

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 7:30pm
First Congregational Church, Berkeley

The Tallis Scholars

Peter Phillips, *director*

Amy Haworth, *soprano*
Emma Walshe, *soprano*
Victoria Meteyard, *soprano*
Rebecca Lea, *soprano*
Caroline Trevor, *alto*
Elisabeth Paul, *alto*
Steven Harrold, *tenor*
Tom Castle, *tenor*
Tim Scott Whiteley, *bass*
Piers Kennedy, *bass*

PROGRAM

ORLANDO GIBBONS (1583–1625) *O clap your hands*

THOMAS TALLIS (c. 1505–1585) *Suscipe quaeso*

NICO MUHLY (b. 1981) *Rough Notes* (West Coast Premiere)

WILLIAM BYRD (1539/40–1623) *Tribue domine*

INTERMISSION

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA *Tu es Petrus*
(c. 1525–1594)

JOHN RUTTER (b. 1945) *Hymn to the Creator of Light*

NICOLAS GOMBERT (c. 1495–c. 1560) *Lugebat David Absalon*

JOSQUIN DES PREZ (c. 1450–1521) *Absalon fili mi*

ARVO PÄRT (b. 1935) *Which was the son of...*

*This performance is made possible, in part,
by Susan Graham Harrison & Michael A. Harrison.*

Our 50th birthday season gives me an opportunity to program some of the pieces that have meant most to us over the years. For this reason I have chosen to do just one piece by my favorite composers—though there could have been many more.

In the first half, we start with the anthem that first excited my interest in Renaissance polyphony, Gibbons' *O clap your hands*, an eight-voice *tour de force*. I was 14 when I first heard it in 1968, and I have never looked back. Obviously we needed to include a composition by Tallis; it didn't matter very much which one, but his seven-voice *Suscipe quaeso* is one of his greatest. Nico Muhly, the New York-based composer, has recently written several wonderful settings for us: *Rough Notes* refers to the stars visible in the Antarctic. Byrd's *Tribute domine* is one of our most performed pieces; we have sung it over 130 times, the first time in 1991.

The second half features music by Palestrina and Josquin, on whose sonorities we have largely founded our own sound and our international reputation. Josquin's *Ab-salon fili mi* goes well with Gombert's *Lugebat David*, since they are based on the same story of a father's loss. We have made a special feature of Gombert's music over the years, having recorded all his *Magnificats* in 1996. We have also made a special feature of Arvo Pärt's music, having dedicated a disc to him in 2014. John Rutter needs little introduction, though his style is not always ours. This is a masterpiece.

I could have included so many other pieces, but I think these make a satisfying sequence. I am heartened to think there is plenty more to explore in the years to come.

—Peter Phillips

In 1973, Peter Phillips, then an undergraduate organ scholar in Oxford, founded a group dedicated to the performance of Renaissance polyphony. Fifty years, and well over 2,300 performances later, they are the premier modern interpreters of this music, while also developing fruitful relationships with the cream of today's composers. This program celebrates those 50 years, honoring the composer and the style that have (literally) made the group's name, while also reaching right up to the present by including several modern figures who have been inspired by that distinctive sound.

The group's founder first encountered *O clap your hands* when he was 14 years old. This is Orlando Gibbons, the masterful 17th-century English composer, at his most direct, forceful, and exuberant. This celebratory piece was likely written to fulfil the requirements of the Oxford degree of Doctor of Music, for which composers would produce exercises in counterpoint in as many as eight vocal parts. Gibbons' effort could not be further from dusty academia, exhibiting juggernaut-like momentum and a consummate command of choral texture.

It is no surprise that the music of Thomas Tallis has dominated the performance schedule of the group that bears his name. A shrewd navigator of the unpredictable political currents of 16th-century England, Tallis was canny enough to end up with a royal monopoly on music printing—a very handy source of income. *Suscipe quaeso* is drawn from the 1575 *Cantiones sacrae*, a collection published jointly with William Byrd, thanking Elizabeth I for her patronage and celebrating this new freedom. It is a prayer for absolution, cast in seven voices that enter slowly, building up a polyphony that is then abruptly stripped down for the word "peccavi"—"I have sinned."

Rough Notes was written for the Tallis Scholars by the New York-based composer Nico Muhly. It sets two fragments from



Nick Rutter

Robert Falcon Scott's diaries, made towards the end of his doomed journey to Antarctica. Muhly writes: "The first part depicts the extraordinary *aurora australis* in quite musical terms, with 'arches, bands, and curtains, always in rapid movement.' The second is a severe foreshadowing of the crew's deaths, promising that they will 'meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past.' The poetry leads to a sort of resolute but resigned conclusion, facing the inevitable but never quite reaching it in text or music. This is the first piece of secular music I've written for the Tallis Scholars, and tried, here, to maximize their skills as colorists and dramatic communicators."

The aforementioned *Cantiones sacrae* publication suggests that, whatever their private sympathies—and modern scholarship suggests they may have been closet Catholics—both Tallis and Byrd were adept at playing the game of Tudor politics. They each contributed 17 pieces to the monumental collection, one for each year that Queen Elizabeth had been on the throne. *Tribue Domine* is one of the most extensive of the motets featured. Taking a text attributed to the early Church Father, Augustine, Byrd

rapidly alternates textures as the words enumerate the virtues of the Trinity. In its use of smaller forces contrasting with rich homophony it evokes the English tradition of the composer's forebears. A fantastically extended Gloria makes a fitting coda, a monument to the splendors of Tudor polyphony.

The text of the motet *Tu es Petrus* is of special importance to Rome, the seat of the Catholic Church, which derives its authority from the lineage of St Peter, the first Pope. (In the scripture, Christ anoints Peter as the "rock" upon which he will build his church.) As a Roman composer, Palestrina was called on to write multiple settings of this key passage. Tonight, we hear the version in six parts—a taut and masterly setting, sufficiently popular in the composer's own age that he wrote an entire mass setting based upon it. Everything works to underscore the confidence and charisma of the Counter-Reformation Catholic church; high and low voices alternate and then cohere in rock-solid homophony, only to break into joyous melisma.

John Rutter's genius for melody and its sympathetic arrangement has won him devotees from across the English-speaking

world and beyond. The *Hymn to the Creator of Light* proves him equally capable in more ambitious forms. It was written for performance in Gloucester Cathedral, on the occasion of the dedication of a window commemorating the great English composer Herbert Howells. At the beginning, ominous unison from one choir is answered by celestial harmony from the other. A more propulsive central section leads to a meditative finale that cleverly weaves the initial motif together with the melody of the chorale “Schmücke dich.”

In a moving passage of scripture in the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel, King David is brought the news that, following a battle, one of his sons has been killed. Despite the fact that Absalom had been in open rebellion against his father, David still weeps for his loss. The story has inspired countless composers across the centuries. *Lugebat David Absalom* has been attributed to Nicholas Gombert; it is a motet with a curious

history, which may originally have had secular words and subsequently been given a *contrafactum*, or new sacred text. It is a profound meditation on grief, painted on a broad, 10-voice canvas. In *Absalon fili mi*, probably authored by Gombert's teacher Josquin, the descent into grief is described in a piece that seems to constantly spiral downwards in pitch, lower and lower as it traces the depths of sorrow.

It is often said of a good composer that they could set the phone book to music and it would still be compelling. Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's *Which was the son of...* comes very close to proving this axiom—the phone book, in this case, being a chapter from Luke's gospel listing the genealogy of Jesus. An impenetrable and entirely undramatic list of bizarre names, one might think, and yet in Pärt's hands it is riveting. Crisp rhythms, syncopations, and shifts between meters barrel the piece towards its end—which is also its beginning: God.

—James M. Potter, 2023

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Tallis Scholars was founded in 1973 by its director, Peter Phillips. Through the group's recordings and concert performances, it has established itself as the leading exponent of Renaissance sacred music throughout the world. Peter Phillips has worked with the ensemble to create, through good tuning and blend, the purity and clarity of sound he feels best serves the Renaissance repertoire, allowing every detail of the musical lines to be heard. It is the resulting beauty of sound for which the ensemble has become so widely renowned.

The Tallis Scholars performs in both sacred and secular venues, giving around 80 concerts each year. In 2013, the group celebrated its 40th anniversary with a world tour, performing 99 events in 80 venues in 16 countries.

The ensemble now looks ahead to its 50th anniversary in 2023–24. In 2020, Gimell Records celebrated 40 years of recording the group by releasing a remastered version of the 1980 recording of Allegri's *Miserere*. As of the beginning of the cancellations caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the Tallis Scholars had made 2,327 appearances, worldwide.

Current season highlights include performances in Australia, New York and Boston, Amsterdam, Zurich, and Paris; tours of Italy; a number of appearances in London; and the group's usual touring schedule around the USA, Europe, and the UK. In a monumental project to mark Josquin des Prez' 500th anniversary celebrations, the Tallis Scholars sang all 18 of the composer's masses over the course of four days at the Boulez Saal in Berlin in July 2022.

Recordings by the Tallis Scholars have attracted many international awards. In 1987, the group's recording of Josquin's *Missa La sol fa re mi* and *Missa Pange lingua* was named *Gramophone* magazine's Record of the Year, the first recording of early music ever to earn this coveted honor. In 1989, the French magazine *Diapason* gave two of its Diapason d'Or de l'Année awards for the recordings of a mass and motets by Lassus and for Josquin's two masses based on the chanson "L'Homme armé." The recording of Palestrina's *Missa Assumpta est Maria* and *Missa Sicut lilium* received *Gramophone*'s Early Music Award in 1991; the group received the 1994 Early Music Award for its recording of music by Cipriano de Rore; and the same distinction again came in 2005 for a disc of music by John Browne. The was nominated for Grammy Awards in 2001, 2009, and 2010. In November 2012, its recording of Josquin's *Missa De beata virgine* and *Missa Ave maris stella* received a Diapason d'Or de l'Année and in the group's 40th anniversary year, it was welcomed into the *Gramophone* "Hall of Fame" by public vote. In a departure for the ensemble, during the spring of 2015, the Tallis Scholars released a disc of music by Arvo Pärt called *Tintinnabuli*, which received great praise worldwide. The group's latest recording of Josquin masses, including *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie*, was released in November 2020, winning the *BBC Music Magazine*'s much coveted Recording of the Year Award and the *Gramophone* Early Music Award in 2021. This disc was the last of nine albums in the group's project to record and release all Josquin's masses before the 500th anniversary of the composer's death in 2021.



Peter Phillips has dedicated his career to the research and performance of Renaissance polyphony, and to the perfecting of choral sound. He founded the Tallis Scholars in 1973, with

whom he has now appeared in over 2,300 concerts and made over 60 recordings, world-wide. As a result of this commitment, Peter Phillips and the Tallis Scholars have done more than any other group to establish the sacred vocal music of the Renaissance as one of the great repertoires of Western classical music.

Peter Phillips also conducts other specialist ensembles. He is currently working with the BBC Singers, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Intrada (Moscow), and El Leon de Oro (Spain). He is Patron of the Chapel Choir of Merton College Oxford.

In addition to conducting, Phillips is well-known as a writer. For 33 years, he contributed a regular music column to *The Spectator*. In 1995, he became the publisher of *The Musical Times*, the oldest continuously published music journal in the world. Phillips' first book, *English Sacred Music 1549–1649*, was published by Gimell in 1991, while his second, *What We Really Do*, appeared in 2013. During 2018, BBC Radio 3 broadcast his view of Renaissance polyphony in a series of six hour-long programs entitled *The Glory of Polyphony*.

In 2005, Phillips was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture. In 2008, he helped to found the chapel choir of Merton College Oxford, where he is a Bodley Fellow; and in 2021, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford.

www.thetallisscholars.co.uk
www.gimell.com

Orlando Gibbons

O clap your hands

O clap your hands together, all ye people:
 O sing unto God with the voice of melody.
 For the Lord is high, and to be feared:
 he is the great King of all the earth.
 He shall subdue the people under us,
 and the nations under our feet. He shall
 choose out an heritage for us, even the
 worship of Jacob, whom he loved. God
 is gone up with a merry noise: and the
 Lord with the sound of the trumpet.

O sing praises, sing praises unto our God:
 O sing praises, sing praises unto the Lord
 our King. For God is the King of all the
 earth: sing ye praises with understanding.
 God reigneth over the heathen: God
 sitteth upon his holy seat. For God, which
 is highly exalted, doth defend the earth,
 as it were with a shield. 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.

Thomas Tallis

Suscipe quaeso Domine

Suscipe quaeso Domine, vocem confitentis.

Scelera mea non defendo; peccavi.
 Deus miserere mei; peccavi, dele culpas
 meas gratia tua.
 Si enim iniquitates recordaberis quis
 sustineat?
 Quis enim justus qui se dicere audeat
 sine peccato esse?
 Nullus est enim mundus in conspectu tuo.

Accept, I beseech thee O Lord

Accept, I beseech thee O Lord, the voice of
 him who confesses.

My crimes I do not defend; I have sinned.
 O God have mercy on me; I have sinned,
 do away my sins by thy grace.
 For if thou shalt remember iniquities,
 who could bear it?
 For who is so righteous that he dare say
 that he is without sin?
 For there is no-one pure in thy sight.

Nico Muhly
Rough Notes

PART ONE

To-night we had a glorious auroral display—quite the most brilliant I have seen. At one time the sky from N.N.W. to S.S.E. as high as the zenith was massed with arches, bands, and curtains, always in rapid movement. The waving curtains were especially fascinating—a wave of bright light would start at one end and run along to the other, or a patch of brighter light would spread as if to reinforce the failing light of the curtain.

PART TWO

For four days we have been unable to leave the tent—the gale howling about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale...

William Byrd

Tribue Domine

Tribue, Domine, ut donec in hoc fragili corpore positus sum laudet te cor meum,

laudet te lingua mea, et omnia ossa mea dicant: Domine, quis similis tui?

Tu es Deus omnipotens, quem trinum in personis, et unum in substantia deitatis colimus et adoramus:

Patrem ingenitum, Filium de Patre unigenitum,

Spiritum Sanctum de utroque procedentem et in utroque permanentem, sanctam et individuum Trinitatem, unum Deum omnipotentem.

Te deprecor, supplico et rogo, auge fidem, auge spem, auge charitatem:

Fac nos per ipsam gratiam tuam semper in fide

stabiles, et in opere efficaces, ut per fidem rectam, et condigna fidei opera, ad vitam, te miserante, perveniamus aeternam.

Gloria Patri, qui creavit nos,
gloria Filio, qui redemit nos:
gloria Spiritui Sancto, qui sanctificavit nos:

gloria summae et individuae Trinitati,

cuius opera inseparabilia sunt,
cuius imperium sine fine manet.

Te decet laus, te decet hymnus, tibi debetur omnis honor, tibi benedictio et claritas, tibi gratiarum actio, tibi honor, virtus et fortitudo,

Deo nostro, in saecula saeculorum,
Amen.

Grant, O Lord

Grant, O Lord, that while I am in this fragile body my heart may praise you, my tongue may

praise you, and all my being may say: Lord, who is there like you?

You are Almighty God whom we worship and adore, three persons, and one divine essence:

the Father unbegotten, the only begotten Son

of the Father, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both, yet abides in both, the holy and undivided Trinity, one God omnipotent.

I pray, beseech and entreat you: increase my faith, increase my hope, increase my charity.

By your grace make us always steadfast in our

faith, and successful in our deeds, that through true faith and deeds worthy of that faith we may come, by your mercy, to eternal life.

Glory be to the Father, who created us.
Glory be to the Son who redeemed us.
Glory be to the Holy Spirit who sanctified us.

Glory be to the highest and undivided Trinity,

whose works are inseparable, whose kingdom abides for ever.

You are worthy of praise, worthy of songs of praise: all honor and blessing and glory, thanksgiving, honor, perfection and might

be yours, our God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

INTERMISSION

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Tu es Petrus

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevallebunt adversus eam: et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum. Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis: et quodcumque solveris super terram erit solutum et in caelis, et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum.

Thou art Peter

Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them: and unto thee do I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou bindest in earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou loosest in earth shall be loosed in heaven; and I give thee the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

John Rutter

Hymn to the Creator of Light

Glory be to thee, O lord,
 Creator of the visible light,
 the sun's ray, the flame of fire.
 Creator also of the light invisible
 and intellectual,
 That which is known of God.
 the light invisible.
 Glory be to thee, O Lord,
 Creator of the light,
 for writings of the law,
 for oracles of prophets,
 for melody of psalms,
 for wisdom of proverbs,
 experience of histories,
 a light which never sets.
 God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light.

Light, who dost my soul enlighten;
 Sun, who all my life dost brighten;
 Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth;
 Fount, whence all my being floweth.
 From thy banquet let me measure,
 Lord, how vast and deep its treasure;
 Through the gifts thou here dost give us,
 As thy guest in heav'n receive us. Alleluia.
 Creator of the visible light.

Nicolas Gombert

Lugebat David Absalon

Lugebat David Absalon, pius pater filium,
tristis senex puerum:
heu me fili mi Absalon, quis mihi det ut
moriar, ut ego pro te, O fili mi Absalon?
Rex autem David filium cooperto flebat
capite:
quis mihi det ut ego moriar pro te,
O fili mi?
Porro rex operuit caput suum, et clamabat
voce magna:
O fili mi Absalon.

Josquin des Prez

Absalon fili mi

Absalon fili mi, quis det ut moriar pro te,

fili mi Absalon?
Non vivam ultra, sed descendam
in infernum plorans.
Porro rex operuit caput sum,
Et clamabat voce magna:
Fili mi Absalon.

David mourned for Absalom

David mourned for Absalom, a pious father
for his son, a sad old man for his boy:
alas, my son Absalom, would God I had
died for you.
King David covered his head and wept
for his son:
would God I had died for you, Absalom,
my son.
Then the king covered his head, and cried
with a great voice:
O my son, Absalom.

Absalom my son

Absalom my son, would that I might die
for thee,
my son Absalom.
Let me not live longer but descend
into hell weeping.
The king covered his head,
and in a loud voice cried out:
My son Absalom.

Arvo Pärt

Which was the son of...

And Jesus himself began to be about
30 years of age, being (as was supposed)
the son of Joseph, which was the son
of Heli,
Which was the son of Matthat, which was
the son of Levi, which was the son of
Melchi, which was the son of Janna,
which was the son of Joseph,
Which was the son of Mattathias, which
was the son of Amos, which was the son
of Naum, which was the son of Esli,
which was the son of Nagge,
Which was the son of Maath, which was
the son of Mattathias, which was the
son of Semei, which was the son of
Joseph, which was the son of Juda,
Which was the son of Joanna, which was
the son of Rhesa, which was the son
of Zorobabel, which was the son of
Salathiel, which was the son of Neri,

Which was the son of Melchi, which was
the son of Addi, which was the son of
Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam,
which was the son of Er,
Which was the son of Jose, which was the
son of Eliezer, which was the son of
Jorim, which was the son of Matthat,
which was the son of Levi,
Which was the son of Simeon, which was
the son of Juda, which was the son of
Joseph, which was the son of Jonan,
which was the son of Eliakim,
Which was the son of Melea, which was
the son of Menan, which was the son of
Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan,
which was the son of David,
Which was the son of Jesse, which was
the son of Obed, which was the son of
Booz, which was the son of Salmon,
which was the son of Naasson,
Which was the son of Aminadab, which
was the son of Aram, which was the son
of Esrom, which was the son of Phares,
which was the son of Juda,
Which was the son of Jacob, which was
the son of Isaac, which was the son of
Abraham, which was the son of Thara,
which was the son of Nachor,
Which was the son of Saruch, which was
the son of Ragau, which was the son of
Phalec, which was the son of Heber,
which was the son of Sala,
Which was the son of Cainan, which was
the son of Arphaxad, which was the son
of Sem, which was the son of Noe,
which was the son of Lamech,
Which was the son of Mathusala, which
was the son of Enoch, which was the
son of Jared, which was the son of
Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan,
Which was the son of Enos, which was
the son of Seth, which was the son of
Adam, which was the son of God.