

THOMAS TOMKINS
These Distracted Times

1. Pavan I
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3. Hear my prayer, O Lord
4. The heavens declare
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Fretwork

Richard Boothby, Richard Campbell, Wendy Gillespie, Bill Hunt, Asako Morikawa, Susanna Pell, Richard Tunnicliffe

Alamire

Steven Harrold, tenor, Christopher Watson, tenor, Timothy Scott Whiteley, baritone, Robert Macdonald, bass

The Choir of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Directed by David Skinner

Jamal Sutton, *organ*

Recorded in the Chapel of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge 11th-14th June 2007 by kind permission of the Master and Fellows

Produced and Engineered by Martin Souter

Performing editions by David Skinner

THOMAS TOMKINS
These Distracted Times

*Although the cannon, and the churlish drum
Have struck the choir mute, and the organs dumb,
Yet music's art, with air and string and voice,
Makes glad the sad, and sorrow to rejoice.*
(Henry Lawes, *The Treasury of Musick*, 1669)

On 30 January 1649 King Charles I was led to a purpose-built scaffold in front of the Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace, and was there decapitated. Two weeks later Thomas Tomkins put pen to paper and wrote a pavan for 'these distracted times'. Tomkins was both a Gentleman of the king's Chapel Royal, and organist of Worcester Cathedral where church services had been suspended since 1647 when parliamentary forces led by Oliver Cromwell seized the city. Tomkins, then, was lamenting not only the death of the King but the end, as he saw it, of cathedral music. Cromwell was known to have been a great admirer of English chamber music, but, according to puritan leanings of the time, organs and choirs had no place in the church: they were themselves seen as 'distractions' from prayer, study, and meditation. The only church music to have flourished during Cromwell's time as Lord Protector was the sober and simple metrical psalm, a form that had its roots in the Edwardine reformation one hundred years previously.

Cromwell died of malaria in 1658 and was buried in great splendour, and at great expense, in Westminster Abbey. At the restoration of the monarchy in 1661, Charles II ordered Cromwell's exhumation; the Lord Protector's head was severed from his body (it apparently took several blows), and his corpse cast into a pit under the gallows. The head was placed on a spike above Westminster Hall as a deterrent to future uprisings, though after some twenty-five years on display it fell to the ground during one stormy night late in the reign of James II and lay at the feet of the sentinel who was on duty. That unnamed soldier was the first in a line of keepers of Cromwell's head until it was eventually interred in the chapel of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, where Cromwell was admitted as a Fellow Commoner on 23 April 1616.¹ Now some 350 years after the Lord Protector's a recording of some of Tomkins's finest church and chamber music is recorded in that very same chapel.

Tomkins was born in St David's, Pembrokeshire, in 1572, and buried on 9 June 1656 at Martin Hussingtree in Worcester, where he served as the cathedral organist from around 1596. Little is known of his early musical training. He owned a copy of Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), into which he made copious annotations (Tomkins's copy is now preserved in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford), and was at some point a pupil of the great William Byrd. By 1620 Tomkins was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and, like Orlando Gibbons (11 years Tomkins's junior, though dying at a prematurely young age in 1625), he ushered in the 'baroque' in English music. Tomkins mastered the many genres of his day, and his music demonstrates technical skills that push beyond much that was explored in earlier generations.

This said, it is thought that the bulk of Tomkins's church music was composed by the 1620s, and that he wrote no madrigals after his publication of *Songs of 3.4.5. & 6. Parts* (London, 1622), where a dedication to Byrd, 'my ancient, & much

¹ See N. Rogers and C. Parish, *Cromwell and Sidney Sussex* (Cambridge, 1999).

reverenced Master' is inscribed. Although apparently planned, Tomkins's vast output of church music was never published during his lifetime. It was the composer's son, Nathaniel, who compiled the majority of his father's works and published *Musica Deo Sacra* in 1668, the source of much of the music on this recording. The centrepiece here is the Fifth Service. The morning canticles *Te Deum* (track 5) and *Jubilate* (track 7) are extensive and elaborate, the latter in particular containing several virtuosic passages for the soloists. The evening canticles *Magnificat* (track 11) and *Nunc dimittis* (track 13) are more subdued, but Tomkins offers contrasting and often beautifully wrought vocal lines, from the soprano duo in the former to that for two tenors in the latter. The organ part for the service is perfectly suited for the extraction of four independent concerted instruments, and here a quartet of viols has been deployed.

There is some debate as to whether viols were ever used in an ecclesiastical setting, though there is some evidence that cornetts and sackbuts were used for festal occasions. Ian Payne has shown that cathedral choirs in general kept viols, and David Pinto points to an anecdote in the travel diaries of Charles Somerset who heard a number of court chapel choirs during his grand tour of 1611-12, and 'found the French provision comparatively meagre, but when conceding that the papal choir outdid the English in voice-quality, added as qualification the significant remark that they used voices only; implying that his home fare was more varied' (*Early Music*, 33.1, 2005). In fact, there is also good evidence to support the notion that instruments were used in chapels even in pre-Reformation times. As early as 1422, when the foundation statutes for the college of Stoke-by-Clare in Suffolk were drawn, a telling passage appears under the heading *De diligentia existentium in choro*: '...the dean may and shall compel his brethren ... to sing and officiate in the choir, and to sing plainchant and discant [improvised polyphony] as well as they know how, and specially to play musical instruments at his direction (*et in instrumentis musicalibus ad nutum suum*) ... so that at the time of divine office no-one shall be idle in the choir' (Alexandra Buckle, unpublished research). So it is possible that a tradition of instruments and voices extends further back than ever appreciated.

With this in mind, it might appear less of an oddity to find viols alongside voices in the staple of Anglican repertoire: the service music. This is not to suggest that viols should replace the organ for verse services, but that it is certainly a viable option. The same holds true for the verse anthems such as *Hear my prayer, O Lord* (track 3) and *My help cometh from the Lord* (track 17). The former is designated 'for the bass', which also is Tomkins's preferred voice part in the Fifth Service and in a number of verse anthems. The choir here plays a relatively minimal role simply serving in each section to reinforce the message delivered by the soloist, although an extended choral passage is reserved for the end of the work. *My help cometh from the Lord*, a complete setting of Psalm 121, begins unusually with the first verse set to plainsong. The work is primarily for two equal 'contratenors' and full choir reiteration, while a solo quartet completes the final verse that is again re-emphasized by the full choir.

The full anthems of Tomkins are today among his best-known works, though they are rarely performed with the accompanying organ part as suggested in *Musica Deo Sacra*. Of the 53 full anthems in this collection, a number stand apart in terms of technical demands on the singer. The solo passages from the Fifth Service, likewise, suggest performance by single voices rather than the full choir: here the music is more rhythmically active and the voice ranges are at times extended, whereas the full choir passages are simpler and more suited to younger and less agile voices. The full

anthem *I heard a voice from heaven* (track 10) falls into this latter category, and is a wonderfully straightforward yet effective piece. Others in the collection, however, would be difficult to perform with multiple voices. This is especially the case with *The heavens declare* (track 4), scored for two contratenors, a tenor and a bass. This is perhaps one of the most rhythmically vibrant four-part settings in Tomkins's output. Other of Tomkins's psalm settings share this scoring: *O Lord, how manifold* (track 8) and *Remember me, O Lord* (track 15) while more staid and reflective in character, as the texts demand, still require extraordinarily wide ranges from the singers., *When David heard* (track 16) from Tomkins' 1622 publication is today one of his most often performed works. It is a lament on Absalom, son of King David, and is likely to have been part of the funeral observances for Henry, Prince of Wales, son of James I, who died tragically and unexpectedly in 1612. The work shares many of the 'madrigalian' characteristics of a setting of the same text by Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623), and both in subtly different ways convey the mournful and dramatic cries 'O my son, Absalom!'

While sacred choral music counts for the majority of Tomkins's output, he also produced some fifteen solo works for the organ and over thirty consort pieces for viols. The *Pavan for 'these distracted times'* (track 12) is among his last compositions, where, it has been suggested, an 'air of resignation' is apparent, while *A Fancy* (track 6) probably dates from happier times as organist of Worcester Cathedral. The Fancy (or Fantasy/Fantasia) was the freest mode of musical expression a player of the keyboard might offer. It was a form that was mastered most chiefly by Tomkin's teacher, William Byrd; another pupil of Byrd, Thomas Morley, defined the Fantasia as the 'most principall and chiefest kind of music which is made without a dittie ... when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth it and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shal seem best in his own conceit.' But the most eloquent and balanced of Tomkins's instrumental creations must be among his *Pavans* for viol consort (tracks 1, 9, 14). Each is finely crafted and exhibit a wide and varied gambit of musical emotions. The selection chosen for this recording, as the theme dictates, darkens from one pavan to the next, reflecting, perhaps, the emotional turmoil and distraction that Tomkins undoubtedly experienced in his final years.

David Skinner
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking: we beseech thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things, which for our unworthiness, we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of thy son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Collect

Hear my prayer, O Lord

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling: hold not thy peace at my tears.

For I am a stranger with thee: and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence, and be no more seen.

Psalm 39, vv. 13-15

The heavens declare

The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

One day telleth another: and one night certifieth another.

There is neither speech nor language: but their voices are heard among them.

Their sound is gone out into all lands: and their words into the ends of the world.

Psalm 19, vv. 1-4

Te Deum (The Fifth Service)

We praise thee, O God, we know thee to be the Lord.

All the earth doth worship thee, the father everlasting.

To thee all Angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein.

To thee Cherubin, and Seraphin continually do cry,

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth.

Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles, praise thee.

The goodly fellowship of the prophets, praise thee.

The noble army of Martyrs, praise thee.

The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee.

The Father of an infinite Majesty.

Thy honourable, true, and only son.

Also the holy ghost the comforter.

Thou art the king of glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting son of the father.

When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest on the right hand of God, in the Glory of the father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.

We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in glory ever lasting.

O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine heritage.

Govern them, and lift them up for ever.

Day by day we magnify thee.

And we worship thy name ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.
Canticle at Matins, Book of Common Prayer

Jubilate (The Fifth Service)

O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands: serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.
Be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name.
For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth from generation to generation.
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.
Canticle at Matins, Book of Common Prayer

O Lord, how manifold

O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.
Psalms 104, v. 24

I heard a voice from heaven

I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: Even so, saith the Spirit: for they rest from their labours.
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord for they rest from their labours.
Revelation, 14

Magnificat (The Fifth Service)

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden:
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.
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.
Canticle at Evensong, Book of Common Prayer

Nunc dimittis (The Fifth Service)

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people, Israel.

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.

Canticle at Evensong, Book of Common Prayer

Remember me, O Lord

Remember me, O Lord, according to the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

Psalm 106, v. 4

When David heard

When David heard that Absalon was slain, he went up to his chamber, over the gate, and wept; and thus he said: O my son, Absalon my son, would God I had died for thee.

2 Samuel 18:33

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;

So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in: from this time forth for evermore.

Psalm 121

THE CHOIR OF SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Directed by David Skinner

Jamal Sutton, Organ

Sidney Sussex rose from the ruins of a Franciscan Friary in 1597 and has long been a nest for professional musicians. One of the earliest was the Royalist pamphleteer, author, and violist Roger L'Estrange (1616-1704), whose family were patrons of the composer John Jenkins. Earlier still, the great Elizabethan composer William Byrd would have been well-known to the foundress, Lady Frances Sidney; two very fine elegies by Byrd survive for her nephew, the poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney. The College now boasts one of the finest mixed choirs in Cambridge, which has recently made a niche in making professional recordings for specialist markets, including museums, art galleries, and national libraries. The Choir sings evensong during University terms, gives regular concerts and tours at home and abroad, and records for Classical Communications and Obsidian Records.

David Skinner is widely known as a researcher and performer of early music, and is currently Fellow and Director of Music at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. He is a co-founder of the award-winning ensemble The Cardinall's Musick, with whom he produced over 25 recordings during his time as co-artistic director (1989-2004). David has served as musical adviser for many of the major UK choirs and ensembles including The Hilliard Ensemble, The Tallis Scholars, the King's Singers, the Sixteen, and several collegiate choirs in Oxford and Cambridge, and has published widely on music and musicians of the English renaissance.

Jamal Sutton was a student at Magdalen College School, where he was organist under the direction of Malcolm Pearce and Bill Ives. He is currently the Senior Organ Scholar at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

Sopranos

Grace Capel

Heather Coleman

Elizabeth Dearnley

Miri Gellert (soloist in 3, 5, 7, 11, 13)

Anna Goldbeck-Wood

Sarah Robbins (soloist in 5, 11)

Pippa Woodrow

Altos

Sarah Bennion

Clare Buckley

Rachel Dilworth

Pamela Machala

Pippa Morton

Michelle Oyen

Emma Parnes

Jamal Sutton

Tenors

Thomas Athorne

Robert Busch
Paul Kilbey
Lex Paulson

Basses

Paul Eastham
James Freeman
Duncan Hewitt
Ronald Horgan

FRETWORK

Since its London debut in 1986, the viol ensemble Fretwork has become established both as a leading force in early music and an inspiration to contemporary composers; its repertory spans the entire English consort tradition, including songs and verse anthems, alongside music from 16th- and 17th-century Europe, as well as new works written especially for the consort. Fretwork performs and broadcasts regularly in the UK and has toured widely in many countries. In 2007 they were the first Lady Frances Ensemble in Residence at Sidney Sussex College in the University of Cambridge.

Richard Boothby, Richard Campbell, Wendy Gillespie, Bill Hunt, Asako Morikawa, Susanna Pell, Richard Tunnicliffe

www.fretwork.co.uk

ALAMIRE

Founded in 2005, Alamire is made up of some of the finest consort singers in the UK and exists in order to explore and promote the compositional processes behind the great masterworks and lesser-known works of the late medieval and early modern periods. Other recordings on the Obsidian label include the madrigals of Philippe Verdelot from the Newberry-Oscott partbooks, which in 1526 were a gift from the city of Florence to Henry VIII, and a recording of the Mass *D'ung aultre amer*, motets and chansons by Josquin Desprez with gothic harpist Andrew Lawrence-King. Other projects include sound installations for art galleries and soundtracks for television and film.

Steven Harrold, tenor, Christopher Watson, tenor, Timothy Scott Whiteley, baritone, Robert Macdonald, bass

www.alamire.co.uk