

Friday, May 2, 2025, 8pm
First Congregational Church, Berkeley

The Tallis Scholars

Palestrina 500

The Tallis Scholars
Amy Haworth, *soprano*
Emma Walshe, *soprano*
Daisy Walford, *soprano*
Victoria Meteyard, *soprano*
Caroline Trevor, *alto*
Elisabeth Paul, *alto*
Steven Harrold, *tenor*
Tom Castle, *tenor*
Tim Scott Whiteley, *bass*
Rob Macdonald, *bass*

Peter Phillips, *director*

PROGRAM

Giovanni Pierluigi da PALESTRINA *Missa Ut re mi fa sol la*
(1525/6–1594)

INTERMISSION

PALESTRINA *Laudate pueri Dominum*

Orlande de LASSUS (1530/32–1594) *Media vita*

PALESTRINA *Tribulationes civitatum*

LASSUS *Timor et tremor*

PALESTRINA *Tu es Petrus*

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

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Palestrina is one of a very small number of composers who have come to represent, as Peter Phillips says, “an entire epoch of music.” In terms of sheer influence on subsequent generations, few can compare. This, the 500th anniversary of his birth, affords an opportunity to reflect on his extraordinary legacy, as well as compare his work with that of Renaissance contemporaries, in this case the near-equally titanic Orlande de Lassus.

The first half of this evening’s concert is devoted to one of Palestrina’s 107 settings of the ordinary texts of the mass. The *Missa Ut re mi fa sol la* is named for its principal melodic idea: the six notes of the hexachord, the compass and starting point of Renaissance music theory (almost identical with the modern equivalent, though substituting “Ut” for our “Do”!). As the building block of a mass setting, six ascending scale notes is an idea almost banal in its simplicity. Even more so, one would think, in the method of deployment here: with the second soprano part simply running up and down the scale at various speeds. As may be expected, however, Palestrina turns it into something considerably more.

In doing so, he was himself participating in a tradition. “Hexachord” masses were not new; Antoine Brumel had written one in the generation before, with his *Agnus Dei* a likely model for Palestrina’s structure here. Juan de Esquivel did a similar thing, as had contemporaries Morales and Capillas, while the great Josquin had also based a mass setting on scale tones, albeit in a different order, in the *Missa La sol fa re mi*. The popularity lay in the challenge: how to transform such simple material into a polyphonically satisfying sequence of movements?

The Kyrie introduces the principal idea: the second soprano treating the scale as a *cantus firmus*, simply ascending and descending once, while the other parts weave polyphony around it. In the following *Christe*, it does the same thing, twice as

slowly (in “augmentation”). It will later spend the entire Gloria simply ascending and descending the ladder (an exercise for Palestrina’s young boy singers to learn their scales, perhaps?).

The texture is not unvarying: the Sanctus includes a particularly delightful section for the divided upper voices. And it wouldn’t be Palestrina without an imitative canon (in which one voice follows another exactly); once we get to the culminating *Agnus Dei* movement, he adds a further voice-part, in exact canon with the second soprano.

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Laudate pueri Dominum’s confident opening motif presages the deployment of that most opulent Renaissance resource, the eight-part choir. This motet, with singers likely doubled on instruments or organ, and arrayed with Palestrina’s customary mastery of polyphonic textures, would have crowned a high festival of the Roman Church.

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Orlande de Lassus enjoyed a position among Renaissance composers almost equal to that of Palestrina. He was likewise capable of a smoothly imitative polyphony, but, somewhat more involved in courtly music-making than the largely church-bound Palestrina, enjoyed a slightly greater freedom to experiment with form and harmony. *Media vita* takes as its subject the plainchant of the popular medieval text, a reminder of the impermanence of life and the omnipresence of death. Each voice-part enters with the outline of the opening of the chant. Subsequently the composer’s personality begins to assert itself: as in the quirky profile of the “quem quaerimus” line, with its ascending scale followed by a sudden descent. In the second part, a particularly expressive soprano part descends gradually from a high F, in a stylized gesture of lament.

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Palestrina’s *Tribulationes civitatum* is also from the Church’s penitential season. The composer moves seamlessly between imi-

tative polyphony, gradually built up by introducing the voices one by one, and the homophonic declamatory style. The joins are barely noticeable, only interrupting the flow of the motet to highlight the word “timor” (fear). Both parts of the piece seem to lead inexorably to the cry of “miserere”—“have mercy.”

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Lassus, though well-schooled in the polyphonic techniques of his time, often pushed the boundaries of what was considered harmonically acceptable. He was associated with a musical movement that sought to enlarge the expressive power of music with unusual shifts of chromaticism or rhythm. *Timor et tremor* exemplifies this approach. This penitential motet opens with slow-moving chords that shift uncertainly between harmonic centers. Later, at the words “non confundar,” the “confusion” finds its echo in syncopated vocal parts that collide and clash with each other, in a manner

more reminiscent of a secular madrigal than a sacred motet.

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The text of the motet *Tu es Petrus* is of especial importance to Rome, the seat of the Catholic Church, which derives its authority from the lineage of St. Peter, the first Pope. (In the scriptures, 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 during 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, an awe-inspiring testament to the skill of this most important of composers.

—James M. Potter, © 2025

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Tallis Scholars were founded in 1973 by their director, Peter Phillips. Through their recordings and concert performances, they have established themselves as the leading exponents 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 Tallis Scholars have become so widely renowned.

The singers perform 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 concerts in 80 venues in 16 countries. In 2020, Gimell Records celebrated 40 years of recording the group by re-

leasing a remastered version of the 1980 recording of Allegri’s *Miserere*. The group celebrated its 50th birthday in 2023–24, and today, the international desire to hear the singers is as strong as ever. The Tallis Scholars have now performed well over 2,500 concerts.

Current season highlights include performances in the United States, Japan, and East Asia, as well as several appearances in London and the group’s usual touring schedule in Europe and the UK.

Recordings by the Tallis Scholars have received many international awards. In 1987, the group’s recording of Josquin’s *Missa La sol fa re mi* and *Missa Pange lingua* received *Gramophone* magazine’s Record of the Year award, the first recording of early music ever to win this coveted honor. In 1989, the French magazine *Diapason* gave the group

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." Their recording of Palestrina's *Missa Assumpta est Maria* and *Missa Sicut lilium* received *Gramophone's* Early Music Award in 1991; the ensemble received the 1994 Early Music Award for its recording of music by Cipriano de Rore, and the same distinction again in 2005 for a disc of music by John Browne. The Tallis Scholars were nominated for Grammy Awards in 2001, 2009, and 2010. In 2012, their recording of Josquin's *Missa de Beata Virgine* and *Missa Ave maris stella* received a Diapason d'Or de l'Année award, and during their 40th anniversary year, they were welcomed into the *Gramophone* "Hall of Fame" by public vote. In a departure for the group, in 2015, the Tallis Scholars released a disc of music by Arvo Pärt called *Tintinnabuli*, which received great praise.

A 2020 release including *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie* was the last of nine albums in the Tallis Scholars' project to record and release all of Josquin's masses before the 500th anniversary of the composer's death. In 2021, it was the winner of the *BBC Music Magazine's* much coveted Recording of the Year award and the *Gramophone* Early Music Award. The group's latest Gimell release (November 2024) is of music by Robert Fayrfax and was named an Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*.

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

more than 2,500 concerts world-wide and made over 60 discs in association with Gimell Records. As a result of this commitment, 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.

Phillips also conducts other specialist ensembles. He is currently working with the BBC Singers (London), the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Utrecht), the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (Tallinn), the Danish Radio Choir (Copenhagen), and El Leon de Oro (Oviedo), and 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. In 2018, BBC Radio 3 broadcast his view of Renaissance polyphony in a series of six hour-long programs entitled *The Glory of Polyphony*. He is also a regular reviewer on music for the London Review of Books.

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.thetallissscholars.co.uk
www.gimell.com

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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Missa Ut re mi fa sol la

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

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

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te;
benedicimus te; adoramus te; glorificamus
te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam
gloriam tuam, Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Glory be to God on high, and in earth
peace, goodwill towards men. We praise
thee; we bless thee; we worship thee; we
glorify thee. We give thanks to thee for thy
great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king,
God the Father almighty.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe;
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;
qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecacionem
nostram; qui sedes ad dexteram
Patris, miserere nobis.

O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the
Father, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon us; thou that
takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer; thou that sittest
at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus; tu solus
Dominus; tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,
cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

For thou only art Holy; thou only art the
Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy
Ghost, art Most High in the glory of God
the Father. Amen.

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem
omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filius Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum
ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo;
Lumen de Lumine; Deum verum
de Deo vero; genitum, non factum;
consubstantiali Patri; per quem
omnia facta sunt.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, and of all
things visible and invisible. And in one
Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son
of God, begotten of his Father before all
worlds. God of God; Light of Light; very
God of very God; begotten, not made;
being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made.

Qui propter nos homines, et propter
nostram salutem descendit de caelis,
et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto,
ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub
Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est.

Et resurrexit tertia die secundum
Scripturas; et ascendit in caelum,
sedet ad dexteram Patris; et iterum
venturus est cum gloria iudicare vivos
et mortuos; cuius regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum
et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque
procedit; qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus
est per prophetas;

Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam
Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum. Et exspecto
resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam
venturi saeculi. Amen.

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

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

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

Who for us men, and for our salvation,
came down from heaven, and was
incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the
Virgin Mary, and was made man.
And was crucified also for us under
Pontius Pilate; he suffered death
and was buried.

And the third day he rose again according
to the Scriptures; and ascended into
heaven, and is seated at the right hand of
the Father; and he shall come again with
glory to judge both the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord,
and giver of life, who proceeds from the
Father and the Son; who with the Father
and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy, catholic and
apostolic Church. I acknowledge one
baptism for the remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.

Blessed is he that cometh in name of the
Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of
the world, have mercy on us.
O Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of
the world, grant us thy peace.

INTERMISSION

Palestrina

Laudate pueri dominum

Laudate pueri Dominum: laudate nomen
Domini.

Sit nomen Domini benedictum,
ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.

A solis ortu usque ad occasum laudabile
nomen Domini.

Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus,
super coelos gloria eius.

Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster,
qui in altis habitat.

Et humilia respicit in coelo et in terra.

Suscitans a terra inopem,
et de stercore erigens pauperem.

Ut collocet eum cum principibus,
cum principibus populi sui.

Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo
matrem filiorum laetantem.

Orlande de Lassus

Media vita in morte sumus

Media vita in morte sumus,

Quem quaerimus adiutorem nisi te,
Domine,

Qui pro peccatis nostris iuste irasceris?

Sancte Deus, sancte fortis

Sancte et misericors Salvator noster

Amarae morti ne tradas nos.

Palestrina

Tribulationes civitatum

Tribulationes civitatum audivimus,
quas passae sunt et defecimus.

Timor et hebetudo mentis cecidit
super nos et super liberos nostros.

Domine miserere!

Peccavimus cum patribus nostris,
injuste egimus, iniquitatem fecimus.

Domine misere.

Praise, O ye servants of the Lord:
praise the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord,
from this time forth and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun unto the going
down of the same the Lord's name
is to be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like unto the Lord our God,
who dwelleth on high.

Who humbleth himself to behold the things
that are in heaven, and in the earth.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.

That he may set him with princes,
even with the princes of his people.

He maketh the barren woman to keep
house, and to be a joyful mother of chil-
dren.

In the midst of life we are in death,

Whom shall we ask for help if not you,
O Lord,

You who are justly angry on account
of our sins?

Holy God, holy strength

Our Holy and Merciful Saviour

Do not hand us over to the bitterness
of death.

We have heard of the trials which the cities
have suffered, and have lost heart.

Fear and confusion have fallen upon us,
and upon our children.

Lord, have mercy!

We have sinned with our forefathers,
we have committed injustices,
we have done wrong.

Lord, have mercy.

Lassus

Timor et tremor

Timor et tremor venerunt super me et caligo cecidit super me miserere mei Domine, miserere mei, quoniam in te confidit anima mea. Exaudi Deus deprecationem meam, quia refugium meum es tu et adiutor fortis Domine invocavi te, non confundar.

Fear and trembling have taken hold of me, and darkness has descended upon me. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy, for my soul has trusted in thee. Hear, O God, my supplication for thou art my refuge and strength; O Lord, I have called upon thee, let me never be confounded.

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, 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.