



Friday 16 December, 7.30pm

St Martin's Church

BREMFA@CHRISTMAS: PUER NATUS EST

BREMFA Consort of Voices

Deborah Roberts *director*

The music

Sarum chant

William Byrd 1539-1623

Sarum chant

Thomas Tallis 1505-1585

Byrd

John Sheppard 1515-1558

Byrd

Interval

Tallis

Byrd

Tallis

Byrd

Puer natus est

Introit: Puer natus est nobis

Kyrie trope - Orbis factor

Missa Puer natus est nobis: Gloria

Gradual: Viderunt omnes fines terrae –
Alleluya: Dies sanctificatus

Playnsong Masse for a Mene: Credo

Offertory: Tui sunt caeli

Missa Puer natus est nobis: Sanctus

Communio: Viderunt omnes fines terrae

Missa Puer natus est nobis: Agnus Dei

O magnum mysterium

In tonight's concert we focus on two composers who were lifelong friends and colleagues, Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. Both were Catholics living under a Protestant monarch, though the older Tallis actually lived long enough to have worked during the reigns of no less than four: Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and finally Elizabeth I.

Although living at a time when many Catholics were persecuted, both composers were jointly granted a 21-year monopoly on music printing, and used it to print, among other things, a lot of Latin-texted music designed for the Catholic rite!

Tonight we are performing Tallis's Christmas Mass *Puer natus est nobis*, written during the reign of Queen Mary, when the church briefly reunited with Rome, and thought possibly to hint at her suspected pregnancy – one which turned out to be false. We are combining it with the Propers* (the texts of the mass which would change according to the feast or season) for Christmas Day, composed by William Byrd during the reign of Queen Elizabeth and published in 1607. As English masses historically never included a Kyrie, we have followed the practice in pre-Reformation England of inserting a plainsong Kyrie Trope. The word 'Kyrie' is replaced by the text 'Orbis factor' with each line followed by 'eleison'. The Tallis mass also lacks a complete Credo, so we have inserted a simple Credo by John Sheppard from his Playnsong *Masse for a Mene*. This is an alternatim setting with verses of plainchant interspersed with a syllabic setting. The 'mene' referred to was the term for a lower boy's voice.

Deborah Roberts

*The Propers are replaced in the Anglican church with hymns that still retain the same positions in the service: Introit, Gradual, Offertory and Communion.

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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