



**FAVOURITE  
SACRED  
MASTERPIECES**

**Tallis**

Spem in alium

**Allegri**

Miserere

**Pergolesi**

Stabat mater

**Mozart**

Ave verum corpus

**Bach-Gounod**

Ave Maria

**Franck**

Panis angelicus

## FAVOURITE SACRED MASTERPIECES

### 1 Thomas TALLIS (c.1505–1585)

#### Spem in alium

Considering that Thomas Tallis was the finest English composer of his generation, it is surprising how little we know about his life. The first time we hear of Tallis is in 1530 when he was organist at Dover Priory in Kent: by then he was clearly a respected professional musician. We also know that Tallis was described as being 'very aged' in 1577 and that he died in November 1585. Taking these three pieces of information together, the consensus is that Tallis was born around 1505 (thus placing him in his mid-twenties while working at Dover, in his early-seventies when he was described as 'very aged', and in his eightieth year when he died). Hardly conclusive, but there is not much else to go on. In 1535 Dover Priory was dissolved, and Tallis's job with it. By 1537 he was working at the church of St Mary-at-Hill in London. St Mary-at-Hill was an important musical foundation, and from there Tallis seems to have begun his association with the English royal court (in 1577 Tallis was described as 'serving your royal ancestors for forty years'). By 1538 Tallis was a senior member of the music staff at Waltham Abbey in Essex, but yet again Tallis's job was dissolved along with the Abbey in 1540. Undeterred, he moved to the newly-founded secular establishment at Canterbury Cathedral, where he sang as part of the choir of 22 men and boys. The Reformation had a profound effect on English church music, most tangibly during the reign of Edward VI when late-medieval Latin polyphony became outlawed. Tallis maintained his craft and his compositional voice, and provided the Church of England with largely homophonic music to English texts. He was, above all, a pragmatist, and he allowed the intimacy and directness of expression which this new style required to give another dimension to his compositional vision. Indeed, turbulent though this English liturgical revolution must have been to a lifelong Catholic, Tallis accepted the new musical order and learnt from it.

Tallis served at court under four monarchs during his long life (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth) as singer, organist, choir trainer, and composer. His musical genius and his years of service at court were recognised in 1573 by the granting of a license which allowed him and his supposed

pupil William Byrd to maintain a monopoly over the printing and publication of music and music paper for 21 years. This extraordinary royal favour seems to have followed hard on the heels of the finest musical achievement of his career, the composition of the forty-voice motet *Spem in alium*. In 1567 the Mantuan composer Alessandro Striggio came to London; he brought with him *Ecce beatam lucem*, a motet in forty parts. According to a recollection of 1611, a music-loving Duke (possibly the Duke of Norfolk) 'asked whether none of our Englishmen could set as good a song'. Consequently, 'Tallis, being very skilful, was felt to try whether he would undertake the matter, which he did, and made one of forty parts which was sung in the Long Gallery at Arundel House'. Arundel House, off London's Strand, belonged to Norfolk's father-in-law, the Earl of Arundel, who ran a strong musical establishment. Moreover the Earl of Arundel also had a country residence, Nonsuch Palace, which had an octagonal banqueting-hall. At Nonsuch Palace the octagonal hall would presumably have necessitated a performance of *Spem in alium* 'in the round', the octagon accommodating eight choirs of five voices each. It is unlikely that early audiences were either aware that all forty voices enter together for the first time at the fortieth semibreve, or that the piece lasts 69 longs (in the Latin alphabet, where I and J are the same letter, T=19, A=1, L=11, L=11, I=9, S=18, so TALLIS = 69). But those fortunate listeners surely shared the most impressive aural experience of their lives, and the number symbolism is a mark of the fact that when Tallis attempted something that must have seemed impossible to the average musician of his day, he still had technique in reserve.

This recording of *Spem in alium* was made using 'surround sound' (available on Naxos SACD 6.110111 and DVD-A 5.110111). The forty voices were arranged to form four sides of a huge St-Chad cross: Choirs 1 & 2 to the West, 3 & 4 to the North, 5 & 6 to the East, and 7 & 8 to the South. The recording was made to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Tallis' birth and the 21st birthday of Oxford Camerata – old members of Oxford Camerata met with their new counterparts for this performance of Tallis's masterpiece.

Jeremy Summerly

### 2 Gregorio ALLEGRI (1582-1652)

#### Miserere

Trained as a chorister in Rome from the age of nine, Gregorio Allegri continued as a singer in Rome and at Fermo and Tivoli. In 1628 he became *maestro di cappella* at the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia in Rome and from 1630 he was a singer in the papal chapel of Pope Urban VIII. His best known composition for the papal choir is his nine-part *Miserere*, a psalm-setting customarily performed by the choir in Holy Week. The work remained the exclusive property of the papal choir and was copied out from memory by the fourteen-year-old Mozart, when he heard the work sung in Rome in 1770. Three years later Dr Burney took a copy of the *Miserere*, with other music of the chapel, during the course of his extended investigative journey through Europe.

### 3-14 Giovanni Battista PERGOLESI (1710-1736)

#### Stabat mater

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, the family name by which he is generally known derived from his great-grandfather's place of origin, Pergola, was born at Jesi in 1710, the third child of a surveyor. Aristocratic patronage enabled him to study in the early 1720s at the Conservatorio dei Poveri in Naples. Later on, Pergolesi's position in the musical life of Naples seemed assured, with commissioned Mass and Vesper settings in honour of St Emedius, patron of the city and protector against earthquakes, and appointment, with right of succession, as deputy to the city *maestro di cappella*. Political disturbances, with the ousting of the Austrian vicerey and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Naples under King Carlos of Bourbon, took Pergolesi briefly to Rome, where, in 1734, a Mass setting commissioned by a Neapolitan nobleman, the Duke of Maddaloni, created a sensation. By 1735 Pergolesi's health had deteriorated very considerably and the following year he took up residence in the Franciscan monastery at Pozzuoli to prepare, it seems, for his death. It was here, in the last months of his life, that he wrote his *Stabat mater*, for the fraternity of the Church of Santa Maria dei Sette Dolori in Naples, a church that is the site of the Maddaloni family tomb. His *cantata da camera*, *Orfeo*, also dates from this final period of his life. He died on 16th March 1736.

Pergolesi's early death and the wide fame accorded him posthumously has led to very considerable confusion in matters of attribution, as others seized the opportunity of using his name, so that any modern listing of his works must include a large category of compositions that are either doubtful or clearly spurious, some of these misattributions finding their way into Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. There is, of course, no doubt about the origin of either the *Stabat mater* or *Orfeo*. The first, indeed, had exceptionally wide circulation, with publication in London in 1749 and adaptation by Johann Sebastian Bach, and remains the most often heard of all Pergolesi's compositions.

Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*, for soprano and alto, with string orchestra and basso continuo, was intended to replace the setting by Alessandro Scarlatti for the same resources and fraternity. It opens with a setting of the first stanza for the two voices, which enter after a brief and moving instrumental introduction, music that Mozart might have had in mind as he wrote his own *Requiem* half a century later. The second stanza is a more animated soprano solo, the instrumental and subsequent vocal trills suggesting the piercing sword of the text. *O quam tristis et afflicta* brings the soprano and alto together in a more reflective mood, to be followed by the fourth stanza, allotted to the alto and Handelian in its operatic vigour. The soprano introduces the fifth stanza, the question proposed countered by the following interrogative stanza from the alto, before the two voices blend, at first in sad reflection and then in animated conclusion. *Vidit suum dulcem natum* is set for soprano, with an affecting instrumental introduction and hesitant pointing of the words *dum emisit spiritum*. The alto invokes the Mother of Christ, *fons amoris*, with deepest feeling. The two join together again in a vigorous fugal *Fac ut ardeat cor meum*, to which the setting of the twelfth stanza, *Sancta Mater, istud agas*, and the following verses, for the two voices, offer a gentler contrast, the soprano answered by the alto before both join together in *Fac me vere tecum flere*. The following alto solo has a dramatic instrumental introduction, echoed in the vocal line. The soprano and alto join in a duet of greater cheer, continued more reflectively in the sanguine expectation of salvation expressed in the final stanza, capped by an energetic *Amen*.

**15 Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)**  
**Ave verum corpus, K. 618**

The simple clarity of Mozart's *Ave verum* of 1791 reflects the circumstances of its composition. The composer spent the last ten years of his life in precarious independence in Vienna, after a childhood centred on Salzburg, where his father had done much to protect him from the practical difficulties of life as a musician. He wrote his setting of the *Ave verum corpus* (Hail true Body), scored for four-part choir, strings and organ, for a church of relatively limited resources in Baden, where his wife was convalescing, during the last summer of her husband's life.

**16 Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)**  
**arr. Charles GOUNOD (1818-1893)**  
**Ave Maria**

The Latin prayer to the Blessed Virgin, *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) was set to a melody derived from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Prelude No. 1 in C major* from *Book I of The Well-Tempered Clavier*, and published in 1853. Gounod's melody has enjoyed wide popularity.

**17 César FRANCK (1822-1890)**  
**Panis angelicus**

César Franck wrote a number of large scale choral works on Biblical subjects, with smaller scale works for occasional or liturgical use. His *Panis angelicus*, originally for tenor, organ, harp, cello and double bass, was written in 1872. It was later added to his *Mass* for three voices, and has been variously arranged. The text is part of a Corpus Christi hymn by St Thomas Aquinas.

Keith Anderson

*Recording credits*

**Tallis: Spem in alium** (8.557770)

Recorded at All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London, 21–23 January, 2005 • Producer: Andrew Walton, K&A Productions Ltd.  
Engineer: Mike Clements • Post-production: Emma Stocker and Andrew Walton © 2005

**Allegri: Miserere** (8.553238)

Recorded in the Chapel of Wellington College, Crowthorne, Berkshire, England, 29–30 and 1 July 1992  
Producer: Chris Craker • Engineer: Dave Harries © 1995

**Pergolesi: Stabat mater** (8.550766)

Recorded at Festetics Castle, Budapest, September 1994. Producer: Tamás Benedek • Engineer: Gábor Mocsáry © 1995

**Mozart: Ave Verum Corpus** (8.550495)

Recorded at the House of Arts, Košice, Slovakia, 10–15 June, 1991 • Producer Rudolf Hetsel • Engineer: Gejza Toperczer © 1992

**Bach-Gounod: Ave Maria & Franck: Panis angelicus** (8.55375)

No production credits available © 1997

Some of the world's greatest sacred masterpieces are heard on this disc, performed by some of the world's leading vocal ensembles. The journey ranges from Thomas Tallis's extraordinary *Spem in alium* to César Franck's immortal *Panis angelicus*. Pergolesi's extraordinary *Stabat mater* is a masterpiece of the early eighteenth century. Mozart, who as a 14 year old had copied out Allegri's *Miserere* from memory, is represented by his beautiful *Ave verum corpus*. It is impossible to omit the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria* from a journey that crosses geographical borders and spans the centuries.

## FAVOURITE SACRED MASTERPIECES

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Thomas TALLIS (c. 1505–1585)<br><b>Spem in alium</b> 12:16                                                                            | <b>11</b> Sancta mater, istud agas SA 5:01                                                                                            |
| <b>2</b> Gregorio ALLEGRI (1582–1652)<br><b>Miserere</b> 10:12                                                                                 | <b>12</b> Fac ut portem Christi mortem A 3:12                                                                                         |
| <b>3</b> Giovanni Battista PERGOLESI<br>(1710–1736)<br><b>Stabat mater</b> 35:26<br><i>Julia Faulkner, Soprano;</i><br><i>Anna Gonda, Alto</i> | <b>13</b> Inflammatus et accensus SA 2:24                                                                                             |
| <b>4</b> Stabat mater dolorosa SA 3:29                                                                                                         | <b>14</b> Quando corpus morietur SA 3:42                                                                                              |
| <b>5</b> Cuius animam gementem S 2:15                                                                                                          | Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART<br>(1756–1791)                                                                                                |
| <b>6</b> O quam tristis et afflicta SA 2:07                                                                                                    | <b>15</b> Ave verum corpus, K. 618 2:51                                                                                               |
| <b>7</b> Quae moerebat et dolebat A 2:07                                                                                                       | Johann Sebastian BACH<br>(1685–1750) arranged by<br>Charles GOUNOD (1818–1893)                                                        |
| <b>8</b> Quis est homo qui non fleret SA 2:41                                                                                                  | <b>16</b> Ave Maria 2:41<br><i>Ingrid Kertesi, Soprano</i>                                                                            |
| <b>9</b> Vidit suum dulcem natum S 3:55                                                                                                        | <b>17</b> César FRANCK (1822–1890)<br><b>Panis angelicus</b> 4:01<br><i>Hungarian State Opera Choir;</i><br><i>József Mukk, Tenor</i> |
| <b>10</b> Eia, mater, fons amoris A 2:20                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>11</b> Fac ut ardeat cor meum SA 2:14                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                       |

Oxford Camerata • Jeremy Summerly 1–2  
Camerata Budapest • Michael Halász 3–14  
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