



Friday 24 June, 9pm
St Bartholomew's Church

TRANSITING THE NIGHT HOURS

BREMFB Consort of Voices

Deborah Roberts *director*

The music

Part 1: Music for a Tudor Compline

usually around 9pm and the final Office before sleep

Sarum chant from the Office

Christopher Tye c. 1505–1572/3

Psalm 31: My trust O Lord in thee is grounded

Thomas Tallis c. 1505–1585

Te lucis ante terminum

Robert White c. 1538–1574

Christe qui lux es et dies

Thomas Tallis

In manus tuas

Christopher Tye c. 1505–c. 1573

Nunc dimittis

John Sheppard 1515–1558

The Lord's Prayer
In pace

John Browne 1453–c. 1500

Salve Regina

Part 2: Music from for Matins for the feast of St John the Baptist (24 June)

usually around 2am

Gregorian chant

Invitatory: Regem praecursoris Dominum
Venite (Tone 5)

Gregorian Hymn

Antra deserti teneris

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina c. 1525–1594

Matins Responsory: Fuit homo missus

Tomás Luis de Victoria c. 1548–c. 1611

Matins Responsory: Descendit Angelus Domini

The very idea of music from the night Offices could stir up images of the antithesis of working from home! But for the monks and nuns from the Middle Ages onwards an unbroken night's sleep was indeed unknown. The daily Office consisted of eight services: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline, based around psalms, prayers, hymns and other liturgical texts sung at set times throughout the day and the night. Most of the music will have been sung to plainchant, some chants quite simple but others elaborate and ornate. By the 16th century polyphonic settings were common, especially for the psalms from Vespers, but chant continued to form the backbone of the entire Office.

'Transiting the night hours' focuses on music from the services that bookended the time allowed for sleep: Compline at the end of the day at around 8 or 9pm, and Matins, sung as early as 2am and lasting for several hours. We are not performing the actual services in a liturgical manner even though we will include some settings of prayers and, certainly for Compline, we will follow the basic structure. This is rather an opportunity to experience some of the exquisite music, both chant and polyphony, that graced the hours of darkness.

For the music from Compline the focus is on Tudor England, but rather than include only music from the Catholic rite, we have taken the liberty of including some English versions of Compline texts that would have formed part of the new Anglican service of Evensong – itself built around texts taken from both Vespers and Compline. These include Christopher Tye's setting of Psalm 31 and his *Nunc dimittis*, and *The Lord's Prayer* by John Sheppard. We have also broken the rules by including two hymn settings: *Te lucis ante terminum* by Thomas Tallis, and *Christe qui lux es et dies* by Robert White. The closing *Salve Regina* by John Browne belongs to the earlier, pre-Reformation period when English sacred music was famed for large-scale structures consisting of sections with variable scoring contrasting with full passages for the whole 5-part choir.

The texts for Compline predominantly focus on peaceful rest and passing the night in safety. They are still relevant to our times whether or not you are a believer.

Matins, also known as the night watch or vigil, was a very long service divided into three sections, known as nocturns, each comprising three antiphons, three psalms, three responsories and three lessons. In addition, the service opened with an invitatory and the Venite plus a hymn, and ended with the Te Deum. Quite a marathon!

The psalms and other texts would vary on specific feast days and as 24 June happens to be the feast of St John the Baptist, we have selected polyphonic settings of two of the responsories and will sing the Venite and the hymn for the day to Gregorian chant. The hymn and responsory texts refer to the birth of John the Baptist, born to older parents who thought they couldn't have children, and to his role and life, including time spent in the desert living on locusts and wild honey.

Even if you have never heard 16th-century polyphony before and know nothing about liturgy or monastic life, you can still connect to universal feelings and the timeless beauty of sound, and don't worry – you won't be here all night!

Deborah Roberts

The performers

Since its founding in 2010 as a student/top amateur ensemble open to some of the most challenging music from the whole of the Renaissance, **BREMF Consort of Voices (BCV)** has certainly risen to the challenge! The group can vary in size as it takes on music in up to 40 parts but it can also supply its own soloists, as it did in 2015 for its Festival concert featuring the Vespers of nun composer Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, broadcast on BBC Radio 3. As well as annual appearances at BREMF and performing in other local festivals and venues, the choir promotes a regular series of concerts in St Paul's Church, West Street.

Deborah Roberts was born in Europe and graduated from Nottingham University with an MA in editing and interpreting renaissance and baroque music. She has remained fascinated by the discovery of new repertoire and performance styles ever since. As a long-term former member of The Tallis Scholars, Deborah performed with them in over 1,200 concerts in many weird and wonderful places around the world and in countless recordings of rare and beautiful renaissance music. She also sang with many other early music ensembles as a soloist and consort singer. She took up choral direction 20 years ago, and enjoys running courses in sacred polyphony and early opera. In 2002 she co-founded Brighton Early Music Festival with Clare Norburn and remains its artistic director.

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