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Tallis Scholars

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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GEORGE M. MODLIN
CENTER FOR THE ARTS
at the University of Richmond



CAMP CONCERT HALL
BOOKER HALL OF MUSIC

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1996 • 8 PM

Marcus Roberts

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1996 • 8 PM

Tallis Scholars

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1996 • 8 PM

The Canadian Brass

Friday, October 18, 1996 • 8 PM
Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music

Sponsored by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation



The Tallis Scholars

featuring

Peter Phillips, Director

Soprano:

Deborah Roberts
Tessa Bonner
Ruth Holton
Sally Dunkley

Alto:

Caroline Trevor
Robert Harre-Jones

Tenor:

Robert Johnston
Philip Cave

Bass:

Donald Greig
Francis Steele

PROGRAM

Music from Renaissance Venice

Orlandus Lassus	Omnes de Saba
Lassus	Alma redemptoris Mater (a8)
Lassus	Decantabat populus Israel
Lassus	Missa Bell'amfitrit'altera
	Kyrie
	Gloria
	Credo
	Sanctus and Benedictus
	Agnus Dei

The ensemble requests that you kindly hold all applause until the end of each half of the program. Thank you.

~ Intermission ~

Adrian Willaert	Lauda Jerusalem
Andrea Gabrieli	Deus qui beatum Marcum
A. Gabrieli	Jubilate Deo
Cipriano de Rore	Descendi in hortum
de Rore	Hodie Christus natus est
Lassus	Magnificat Sexti Toni (a8)

Program Subject to Change.

The Tallis Scholars appear by arrangement with
The Aaron Concert Management, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts

American Friends of the Tallis Scholars, Inc., is an American not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting the work of the Tallis Scholars in presenting performances of Renaissance vocal music of the highest quality. American Friends regularly publish The Tallis Scholars newsletter, and a wide range of benefits is available to members in various membership categories. For more information on the organization, please contact American Friends of the Tallis Scholars, Inc., P.O. Box 2411, Rockefeller Center Station, New York, NY 10185-0021.

THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

Peter Phillips, Director

The Tallis Scholars were founded in 1973 by their director, Peter Phillips. Through their recordings and concert performances this London-based ensemble has established itself as a leading exponent of Renaissance sacred vocal music. Peter Phillips has worked with the ensemble to create, through precise tuning and homogeneous blend, the purity and clarity of sound which he feels best serves the Renaissance repertoire. It is the resulting beauty of sound for which the Tallis Scholars have become renowned the world over.

The Tallis Scholars perform in both sacred and secular venues, giving around 80 concerts each year. They tour at least twice a year in the U.S., where they have been described as "a *capella* superstars," and give major tours in the Far East every eighteen months. The group has given three major tours of Australia, singing in the Sydney Opera House and throughout the country. In February of 1994, the ensemble performed on the 400th anniversary of the death of Palestrina in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, where Palestrina was trained as a choirboy and later became *Maestro di Cappella*. In April of 1994, the Tallis Scholars had the privilege of performing in the Sistine Chapel to mark the final stage of the complete restoration of the Michelangelo frescoes. The ensemble's television appearances have included a 1994 Christmastime appearance on ABC TV's "Good Morning America" show, and the popular British documentary program, "South Bank Show." Recent tours have taken the group to Europe's major cities, the Baltics, and Korea. Plans for 1997 once again include tours of the U.S., Japan and Australia, as well as concerts in many European festivals.

Much of the Tallis Scholars' reputation for their pioneering work has come from their association with Gimell Records, established by Peter Phillips and Steve Smith in 1981 solely to record the ensemble. The Gimell catalog currently extends to over 30 recordings, featuring works by established composers such as Byrd, Tallis, Palestrina, Josquin and Victoria, and also lesser-known composers such as Clemens non Papa, Frei Manuel Cardoso and Heinrich Isaac. In 1987 the group's recording of Josquin des Pres' *Missa Pange lingua* and *Missa La sol fa re mi* won Gramophone Magazine's Record of the Year, the first ever in its Early Music category to win that distinction. Other awards have included the top prize in *Gramophone's* Early Music Category (1991, 1994), the International Record Critics' Award, Prix Diapason D'Or, and Premio Internazionale del Disco Antonio Vivaldi. A very recent and exciting new partnership has been forged between Gimell and Philips Classics (part of Polygram), and as of September 1996, Gimell's catalog will be distributed by Polygram.

Director Peter Phillips, educated at Oxford, has made an impressive reputation for himself as director of the Tallis Scholars, as well as internationally respected scholar, broadcaster, author and entrepreneur. His first book *English Sacred Music 1549-1649*, was published by Gimell in 1991; he has also been a columnist for London's *The Spectator*, and is currently Advisory Editor of *The Musical Times* journal.

VENICE PROGRAMME

The innovation of writing music for multiple choirs opened a new chapter in the history of renaissance choral music. It brought a whole new dimension to choral church mu-

sic, one that offered composers a fresh set of resources capable of creating a bold and sonorous splendour previously unknown. Initially popular in northern Italy during the early-sixteenth century, the practice of polychoral music was most actively cultivated in Venice. It was originally associated with the singing of psalms, which for centuries has been performed antiphonally but by the late-sixteenth century polychoral music had become synonymous with Venetian church music, and composers all around Europe were paying homage to Venice by trying their hands at writing music for more than one choir.

At the heart of the Venetian musical tradition was the Basilica of St Mark's. The choir there entered a new phase in 1527 with the appointment of the Flemish composer **Adrian Willaert** (c1490-1562) as *maestro di cappella*. Willaert held this post for 35 years, and during his tenure the choir grew from a somewhat provincial establishment into a musical institution of international status. The progression of the cappella's transformation is reflected in the music which Willaert composed while working at St Mark's. Though always rooted firmly in the Flemish contrapuntal idiom, Willaert's music showed an increased sensitivity toward the setting of texts. As the German theorist Gaspar Stocker wrote in 1570, "Willaert seems to have begun... a new music, in which he does away altogether with liberties taken by the older composers in matters of declamation... All modern composers follow him now. As Josquin appeared to be the leader of the older school of music, so Adrianus (Willaert) stands out as the sum-

mit, the father, leader, creator of the new style... which he also taught to others such as Orlando (Lassus) and Ciprian (de Rore)."

In 1550, Willaert published a set of psalms designated *psalmi spezzati* (Italian for 'broken psalms') which involved two separate choirs singing alternately in four voices, and at times singing together in eight voices. These were the first ever polychoral compositions to be printed and within a decade or two the double-choir technique was in tremendous vogue all around Europe, clearly as a direct response to Willaert's success. Willaert's psalms relied heavily on the spatial separation between the two choirs for their effect. Antiphony was the essence of early polychoral music, only late did composers begin to explore the possibilities of tutti writing. In Willaert's *Lauda Jerusalem* (Psalm 129), for example, the two choirs consistently trade-off contrapuntal passages that slightly overlap. At the work's conclusion the exchange of phrases is quickened to build up momentum for the final passage in which both choirs are finally united.

After Willaert's death in 1562 the post of maestro at St Mark's was taken over by Willaert's former pupil and fellow-Netherlander, **Cipriano de Rore** (1516-1565). The post proved to onerous for Rore to manage, however, and he resigned less than a year later. Today Rore's fame relies almost entirely on his Italian madrigals, which were among the most innovative and adventuresome of the time. As a result, his sacred music is often overlooked and is sometimes described as conservative in style. But there is no doubt that Rore was every bit as serious about his sacred music as his secular music,

and that he understood his place in the two-century succession of Flemish contrapuntal masters working in Italy.

Despite Rore's training and employment at St Mark's, he never took up the Venetian double-choir idiom. All of his sacred music is unmistakably Flemish in mood and formal structure, often characterised by a sombre and devotional atmosphere that could hardly be more at odds with his often restless madrigals. Rore's *Descendi in hortum meum* and *Hodie Christus natus est* are among his most inspired and technically accomplished motets. Both pieces are underpinned by strict canonic writing, the former concealing an elaborate three-part canon between tenor 1, alto 1 and soprano 2. That such heartfelt music is harnessed by such restrictive musical artifice is a testimony not just to Rore's achievements, but to the achievements of the Franco-Flemish school.

The double-choir technique attained a new level of sophistication in the hands of yet another Netherlander, **Orlandus Lassus** (1532-1594). Lassus was arguably the greatest composer of the late Renaissance. Although today his reputation is still partly obscured by the towering one of his Italian contemporary Palestrina, Lassus in his own day was much more famous and influential. He was also one of the most prolific composers of any period; his staggering output consists of some 70 masses, over 530 motets, 100 Magnificats, 200 Italian madrigals, 150 French chansons, 100 German Lieder and many pieces for instrumental ensemble. In short, Lassus mastered virtually every musical genre known to him.

As a choirboy at St Nicolas in Mons, Lassus was abducted three times and delivered abroad for the sake of his exquisite voice; the third time this happened he decided not

to return home and instead entered the service of the Viceroy of Sicily. From there Lassus went on to become a composer of astonishing versatility, eventually securing the post of Kapellmeister at Duke Albrecht V's court in Munich. He held this post his entire life, though he travelled widely throughout Europe while in the Duke's service.

Lassus is known to have visited Venice at least four times between 1567 and 1582, and during those visits he undoubtedly became intimately familiar with the polychoral tradition at St Mark's. The double-choir Magnificat by Lassus which concludes this concert is quite similar to Willaert's psalms in the trading-off of extended contrapuntal passages between the two choirs and the overall absence of tutti writing. Yet this style is not typical of Lassus's double-choir writing on the whole. As we hear in his motets *Omnes de Saba* and *Alma redemptoris Mater*, Lassus was clearly more interested in the dazzling sonorities made available by combining the two choirs than in the novelty of ping-ponging between them. When he did incorporate antiphonal exchange it tended to be brief, with the phrases of each choir being carefully dovetailed together.

In the motet *Decantabat populis Israel* Lassus adopts polychoral principles in a work scored for a single seven-part choir. First the cascading imitative opening is suddenly interrupted by bold homophony as the basses and tenors enter. Later in the work Lassus sets up antiphonal passages by grouping various combinations of voices together and set-

ting them against one another, a technique which became popular in the works of many late-sixteenth century composers.

Nowhere is Lassus's polychoral writing more impressive than in his *Missa Bell'amfitrit'altera*, one of his three masses scored for double choir. While many of Lassus's masses are based on popular secular pieces, this is probably not the case here. It seems rather that the work, which Lassus composed in 1583, is a tribute to the music of Venice. 'Amphitrite', who was the beautiful girlfriend of Neptune, was also a sobriquet for the city of Venice, and Lassus may well have coined the title himself to suit his musical tribute. It is an intensely subtle work and a remarkable blend of classic polychoral style and Flemish contrapuntal craftsmanship. Lassus seems to explore every possibility of scoring; everything from huge blocks of homophony, antiphonal sections and split-choir writing, to eight-part imitative counterpoint in the Flemish fashion.

The polychoral tradition in Venice entered its golden age when **Andrea Gabrieli** (c1520-1586) became organist in St Mark's in 1567. By then organists at St Mark's played an important role as composers, at times an even greater role than the maestro. Gabrieli became the first Italian composer at St Mark's

who could rival the foreign composers who had long dominated church music in Italy. Yet the Netherlandish influence remained; during the 1560s Gabrieli was employed for a time at Albrecht V's court in Munich where he studied with Lassus. As organist of St Mark's he attained celebrity status as the primary exponent of polychoral music.

In 1587 the collection of motets called *Concerti di Andrea*, comprised of works by Andrea and his nephew, Giovanni Gabrieli, marked the most important publication of Venetian polychoral music since Willaert's psalms. The motets *Deus qui beatum Marcum* and *Jubilate Deo* both come from this collection. *Deus qui beatum Marcum* is not a polychoral piece at all, but rather an ambitious eight-voice motet revealing Gabrieli's time spent with Lassus. The text, known as the 'oration de S. Marco', was set twice by Gabrieli and was presumably used for important state and religious ceremonies. The double-choir *Jubilate Deo* is very much in the Venetian mainstream in its reliance on antiphonal exchange and powerful homophonic writing. It too suggests the influence of Lassus at times, but the end result is a work that is thoroughly Venetian.