

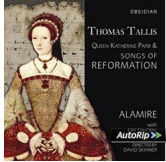
## Thomas Tallis - Queen Katherine Parr & Songs of Reformation (2017)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 21 January 2018 14:31 -

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### Thomas Tallis - Queen Katherine Parr & Songs of Reformation (2017)



1. *Gaude gloriosa Dei mater* 17:01 2. *When Jesus Went (Salvator mundi II)* 2:16 3. *O Lord, Give Thy Holy Spirit* 2:20 4. *Hear the Voice and Prayer* 3:03 5. *Purge Me, O Lord* 1:49 6. *Solfing Song* 2:36 7. *Verily, Verily I Say unto You* 1:49 8. *If Ye Love Me* 2:11 9. *O Lord, in Thee Is All My Trust* 2:37 10. *Libera nos* 1:52 11. *Litany* 16:29 12. *Fantasia (O sacrum convivium)* 4:29 13. *See Lord and Behold* 16:58 Alamire - Choir, Vocal Ensemble Fretwork - Ensemble David Skinner - Conductor

In 1978 an extraordinary discovery was made behind plasterwork in the walls of Corpus Christi College, Oxford: music from Thomas Tallis's grandest motet *Gaude gloriosa*, but with unidentified English words (see attached image). The discovery remained more or less dormant until David Skinner recently identified the text as being by none other than Henry VIII's sixth and last queen Katherine Parr. The words are from her psalm paraphrase *Against Enemies* in her first publication *Psalms or Prayers*, published in London in 1544. Parr's work was published in tandem with Thomas Cranmer's *Litany*, which was the first departure from the Roman rite in Henry's reign, though we have known very little of its actual liturgical use until now.

All was part of Henry's famous war effort against the Scots and French in 1544; the English *Litany* was adopted so that the population might stand up and pray the King into battle and for the first time in English later that summer. Skinner has also discovered that the *Litany*, Parr's text (set to music by Tallis), alongside the composer's 5-part *Litany* (also now to be performed in the Festival) were first performed following an elaborately orchestrated series of events at St Paul's Cathedral, London, which culminated on 23 May 1544 with a procession and sermon. Queen Katherine Parr, via the Chapel Royal singers, acted as Henry VIII's mouthpiece with her evocative war-like text *See, Lord, and behold*, with sentiments such as *they are traitors and rebels against me and let the wicked sinners return unto hell, and let them fall and be taken down into the pit which they have digged!* For the first time we can now suggest a specific date which marks the beginning of the English liturgical reformation 23 May 1544 at St Paul's Cathedral which quite predates the introduction of the *First Book of Common Prayer* in 1549.

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These discoveries are not only significant for cultural historians, but also fundamentally challenge our perceptions of Tallis's music and chronology which have hitherto been fixed in their essentials for nearly half a century. We also have new insight into the role of a Tudor queen in Henry's court politics. The musical Reformation seems to have come to England somewhat earlier than anticipated. Many fascinating avenues for further research, both musicological and historical, have opened up for the years to come. ---David Skinner, amazon.com

English composer Thomas Tallis witnessed dramatic changes of religion under four monarchs, and his career accordingly represents the development of polyphonic church music in Renaissance England. Along with his student and fellow Roman Catholic, William Byrd, Tallis was one of the earliest composers to publish music under royal patent in England, and his works demonstrated the shifting doctrines and styles of liturgy in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. This 2017 Obsidian release features one piece with a text by Henry VIII's sixth and last wife, Katherine Parr, which gives the album its title, though the mix of Roman Catholic and Anglican pieces on the program suggests that "songs of Reformation" may be seen as one-sided. In any case, the performances by the vocal ensemble Alamire and the viol consort Fretwork put the emphasis on Tallis and his varied output, rather than on the theological preferences of royalty. The result is a well-balanced portrait of Tallis, and his choral music is given transparent textures and clear diction by the 14-voice choir, which maintains independence of parts while offering an evenly blended tone. Fretwork's introspective performances reflect the chamber music of the time, typically composed as free fantasias for viol consort, often based on fragments of chant. Tallis' When Jesus went (Salvator mundi II), the Solfaing Song, and the Fantasia (O sacrum convivium) show Fretwork's polished and affecting playing, which is particularly striking in passages with plangent cross-relations. ---Blair Sanderson, AllMusic Review

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