Spem in alium nunquam habui

A motet
for 40 voices

by

Thomas Tallis

(*c*.1505 – 1585)

Edited by Philip Legge

Notes

Except for the unplanned visit to London in June 1567 by the Mantuan gentleman, diplomat and composer Alessandro Striggio senior, who came bringing performance parts of his 40-voice *Missa sopra Ecco sì beato giorno*, it would seem otherwise unlikely Thomas Tallis would have received inspiration for his own sublime motet in 40 parts, *Spem in alium nunquam habui*. The rediscovery of the mass by Davitt Moroney and his researches have confirmed most of the salient details of this story, in particular verifying the account of one Thomas Wateridge, a law student at the Temple:

In Queen Elizabeth's time yere was a songe sen[t] into England of 30 parts (whence ye Italians obteyned ye name to be called Apices of ye world) wch beeinge songe mad[e] a heavenly Harmony.

Allowing for 30 parts being an error, either deliberate or unintended, then the mass undoubtedly received a performance in London during Striggio's fortnight-long stay, probably in a non-liturgical context; it now seems rather less likely that he performed his extant 40-part motet *Ecce beatam lucem*. Striggio's diplomatic business, which primarily involved petitioning the Holy Roman Emperor on behalf of Duke Cosimo de' Medici, had in 1566 taken him from Florence to Vienna via the Gonzaga court at Mantua, then on to the Wittelsbach court in Munich via Brno, and by April 1567 to the Valois court in Paris via Innsbruck and Augsburg, before he seized his initiative to visit England. The mass (with its *Agnus Dei* expanding to 60 voices) had been performed at least twice on his tour, once liturgically before Duke Albrecht V in Munich, and privately after dinner for King Charles IX at a château outside Paris; only the departure of the imperial court from Vienna had prevented a performance before the Hapsburg emperor Maximilian II. Striggio's gift of a six-voice madrigal *D'ogni gratia et d'amor*, later placed at the head of his second book of six-voice madrigals, fittingly attests to his meeting with Queen Elizabeth I, and Wateridge's account likewise to an English performance making "a heavenly Harmony". The anecdote goes on:

The Duke of _____ bearinge a great love to Musicke asked whether none of our Englishmen could sett as good a songe, and Tallice beinge very skilfull was felt to try whether he could undertake ye Matter, wch he did and made one of 40 partes wch was songe in the longe gallery at Arundell house

Arundel House was the London home of Henry FitzAlan, the 19th Earl of Arundel, and his son-in-law, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, was probably the music-loving nobleman mentioned. FitzAlan was moreover considered to be the leader of the English Catholics at the time, and had held high office under four successive Tudor monarchs, being Privy Councillor and Lord Steward of the Realm under Elizabeth, before retiring from office in 1564 and undertaking a fourteen-month visit

to Italy from 1566 to April 1567, which plausibly might have resulted in an encounter with Striggio, and an invitation for him to visit London. FitzAlan possessed the largest musical establishment outside the court, and in 1556 had purchased from Mary Tudor the fabled Nonsuch Palace, England's largest Renaissance building, as his country residence. The music collection held in the library there is known to have been extensive, as in 1596 a catalogue was drawn up, which happens to reveal the existence of a score of *Spem in alium*. Nonsuch also possessed an octagonal banqueting hall with four first-floor balconies, which intriguingly suggests the architectural features that Tallis incorporated into his composition: it is conceivable he designed the work to be sung not only in the round, but perhaps with four of the eight choirs singing from the balconies.

Of Tallis' motet, it:

[...] so farre surpassed ye other that the Duke hearinge of yt songe, took his chayne of Gold from of[f] his necke and putt yt about Tallice his necke and gave yt him (wche songe was againe songe at ye Princes coronation). — "By Ellis Swayne at my Chamber ye 27 Novr 1611"

The Duke of Norfolk was imprisoned in the Tower from October 1569 until August 1570, and then again in September 1571, being subsequently executed in June 1572 owing to his participation in the Ridolfi plot, which would suggest a dating of Tallis' motet to around the year 1570, and its first performance during the thirteen months of freedom enjoyed by the Duke. While no manuscripts of the original Latin motet (such as the copy held at Nonsuch in 1596) are currently known to exist, copies of the version sung at the coronation do. Retexted as an English contrafactum, the motet was performed, firstly for the investiture of Henry, Prince of Wales, on 4 June 1610; and after his decease, the ceremony and the motet were repeated on 4 November 1616 for his younger brother, the future King Charles I. The text sung was:

> Sing and glorifie heavens high Maiesty
> Author of this blessed harmony
> > Sound devyne praises
> > With melodious graces
> This is the day, holy day, happy day
> > For ever give it greeting
> > Love and joy hart & voice meeting:
> Lyve Henry [*Lyve Charles*] Princly and mighty
> Harry lyve [*Charles lyv long*] in thy Creation happy.

The editors of *Tudor Church Music* in the 1920s did not have access to the earliest known source, Egerton MS 3512, a large full score dating from the early 17th Century and rediscovered in 1947, but instead used a slightly later manuscript set of parts from the Gresham College Library (now in the Guildhall Library, G. Mus. 420).

These two manuscripts are the only extant copies known to originate from the seventeenth century, or earlier. The Egerton full score was not copied in choirs, but first all of the sopranos, numbered by the scribe 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36; then the altos, numbered 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37; and so on for the other voices, suggesting eight identically-formed choirs of five voices (whereas Striggio had employed five non-identical eight-part choirs). An unfigured thorough bass appears in the middle of the full score, after the 20th voice. The five voice types (described in this edition as soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass) possess similar ranges in each choir and are notated in the set of G2, C2, C3, C4, and F4 clefs. Performance at a higher pitch than as written is possible and might have involved an alternate voicing of each choir as treble, mean, contratenor, tenor, and bass.

There are several noteworthy additions to the Gresham MS: on many of the individual pages for each voice part, the scribe copied out the original Latin words (taken from the Sarum Breviary); the unfigured thoroughbass following the 20th voice is denoted "for ye Organ"; and at the end of the 33rd voice the scribe wrote "This song was first made to a lattin ditty by Mr. Tho: Tallis; but who put in the English ditty I ame altogether ignorant off." This statement, amongst other evidence, supports the idea that the Egerton MS was the original copy of the English contrafactum, and the Gresham MS was copied from it some years later. Orlando Gibbons, John Amner, and Thomas Warwick have each been put forward as putative authors of the Egerton MS, however these speculative guesses originate from long afterwards; a more recent claim for the composer John Ward has been rejected on the basis of comparisons with identified holographs. The Egerton MS bears an inscription on the last folio, "Mr. Thomas Tallis, Gentleman of King Henry the Eyghts Chapel, King Edward, Queen Mary & of her Maiesties that now is, Queen Elizabeth, the maker of this Song of fourty parts." This is taken to infer the author of the contrafactum copied the annotation from a manuscript dating to Tallis' own lifetime, even though the contrafactum itself must date from the early part of the reign of James I, or no earlier than 1603; the Gresham MS also copies this text, but omitting the clause referring to Elizabeth as "her Majesty that now is".

For the text underlay *Tudor Church Music* used another manuscript (Royal Music MS 4 g. I) bearing the Latin text, but as this dates from the eighteenth century it probably does not preserve the word placement of Tallis' original; the editors themselves noted the underlay "is in places so perverse that it appears like an attempt on the part of an unknown editor to fit the Latin words to the English adaptation." Hence the editor of this new edition has dispensed with this text underlay and supplied his own. Text aside, the music is a direct transcription

of the *Tudor Church Music* version, which as described above used the Gresham MS as its principal source; the collation of the two manuscripts indicate the scribe of the Gresham MS attempted to add some accidentals according to the rules of *musica ficta*. Though the earliest manuscript has many fewer accidentals than this edition, it is not inconceivable that the work was indeed sung with many more than are included here. Although the organ bass line cannot be shown to have originated with Tallis, it was possibly conceived in emulation of Striggio, who did utilise a continuo bass in his mass and motet, and so may be included or omitted in modern-day performances.

Musically, the motet is a *tour de force* on many levels, not least for Tallis' masterful exploitation of his choirs' spatial distribution. If the choirs are arranged in circular fashion sequentially by number, then the music "rotates" through the opening points of imitation on *Spem in alium nunquam habui* (choirs I to IV) and *Præter in te, Deus Israel* (choirs V to VIII). After a short interjection from choirs III and IV (which functions antiphonally as "decani" to the "cantoris" of choirs VII and VIII) Tallis completes the circle with the entry of the final bass voice of Choir VIII; shortly afterwards, at the fortieth breve of the work, all forty voices enter in the first of a series of massive welters of sound, which has been described as "polyphonic detailism". The next imitative section which follows at *qui irasceris et propitius eris* reverses the direction of rotation as new voices enter against varied countersubjects in the parts already established.

Tallis also manages to combine the exchanges between choirs in four different antiphonal arrangements, by amalgamating the singers in four groups of two choirs (as hinted at above), so antiphony can pass back between both "north" and "south", but also between "east" and "west"), but also as two groups of four choirs (*ie* one massive 20–voice choir against another) which can be arranged in two different ways (north and west versus east and south, or north and east versus south and west).

After the most intricate chordal passage so disposed between the various choirs, Tallis contrives the entire choir of 40 voices to enter as one after a pause, "upon a magical change of harmony". With the words *respice humilitatem nostram* Tallis ends with the most strikingly unhumble polyphonic passage yet heard, framed by the strong harmonic rhythms of the ensemble. The view that this might be Tallis' *opus magnum* is intriguingly suggested by Hugh Keyte's observation of a possible numerological significance in the work's duration being exactly 69 long notes: in the Latin alphabet, TALLIS adds up to 69.

Philip Legge, Melbourne, November 2004, revised to February 2008

Spem in alium nunquam habui

Thomas Tallis
(c.1505–1585)

14

Choirs I & II

Pf.

79　80　81　82　83

15

VII

di – mit – – tis.
love and *joy,*

di – mit – tis,
love and joy,

di – mit – tis.
love and____ joy,

di – mit – – tis,
love and joy,

di – mit – tis,
love and joy,

di – mit – – – tis.
love and_____ joy,

di – mit – tis, di – mit – tis.
love and joy, love____ and____ joy,

VIII

di – mit – tis,
love____ and____joy,

di – mit – tis,
love and____ joy,

di – mit – tis, di – mit – tis.
love and joy, love and____ joy,

di – mit – – – tis.
love and_____ joy,

di – – – mit – tis, di – mit – tis.
love____ and____ joy, love____ and____ joy,

di – mit – – tis.
love and *joy,*

Choirs III & IV　Choirs I & II　Tutti　Choirs V & VI　III & IV

Pf.

84　85　86　87　88

18

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry,* cæ - li et *prince - ly and*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry* cæ - li et *prince -ly and*

VII

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry,* cæ-li et ter- *prince -ly and might -*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry* cæ - li et ter- *prince -ly and might*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *Live Hen - ry,* cæ - li et *prince -ly and*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry* cæ - li et *prince -ly and*

VIII

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry* cæ - li et *prince - ly and*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry,* cæ-li et ter- *prince -ly and might*

Cre-a - tor, *live Hen - ry,* Cre-a - tor *live Hen - ry* cæ - li et *prince - ly and*

Cre-a - tor cæ-li et ter- *Live Hen - ry, prince -ly and might -*

Pf.

VII & VIII   V & VI   I & II   V & VI   VII & VIII   I & II   VII & VIII

99   100   101   102   103

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

VII

ræ, *y,* re- *Har -*

- ræ, - *y,* re- *Har -*

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

VIII

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

- ræ, - *y,* re- *Har -*

ter - ræ, *might -y,* re- *Har -*

ræ, *y,* re- *Har -*

Pf.

III & IV   I & II   III & IV   I & II   III & IV   [G.P.] Tutti

104   105   106   107   108

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

spi - ce,
ry live,

Choirs V & VI

Choirs III & IV

Choirs I & II

Bibliography and sources

Egerton MS 3512, British Library, *ca* 1603–10, Text: *Sing and glorify*; incorrectly described by Thomas Tudway, 1718, as "ye original score of Mr. Tallis's 40 parts Anthem."

Gresham MS, Guildhall Library G. Mus. 420, *ca* 1625, Text: *Sing and glorify*

Royal Music MS. 4 g. I, British Library, *ca* 1800, Text: *Spem in alium* Thomas Wateridge, *Commonplace Book*. Manuscript Department, Cambridge University Library, MS.Dd.5.14, fol. 73v.

Rev. H. Fleetwood Sheppard, "Tallis and His Song of Forty Parts." Letter to *The Musical Times* 19, nº 420 (February 1878): 97–98.

A.H. Mann, Preface to Thomas Tallis, *Motet for 40 Voices*. London: Weekes, 1888.

Tudor Church Music VI, editorial committee P.C. Buck, A. Ramsbotham, E.H. Fellowes, S. Townsend Warner. London: Oxford University Press for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1928: xxxiii, 299–318.

Bertram Schofield, "The Manuscripts of Tallis's Forty-Part Motet." *Musical Quarterly* 37, nº 2 (April 1951): 176–83.

Philip Brett, Preface to Thomas Tallis, *Spem in alium nunquam habui: A Motet in Forty Parts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966. Revised from the plates of the publication in *Tudor Church Music* 6 (see above).

Pamela J. Willetts, "Musical Connections of Thomas Myriell." *Music & Letters* 49, nº 1 (January 1968): 36–42.

Iain Fenlon and Hugh Keyte, "Memorialls of Great Skill: A Tale of Five Cities." *Early Music* 8, nº 3 (July 1980): 329–34.

Elizabeth Roche, "Tallis's 40-Part Motet." Letter to *The Musical Times* 122, nº 1656 (February 1981): 85.

Denis Stevens, "A songe of fortie partes, Made by Mr. Tallys." *Early Music* 10, nº 2 (April 1982): 177–81.

John Milsom, "English Polyphonic Style in Transition: A Study of the Sacred Music of Thomas Tallis." DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1983: i, 190.

Ian Payne, "The Handwriting of John Ward." *Music & Letters* 65, nº 2 (April 1984): 176–88.

Hugh Keyte, Sleeve notes for Thomas Tallis, "Spem in alium", Tallis *Latin Church Music I*. Compact Disc EMI CDC 7 49555-2, 1989: 9–12

Paul van Nevel, Sleeve notes for Thomas Tallis, "Spem in alium", *Utopia Triumphans*, translated by Griffin Anderson. Compact Disc Sony SK 66 261, 1995: 17–18

Davitt Moroney, "Alessandro Striggio's Mass in Forty and Sixty Parts." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, nº 1 (2007): 1–70.

Commentary

As Brett's 1966 edition of *Spem in alium* for Oxford University Press differed from the *Tudor Church Music* version of 1928 by having access to the previously unavailable Egerton MS, he removed various instances of *ficta* (accidentals) appearing in the Gresham MS that were not present in the earlier Egerton MS 3512, which he summarised as affecting the following notes: bar 35 · choir VIII soprano voice · symbol 4; 36·VIIIs·1; 98·Va·5; 105·IIa·3; 129·IVt·1. This is not however the end of the story, as the following accidentals, also occurring in Gresham but not in Egerton, were left to stand: 8·It·4; 12·Ia·2; 16·IIIt·3; 20·IVa·2; 22·IVt·2; 26·Vt·3; 33·Va·2; 37·IIIa·4; 49·VIIIa·5; 49·VIIIt·7; 61·IVa·2; 61·IIIt·3; 64·IVa·6 & 8; 77·VIIa·5; 80·VIa·4; 83·IIs·4; 85·IIa·5; 86·Ia·3; 98·IVs·6; 99·VIIt·3; 104·Is·4; 104·IIIt·3; 108·IVs·5. Moreover, Brett removed some instances of *ficta* that were the provenance of the *Tudor Church Music* editorial committee, besides adding his own in places.

Emendations to both Gresham and Egerton MSs are as follows: 58·IVt·2 is originally d', corrected to c'; 134·VIIIs·2 is originally a', corrected to g'. Three definite errata have been found in Philip Brett's edition: 106·Ia·5 = minim; 124·Vbass·1, semibreve rest missing after this note; lastly, it is clear that at 75·IIa·7, the printed d', also present in the earlier *Tudor Church Music* edition, should have been corrected to

c'. This error was only noticed by the editor as late as February 2008.

The two manuscripts have more substantial differences concerning the bass and tenor parts of choirs VI and VII. In the Gresham MS, the tenor parts of choirs VI and VII have been entirely swapped beginning at bar 122 and continuing to the end, with respect to Egerton. The situation regarding the bass parts of the same two choirs is rather more complicated, as the parts are not interchanged for their entire duration. At the foot of the first folio of the Egerton MS, a note explains that parts 30 and 35 (the numbering given to these two bass parts) have been somewhat confused: "The figuring of the 35 must be for the 30, but its was mistaking the figures" (sic). The first phrases of each part, from bar 28 to bar 33, are swapped; the next short phrase in the bass of choir VII from bar 37 to 39 is however *not* transferred to choir VI. The next two sections, from bar 40 to bar 56, and from bar 69 to bar 77, are swapped entirely. At bar 78 the first note in choir VI is in the other score doubled to a semibreve and transferred to choir VII, the remainder of the line continuing in choir VI after one minim's rest. The short two bar entry at bars 86 and 87 are swapped, and thereafter in the 20-bar section involving pairs of choirs answering one another the parts are not exchanged, as choirs VI and VII are not grouped with one another in this passage. After this, the new sections beginning at bars 108 and 122 are once again swapped between the basses of choirs VI and VII in their entirety.

Aside from this there are a variety of other minor differences: in this summary, the following abbreviations hold: br = breve, sb = semibreve, m = minim, cr = crotchet; q = quaver; full stop = dotted note; pitches are indicated using C, c, c', c" notation standard, middle c' denoted as given.

Choir I: 21·Is·3 f#; 24·Ibass·4 br, not sb: tied sb required at start of bar 25; 83·It·6 ficta # above c'; 106·Ia·5&6 cr g' cr c', not m g'; 122·Ibar·2 ficta # above f; 125·Is m-rest sb cr cr, not m-rest m m m; 128·Ia·3 explicit, not cautionary flat

Choir II: 12·IIbass·3 tied to 13·1; 22·IIs·2&3 cr g' cr g', not m g'; 24·IIs·7 no tie to 25·1; 25·IIs·1 = cr. f'; 25·IIs·2 = q c"; 45·IIbar·3 ficta # above f; 86·IIt·5 tied to 87·1 = cr a, not cr rest; 126·IIt·4 explicit, not cautionary flat; 130·IIa·4 no cautionary flat; 130·IIa·7 ficta # above f'; 136·IIa·4 ficta # above f'

Choir III: 37·IIIbar·4 e, not a; 104·IIIt·3 ficta # above c'; 126·IIIt·5 explicit, not cautionary flat; 136·IIIbass·1 tied to 137·1

Choir IV: 19·IVa·4 m tied to 20·1, not 2 cr; 25·IVt·4 explicit, not cautionary flat; 116·IVa·6 not tied to 117·1; 129·IVs·3 explicit, not cautionary flat; 129·IVbar·1 s, not dotted s.

Choir V: 26·Vt·3 cautionary, not explicit flat; 27·Vt·3 no accidental, q b; 81·Vbar·3 m f, not cr cr; 86·Vt·3&4 cr. f' q e', not m f'; 122·Vt·7 ficta # above f'; 123·Vs·3 ficta # above f"; 123·Va·3 ficta # above f'; 128·Vs·6 explicit, not cautionary flat; 136·Vbar·5 ficta # above f

Choir VI: 29·VIs·5 g', not a'; 29·VIt·4 tied to 30·1; 34·VIa·4 ficta # above g'; 44·VIa·8 ficta # above f'; 45·VIs·2 cr tied to m, not m.; 70·VIs·3 tied to 71·1; 72·VIs·2&3 = cr cr, not cr. q; 78·VIs·2 m, not cr cr; 78·VIa·5&6 cr. q, not cr cr; 78·VIbass·1 m g, not m rest; 80·VIbass·9 not tied to 81·1; 128·VIt·3 explicit, not cautionary flat; 128·VIbar·2 b flat sign required; 132·VIbar·6 not tied to 133·1

Choir VII: 40·VIIa·1 explicit, not cautionary flat; 77·VIIa·5 f', no #; 78·VIIbass = bar rest; 87·VIIbass·3 A, not G; 123·VIIs·3 ficta # above f'; 123·VIIt·4 m g, not cr g cr rest; 126·VIIs·5 explicit, not cautionary flat; 129·VIIt·5 = cr rest, not cr d'; 129·VIIbar·6 d', not d

Choir VIII: 39·VIIIbar·2 explicit, not cautionary flat; 40·VIIIa·2 b, not g; 49·VIIIa·5 ficta # above f'; 49·VIIIt·7 ficta # above c'; 78·VIIIbass·1 B, not G; 129·VIIIa·4 explicit, not cautionary flat

Finally, 138·all parts·1: each part has a fermata on the final note.