



South West Early Music Forum

registered charity no. 291319

Workshop for singers with David Allinson

Robert Parsons – beyond *Ave Maria*

Saturday 23 November 2024

St. Peter's Church, Church Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham

Organiser: Jonathan Tribe

The reputation of Robert Parsons (c.1535–72), today rests almost entirely on the honeyed beauty of his *Ave Maria*, with its perfect Amen. But his other sacred music is of such high quality, and so little known, that it will be a pleasure to explore it with you.

Parsons was a key influence on Willim Byrd, and one of the greatest composers of the generation which lived through the turbulent decades of the Reformation. His sudden death, by drowning in the frozen waters of the River Trent at Newark, gifted Byrd a place in the Chapel Royal. Robert Dow's eulogy, written at the time, tells of a composer cut down at the height of his powers:

Qui tantus primo Parsonne in flore fuisti, quantus in autumno in morerer flores

(‘Parsons, you who were so great in the springtime of life, how great you would have been in the autumn, had not death intervened.’)

For this workshop we hope to sing Parsons' three searingly dramatic Latin pieces for Holy Week, along with his rather mellow double-choir canticles for the new Anglican rite. And, of course, we will sing the *Ave Maria*. Parsons' music, composed in the turbulent years of the mid-16th century, synthesises long standing English traditions (rich contrapuntal textures and pungent false relations) with modern, perhaps continental, features like dramatic text declamation and emotive word-setting.

The tutor

Dr David Allinson is a freelance conductor, singer and academic with wide experience as a leader of choral workshops. His special love is Renaissance polyphony, and he has led countless workshops and singing holidays in the UK and Europe, working for every UK Early Music Forum, for organisations such as Lacock and Run by Singers, and for numerous private groups. He is known for his combination of scholarship, technical know-how and humorous positivity.

David has some connections with our region. He was awarded his doctorate, on the musical and devotional content of early Tudor music, by Exeter University in the late 1990s, and for some years around 2010 he was Teaching Fellow in Music at Bristol University. David has been the musical director of the well-regarded Renaissance Singers (London) since 2010 and has conducted numerous other choirs including his own ensemble, Cantores. He is Honorary Vice-President of the Southern Early Music Forum. [More at www.davidallinson.com]

There is some parking next to and opposite the church, and more in local roads.

There is a Co-op at the other end of Church Road, a 10 minute walk, so we recommend bringing your own lunch with you. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Music will be available to download onto tablets if required.

The fee for the workshop is £20 for EMF members and £25 for non-members,
or £5 for 18-25's.

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