

christmas with tallis vocalis



Tallis Vocalis

Patrick Craig *conductor*

9 December 2019 8:00pm
St. Andrew's Church

Programme

John Tavener (1944–2013)

Owain Park (b.1993)

Judith Weir (b.1954)

William Byrd (1539/40–1623)

Paul Mealar (b.1975)

Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585)

Vanissa Law (b.1982)

The Lamb

Shepherds' Cradle Song

Drop Down, Ye Heavens, From Above

Rorate caeli

A Spotless Rose

Videte miraculum

*O Holy Night** (world premiere)

– 15 minutes interval –

James MacMillan (b.1959)

Tomás Luis de Victoria (c.1548-1611)

Anonymous (Traditional Basque carol)

Hieronymus Praetorius (1560–1629)

John Sheppard (c.1515–1558)

Sally Beamish (b.1956)

Cecilia McDowall (b.1951)

Nova! Nova! Ave fit ex Eva

Ave Maria a 8

Gabriel's Message (arr. Jim Clements)

In dulci jubilo (arr. Pearsall)

Verbum caro

In the Stillness

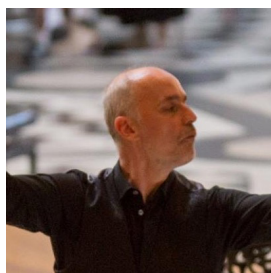
Now May We Singen

* This new work is commissioned by Tallis Vocalis in 2019 with sponsorship from CASH Music Fund.

TALLIS VOCALIS



Tallis Vocalis is Hong Kong's first vocal ensemble dedicated to the performance of early and Renaissance music. Founded by local choral enthusiast Raymond Choi, the ensemble focuses on Renaissance polyphony of the 15th and 16th centuries, with the occasional foray into early Baroque and contemporary works. In 2014 Tallis Vocalis gave its inaugural concert with British conductor Andrew Griffiths from Stile Antico in a programme of English Tudor works. In subsequent years there have been collaborations with British conductors Christopher Watson and Geoffrey Webber. In 2017 the ensemble made its debut in Le French May Festival with a Franco-Flemish programme featuring Josquin des Prez conducted by Edward Wickham. Later that year the ensemble worked with Peter Phillips, director of the world-famous Tallis Scholars, in a concert of music by William Byrd and Arvo Pärt. Recently they have expanded their horizons by collaborating with renowned contemporary dancer Christine He and with the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong.



Patrick Craig

Conductor

Patrick Craig is a countertenor and conductor. He is a Vicar Choral at St Paul's Cathedral and over twenty years sang more than a thousand concerts with the Tallis Scholars. He is a member of The Cardinal's Musick who won the Gramophone Record of the Year award in 2010.

Patrick Craig began conducting as Organ Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He went on to found Aurora Nova, the first all-female professional choir to lead Sunday worship at St Paul's Cathedral. He led them on their first tour of USA, and also conducted the City of London Sinfonia in a series of Orchestral Masses at St Paul's.

In 2016 Patrick became the Musical Director of the Temenos Chamber Choir in Sevenoaks. In March 2018 he conducted his first Bach B minor Mass with them. Other conducting opportunities have included guest conducting The Cardinal's Musick at the Lichfield, Brinkburn, Brighton and Aldeburgh Festivals, and the Tallis Scholars at the BBC Proms. He is also Guest Conductor of the Cecilia Consort, with whom he has led performances of Poulenc's *Gloria* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

Patrick has also taught and directed on Tallis Scholar Summer Schools in the UK, Spain, USA and Australia, and regularly leads singing workshops across the United Kingdom and Europe for amateur singers, focusing especially on Renaissance polyphony and its cultural and historical contexts.



Raymond Choi

Founder, Chairman & CEO

Local choral enthusiast Raymond Choi founded Tallis Vocalis in 2013 out of a lifelong love for Renaissance polyphony. He is also the Chairman and CEO of the group.

Before founding Tallis Vocalis, Raymond Choi was Chairman of the Hong Kong Bach Choir from 2004 to 2014. Under his dedicated leadership, the Bach Choir cemented its place as the leading classical chorus in Hong Kong. He was responsible for the choir's innovative programming, which mixed the popular repertoire with numerous Asian and local premieres. He has collaborated with local and overseas musicians, singers, chorus masters, conductors and organisations and has led the choir to concerts in Macao and Shanghai.

Apart from his role as an arts administrator, Raymond is also an experienced chorister and sings as a bass with Tallis Vocalis. He has also sung with choirs in Hong Kong and the UK such as the Hong Kong Bach Choir, Hong Kong Philharmonic Chorus, the Philharmonia Chorus (UK) and the London Philharmonic Choir, under Lorin Maazel, Vladimir Jurowski, Eliahu Inbal, Marin Alsop, Stephen Cleobury, Nicholas Cleobury, Helmuth Rilling and Jerome Hoberman.



William Chung

Rehearsal Leader

William Wai-Leung Chung, baritone, choir conductor, and music teacher, holds an MMus in choral conducting from the Michigan State University, and a BA in Music from the University of Hong Kong. He studied conducting with Rolf Beck, Stephen Coker, David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Helmuth Rilling, and Sandra Snow, and voice with Peter Lightfoot and Lan Rao. He began his career as the conductor of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union Choir and was the conductor of the Greeners' Sound, and instructor of the Hong Kong Treble Choir. He now teaches music at St. Stephen's College, conducts the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union Choir, and is the Assistant Conductor of the Hong Kong Bach Choir.

William was granted graduate assistantship during his study at Michigan State University. At the University of Hong Kong, he was given the Helen Moore-Williams Music Prize, Hong Kong Children's Choir Scholarship, and the Bernard van Zuiden Music prize, in recognition of his outstanding academic performance and contribution in vocal and choral arts during his study. He was awarded the best conductor in the 2012 Busan Choral Festival and Competition while leading the Greeners' Sound attaining a bronze prize in the classical mixed voice category. The Greeners' Sound also attained a championship in the 65th Hong Kong Schools' Music Festival and Gold (A) Award in the 2013 Hong Kong International Youth and Children's Choir Festival under William's conductorship.

As a singer he had performed abroad with the World Youth Choir in China, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and France. He currently is a member of Tallis Vocalis and occasionally performs as a freelance singer.



Vanissa Law

Associate Composer

Vanissa Law was born in Hong Kong and began her studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) majoring in piano under Chinese composer Cui Shiguang. After graduating from HKBU, she turned her focus towards electroacoustic composition at Ball State University in the United States majoring in voice and music composition for her master degree. Law returned to Hong Kong and obtained her PhD in 2016 under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Keyes at HKBU. She studied voice with Katusha Tsui-Fraser and Dr. Mei Zhong, and was the winner of the regional (Indiana) audition of the National Association of Teachers of Singing in the United States in 2008.

Law's works and installations have been premiered and exhibited internationally at various events and festivals including the 13th International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression (Seoul, Korea), Zvukové Dobrodružství (Brno, Czech Republic), the Society of Composers (SCI) Region VI Conference (Texas, USA), the University of Central Missouri New Music Festival (Missouri, USA), the soundSCAPE festival (Italy), the 2013 International Workshop on Computer Music and Audio Technology (Taipei) and the Hong Kong Arts Festival. Her collaborative music theatre piece, *Bubble*, was premiered by the Neue Vocalsolisten (Germany) at the Munich Biennale in 2018.

Law was granted a Fulbright Research Award in 2014 and undertook a 10-month scholarship at the Louisiana Digital Media Center of Louisiana State University in the United States. She is now a part-time lecturer in the music departments of the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Baptist University, the School of Design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the School of Creative Media at the City University of Hong Kong.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Tonight's programme contrasts the majesty of the greatest renaissance Christmas motets with a snapshot of the work of today's vibrant sacred music composers in England. Plainsong weaves a thread through the whole programme, continuing to inspire composers today just as it did five hundred years ago.

John Tavener died in 2013 having made a huge impact on the musical world with his unique pared-back style, which so moved the world with his *Song for Athene* sung at the end of Princess Diana's funeral. This symmetrical setting of William Blake's poem *The Lamb* is his most often performed work. Owain Park is a young singer, conductor, organist and composer who directs the vocal group The Gesualdo Six, as well as being increasingly well known as an imaginative choral composer. His *Shepherds' Cradle Song* has a close-harmony, dreamlike feel to it, borrowing an earworm from John Rutter's soundworld, and setting an Elizabethan poem by John Davies. Judith Weir was appointed as the first female Master of the Queen's Musick in 2014. She wrote this arrangement of the ancient hymn, the Advent Prose (*Drop Down Ye Heavens from Above*), in 1984 for the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge's Advent Carol Service. It takes the plainsong melody and moves from simple medieval parallel movement to rich eight-part harmony and back again. William Byrd was England's most inventive Tudor composer, a Catholic living precariously in a newly Protestant country. He poured his concerns and frustrations into his *Gradualia* – a setting of all the specific communion texts for every feast of the Catholic Church's year. His *Rorate caeli* sets the same text as Judith Weir but this time in Latin, a rigorous, dangerous and vigorous reinterpretation.

Paul Mealor's music came to the attention of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge when they were both studying at St Andrew's University in Scotland where Mealor is a Professor of Music. They went on to feature his *Ubi Caritas* at their wedding in 2011, and this setting of the anonymous medieval carol *A Spotless Rose* very much mirrors the same style of clustered slow moving harmonies, beloved of several Scandinavian contemporary composers.

We now arrive at the master English Renaissance composer after whom this ensemble is named. Thomas Tallis's motet for the feast of Candlemas, *Videte miraculum*, again uses Gregorian chant as its foundation, around which he weaves a delicate tapestry of sound in praise of the woman "who brought forth God and man". Our first half ends with the world premiere of local Hong Kong composer Vanessa Law's latest work. It's a reimagining of Adolphe Adam's beloved Christmas song *O Holy Night*. Vanessa says of her carol – "While keeping the warm winter ambience of the text, the piece distinguishes itself from the original version by a mysterious opening, and a constantly changing sonority. The intention is to invite the audience to listen to the text closely, although it is already an old familiar lyric."

The greatest living composer of sacred music, Scotland's James MacMillan, celebrated his 60th birthday earlier this year with a series of important new commissions, including a new choral symphony and his own forty-part motet. His *Nova! Nova! Ave fit ex Eva* kicks off our second half with another setting, this time for upper voices, of an anonymous 15th century text. Again offbeat rhythms are used to convey the eight verses in urgent phrases. The text plays on the idea that Mary reversed the original sin of Eve in the Garden of Eden in her acceptance of Gabriel's message at the Annunciation – EVA becomes AVE. Next we hear one of the most beautiful Renaissance settings of Gabriel's greeting – *Ave Maria* - for eight voices in double choir formation by Tomás Luis de Victoria. As ever this most vocally friendly of composers combines his native-born Spanish passion with his adopted country's Italian fluidity in this motet which sounds rather like Fra Angelico's Annunciation painting looks – a study in luminous symmetry.

Jim Clements is a tenor in London who writes beautiful arrangements and compositions for many of the UK's finest vocal ensembles. His arrangement of the Basque 14th century folk carol *Gabriel's Message* also uses Luke's account of the Annunciation as its text, and retains this ancient and well-loved melody. Similarly Robert Pearsall, an English gentleman who moved to Germany in 1825, took a wonderful melody (*In julci júbilo*) by Hieronymus Praetorius, the great forerunner of Schütz and Bach in Germany, and wove a masterly arrangement with constant varying textures from his inspiring source. John Sheppard came from the generation of English composers before Byrd and enjoyed the protection of the pre-reformation era to write florid and extended polyphony. *Verbum caro* features the plainsong chant for Christmas morning in slower notes in the baritone part, and

around it Sheppard weaves intricate five-part harmony. The text is the opening words of St John's Gospel.

We end by coming bang up to date with two contemporary pieces by female composers. Sally Beamish's *In the Stillness* is a simple but exquisite setting of a Christmas Eve poem by Katrina Shepherd. Known for her haiku poems which often celebrate the natural world, Shepherd captures the hushed rapture of a small English parish church in a snowbound landscape, while Beamish, one of England's most versatile and prolific composers, matches the intimate warmth of the poem in her music. Cecilia McDowall has carved an impressive position as one of England's most prolific choral composers and ends this concert with a typically rhythmic and medieval sounding setting of a 15th century text – *Now May We Singen*. The energetic five verses each end with a catchy refrain which mixes Latin and English phrases.

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SINGERS

Sopranos: Freya Crofton, Elizabeth Coupe, Vanessa Ko, Helena Murchie, Clare Reavey, Noel Sin, Fiona Steffensen

Altos: Edward Bagnall, Michael Cheung, Sandy Ho, Yuri Imamura, Rinske Kuiper, Chloe Robertshaw, Anushka Sehgal

Tenors: Kyle Hung, Joseph Lai, John Renken, Marcus Wong

Basses: Raymond Choi, Cliff Chou, William Chung, Sam Hilton, Bernard Lee, Jon Picker, Tom Raggett

SUPPORT US

Tallis Vocalis is a non-profit-making performing arts organisation and receives no government funding. We rely solely on the support of our Friends and the sponsorship of individual donors. If you would like to learn more about our Friends Circle Scheme and how to sponsor us, please email info@tallisvocalis.com. As a registered charity, any donation of HK\$100 or more to Tallis Vocalis is tax-deductible with receipt.

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