

## The music

<b>Tomás Luis de Victoria</b>	<i>O quam gloriosum</i>
<b>Raffaella Aleotti</b>	<i>Surge, prospera amica mea</i>
<b>Jonathan Dove</b>	<i>In beauty may I walk</i>
<b>James MacMillan</b>	<i>Dominus dabit benignitatem</i>
<b>William Byrd</b>	<i>Diliges Dominum</i>
<b>Judith Weir</b>	<i>Ave Regina caelorum</i>
<b>Anna Semple</b>	<i>Ad te, Domine</i>
<b>Arvo Pärt</b>	<i>The Deer's Cry</i>

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### INTERVAL

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<b>Thomas Tallis</b>	<i>Sancte Deus</i>
<b>Alec Roth</b>	<i>Men &amp; Angels</i>
<b>Jean Mouton</b>	<i>Nesciens Mater</i>
<b>Diogo Dias Melgás</b>	<i>Salve Regina</i>
<b>Sulpitia Cesis</b>	<i>Stabat Mater</i>
<b>Hilary Campbell</b>	<i>Ave Maria</i>
<b>Cecilia McDowall</b>	<i>Alma redemptoris Mater</i>
<b>Pierre de la Rue</b>	<i>O salutaris hostia</i>

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**Tomás Luis de Victoria** (c1548-1611) *O quam gloriosum*

*O quam gloriosum*, a motet for All Saints with text from *Revelation*, was written during Victoria's time in Rome when he was organist at the Aragonese church, Santa Maria di Monserrato. It's remained justly popular ever since its first publication in 1572 - full of uplifting energy, the motet pauses only briefly at 'amicti stolis albis' as the righteous are clothed for heaven.

**Raffaella Aleotti** (c1570-c1646) *Surge, prospera amica mea*

Raffaella Aleotti (originally Vittoria Aleotti before she entered the convent of San Vito, Ferrara, where she became *maestra di capella*) is believed to be the first woman to have had sacred music published in her lifetime. This motet – a well-known love song from the *Song of Solomon* – combines rhythmic vitality with reflective moments. Ascending scales, floating melismas and rising key changes all underline the strong feeling contained within the poetry of the text.

**Jonathan Dove** (b1959) *In beauty may I walk*

The composer says: "I wrote this as a leaving present for Anthony Whitworth Jones, on his departure from Glyndebourne in August 1998. I thought of it as a travel-blessing for a friend and supporter who had been important

to me for over a decade: he was running Glyndebourne Touring Opera when I first went there as Assistant Chorus Master; later on he became General Director of Glyndebourne, and was instrumental in commissioning three community operas, a wind serenade (*Figures in the Garden*), and finally *Flight*, an opera for Glyndebourne Festival. *In beauty may I walk* is a very short thank-you for so much. Its first performance was at Anthony's leaving party, when it was sung by the Glyndebourne Chorus conducted by Andrew Davis."

**James MacMillan** (b1959) *Dominus dabit benignitatem*

*Dominus dabit benignitatem* is one of James MacMillan's *Strathclyde Motets* - a series of communion motets of moderate difficulty meant for the use of average church or concert choirs. It's nevertheless a hugely impressive piece, despite starting from the simplest of means. As with all the motets in the set, a solo line often predominates which is then echoed in other parts. The final Amens are as beautiful as they are unexpected.

**William Byrd** (c1540-1623) *Diliges Dominum*

First appearing in *Cantiones Sacrae*, the 1575 joint publication by Byrd and Tallis once Elizabeth I had granted them exclusive music-publishing rights, *Diliges Dominum* is a fascinating musical palindrome. One of the two 4-part choirs sings the music forwards, the other the same music but in reverse. But you don't need to follow the score to appreciate this exquisitely beautiful piece.

**Judith Weir** (b1954) *Ave Regina caelorum*

The work was commissioned by Merton College, Oxford as part of the *Merton Choirbook*, a collection of music being assembled to celebrate Merton College's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014. It was first performed on 8th July 2014 in Gloucester Cathedral, as part of the Cheltenham Music Festival, by the Choir of Merton College conducted by Benjamin Nicholas.

**Anna Semple** (b1997) *Ad te, Domine*

In Anna's words: "*Ad te, Domine* is a meditation on a short extract from *Psalms 24*. There is a resignation and peacefulness to these verses that I wanted to reflect in the stillness of this setting. The texture contracts and expands like slow breath, whilst the tonal anchor acts as something of a nod towards the human earthiness the speaker hopes to transcend."

**Arvo Pärt** (b1935) *The Deer's Cry*

The text of *The Deer's Cry* is known in Ireland as *St Patrick's Breastplate* - punning on the dual meaning of the Latin word *lorica*, which is both a piece of Roman body-armour and also an ancient Scots-Irish prayer invoking divine protection. St Patrick and his followers allegedly evaded ambush on one occasion by passing their enemies disguised as a herd of deer with a fawn, hence *The Deer's Cry*.

The work's harmony is deeply rooted in A minor, serving to emphasise the steadfast nature of the prayer text. The voices rise to an impassioned appeal, before subsiding in quiet confidence.

**Thomas Tallis** (c1505-1585) *Sancte Deus*

Thought to be an early piece by Tallis, written at a time in Henry VIII's reign when Marian devotion was being discouraged, it concentrates on Christ and the cross. Voices are asked to do some fairly unusual things - the bass singing above the tenor for example.

**Alec Roth** (b1948) *Men & Angels*

Alex writes: "*Men & Angels* is one of several works of mine based on words by the poet George Herbert. The setting for unaccompanied choir of his poem *Antiphon II* was made for the George Herbert Festival held in Bemerton, Salisbury and Wilton in July 2014. Herbert sets his verses out like a play script, with parts for 'Chorus', 'Men' and 'Angels'. This works well on the page, but is of no help when the text is sung, so I have entitled my version *Men & Angels* to give the listener a clue as to what is happening. The lower voices (tenor, bass) sing the words of the Men ("Here below"), the upper voices (soprano, alto) sing the words of the Angels ("Here above"), and the two groups combine for the Chorus, who narrate Herbert's imaginary dialogue as to which – men or angels – are better placed to sing the praises of the God of Love."

**Jean Mouton** (c1459-1522) *Nesciens Mater*

Mouton was a prolific writer of church music (over 100 motets and 15 masses). *Nesciens Mater* first appeared in the *Medici Codex* of 1518, an illuminated manuscript collection of motets, and was a wedding gift for Lorenzo de Medici and his young French bride. In the motet, the circumstances of Mary's role in the birth of Jesus are highlighted by a smooth, flowing eight-voice polyphony produced by two 4-part choirs in canon. The choirs don't simply follow each other but interweave constantly, to yield an exquisite undulating tapestry of sonorous beauty.

### Diogo Dias Melgás (1638-1700) *Salve Regina*

A late work by the Portuguese composer, Melgás's *Salve Regina* takes Iberian polyphony to its limits. It's rich with counterpoint and full of harmonic daring, the composer wasting no opportunity to introduce drama and emotion (listen for 'o dulcis') into this centuries-old text.

### Sulpitia Cesis (1577- post 1619) *Stabat Mater*

Born into a noble family, Sulpitia Cesis became a nun at the convent of St Geminiano in Modena in 1593. The sisters here were renowned for their music, both singing and playing instruments such as lute, sackbut and organ. Cesis' setting of *Stabat Mater*, for Good Friday, was published in a volume of her work in 1619. It's scored for four singers, and while it alternates between sections in two-time and three-time, the piece maintains a plangent tone throughout.

### Hilary Campbell (b1983) *Ave Maria*

Hilary Campbell's *Ave Maria* was premiered at the 2012 Brighton Early Music Festival. It begins with three statements of the all-important opening words: in the first two of these, the solo alto is answered by the other voices, and in the last, the tenor takes up the alto's line as the texture blossoms outwards from this simple phrase. This opening theme, and its associated text, reappears in the manner of a mantra throughout the piece, with Campbell introducing it in a variety of guises and transformations.

### Cecilia McDowall (b1951) *Alma redemptoris Mater*

The melodic lines of Cecilia McDowall's *Alma redemptoris Mater* are crafted from the opening of the plainchant commonly associated with this Marian antiphon, combining these with sustained drones to create a texture reminiscent of the florid style found in the sacred music of late 15th-century England.

### Pierre de la Rue (c1452-1518) *O salutaris hostia*

The hymn *O salutaris hostia* was written to be sung during the Benediction of the Mass when the Host is placed in the monstrance and revealed to the congregation. De la Rue's setting is a beautiful and gentle reflection on the nature of the Trinity.

Notes by Dick Ware

### Festival Patron: David Matthews

#### Grateful acknowledgements

We thank all those who have helped with the Festival or supported us financially and in other ways. Special thanks to the funding bodies, sponsors and supporters listed below, without whose generous help there would be no Festival.

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#### Next year's Festival

The 2024 Little Missenden Festival will run from Friday 4th to Sunday 13th October.

**Festival website** [little-missenden.org](http://little-missenden.org)

- See the full **2023 Festival Programme**
- **Book Tickets** (or phone 0333 666 3366)
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#### Booking Information

- Email: [tickets@little-missenden.org](mailto:tickets@little-missenden.org)
- Phone: 01494 958148 between 11am and 8pm

#### General Information

- Email: [contact@little-missenden.org](mailto:contact@little-missenden.org)

#### Little Missenden Festival Executive Committee

*Chair:* Dick Ware

*Committee:* Angela Bishop, Polly Buston, Martin Cunningham, John Glasson, Beth Neill, Liz Wager, Dick Wells, Rachel Wilcox

# Programme Notes

## THE CORVUS CONSORT

Old words are the best



8pm, Friday October 13th, 2023  
Little Missenden Church

63rd Little Missenden Festival

## The artists

**Corvus Consort:** **Freddie Crowley** *conductor*  
**Ailsa Campbell, Clover Willis** *soprano* **Anna Semple,**  
**Izzi Blain** *alto* **Ben Munden, James Micklethwaite** *tenor*  
**Tom Lowen, Sam Poppleton** *bass*

“one of the most innovative and adventurous vocal ensembles presently performing” (*Matthew d’Ancona, Tortoise Media*)

Founded and directed by **Freddie Crowley**, the **Corvus Consort** is a vocal ensemble based in the UK, drawing its members from a pool of young professionals in the early stages of their singing careers.

With the key objectives of musical versatility and innovative programming, the Consort performs in a wide variety of genres and styles, stretching from the Renaissance to the present day, and enjoys a range of instrumental collaborations. The ensemble is also flexible in size and forces, so it can be carefully tailored to each particular performance context.

Ongoing collaborations include a programme for upper voices and harp with harpist Louise Thomson, music for voices and saxophones with the Ferio Saxophone Quartet, and an improvisatory exploration of Renaissance soundworlds with Music on the Edge. These latter two collaborations were launched in summer 2020 with the release of two remotely-recorded videos, premiered by The Sixteen as part of their Sounds Sublime Online festival.

In collaboration with the Ferio Saxophone Quartet, the Consort released its debut CD ‘Revoiced’ in July 2022 on *Chandos Records*. The disc features a set of Baroque and Renaissance vocal works in new transcriptions and arrangements for voices and saxophones, as well as music by living composers – a new piece by Owain Park, newly-created versions of existing works by Sarah Rimkus and Roderick Williams, and music by James MacMillan arranged for voices and saxophones.

For Christmas 2020, the Corvus Consort commissioned 12 of the UK’s most exciting young composers to write miniature works for a choir of 12 voices based on the well-known song The 12 Days of Christmas, as part of a festive project entitled “Twelve Composers Composing”. The resulting works were released online in 12 short videos throughout the 12 days of

Christmas, and received their live performance premieres in December 2021.

Since making its first appearance in 2018, the Consort has enjoyed performances such as London’s King’s Place, Chiltern Arts Festival, Church Stretton Festival, Winchfield Festival, Kings Lynn Festival, Music on the Quantocks, Lamberhurst Music Society, Simonsbath Festival and Borough Theatre Abergavenny, as well as becoming Ensemble-in-Residence at the brand new Whiddon Autumn Festival in 2021. Recent engagements include a Bach programme alongside violinist Rachel Podger at Dorchester Arts and Exeter Cathedral.

Visit [www.little-missenden.org](http://www.little-missenden.org)