



NICO MUHLY
No Resting Place
THE TALLIS SCHOLARS



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Nico Muhly (b. 1981)

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PETER PHILLIPS director

AMY HAWORTH, EMMA WALSH, REBECCA LEA, VICTORIA METEYARD soprano

CAROLINE TREVOR, ELISABETH PAUL alto

STEVEN HARROLD, GUY CUTTING, TOM CASTLE tenor

TIM SCOTT WHITELEY, ROB MACDONALD bass

Nico Muhly (b. 1981)

1. **A Glorious Creature** 9:04
2. **Recordare, Domine** 6:17
3. **Marrow** 2:56
4. **Prosperitie** 1:38
5. **Rough Notes** 9:11

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6. Incipit lamentatio – ALEPH. Quomodo sedet 4:32
7. BETH. Plorans ploravit 5:23
8. GHIMEL. Migravit Judas 3:08
9. DALETH. Viae Sion lugent 5:46
10. HE. Facti sunt hostes 5:53

ALL PREMIERE RECORDINGS

TOTAL RUNNING TIME 54:33

For many years The Tallis Scholars only sang Renaissance polyphony. We had founded our sound on what Palestrina, in particular, seemed to require and then made whole programmes flow from that starting point. The idea of extending this method to include living composers only occurred when I met John Tavener. Then I discovered that contemporary music, if written in a style which benefitted from the Palestrina method of ensemble singing, could augment, rather than disrupt, the experience of an all-Renaissance concert.

The epitome of this possibility was the music of Arvo Pärt, some of which we recorded in 2015. Unfortunately I first met him in old age, which meant he never wrote anything specifically for us. As it turned out the composer who immediately understood our particular sound was Nico Muhly. As a choirboy he had absorbed the many sonorities of sacred choral music, and was quick to work out how best to write for us. A succession of masterpieces followed, each as powerful as the last. Recording sessions can be arduous. These were pure creativity.

A note by Nico Muhly

Peter asked me to write a piece for the 50th anniversary of The Tallis Scholars. As most of the other things I'd written for them (lamentations, freezing to death, general penitence) were so depressing, I thought it would be right to set something bright and radiant. I'd been on a giant Traherne (c. 1637–1674) kick, setting his prose almost exclusively for a few years, and I found a text whose shape immediately suggested music: 'The Sun is a glorious Creature, and its Beams extend to the utmost Stars, by shining on them it cloaths them with light, and by its Rayes exciteth all their influences.' I thought about the depictions of the sun-god Aten in Amarna-period Egypt, with the sun as a single sphere whose rays reach out and actually touch, with leaf-shaped hands, his people. Obviously, the way to musicalize this was to start with a single note (middle-c) and a single word ('the Sun') and radiate out through five different chords before proceeding into a near-constantly ecstatic piece which alternates between 10-part counterpoint and hymn-like chorales. When Traherne writes about 'every Mote in the Air, every Grain of Dust, every Sand, every Spire of Grass', I tried to match this with an chromatic harmonic language: informed, perhaps, by extreme close-ups of the physical world. The music on the text 'The Sun' reappears, but on the text 'the Soul', representing a transference of focus both theologically and musical.

Recordare, Domine is my first collaboration with The Tallis Scholars, where I feel I figured out how to work the specific mechanism of their voices and performances practice. It's a setting of Lamentations 5; 1-5, and I attempted to achieve a sense of desolation through extreme intervals and changes of register: leaps of ascending ninths, descending sevenths and other yearning stretches. All of this was in service

of the setting of *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, which starts as a descending second, then a third, then a fourth, and so on. The experience of hearing the four sopranos sing that section was one of the most poignant moments I've had before or since, and one where I felt I'd honestly tapped into what makes The Tallis Scholars such a special and specific collection of ten voices.

Marrow is a setting of Psalm 63, and features the most abstract use of the voices in this collection. At the beginning, the upper voices outline, through stylized gasps and exhalations, a dissonant chord which comes in and out of focus, whilst the baritone and the base intone the text of the Psalm haltingly. These episodes are offset by unison singing on the text 'Thus have I looked for thee in holiness' and 'when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips', and the piece ends as it began.

Prosperitie was written as a *pièce d'occasion* for Peter Phillips's 70th birthday. I knew that the birthday party was going to be on a boat, and I knew he'd insisted there would be no singing, so this piece needed to feel more like a toast than a fifteen minute Marian votive antiphon. I knew it needed to end in the stratosphere, and I knew it had to be outrageous as well as easy to put together. We rehearsed in secret in St Mary le Strand for approximately eight minutes before boarding the boat, and the intrepid tenor Guy Cutting, who appears on this recording, had to hold the music for me — moonlighting as a conductor — whilst kneeling on the uneven floor.

Rough Notes is a setting of the last diary entry of Captain Robert Falcon Scott, who froze to death in Antarctica in March of 1912, offset by an entry from 1911, describing the 'brilliant display' of the *aurora australis*. His death, and that of his traveling companions, came after a week-long snowstorm, and when it became clear that the end was near, his entries become reflective and somewhat grand: 'I do not

regret this journey which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past.' The music, accordingly, alternates between hymn-like declarations of text, mostly in unison, and more abstract tone-painting. In stark contrast to *A Glorious Creature*, this piece is all to do with cold textures: austere pieces of counterpoint, unstable harmonies, and a sense of the inevitable. The piece ends with a recapitulation of the Southern Lights music, almost a fever dream, before decaying into a single voice singing: 'These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale.'

When Peter asked me to write a set of lamentations, as a continuation, perhaps, of *Recordare, Domine*, I had been reading endless articles about the Windrush scandal. At that time, the stories and fates of so-called 'Dreamers' (technically illegal immigrants to the United States, who came as children) were frequently in the news, and I found countless resonances with the Windrush generation of Caribbean migrants to the UK who found themselves in various ways stateless, detained, and denied benefits. I found myself automatically connecting these interviews with the texts of the lamentations themselves, and decided to incorporate modern English interviews inside the traditional organization of settings of the lamentations. *No Resting Place*'s structure is traditional, with long, melismatic settings of the Hebrew letters which announce each verse. The fact that the Hebrew letters are set to music is a gift to composers; I would wager that more people could sing along with the letters in the Couperin setting (*Jod* and *He* in particular) than they could the verses themselves. With the exception of 'Migravit Judas', the verses are meditative, with imitative counterpoint occasionally complicating their simplicity. Between each verse, the interviews are presented almost as recitative, but then one word or phrase is restated and taken up by a variation on the preceding Hebrew letter; for instance, the word 'grey', (from the sentence 'Just these diaries saying the word grey') is set

with the exact same descending scale as the letter *beth*. The accusatory ‘What are you doing here’ loudly reprises *aleph*, and *ghimel*, with slightly grotesque glissandi smearing each chord change, is flipped upside down over the text ‘To lose your job, have your driving licence revoked and lose your right to housing is to systematically lose your identity’. That sentiment echoes the Lamentations: ‘she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place’. *Daleth*, set to a long, cyclical exploration of a single chord, and the attendant lamentation’s dire, lonely ‘all her gates are desolate’, finds a rhyme in the fragment ‘There’s been a loss, a great loss’. *He*, set to a violently radiant C major chord, precedes a duet for the altos (‘her children have gone away, captives before the foe’), setting up the most prolonged interlude, written by the Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett, who, after referencing the slave port at Gorée Island, Senegal, writes, ‘To remember our history is to lament, to wail’. I set ‘... to wail’ to the same music as the letter *he*, but here, it is floating and quiet and seamlessly morphs into the Lamentations’ refrain (‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum’). A reprise of the *beth*/‘grey’ music continues this sentiment, and we rewind fully to the music of *aleph*/‘What are you doing here’ before a quiet coda. For me, this juxtaposition of texts summarizes the fundamental discomfort and mourning we all confront when reading the Lamentations, and when we read, in the newspaper and in histories both written and oral, about the violent displacement of human beings and confront our own implication and complicity in the same.

1. **A Glorious Creature**

2023, SSSSAATTBarB

The Sun is a glorious Creature, and its Beams extend to the utmost Stars,
by shining on them it cloaths them with light,
and by its Rayes exciteth all their influences.

Yet so particularly regardeth all, that every Mote in the Air,
every Grain of Dust, every Sand, every Spire of Grass is wholly illuminated thereby,
as if it did entirely shine upon that alone.

Yet the Sun is but a little spark, among all the Creatures,
that are made for the Soul; the Soul, being the most High and Noble of all,
is capable of far higher Perfections, far more full of Life and Vigour in its uses.
It can exceed the Heav'ns in all its operations and run out into the infinite spaces.

Thomas Traherne (c. 1637–1674)

2. **Recordare, Domine**

2013, SATB

Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae.
Recordare, Domine, quid acciderit nobis;
intuere et respice opprobrium nostrum.
Haereditas nostra versa est ad alienos,
domus nostrae ad extraneos.
Pupilli facti sumus absque patre,
matres nostrae quasi viduae.
Aquam nostram pecunia bibimus;
ligna nostra pretio comparavimus.
Cervicibus nostris minabamur,
lassis non dabatur requies.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

*Here begins the lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet.
Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!
Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to foreigners.
We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.
We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.
Our pursuers are at our necks;
we are weary; we are given no rest.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
return to the Lord your God.*

Lamentations 5; 1-5

3. **Marrow**

2017, SATB

O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee.
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee:
in a barren and dry land where no water is.
Thus have I looked for thee in holiness:
that I might behold thy power and glory.
My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness:
when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips.
Have I not remembered thee in my bed:
and thought upon thee when I was waking?
Because thou hast been my helper:
therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Psalms 63

4. **Prosperitie**

2023, SSSSAATTBarB

And he shall be as a tree, which is planted beside the runnings of waters;
that shall give his fruit in his time. And his leaf shall not fall down;
and all things, whichever he shall do, shall have prosperity.

Psalms 1 v.3 (Wycliffe)

5. **Rough Notes**

2018, SATB

Tonight we had a glorious auroral display – quite the most brilliant I have seen. At one time the sky from North North-West to South South-East as high as the zenith was massed with arches, bands, and curtains, always in rapid movement. The waving curtains were especially fascinating – a wave of bright light would start at one end and run along to the other, or a patch of brighter light would spread as if to reinforce the failing light of the curtain.

For four days we have been unable to leave the tent – the gale howling about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake, I do not regret this journey which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale.

Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868–1912). Diary entry, Sunday 21 May 1911; ‘Message to the Public’, March 1912

No Resting Place

2022, SSSAATTBarB

6. Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae.

Here begins the Lamentation of the Prophet Jeremiah.

ALEPH. Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo!
Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium;
princeps provinciarum facta est sub tributo.

*How lonely sits the city that was full of people!
How like a widow has she become, she that
was a princess among the cities has become a vassal.*

I don't feel it's home anymore. I feel as if everyone
is looking at me and saying, 'What are you doing
here?'¹

7. BETH. Plorans ploravit in nocte,
et lacrimae ejus in maxillis ejus:
non est qui consoletur eam,
ex omnibus caris ejus;
omnes amici ejus spreverunt eam,
et facti sunt ei inimici.

*She weeps bitterly in the night,
tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers
she has none to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
they have become her enemies.*

When my dad died we were going through his
things and we found this pile of diaries – little
diaries, just to tell him what to do. He had a great
stack of these. So we had a look at them and
it would literally say grey. You know, one day
grey, next day grey. Grey. He must have been so
depressed. Just these diaries saying the word grey.²

8. GHIMEL. Migravit Judas propter afflictionem,
et multitudinem servitutis;
habitavit inter gentes,
nec invenit requiem:
omnes persecutores ejus
apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

*Judah has gone into exile because of affliction
and hard servitude;
she dwells now among the nations,
but finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.*

To lose your job, have your driving licence revoked
and lose your right to housing is to systematically
lose your identity. When we place targets over
people we can expect nothing less.³

9. DALETH. Viae Sion lugent,
eo quod non sint qui veniant ad solemnitatem:
omnes portae ejus destructae,
sacerdotes ejus gementes;
virgines ejus squalidae,
et ipsa oppressa amaritudine.

*The roads to Zion mourn,
for none come to the appointed feasts;
all her gates are desolate,
her priests groan;
her maidens have been dragged away,
and she herself suffers bitterly.*

There's been a loss, a great loss. That's the only way I can put it. I feel the sense of it, very much, very deeply, you know. I feel as if I had something taken away from me that cannot be replaced.⁴

10. HE. Facti sunt hostes ejus in capite;
inimici ejus locupletati sunt:
quia Dominus locutus est super eam
propter multitudinem iniquitatum ejus.
Parvuli ejus ducti sunt in captivitatem
ante faciem tribulantis.

*Her foes have become the head,
her enemies prosper,
because the Lord has made her suffer
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.*

I journeyed back across the Atlantic to pay homage, to lament, to wail, to remember, to tellout. To remember at the mouth of the cave on Gorée Island, Sénégal, looking out to the Atlantic sea where so many stolen lives were lost, so many his/her-stories dismembered and misremembered?

To remember our history is to lament, to wail.⁵

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem
return to the Lord your God.*

Lamentations 1-5; 1 © Judy Griffith; 2 © Andrew Levy;
3 © David Lammy MP; 4 © Judy Griffith;
5 © Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon



THE TALLIS SCHOLARS

The Tallis Scholars were founded in 1973 by their director, Peter Phillips. Through their recordings and concert performances, they have established themselves as the leading exponents of Renaissance sacred music throughout the world. Peter Phillips has worked with the ensemble to create the purity and clarity of sound which he feels best serves the Renaissance repertoire. It is the resulting beauty of sound for which The Tallis Scholars have become so widely renowned.

In 2013 the group celebrated their 40th anniversary with a World Tour, performing 99 events in 80 venues in 16 countries. In 2020 Gimell Records celebrated 40 years of recording the group by releasing a remastered version of the 1980 recording of Allegri's 'Miserere'. In 2023/24 as they celebrated their 50th Birthday the desire to hear this group in all corners of the globe was as strong as ever. They have now performed nearly 2750 concerts.

Recordings by The Tallis Scholars have attracted many awards throughout the world. The 2020 release including *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie* was the last of nine albums in The Tallis Scholars' project to record and release all Josquin's masses before the 500th anniversary of the composer's death. It was the winner of the *BBC Music Magazine's* much coveted Recording of the Year Award in 2021 and the 2021 Gramophone Early Music Award. Their latest Gimell release in November 2024 was music by Robert Fayrfax and was made Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*.

PETER PHILLIPS

Peter Phillips has dedicated his career to the research and performance of Renaissance polyphony, and to the perfecting of choral sound. He founded The Tallis Scholars in 1973, with whom he has now appeared in nearly 2750 concerts world-wide, and made over 60 recordings in association with Gimell Records. As a result of this commitment Peter Phillips and The Tallis Scholars have done more than any other group to establish the sacred vocal music of the Renaissance as one of the great repertoires of Western classical music.

Peter Phillips also conducts other specialist ensembles. He is currently working with the BBC Singers (London), the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Utrecht), the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir (Tallinn), the Danish Radio Choir (Copenhagen) and El León de Oro (Oviedo). He is Patron of the Chapel Choir of Merton College Oxford.

In addition to conducting, Peter Phillips is well-known as a writer. For 33 years he contributed a regular music column to *The Spectator*. In 1995 he became the publisher of *The Musical Times*. His first book, *English Sacred Music 1549–1649*, was published by Gimell in 1991, while his second, *What We Really Do*, appeared in 2013. During 2018, BBC Radio 3 broadcast his view of Renaissance polyphony in a series of six hour-long programmes entitled *The Glory of Polyphony*. He is a regular reviewer on music for the London Review of Books.

In 2005 Peter Phillips was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture. In 2008 he helped to found the Chapel Choir of Merton College Oxford, where he is a Bodley Fellow; and in 2021 he was elected an Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford.



Thank you to

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All the singers on this recording, and all the singers who performed these works over the last decade,
and Peter Phillips, for loaning me the keys to this amazing vehicle and trusting my itinerary.

Nico Muhly

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