

Spem in alium nunquam habui

A motet
for 40 voices

by

Thomas Tallis

(c.1505 – 1585)

Edited by Philip Legge

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 beeing 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*] Princely 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 irascaris 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)

High Soprano I

Soprano I

Alto I

Tenor I

Bass I

High Soprano II

Soprano II

Alto II

Tenor II

Bass II

High Soprano III

Soprano III

Alto III

Tenor III

Bass III

High Soprano IV

Soprano IV

Alto IV

Tenor IV

Bass IV

High Soprano V

Soprano V

Alto V

Tenor V

Bass V

High Soprano VI

Soprano VI

Alto VI

Tenor VI

Bass VI

High Soprano VII

Soprano VII

Alto VII

Tenor VII

Bass VII

High Soprano VIII

Soprano VIII

Alto VIII

Tenor VIII

Bass VIII

Thorough bass

[illegible]

13

I

i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

li - um, spem in a - li - um, spem in a - li - um, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam

spem in a - li - um, in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um

quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um

II

in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun -

bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem

spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a -

in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

III

a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu - i, spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

IV

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

Spem in a - li - um nun - quam ha - bu -

V

VI

VII

VIII

19

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

Præ - ter in te, De -

Præ - ter in te,

Præ - ter in

Præ -

Præ -

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

43

I

ra - el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el: Is - ra - el:

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

te, De - us Is - ra - el:

II

Is - ra - el, prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

- el, Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

- us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

III

el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el, De - us Is - ra - el:

te, De - us Is - ra - el:

in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

IV

us Is - ra - el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

De - us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

- el, prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

us Is - ra - el:

V

us Is - ra - el, De - us Is - ra - el:

- el, prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

ra - el, prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

VI

Is - ra - el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

- ra - el, Is - ra - el, De - us Is - ra - el:

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el:

De - us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el:

VII

el, Is - ra - el, qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti -

ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el: qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro -

- ra - el, prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el, De - us Is - ra - el: qui i -

Is - ra - el, in te, De - us Is - ra - el, De - us Is - ra - el: qui i -

prae - ter in te, De - us Is - ra - el: qui

VIII

te, in te, De - us Is - ra - el: qui i - ra - sce -

De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el: qui i - ra - sce - ris, qui

us Is - ra - el, Is - ra - el: qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us,

el, Is - ra - el: qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e -

- ra - el: qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

55

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

qui i - ra - - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us
qui i - ra - - sce - ris, qui i - ra - sce -
qui i - ra - - sce - ris et pro -
qui i - ra - sce - ris et
qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi -
qui i - ra - - - - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e -
i - ra - sce - ris, qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
et pro - pi - ti - us, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
- sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
pi - ti - us e - ris,
et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
us e - - - ris,

61

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

et o - - mni -
et o - mni - a
et o - mni - a
et o - - mni -

et o - - mni -
et o - - mni -
et o - - mni -
et o - mni - a

et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
et pro - pi - ti - us, pro pi - ti - us e - ris,
e ris, qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
ti - us, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - ti - us e - ris,
et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,
i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris, e - ris, e - ris,
ris, qui i - ra - sce - ris et pro - pi - ti - us e - ris,

V

VI

VII

VIII

[illegible]

73

I

ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ca - ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

II

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ca - ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

mi - num, pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

III

o - mni - a pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

o - mni - a pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

IV

ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

ho - mi - num, pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

mi - a pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

V

ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

VI

o - mni - a pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

ta ho - mi - num, pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne,

num, pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

VII

ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

mi - a pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne

VIII

ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

pec - ca - ta ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

ca - ta ho - mi - num, ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis, di - mit - tis,

ho - mi - num in tri - bu - la - ti - o - ne di - mit - tis,

The bass line of 'The Rose Tree' is written in 4/4 time. It begins with a C4 quarter note, followed by a D4 quarter note, and then a series of eighth notes: E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The melody concludes with a half note C4.

[illegible]

91

I

Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ, et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,

II

Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,

III

De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor

IV

De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor
 De - us, Cre - a - tor

V

Cre - a - tor cæ -
 Cre - a - tor cæ -
 Cre - a - tor cæ -
 Cre - a - tor cæ -

VI

Cre - a - tor cæ -
 Cre - a - tor cæ - li -
 Cre - a - tor cæ - li -
 Cre - a - tor cæ -

VII

Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,

VIII

Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,
 Do - mi - ne De - us, Cre - a - tor cæ - li et ter - ræ,

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

103

I

li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, et ter - rae, et ter - rae, et ter - rae, re -

II

li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, et ter - rae, et ter - rae, et ter - rae, re -

III

Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, re -

IV

Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, re -

V

Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, re -

VI

Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, Cre - a - tor cae - li et ter - rae, re -

VII

cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, re -

VIII

cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, cae - li et ter - rae, re -

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]