



Thomas Tallis Society Choir  
Directed by Eamonn Dougan



# HOWELLS REQUIEM

Penitential motets by Lobo, Purcell, Pärt,  
Jonathan Dove & others

## Tonight's Programme

Charpentier	Miseremini Deus	Purcell	Miserere mei, Deus
Dove	Into thy hands	Leighton	Drop, drop slow tears
King John IV of Portugal	Crux Fidelis	Pärt	The Deer's Cry
Lobo	Versa est in luctum	Handel	Sonata in G minor
Bonporti	Serenata in A minor	JS Bach	Sonata in C minor (1 <sup>st</sup> mve)
Briggs	Media vita	Howells	Requiem

This concert has no interval. Drinks will be available in the hall after the concert.  
Please join us there.

## Miseremini Deus

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (c1645-1704)

Marc-Antoine Charpentier was born in or near Paris, into a well connected family, and received an education sufficient for him to register for law school in Paris when he was 18. However, after a term, he withdrew and studied with the composer Giacomo Carissimi in Rome in the 1660s. His first employment on returning to France was as house composer to Marie de Lorraine, duchesse de Guise. Given an apartment in the recently renovated Hôtel de Guise, he was in effect a courtier rather than a paid domestic servant.

'Miseremini Deus' is taken from one of his *Motets pour les trépassés* composed around 1671-72, possibly for the funeral of his employer's nephew Louise Joseph, Duke of Guise (1650-71). Set for double choir, it begins with a homophonic but rich six-part texture, the choir only dividing into two distinct bodies at the words 'qui a manus, Domini te tigit me' ('who touches me by the hand of the Lord'), then resuming with a homophonic texture at the end.

<i>Miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei, Qui a manus Domini te tigit me.</i>	Have pity on me, at least you my friends, who touches me by the hand of the Lord.
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## Into thy hands

Jonathan Dove (b.1959)

Born in Blackheath, Jonathan Dove had a long association with Glyndebourne and has composed several operas including the highly successful family opera *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Dove is even better known for his choral works, including *The Three Kings*, a carol commissioned for the Choir of King's College, Cambridge's Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols in the year 2000.

Dove's *Into Thy Hands* was written in 1996 to be sung by the choir of Salisbury Cathedral at the burial site of Sir Edmund Rich in Pontigny, France, on the 750th anniversary of his canonisation. One of the great scholars of the 13th century, Rich was treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral for 11 years, then became Archbishop of Canterbury before going into exile. He died near Pontigny in 1243. *Into thy hands* combines two prayers of Sir Edmund; the first is an expansion of the Compline Responsary 'Into thy hands O Lord' (that is, of the text we have just heard in Latin set by Sheppard), whilst the second talks of pilgrimage and eternity.

Jonathan Dove has written how both the Abbey in Pontigny, where the piece was first performed, and the text itself influenced the character of his work: 'Knowing that [the Abbey] was a very resonant building, I imagined that the echo would be part of the piece, and set the first prayer spaciouly, allowing for the sound of each phrase to reverberate.' The second prayer he set as 'a calm processional which does not reach an ending, but simply, in trust, surrenders itself.'

<i>Into thy hands O Lord and Father We commend our souls and our bodies Our parents and our homes friends and kindred.</i>	<i>Enlighten us with thy holy grace, and suffer us never more to be separated from thee.</i>
<i>Into thy hands O Lord and Father We commend our benefactors and brethren departed.</i>	<i>Into thy hands O Lord Jesus Christ mercifully grant to me that the rest of my pilgrimage may be directed according to thy will, that the rest of my life may be completed in thee and my soul may deserve to enjoy thee who art eternal life.</i>
<i>Into thy hands O Lord and Father, We commend all thy people faithfully believing, all who need thy pity and protection.</i>	

## Crux Fidelis

King John IV of Portugal (1604-1656)

This setting of the eighth stanza of the hymn *Pange lingua* was first published in the 11-volume collection of 'ancient music' issued in Paris 1843-45. This dates the work 1615 and credits it as the work of John IV, King of Portugal, whose work was otherwise almost totally destroyed in the Lisbon earthquake and fire of 1755. However, it seems highly unlikely to be his work. Even leaving aside the question whether it can be the work of an 11 year old, the work, beautiful as it is, is full of anachronistic

harmonies and it seems more likely to be a composition dating from the 19th century, or – just possibly – a realisation from that century of an original fragment from a manuscript long since lost. Yet it is a highly effective piece: understated in tone and in a major key, it tells of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus in terms of ‘Sweet wood, sweet nails, sweet burden’.

<i>Crux fidelis, inter omnes arbor una nobilis: nulla silva talem profert, fronde, flore, germine. Dulce lignum, dulces clavos, dulce pondus sustinet.</i>	Faithful cross, above all other, One and only noble tree: None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit thy peer may be. Sweetest wood and sweetest iron, Sweetest weight is hung on thee!
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### Versa est in Luctum

Alonso Lobo (1555-1617)

The Spanish composer Alonso Lobo has been overshadowed by his great and slightly older contemporary Tomás Luis de Victoria, though that preeminent composer considered Lobo fully his equal. This beautiful setting of *Versa est in luctum*, written in 1598 for the funeral of Philip II of Spain, is his most celebrated work, and a fine demonstration of how Lobo combined the smooth contrapuntal style of Palestrina with the harmonic intensity of Victoria.

<i>Versa est in luctum cithara mea, et organum meum in vocem flentium. Parce mihi Domine, nihil enim sunt dies mei.</i>	My harp is turned to grieving and my flute to the voice of those who weep. Spare me, O Lord, for my days are as nothing.
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### Serenata in A minor Op 12 No 4

Francesco Antonio Bonporti (1672-1749)

### Media vita

Kerensa Briggs (b.1991)

Kerensa Briggs is a London-based composer with a rich background in choral singing, having sung with the Gloucester Cathedral Youth Choir, then with Trinity College Cambridge and King’s College, London where she held a Choral Scholarship and undertook an MMus in composition. *Media Vita* was composed to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the English Renaissance composer John Sheppard. Its text is attributed to Notker ‘the Stammerer’, a Benedictine monk of St Gall Abbey (now in Switzerland) who died in 912. It is said that Notker was inspired to write it having watched workmen building the great bridge of Martinsbruck at considerable risk to their lives. For a while the text served as a battle hymn, but by the 13th century it had become part of the German service for the burial of the dead.

As Briggs has noted, her setting for a cappella double choir pays conscious tribute to John Sheppard: ‘The piece draws inspiration from both the intensity and ebb and flow found within Sheppard’s work and the text itself. False relations and imitative writing remain but these ideas are incorporated into a rich harmonic language and reflective sonority, depicting an awareness of death in life alongside a hope for redemption or salvation.’

<i>Media vita in morte sumus quem quaerimus adiutorem nisi te, Domine, qui pro peccatis nostris juste irasceris?</i>  <i>Sancte Deus, sancte fortis, sancte et misericors Salvator: amarae morti ne tradas nos.</i>	In the midst of life we are in death. Whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?  Holy God, Holy and strong, Holy and merciful Saviour, deliver us not to bitter death.
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Celebrated as the last great English composer before the international success of Edward Elgar at the turn of the 20th century, Henry Purcell was a chorister with the Chapel Royal and at the age of 20 he was appointed organist of Westminster Abbey.

Purcell sets the text of *Miserere Mei*, a paraphrase of Psalm 51, as a brief double canon: that is, the altos have their part sung in canon by the basses, the latter preceded by another canon started by the sopranos and then taken up by the tenors. While so described it sounds like a dry exercise, such is Purcell's genius that the result is a short but richly expressive piece, full of poignant passing dissonances appropriate to the text.

<i>Miserere mei, O Jesu.</i>	Have mercy on me, O Jesus.
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Born in Wakefield, Yorkshire, Leighton was a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral where he encountered a broad range of repertoire including by Tudor composers and Benjamin Britten. While still a schoolboy he was awarded an LRAM for piano performance, and he went on to study classics and music at Oxford. He became friends with Gerald Finzi, who promoted his music and introduced him to Vaughan Williams. Though Leighton ultimately ended his career teaching at the University of Edinburgh, where his pupils included James MacMillan (whose *Miserere* is included in this concert), he always identified himself as a Yorkshireman.

Leighton's setting of 'Drop, drop slow tears' was originally composed as the serene final movement of his anguished cantata of 1961, *Crucifixus pro nobis*, the previous movements being settings of texts by the relatively little-known seventeenth-century Catholic poet Patrick Carey. This a cappella piece gains much of its expressive power not so much from actual dissonance but from its unexpected cadences and key changes through harmonic sleights of hand.

<i>Drop, drop, slow tears, And bathe those beauteous feet Which brought from Heaven The news and Prince of Peace.</i>	<i>Cease not, wet eyes, His mercy to entreat; To cry for vengeance Sin doth never cease.</i>	<i>In your deep floods Drown all my faults and fears; Nor let His eye See sin, but through my tears.</i>
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The now widely performed Estonian composer started as a fairly extreme avant gardist, but then withdrew from composition for some years in the 1970s, studying medieval church music. Through this, he developed what he describes as a 'tintinnabuli' style. As Pärt has explained: 'I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation.'

*The Deer's Cry*, commissioned by the Louth Contemporary Music Society in Ireland and premiered there in 2008, builds from a few, fairly simple but precise elements to a richly resonant climax, falling gradually back into silence.

<i>Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ in me, Christ when I arise,</i>	<i>Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. Christ with me.</i>
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Born in Gloucester to Oliver Howells, a builder, plumber and decorator, Herbert was the youngest of six children. He was fortunate in having his exceptional musical talent recognised at an early age, and with the patronage of a local Squire took piano lessons with one of England's leading organists, Herbert Brewer. Howells' great epiphany as a musician came in 1910, when, aged 18, he came to the Three Choirs Festival, held that year in Gloucester, and attended the premiere of a work by a rising composer previously described to Howells by Brewer as 'a strange man who lives in Chelsea': this was *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The archaic harmonies, transmuted by Vaughan Williams into something rich, strange and resonant, transfixed Howells and were to ultimately determine his creative path.

Some forty years later, Howells conducted the premiere of his large-scale work for soloists, chorus and orchestra, *Hymnus Paradisi*, widely regarded as his masterpiece. Though first performed in 1950, much of it was in fact composed in the 1930s, after a period of grief following the sudden death in 1935 of his nine-year-old son, Michael, from polio. Into this great work, Howells incorporated several sections of a Requiem he had previously composed. That earlier work, as a note in the Requiem's published score explains, 'was not released for performance until 1980, for personal reasons'. That same note - presumably endorsed by the composer - stated that the Requiem was originally composed in 1936. However, the widely held assumption that it was therefore started after Michael's death was overturned by the discovery of a letter written by Howells: dated 13 October 1932, this describes at some length - enough to establish beyond doubt that it is the very same work (only the setting of Psalm 121 is not included in his description) - a 'simple Double-Choir' Requiem which he had 'done specially for King's College, Cambridge - otherwise I might not have dreamed of it.'

Its apparently unusual sequence of movements in fact follows, as Howells explicitly acknowledged in his letter, the example set by his older colleague, Henry Walford Davies (today perhaps most widely remembered for his *RAF March Past*, *Solemn Melody*, and a lesser-known setting of "O little town of Bethlehem"), with his *A Short Requiem* composed in 1915. Dedicated 'In Sacred Memory of all those who have fallen in the war', Walford Davies had evidently written this to meet the urgent need for a Requiem Mass, not previously included in the Anglican liturgy.

Howells' six-movement Requiem, as published, largely follows Walford Davies's choice of texts for the first six movements of the older composer's nine-movement *Short Requiem*, only deviating in the second movement when rather than using Psalm 130 ('Out of the depths') Howells chose the equally appropriate but more overtly reassuring Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my Shepherd'. That choice of a gentler text may possibly suggest that Howells completed his Requiem after Michael's death (which would explain the claim it was 'composed in 1936').

Even more striking is how Howells chose to set Psalm 121, 'I will lift up mine eyes'. Comparing these two Requiems, it is clear that Howells not only mostly followed Walford Davies's choice of texts, but also the way they are set in all six of his movements. So in Psalm 121 (which notably Howells did not mention in his letter of 1932), he echoes Davies' approach by having a solo voice answered by the choir: only where Walford Davies' soloist is a piping treble voice, Howells opts for a baritone soloist. One can only imagine having a boy singing that opening solo would have been more than Howells could bear emotionally.

Even if Howells did complete his Requiem after his son's death, the question remains - why did he begin composing this, in itself, extraordinary work in the first place in 1932? In 1920, in the year after his father's death, Howells started and almost completed a setting for double choir of "Blessed are the Dead". When he set that text again for the final movement of his 1930s Requiem, he wrote entirely

new music; yet the texture and emotional character of the earlier work is recalled not just in the Requiem's final movement, but seems to inform much of the rest of the new work - almost as if Howells felt the need to "unpack" over several movements the feelings touched upon in his earlier setting.

Howells' six movements are:

### 'Salvator mundi'

This opens in restrained, four-part choir texture, its grave and gently expressive modal harmonies clearly inspired by Vaughan Williams's *Tallis Fantasia*. But as the choir sings of how Christ redeemed mankind, the harmonies unmistakably turn to straightforward B minor, and the choir divides into two groups, each pleading 'Save us', 'help us'. The movement ends with a rich, double choir texture.

### Psalm 23

Again, we seem to return to an earlier Renaissance style, though again as filtered through Vaughan Williams (this time his Mass in G minor). It begins with a soprano solo, soon joined by an alto solo. The choir enters, *sotto voce*, with the line 'Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death'. Their music briefly and almost tentatively breaks into harmony, reaching its climax at the words 'and my cup shall be full', before dwindling back into a unison end.

### Requiem aeternam (1)

Here, with this Catholic text, Howells opens with a choral sound that initially recalls Palestrina, a composer whose music he was familiar with from his visits as a student to Westminster Cathedral (as Stanford urged his RCM composition students to do). But soon the harmonies become distinctly those of the 20th century, most particularly when Howells divides the choir and has sustained harmonies slowly blossom outwards with dissonant notes which seem to blaze like intense light - a vivid realisation of the words 'et lux perpetua' ('and perpetual light'). This virtually became the germ of Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi* - that Requiem aeternam setting, scarcely altered except the removal of its ending, serving as the opening choral gambit of that masterpiece - in which, the composer said, 'Light, indeed, touches all but one of the six movements.'

### Psalm 121

This starts as a baritone solo with responses from the choir. The choir then takes the lead with the word 'Behold' and conveys the rest of the psalm text, though the final word is given to a tenor soloist, who reprises its opening statement.

### Requiem aeternam (2)

Howells' second setting of this text starts as if in the 'pit' of Psalm 130. Arguably, it is the trajectory of that psalm, with its cry to the Lord and faith that his mercy will ultimately prevail, which determines the journey of this movement from near despair to final consolation and reassuring harmonic warmth. In *Hymnus Paradisi*, Howells used the central section of this setting as a continuation of the earlier Requiem aeternam.

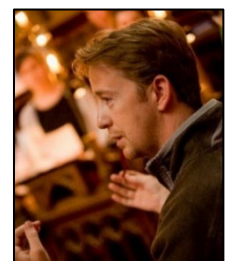
### 'I heard a voice from heaven'

Involving in its course solos from tenor, soprano, and baritone, this continues the sense of consolation offered by the end of the previous movement. Midway through the piece, the bass voices add a sense of awe-inspiring numinous mystery with their augmented intervals, but the final mood is one of comfort and resolution.

## EAMONN DOUGAN

Eamonn Dougan is an inspirational conductor and renowned vocal coach and baritone. He is Associate Conductor of The Sixteen, founding Director of Britten Sinfonia Voices, Music Director of the Thomas Tallis Society, and Chief Conductor for Jersey Chamber Orchestra and Ryedale Festival Opera.

Recent conducting debuts include Handel's *Semele* at Sibelius Summer Academy and



Haydn's *Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross* with the English National Opera. Forthcoming conducting engagements include performances as part of the Royal Academy of Music's Bach the European series, concerts with Chorwerk Ruhr, celebrating Byrd's 400th anniversary, a Christmas tour with Ars Nova, Copenhagen and Messiah with Chamber Choir Ireland and the Seville Baroque Orchestra. His third recording with De Profundis was released in 2024.

Eamonn is vocal consultant for the ongoing Bach series at the Royal Academy of Music, where he also gives conducting masterclasses. He is a Visiting Professor to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he teaches ensemble singing and directs the Guildhall Consort. Eamonn read music at New College, Oxford, before continuing his vocal and conducting studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Eamonn Dougan is managed worldwide by Percius.

Dominika Fehér – Violin

Luke Mitchell – Organ

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## REMAINING 2024-25 SEASON DATES

**Sunday 6 July 2025** conducted by Eamonn Dougan

Taylor Scott Davis – Magnificat

Schubert – Magnificat

Fauré – Cantique de Jean Racine

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