

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 18 June 2025
7.30pm

The breaking of bread/The Last Supper at St James's, Spanish Place

The Sixteen

Harry Christophers conductor
Victoria Meteyard soprano
Charlotte Mobbs soprano
Emilia Morton soprano
Alexandra Kidgell soprano
Kirsty Hopkins soprano
Katy Hill soprano

Daniel Collins alto
Edward McMullan alto
Stephanie Franklin alto
Kim Porter alto
Mark Dobell tenor
Oscar Golden-Lee tenor

Thomas Castle tenor
Steven Harrold tenor
Ben Davies bass
Tim Jones bass
Stuart Young bass
Robert Macdonald bass

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525-1594) Ego sum panis vivus (1581)

Kyrie from *Missa Fratres ego enim accepi* (1614)

Vineam meam non custodivi (1584)

Si ignoras te (1584)

Pulchrae sunt genae tuae (1584)

Stabat mater (c.1590)

Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui (1584)

Duo ubera tua (1584)

Quam pulchra es (1584)

Pange lingua (1589)

Gloria from *Missa Fratres ego enim accepi*

The Sixteen respectfully requests that audience members reserve their applause until after each group of pieces, as listed, rather than after each piece



Support Wigmore Hall during its 2025/26
Anniversary Season.

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/support-us



Join & Support

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Like many great artists, social upheaval acted as a catalyst for Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina's art, whose musical output included over 100 masses, more than 250 motets and dozens of miscellaneous liturgical choral works. His exquisite liturgical music emerged at time when the Catholic Church was embarking on the Counter-Reformation, battling the rise of Protestantism, a movement based on Martin Luther's crusade against what he perceived as rife financial corruption at the heart of Catholicism. Rome was ruffled, and among the many issues under discussion was the idea that its choral music had become too complex. Were polyphony's interweaving musical lines the enemy of textual clarity? Were they, in fact, too corrupt?

So the legend goes (and as told by composer Hans Pfitzner in his 1917 opera), Palestrina responded to this question with the *Missa Papae Marcelli* (Mass of Pope Marcellus), a pre-eminent work of unparalleled transparency and cut-glass perfection. The church was persuaded, and Palestrina's brand of polyphonic choral music was given a stay of execution. Although this story has since been debunked, it nevertheless contains kernels of truth. Palestrina's music thrived because it struck an ideal balance between complexity and simple directness, its passages of dovetailing vocal lines contrasting with moments of homophonic, or chordal, stillness. It's a recipe that would later captivate JS Bach and Richard Wagner in equal measure, the latter's use of leitmotifs stemming from Palestrina's subtle use of short musical phrases to denote and emphasise meaning.

Born around 1525, Palestrina moved to Rome as a child to study music. In 1551, he became music director of the Cappella Giulia at St Peter's Basilica but left under new rules that prevented laymen from working there. Positions at St John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore followed before Palestrina returned to the Cappella Giulia in 1571 under Pope Pius V. He died in 1594.

This concert is the second of The Sixteen's three visits to St James's, Spanish Place, in which Harry Christophers and singers explore the composer's music either connected with, or to accompany, the service of Eucharist, also known as Mass or Holy Communion – and central to Catholic worship. They begin with *Ego sum panis vivus* ('I am the bread of life') from Palestrina's second book of motets and intended to be sung for the feast of Corpus Christi. It's scored for five voices (two upper voices, plus alto, tenor and bass), and sets Jesus's words from the Gospel of St John. *Ego sum* is one of the finest examples of the composer's imitative writing, its rising melodic figure, heard in the opening moments, symbolic of Jesus's promise of eternal life. Listen as it passes seamlessly between all four parts, juxtaposed with those moments of stillness before the joyous three-part alleluias. The motet's second part, calmer in nature, mirrors the first in structure and mood, but ends with equally triumphant alleluias.

Palestrina based his *Missa Fratres ego enim accepi* on the melodic fragments of the earlier double-choir motet *Fratres ego enim accepi*, setting a text commemorating the Last Supper. Also scored for double choir, the three-part *Kyrie* (Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison) and *Gloria*, which ends this concert, both employ mesmerising call-and-response echo effects.

Palestrina is one of many composers to set the *Stabat Mater*, which reflects on the Virgin Mary's suffering at the foot of the cross. Its text is thought to have originated in the 13th Century and is traditionally used in the Catholic service of Vespers on Passion Friday (the Friday before Palm Sunday). Composed in the last ten years of Palestrina's life, the eight-part *Stabat Mater* was intended to be performed exclusively by the Papal choir, and remained unpublished until 1770 when, on his travels, the English music historian Charles Burney somehow managed to get hold of a copy. Into just 10 or so minutes Palestrina squeezes some of his most ravishing music – the antiphonal chordal opening is unexpectedly mesmerising, while the gently falling counterpoint of the final 'paradis gloria' brings the work to a shimmering close.

Bookending the *Stabat Mater* are six settings of verses from the *Songs of Solomon*, motets that mark something of a departure for Palestrina. Sitting somewhere between secular and sacred, the Old Testament texts describe, in the composer's words, 'the divine love of Christ and his spouse, the soul'. They are, at times, quite erotic in nature (the title page of the 1584 Fourth Book of Motets, in which these pieces were originally published, makes no reference to their source material). Palestrina, however, who dedicated the works to Pope Gregory XIII, meets the verses head on with 'a style of music a little more lively than I normally used in other sacred compositions', as Palestrina wrote. It's not known how or where they would have been published, but it was fairly common for music to be written to accompany the Pope's suppers. In that sense, these pieces could be seen as chamber music – religious in theme, but serving no formal liturgical purpose. Still, Palestrina lavishes some of his most beautiful and intensely scored music on what are, effectively, love songs.

The *Pange lingua* ('sing, my tongue') was written by St Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century. The text glorifies the Eucharist, describing the mystery of Christ's presence in the sacrament, and musical settings were used at Corpus Christi during which congregation, priests and choir would process between Rome's most important churches. Palestrina uses an 'alternatim' setting here, swapping verse by verse between plainchant and polyphony. The resulting contrasts are remarkably effective and surely represented something of a powerful weapon in the Counter-Reformation arsenal.

© Oliver Condy 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

The Sixteen respectfully requests that audience members reserve their applause until after each group of pieces, as listed, rather than after each piece

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
(c.1525-1594)

Ego sum panis vivus I am the living bread
(1581)
Biblical text

Ego sum panis vivus, Qui de caelo descendi: Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane, Vivet in aeternum. Alleluia. Panis quem ego dabo, Caro mea est, Pro mundi vita: Si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane, Vivet in aeternum. Alleluia.	I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: whosoever eateth of this bread shall have eternal life. Alleluia. The bread which I give you is my flesh and life for the world: whosoever eateth of this bread shall have eternal life. Alleluia.
---	--

Kyrie from *Missa* Kyrie from *Brethren*,
Fratres ego enim *I have received*
accepi (1614) *Mass*
Liturgical text

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.	Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.
--	---

Vineam meam non My vineyard I have
custodivi (1584) not kept
Biblical text

Vineam meam non custodivi. Indica mihi, quem diligit anima mea, Ubi pascas, Ubi cubes in meridie, Ne vagari incipiam Post greges sodalium tuorum.	My vineyard I have not kept. Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon, lest I begin to wander after the flocks of your companions.
--	---

Si ignoras te (1584) If thou know not
Biblical text

Si ignoras te, O pulchra inter mulieres: Egredere, et abi post vestigia gregum, Et pasce haedos tuos luxta tabernacula pastorum. Equitatu meo in curribus Pharaonis Assimilavi te, amica mea.	If thou know not, O fair one among women, follow the steps of thy flocks and feed thy kids next the shepherds' tents. To my horsemen in Pharaoh's chariots I have compared thee, my love.
--	--

Pulchrae sunt genae Thy cheeks are
tuae (1584) beautiful
Biblical text

Pulchrae sunt genae tuae, sicut turturis: Collum tuum sicut monilia. Murenulas aureas faciemus tibi, Vermiculatas argento. Dum esset rex in accubitu suo, Nardus mea dedit odorem suavitatis.	Thy cheeks are beautiful as doves, thy neck like jewels. We will make thee chains of gold, inlaid with silver. While the king was at his rest, my spikenard gave forth sweet perfume.
--	--

Stabat mater (c.1590)

Liturgical text

Stabat mater dolorosa
luxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat filius.

Cuius animam
gementem,
Contristatam et
dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti;

Quae moerebat et
dolebat
Pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati poenas
incliti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari,
Piam matrem
contemplari
Dolentem cum filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Iesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem natum
Morientem desolatum,
Dum emisit spiritum.

Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim
doloris
Fac, ut tecum
lugeam.

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum
Ut sibi
complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo
valide.

Stood the sorrowful mother

Stood the sorrowful mother
weeping by the cross
while her son hung there.

Through her sorrowful
heart,
crushed with sadness
and grief,
there passed a sword.

O how sad and how afflicted
was that blessed woman,
the mother of the sole
begotten;

How she grieved and
sorrowed
and trembled when she saw
the pains of her glorious
son.

What man would not weep
to see the mother of Christ
in such great anguish?

Who could not feel her grief,
to think on the mother of
Christ
grieving with her son?

She saw Jesus in agony
and scourged by the lash
for the sins of his people.

She saw her own sweet son
dying and forsaken,
until he yielded up his spirit.

O mother, fount of love,
make me feel the force of
your sorrow,
that I too may grieve with
you.

Make my heart burn
with love for Christ my God,
that I may be pleasing to
him.

Holy mother, grant me this,
fix deep within my heart
the wounds of him,
crucified.

Tui nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Mecum poenas
divide.

Fac me vere tecum flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

luxta crucem tecum
stare,
Te libenter sociare
In planctu desidero.

Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi iam non sis amara:
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fac ut portem Christi
mortem,
Passionis fac consortem,
Et plagas
recolere.

Fac me plagis
vulnerari,
Cruce hac inebriari,
Ob amorem filli.

Inflammatum et accensum
Per te, Virgo, sim defensum
In die
iudicii.

Fac me cruce
custodiri,
Morte Christi
praemuniri,
Confoveri gratia

Quando corpus
moriatur,
Fac ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria.

Let me share the torment
of your wounded son,
who deigned to suffer for
me.

Let me weep with you,
and suffer with the crucified
my whole life through.

I yearn to stand with you
beside the cross,
and willingly join with you
in deep lament.

Virgin, all virgins excelling,
do not be harsh with me:
but let me mourn with you.

Let me bear Christ's
death within me,
let me share his passion
and be mindful of his
wounds.

Let me be riven by his
wounds,
intoxicated by his cross,
out of love for your son.

Thus kindled and enflamed,
may I, through you, O virgin,
be defended on the day
of judgement.

Let me be guarded by the
cross,
defended by the death of
Christ,
and strengthened by his
grace.

And grant that when my
body dies,
my soul may gain
the glory of paradise.

Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui (1584)

Biblical text

Quam pulchri sunt gressus
tui in calceamentis,
Filia principis.
Iuncturae femorum tuorum
sicut monilia
Quae fabricata sunt manu
artificis.
Umbilicus tuus crater
tornatilis,
Numquam indigens poculis.
Venter tuus sicut acervus
tritici
Vallatus liliis.

How beautiful are thy feet

How beautiful are thy
sandalled feet,
O daughter of princes.
The joints of thy thighs
are like jewels
made by the hand of
craftsmen.
Thy navel is like a
rounded bowl
never without cups.
Thy belly is like a heap of
wheat
set about with lilies.

Duo ubera tua (1584)
Biblical text

Duo ubera tua sicut duo
hinnuli, gemelli capreae.

Collum tuum sicut turris
eburnea;
Oculi tui sicut piscinae in
Hesebon
Quae sunt in porta filiae
multitudinis.
Nasus tuus sicut turris
Libani,
Quae respicit contra
Damascum.

Caput tuum ut
Carmelus;
Et comae capitis tui sicut
purpura regis
Vincta canalibus.

Thy two breasts

Thy two breasts are like two
young roes that are twins.

Thy neck is as a tower of
ivory;
thine eyes like the
fishpools in Heshbon,
by the gate of
Bathrabbim:
thy nose is as the tower of
Lebanon
which looketh toward
Damascus.

Thine head upon thee is
like Carmel,
and the hair of thine head
like purple;
the king is held in the
galleries.

Quam pulchra es (1584)
Biblical text

Quam pulchra es, et quam
decora,
Carissima, in deliciis.
Statura tua assimilata est
palmae,
Et ubera tua
botris.
Dixi: Ascendam in
palmam,
Et apprehendam fructus
eius:
Et erunt ubera
tua
Sicut botri vineae:
Et odor oris tui sicut odor
malorum.

How fair you are

How beautiful art thou,
and how comely,
my dearest, in delights.
Thy stature is like to a
palm tree
and thy breasts to
clusters [of fruit].
I said: I will go up into the
palm tree
and I will take hold of the
fruit thereof.
And thy breasts [also]
shall be
as the clusters of the vine;
and the odour of thy
mouth like apples.

Pange lingua (1589)

Liturgical text

Pange lingua gloriosi
Corporis mysterium

Sanguinisque pretiosi,
Quem in mundi pretium
Fructus ventris generosi
Rex effudit
Gentium.

Nobis datus, nobis natus
Ex intacta virgine
Et in mundo
conversatus,
Sparso verbi
semine,
Sui moras incolatus
Miro clausit
ordine.

In supremæ nocte
cenæ
Recumbens cum fratribus
Observata lege plene
Cibis in legalibus,
Cibum turbae duodenæ
Se dat suis
manibus.

Verbum caro, panem
verum
Verbo carnem efficit:
Fitque sanguis Christi
merum,
Et si sensus deficit,
Ad firmandum cor sincerum
Sola fides sufficit.

Tantum ergo
sacramentum
Veneremur cernui,
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui;
Praestet fides
supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

Genitori Genitoque
Laus et iubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio;
Procedenti ab
utroque
Compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

Sing, my tongue

Sing, my tongue,
the mystery of the
glorious body,
and of the precious Blood
that for the world's salvation
the fruit of a noble womb,
the king of the nations,
shed.

Given to us, born to us,
from an unblemished virgin,
and having lived in the
world,
scattering the seed of the
Word,
the time of his habitation
miraculously He closed in
due order.

In the night of His last
supper,
resting with His brothers,
the law being fully observed
with permitted foods,
to the group of twelve
He gave Himself as food
with his own hands.

The Word in flesh true
bread
by a word makes His flesh,
and also makes true wine
the Blood of Christ,
and if sense is lacking,
to confirm a true heart
Faith alone suffices.

Therefore so great a
Sacrament
let us fall down and worship,
and let the old law
give way to a new rite,
and let faith stand
forward
to make good the defects
of sense.

To the Father and the Son
be praise and joy,
health, honour and virtue
and blessing,
and to him proceeding
from both
be equal praise.
Amen.

Gloria from Missa

Fratres ego enim

accepi

Liturgical text

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus
te,
Adoramus te, glorificamus
te.
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam
tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu
Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata
mundi,
Miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata
mundi,
Suscipe deprecationem
nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram
Patris,
Miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus Altissimus Jesu
Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
In gloria Dei
Patris.
Amen.

Gloria from

Brethren, I have

received Mass

Glory be to God on high.
And on earth peace to
men of good will.
We praise Thee, we bless
Thee,
we worship Thee, we
glorify Thee.
We give thanks to Thee
for Thy great
glory.
Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten
Son, Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son
of the Father,
Thou that takest away the
sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the
sins of the world,
receive our
prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right
hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy,
Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art the most
high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the
Father.
Amen.