

Workshop Preview

MISSA PUER NATUS EST NOBIS by THOMAS TALLIS.

A workshop for singers at Grange Court, Leominster on 25th November, 2017 with Patrick Craig

Back in September 2014 Patrick Craig came to Bartestree to lead a workshop on the subject of 'Angels - Music for Michaelmas'. It was a very happy, fulfilling day and ever since then we have had a plan to bring him back to BMEMF once more. It's been arranged! This time it's music for Advent. Please put November 25th in your diary straight away as this is a wonderful opportunity for a pleasurable, quality singing experience.

Patrick was born into a very musical family. With his background he could hardly have failed to make a career of music. He was a chorister at Lichfield Cathedral as was his grandfather, father and brother before him. At various times, Patrick learnt cello, violin, piano, organ and harp. But, fortunately for us and the entire world of vocal music, he began to focus more on singing; and at a surprisingly late age was discovered to have a good countertenor voice. Patrick now sings counter tenor with both St. Paul's Cathedral Choir and The Cardinal's Musick and has recently completed a thousand concerts with the Tallis Scholars. He is increasingly in demand as a conductor, leading workshops across England and Europe that combine the study of choral music with an exploration of its cultural and historical background. Patrick is also the founder director of the all-female professional choir Aurora Nova who have led services in St. Paul's Cathedral for the past twenty years. In addition to all this, he sings solos, gives lectures and makes recordings. We are lucky indeed he can fit us into his busy schedule!

The music that we are to sing under his direction is very special. The date being near Christmas we can allow ourselves to indulge in some seasonal music (no, not carols nor the Messiah!) 'Missa Puer Natus Est Nobis' will be the foundation for our workshop. The accession in 1553 of Queen Mary, a devout Catholic, seems to have provided a stimulating opportunity for a composer like Thomas Tallis. The shackles were off and Tallis wrote for the unusual combination of seven voices in a shimmering sound world that suggests cooperation between both the Chapel Royal and also the Spanish court musicians of Philip I who were resident in England during Mary Tudor's brief reign. The unusual use of a cantus firmus chant from the Propers for Christmas day may even point to a hopeful royal pregnancy that sadly never came to fruition. This Mass demonstrates Tallis' expert handling of current techniques of structural imitation and choral antiphony. The Agnus Dei is exquisite.

We shall also be exploring other sumptuous music of this period including motets by Tallis' successors – Byrd, Philips and Dering – all glorious pieces.

Patrick's lively style and enthusiasm will surely be much in evidence. In his previous workshop with us we were treated to poems, a dip into some contemporary music and tales of his own singing experiences. Perhaps we will have similar again? This workshop comes at an unusual time, but can you think of a better way to spend a probably dreary November day, than singing this lovely music? This is a great opportunity for BMEMF singers. Do come.

Our venue for this workshop is once again Grange Court in Leominster. As we have found before, this is conveniently placed and will be comfortable. More venue details can be found on the booking form.

Wendy Sladen