopoly. His works in this genre display a quite amazing variety of styles: *Laudibus in sanctis* sets its colourful and ebullient text in an evocatively madrigalian manner, portraying the instruments of music and dances which it mentions. *Infelix ego* is Byrd's heartfelt response to a meditation upon Psalm 50 ('Miserere mei Deus') written in prison by the Florentine religious leader Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), shortly before his execution. Byrd here adopts a modernised version of traditional English techniques of composition, including kaleidoscopic contrasts of different voice-groupings, and the use of the splendid festal English texture including 'high trebles'. The final section of the piece is a broadly climactic setting of the opening words of the psalm.

Among the most common sources for laments during the Renaissance were King David's laments on the deaths of, firstly, his son Absalom, and, secondly, King Saul and his son, Jonathan, as recorded in the Second Book of Samuel. These laments (or parts of them) were frequently employed in musical elegies for royalty, and it may be that several of the remarkable English settings of King David's laments, such as Robert Ramsey's *How are the mighty fallen*, were written upon the death in 1612 of Henry Prince of Wales, eldest son and heir of James I, who during his short life became the focus for the nation's hopes of future glory, and whose private court was a centre of artistic endeavour, including music. Certainly, the textual themes of these laments—death in youth, and the fall of the mighty—could appropriately have been applied to the Prince, whose passing was marked also by Byrd and Tomkins. Similarly, the 'sweet youth' whose 'doleful obit' is the subject of Ramsey's *Sleep fleshly birth* may be Henry.

Owen Rees, Director