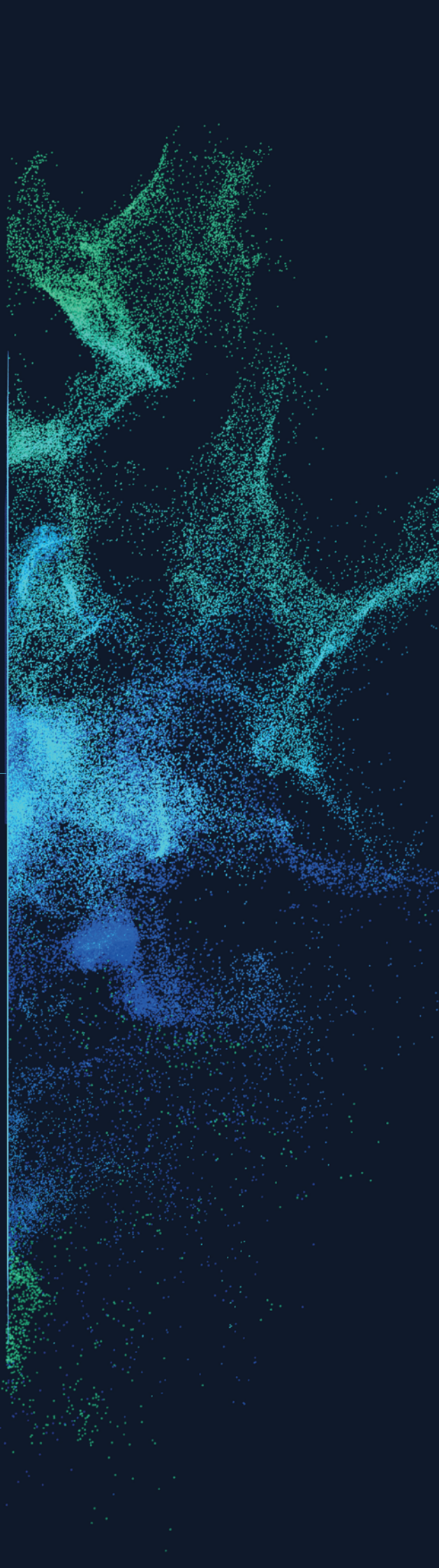




FROM DUSK
TILL DAWN



Tallis Vocalis

Graham Ross *conductor*

17 November 2023 8:00pm
Methodist International Church

Programme

György Ligeti (1923–2006)	<i>Éjszaka (Night)</i>
Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585)	<i>In manus tuas</i>
Joanna Marsh (b.1970)	<i>Evening Prayers</i>
John Sheppard (c.1515–1558)	<i>In pace in idipsum</i>
Josquin des Prez (c.1450–1521)	<i>Nunc dimittis</i>
Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b.1977)	<i>Heyr þú oss himnum á</i>
Vanissa Law (b.1982)	<i>We Grow Accustomed to the Dark*</i> (world premiere)

– 15 minutes interval –

William Byrd (1539/40-1623)	<i>O lux beata trinitas</i>
James MacMillan (b.1959)	<i>Lux Aeterna</i>
Arvo Pärt (b.1935)	<i>Morning Star</i>
Robert White (c.1538–1574)	<i>Christe qui lux es et dies (III)</i>
Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)	<i>Ecco mormorar l'onde</i>
Eric Whitacre (b.1970)	<i>Lux aurumque</i>
Tomás Luis de Victoria (c.1548-1611)	<i>O lux decus hispaniae</i>
György Ligeti	<i>Reggel (Morning)</i>

* This new work is commissioned by Tallis Vocalis in 2023 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.



Graham Ross

Conductor

Graham Ross has established an exceptional reputation as a sought-after conductor and composer of a very broad range of repertoire. He is co-founder and Principal Conductor of The Dmitri Ensemble and Director of Music and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, with whom his performances around the world and his extensive discography have earned consistently high praise. In demand as a regular guest conductor of other ensembles in the UK and abroad, recent collaborations have included London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, BBC Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra, Purcell School, and Australian Chamber Orchestra. Highlights in the 2022/23 season include return engagements to BBC Singers, London Mozart Players, Aalborg Symfoniorkester, DR Vokal Ensemble, and Salomon Orchestra, and debuts with Music in the Round, Gothenberg Symphony Orchestra, Tallis Vocalis in Hong Kong, and concerts with the Choir of Clare College across the UK and overseas in Denmark, the Netherlands, and the USA.

At the age of 25 he made his BBC Proms and Glyndebourne debuts, with other opera work taking him to Jerusalem, London, Aldeburgh and Provence. He has conducted and recorded world premières of a wide spectrum of composers, including James MacMillan, Judith Bingham, Giles Swayne, Vaughan Williams, Imogen Holst, Nico Muhly, Brett Dean, Lydia Kakabadse and Matthew Martin. He has conducted more than twenty albums and since 2011 he has recorded exclusively for Harmonia Mundi, including a highly-acclaimed series of music for the church year. His latest album *Ice Land: The Eternal Music* was released in 2022.

As a composer commissions have included BBC Concert Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Covent Garden Chamber Orchestra, O Duo, Park Lane Group, Wigmore Hall and the Solstice Quartet. As an amateur and through outreach work he has conducted projects in Tower Hamlets, Wigmore Hall, English National Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and overseas in Nigeria, Palestine, across Europe and the USA. He is founder and Artistic Director of Singers Abroad, running annual courses for singers of all ages, and a Trustee and Patron of the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music. He is a regular contributor on BBC Radio, including as a recent guest presenter of *Inside Music*. In 2021 he was made an Honorary Fellow the University of Macau, where he was presented with a Half Moon Award for the Arts in 2019.

He studied music at Clare College, Cambridge and conducting at the Royal College of Music, London. He held a conducting scholarship with the London Symphony Chorus, has served as assistant conductor for Vladimir Jurowski, Diego Masson, Sir Roger Norrington and Nicholas Collon, and acted as Chorus Master for Sir Colin Davis, Sir Mark Elder, Ivor Bolton, Edward Gardner, Richard Tognetti and Lars Ulrik Mortensen.



Raymond Choi

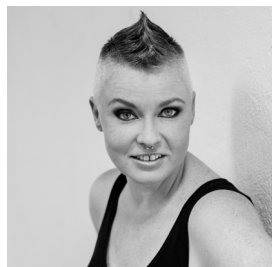
Founder, Chairman & CEO

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.



Bethan Clark

Chorus Master

Hailing from the UK, Bethan Clark has spent 18 years living and working in Hong Kong. In 2002 she founded Katterwall, a company dedicated to everything vocal, including the popular Kassia Women's Choir (2003-2016). She is a qualified secondary school music teacher, has lectured in Musical Theatre at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and presented for RTHK Radio 4.

As conductor, chorus master and vocal coach, she has worked with many groups and organisations including: The Cecilian Singers, Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival, Hong Kong Bach Choir Chamber Choir, Hong Kong Bach Choir, Tallis Vocalis, HSBC Staff Choir, Invention Women's Choir and St. John's Evensong Choir. In 2014-15, she prepared singers for three performances in New York's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall and in March this year she was invited to be the Choral Director of FOBISIA's Choral Festival in Jeju, Korea.

She is currently extending into the corporate field, running 'Leadership through Conducting' workshops for management trainees.

In 2010 she directed the sold-out Hong Kong premiere of Jason Robert Brown's musical *Songs for a New World* and in 2014 she produced and directed the well-received Anthem for Doomed Youth marking the centenary of the start of WWI.

In 2011 Bethan was the first person in Hong Kong to become a Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (L.R.S.M) in Choral Conducting, which she achieved with Distinction.

Her website is www.bethanclark.com



Vanessa Law

Associate Composer

Vanessa Law is a composer and curator who is passionate in interdisciplinary art practices

Born and raised in Hong Kong, her wide-ranging artistic output covers the traditional acoustic compositions for instruments and voice, experimental interactive electroacoustic works to creative multimedia theatre collaborations. She is the co-curator of *The Missing Link*, a publicly funded two-year project comprising a series of arts technology exhibitions, immersive performance, and open lectures on the use of technology in arts in modern times. Law worked as a Visiting Scholar at Queen's University Belfast on a project funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Classically trained in her early years, Law steered her focus towards electroacoustic music composition whilst studying for her master's degree at Ball State University in the United States. Law's pieces and installations have been premiered and exhibited internationally at various events and festivals. Her doctoral research was on the use of gestures in electroacoustic music, in particular everyday gestures used by musicians and non-musicians alike, which Law manages to incorporate in some of her works by translating gestures into sound and images. Law was granted the Fulbright Research Scholar Award in 2014 to conduct a 10-month research project at the Louisiana Digital Media Centre. The research culminated in the Soft Instruments Project which developed prototypes of electronic music interfaces custom-made for people with developmental disability, who are at higher risk of sustaining unintentional injury in the music making process.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Our programme begins with the darkness of György Ligeti's *Éjszaka (Night)*, composed in 1955. Voices enter hypnotically in canon, their rising phrases create ever thickening sound clusters. Tension increases, before subsiding to a calm C major. Thomas Tallis's *In manus tuas* is a setting of a responsory text from the service of Compline – the last office of the working day – though set here as a motet for five voices. It was composed in 1575 under the reign of Elizabeth I, and is representative of that period in its relative brevity and economy of means. Its slow-moving pulse and harmony, infused with some expressive false relations (neighbouring chromatic notes heard either simultaneously or adjacent to one another), make for a perfect conclusion to the day before The Great Silence which followed.

Joanna Marsh is an award-winning British composer who divides her life between the UK and Dubai. Her *Evening Prayer* sets a text by the sixteenth-century Lancelot Andrewes. Inspired by Josef Rheinberger's own evening song, *Abendlied*, it is similarly scored for six-voice choir, with juxtaposed block chords creating an expressive musical landscape. John Sheppard's *In pace, in idipsum dormiam* returns us to the office of Compline with another Respond setting from that service, using texts from Psalms 4 and 132 (In very peace I will lay down and take my rest). The work alternates chant with four-part polyphonic passages whose imitation always begins with the lower two voices. The restrained chordal cadences give the work a beautiful simplicity. It would likely have been sung at the Chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford, where Sheppard was Informator Choristarum from 1543.

Nunc dimittis, the Song of Simeon, is paired with the Magnificat, the Song of Mary, as most services of Anglican Choral Evensong. We are uncertain if the setting attributed to the Franco-Flemish composer Josquin des Prez is actually by him: it was included in the collected Josquin edition but subsequently shown to be of unreliable attribution. Whoever the composer, the four-part setting is one of affecting simplicity and expressiveness which bears some of the hallmarks of Josquin's style, notably in the alternation of high and low pairs of voices. The return of both words and music at the end is unexpected, and its subsequent shift of tonality is magical.

Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Heyr þú oss himnum á* sets a gentle prayer of praise by the sixteenth-century poet Olafur á Söndum from her native Iceland. The metre is irregular, guided by the natural stresses of the text. The melody emerges from a D minor drone, and is assigned mostly to the sopranos. All voices however are cast in their lower registers, which gives the work a dark, solid soundscape. This provides the perfect scene-setting for Vanessa Law's *We Grow Accustomed to the Dark*, receiving its world premiere performance this evening. Scored for choir and electronics, it was commissioned by Tallis Vocalis in 2023 with sponsorship from CASH Music Fund. Setting a text by Emily Dickinson, it presents two principal musical ideas: initial slow-moving syllabic writing, and contrasting passages of pulsating quavers with building vocal clusters. These two ideas combine as the piece develops, in constant dialogue with the electronics.

At William Byrd's *O lux beata Trinitas*, we begin our shift from darkness to light. This mostly contrapuntal motet sets a hymn closely related to the Phos Hilaron ascribed to St Ambrose. As one might expect for a Vespers Hymn at Trinity Sunday, the number three plays an important role: it makes much use of three-voice textures within the six voices and three-beat rhythms within a four-time structure ('Te mane laudum carmine'). Furthermore it is divided into three sections, with the final section ('Deo Patri sit gloria') composed as a triple canon. James MacMillan's *Lux aeterna* is one of the composer's Strathclyde Motets. Composed in 2008, it sets the text from the Requiem Mass, with a haunting web of outer voices weaving their way around an unadorned plainsong heard throughout in the alto line. Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's *Morning Star*, cast in the same A minor key as MacMillan's work, is based on a prayer above the tomb monument of St. Bede in Durham Cathedral in England. The repeating 'Christ is the morning star' gradually intensifies, as the 'promise of the light of life' eventually softens the tonality to a glowing A major.

Robert White's *Christe qui lux es et dies* takes us once again back to Compline with a setting of a hymn which asks God for his protection in the coming night. White, one of the leading figures of the English Renaissance between Tallis and Byrd, composed four settings of this text. This third setting presents the verses in alternate chant and polyphony, where the cantus firmus is heard strictly in the soprano part. The almost syllabic setting of text allows for close imitation between the parts, and displays mastery of invention within the structural confines. Monteverdi's *Ecco mormorar l'onde*,

our programme's only madrigal, gives an evocative description of sunrise. The music moves from the opening wispy solo phrases in darkness to the singing of birds and stronger block chords, as morning light bathes the mountaintops and 'restores our hearts'.

Different qualities of light appear in two contrasting works set some 400 years apart: *Lux aurumque* by the American Eric Whitacre, composed in 2000, tells of the golden light of angels singing softly to the new-born baby through a luxurious, slow-moving harmonic landscape. The music is constructed through blocks of sound, some rich and sonorous, others close-knit and delicate. Tomás Luis de Victoria's *O lux et decus Hispaeniæ*, sets the antiphon for the feast of St James in a five-part motet. Here James is honoured as the 'light and grace of Spain', with the two soprano parts appearing as a strict canon set three bars apart, giving the music a light and airy feel.

As we reach the new dawn, Ligeti's music returns with *Reggel (Morning)*, the companion piece to *Észzaka*. The music, marked 'Vivace, stridente', depicts a fast-ticking clock and seven low chimes of the bell. The cockerel greets the morning – and thus the new day has very much begun.

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SINGERS

Sopranos: Gloria Chan, Tracy Cheung, Bethan Clark, Genevieve Hilton, Lydia Lau, Lise-Marie Quin, Noel Sin

Altos: Evelyn Chan, Sherry Chan, Michael Cheung, Mimi Ho, Sandy Ho, Charlie Kim, Arlene Siagian

Tenors: Artus Cheung, Francisco Fernandez Diez, Chris Preddy, Marcus Wong, Leo Yeung

Basses: Ryan Brodersen, Tommy Chan, Raymond Choi, Patrick Heery, Sam Hilton, Jonathan Picker

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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