

Gallicantus

2020/2021



gallicantus.com

“Everything Gallicantus touches seems to turn to gold.”

- Adrian Horsewood, Early Music Today



Literally meaning ‘rooster song’ or ‘cock crow’, Gallicantus was a name used in monastic antiquity for the office held just before dawn, which celebrated the renewal of life and offered a sense of gratitude and optimism for the coming day. The membership of the group shares a wealth of experience in consort singing, and is bound by a belief in the rhetorical power of great Renaissance music.

Under the direction of Gabriel Crouch, Gallicantus creates performances and recordings which explore narratives and draw out unifying themes within their apparently diverse repertoire. Gallicantus has performed in many significant venues and festivals in the UK (Wigmore Hall, Spitalfields Festival, York Early Music Festival, Temple Winter Music Festival), as well as Germany, Austria (Trigonale Festival), Poland (Wroclaw Festival), Italy, and the low countries (Utrecht Early Music Festival). In the USA the group holds regular residencies at Princeton and Yale Universities, and in 2017 made its Carnegie Hall debut in New York.

Gallicantus has released five CDs on the Signum label, each garnering lavish praise. With “Hymns, Psalms and Lamentations”, dedicated to the music of Robert White, critics acclaimed “impassioned, exciting music” (The Times), whilst Gramophone Magazine declared: “What an outstanding disc... The opening of the Lamentations could stand as a kind of illuminated initial at the beginning of a gorgeous manuscript, so transparent and luminous is it.” Their second recording “Dialogues of Sorrow - Passions on the Death of Prince Henry (1612)”, was described as “one of the best choral releases of the year” by TheArtsDesk.com, possessing “singing of clarity, suppleness and poignancy” (Daily Telegraph); whilst International Record Review proclaimed “...this is a well sung, intelligently produced and exhaustively researched project, which deserves great success.” The 2012 release “The Word Unspoken”, featuring music by William Byrd and Philippe de Monte was equally well received, with The Sunday Times saying “The intensity of the music is reflected in Gallicantus’s beautifully shaped performances”. It was named ‘Editor’s Choice’ in Gramophone Magazine, which noted that “the ensemble’s view is delivered with such intelligence and rhetorical persuasiveness that the cumulative weight of their Byrd, in particular, is well-nigh symphonic in effect.” The group’s fourth CD - the remarkable Lagrime di San Pietro by Lassus, cemented Gallicantus as one of Europe’s foremost early music ensembles, earning a second consecutive ‘Editor’s Choice’ selection from Gramophone, as well as nomination for a coveted Gramophone Award in 2014. The group’s 2017 release, ‘Queen Mary’s Big Belly’, garnered another ‘Editor’s Choice’ award from Early Music Today, for its ‘sumptuous music performed with supreme artistry... brilliant, both musicologically and artistically;’ and their most recent recording – ‘Sibylla’ (2018) – earned the ‘star review’ in Choir & Organ magazine, and was singled out by Gramophone magazine for its definitive recording of the Prophetiae Sibyllarum by Lassus: “this warrants a top recommendation, for Gallicantus surpass the mixed ensembles technically and edge The Hilliards’ more reverential account interpretatively.”

GABRIEL CROUCH has led the renowned early music ensemble Gallicantus since its inception in 2008. He began his musical career as an eight-year-old in the choir of Westminster Abbey, where he performed a solo at the wedding of HRH Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson. After completing a choral scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, he was offered a place in the renowned a cappella group The King's Singers in 1996. In the next eight years he made a dozen recordings on the BMG label (including a grammy nomination), and gave more than 900 performances in almost every major concert venue in the world.

Since moving to the USA in 2005 he has built an international profile as a conductor and director, with recent engagements in Indonesia, Hawaii and Australia as well as Europe and the continental United States. With Gallicantus he has now released six recordings under the Signum label to rapturous reviews, garnering multiple 'Editor's Choice' awards in Gramophone Magazine, Choir and Organ Magazine and the Early Music Review. His recording of Lagrime di San Pietro by Orlando di Lasso was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award in 2014.



Gabriel was appointed Director of Choral Activities and Senior Lecturer in Music at Princeton University in 2010. When the academic calendar allows, he maintains parallel careers in singing and record production, crossing the Atlantic frequently to appear with such ensembles as Tenebrae and The Gabrieli Consort, and in the US, performing recitals of lutesong with such acclaimed lutenists as Daniel Swenberg and Nigel North. As a producer his credits have included Winchester Cathedral Choir, The Gabrieli Consort and Tenebrae. His work as a singer, coach and musical director has led to his name appearing in the London Times' list of 'Great British Hopes'.

BALLAD OF THE MARIGOLD

Eight singers plus lute

With all the brinksmanship and bloodshed that carried her to the throne in 1553, the issue of Mary Tudor's succession was a thorny one for the staunchly Catholic queen and her court. If her marriage to the Spanish King Philip in the summer of 1554 was to yield no children, the existing heir would be the troublesome young Protestant princess Elizabeth. Understandably, there was an immense sense of expectation for the announcement of a royal pregnancy in the months immediately following the royal wedding, and it duly arrived in late November, with a rush of courtly tributes.

This program summons up the spirit of this euphoric moment in Mary's reign, and her subsequent descent in to a depression as it was finally recognized, six months later, that no heir would be born. The music of Mary's most important composers, including Tye, Mundy, Tallis and Sheppard, is performed alongside secular songs of the day, including a adaptation of verses from William Forrest's paean to Mary, 'A New Ballad of the Marigold'. Of special significance is a brand new reconstruction setting of the Sarum Litany by Thomas Tallis, thought to have been heard in late November 1554 in a service of prayer for the health of Mary's expected child.

DEATH IN VENICE

The Venetian lament, and its English imitators

Six singers plus lute/theorbo

The expression of personal and communal grief has provoked potent and inventive music throughout history, never more so than during the era when 'melancholy' was ennobled and glorified in popular culture. This program charts - through a series of musical 'epitaphs' - the evolution of the Venetian School at the hands of several great Flemish composers who were brought from northern Europe to burnish the courts of northern Italy with their masterful music - and presents two of the great works of Monteverdi at the pinnacle of this evolution.

Alongside these masterpieces of the Venetian School will be heard some of the great English music which was composed under its influence. Byrd and Tomkins produced exquisite epitaphs (for Tallis and Byrd respectively); and from Coprario, Tomkins and Vautor we hear some of the sublime works that were composed as part of the national outpouring of grief at the death of the 17-year-old Prince Henry, eldest son of King James I, in 1612.

SYBILLA

Five singers

The ancient Greek prophetesses known collectively as 'The Sibyls' were recorded in writing from the 5th Century BC - but from the 2nd century AD, a process of judicious redaction and expansion enabled early Christians to use the Sibylline prophecies as a companion document to the Old Testament. The revised texts, though they retained some of the original mystic and apocalyptic flavor, were largely concerned with a coming Messiah, and as a result they played a significant role in some early Catholic liturgies. By the 16th Century, the 'Song of the Sibyl' was traditionally heard all over Europe on Christmas Eve, but its use was discredited by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the tradition now remains only in a few corners of the Iberian Peninsula.

The only complete setting of the twelve Sibylline prophecies in existence was composed by Orlandus Lassus (1532-94). His *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* has achieved notoriety through its intense and dark chromaticism (though it was the first major work of his career, composed in around 1555, it is among his most harmonically adventurous and startling) and through the fact that, with the discredit attributed to the prophecies at precisely the time of its composition there are no later Sibylline settings to compare it with. It is, certainly in terms of its text, and arguably its harmonic language too, a quite unique work.

In 2015, two Princeton professors - Dan Trueman and Dmitri Tymoczko - composed their own responses to Lassus' masterpiece. Trueman reimagined the Sibyl of Delphi as an Irish mystic, infusing his work with the flavors of Irish folk music and incorporating passages of Gaelic, whilst Tymoczko set a sequence of brand new 'Sibyls' dreamt up by the American poet Jeff Dolven, each belonging to a different American city.

DIALOGUES OF SORROW

Eight singers plus lute

After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland was eventually chosen to accede to the throne of England, whence he became James I. James had two sons: Henry and Charles. Henry had a reputation for temperance and for chivalry, and his patronage of artists, architects, and men of letters, promised a coming renaissance under Henry IX. Henry was also said to be willing to fight and die for his Protestant faith. Charles, in dreadful contrast, was a vacillating and feeble man, who lacked the courage or humility to forge working relationships with Parliament, and whose witless vanity was a significant catalyst for the twin tragedies of the Civil War and ensuing Commonwealth.

In the early spring of 1612, the 17-year-old Henry took an ill-judged dip in the River Thames and quickly succumbed to Typhoid Fever. His death prompted a quite unprecedented outpouring of national grief, represented in the composition of dozens of musical and poetic epitaphs, many of which refer analogously to the death of King David's son, Absalom. In total there were more than 40 pieces of vocal music that were definitely or probably written upon the death of the young prince, as well as dozens of eulogies and poems by Donne, Campion, Heywood, Peacham et al. This program presents some of the highlights from this body of work (including newly reconstructed madrigals by Thomas Ford and William Cranford), and illuminates a prince's life that was as mythologized as it was brief.

THE WORD UNSPOKEN

Five to seven singers

With the punishments inflicted on recusant Catholics during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First, it is not surprising that evidence for the religious preferences of her greatest composers can be vague or contradictory. Even the most famous 'Catholic' figure in English music, William Byrd, never did anything so brazen as to publicly declare his faith – though the texts he selected for his 1589 *Cantiones Sacrae* speak eloquently enough of his spiritual loneliness. The situation is further complicated firstly by the fact that many of these composers also wrote under Elizabeth's predecessors, including her Catholic half-sister Mary; and secondly by the fact that employees of the Chapel Royal (as Byrd, Tallis, Parsons and Sheppard were all privileged to be) were permitted to produce Latin motets even when a Protestant monarch sat on the throne.

This program presents some of the great music by five giants of the 16th music scene in England, in each case revealing the different musical personas which circumstances forced them adopt, and which were manifested in the setting of Latin (Catholic) and English (Protestant) texts. William Byrd, John Sheppard, Robert White, Robert Parsons, and the primordial figure in this musical pantheon, Thomas Tallis.

THE FEASTS OF CHRISTMAS

The Christmas story told in masterpieces of the English Renaissance

Six singers

This program charts the progression of events which began with Gabriel's miraculous Advent visit to a carpenter's house in Nazareth, through to the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple at Candlemas. Each staging post of the story (Advent, Nativity, Holy Innocents, Epiphany, and Candlemas) is set to music by one of the great masters of the English musical Renaissance, spanning a period from the composition of the Eton Choirbook (Walter Lambe) through to the dying embers of this Golden Age of English music, in the aftermath of Queen Elizabeth's death (George Kirbye), and the program is bookended, appropriately, by the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis.

The names of William Byrd and Thomas Tallis - the unquestionable giants of this epoch - are featured particularly heavily as one might expect; but this selection also reminds us of the great genius of others, especially Robert Parsons and John Sheppard, both of whom have suffered grievous harm to their legacy due to the loss or destruction of manuscripts, so that, in the case of Robert Parsons, only a handful of works have survived. The exquisitely crafted and poignant Ave Maria, now considered one of the greatest works in the history of choral music, gives a tantalizing glimpse of what this composer might have achieved had he lived beyond his thirties.

HYMNS, PSALMS & LAMENTATIONS (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD134)

This impressive debut disc by Gallicantus.

– Nick Kenyon, *Observer*

Gabriel Crouch's group sing with a rapture and clarity made to measure for the Tudor church music of Robert White... Impassioned, exciting music.

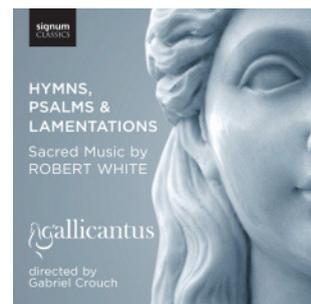
– Geoff Brown, *The Times*

What an outstanding disc...

– Ivan Moody, *Gramophone Magazine*

England is blessed with a multitude of fine early music ensembles, but this one immediately rises to the forefront with the best of them. I cannot recall having ever heard an ensemble of this sort sing with such perfect balance and clarity that I could clearly understand and distinguish the words of each vocal line.

– James A. Altena, *Fanfare Magazine*



THE WORD UNSPOKEN (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD 295)

The intensity of the music is reflected in Gallicantus's beautifully shaped performances.

– Stephen Pettitt, *The Sunday Times*

As a specialist early-music consort, Gallicantus are perfectly placed here to compare the works of William Byrd and Philippe de Monte.

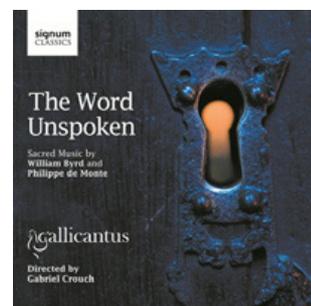
– *The Independent*

The ensemble's view is delivered with such intelligence and rhetorical persuasiveness that the cumulative weight of Byrd, in particular, is well-nigh symphonic in effect.

– Fabrice Fitch, *Gramophone*

The singing is beyond exemplary: deeply felt, tenderly phrased, perfectly balanced, with the most profound understanding, seemingly bred in the bone.

– *The Independent*



DIALOGUES OF SORROW (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD 210)

Editors Choice: This is a perfect selection...lovingly and movingly performed.

– *Early Music Today*

One of the year's best choral releases.

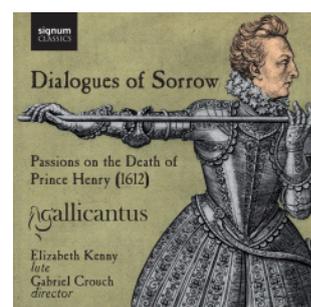
– *TheArtsDesk.com*

... this is a well-sung, intelligently produced and exhaustively researched project, which deserves great success.

– *International Record Review*

The music is first-rate and Gallicantus creates an affecting picture of a nation in mourning with singing of textural and verbal clarity, suppleness and poignancy.

– Geoffrey Norris, *The Times*



LASSUS: LAGRIME DI SAN PIETRO (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD 339)

Everything Gallicantus touches seems to turn to gold... this disc of Lassus's cycle of Petrine lamentation is stunning.

– Adrian Horsewood, *Early Music Today*

An involving experience... details are tellingly lingered over, repetitions properly emphasized and the score's illumination of an inner drama sensitively rendered.

– Fabrice Fitch, *Gramophone*

Recording of the Month: ... absolutely must be experienced.

– *MusicWeb International*

**QUEEN MARY'S BIG BELLY** (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD 464)

Gallicantus are singers of the highest order and... we should be grateful to them for creating a programme of such wonderful music and drawing it to our attention.

– *MusicWeb International*

The Litany in particular is beautifully sung, and is one of many moments which make this imaginative, informatively annotated programme worth investigating.

– *BBC Music Magazine*

Editor's Choice Award: Sumptuous music... performed with supreme artistry by vocal group Gallicantus. The singers nurse the lines with the greatest care, distinguishing the sections with subtle colours. Brilliant both musicologically and artistically.

– *Early Music Today*

An intriguing idea... radiantly sung, a story told with relish and great historical context musically and in the extensive notes.

– *Record Review*

**SIBYLLA** (SIGNUM CLASSICS, SIGCD 520)

The extraordinary Gallicantus sing with micrometrical precise articulation and flawless pitching.

– *Choir and Organ*

This CD is evidence of an intimate understanding of this challenging music and is as fine an account of the score as has been committed to CD to date.

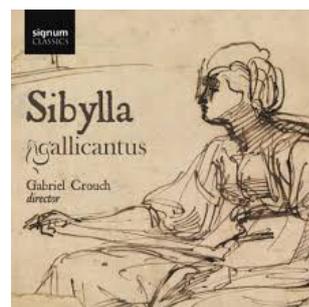
– *Early Music Review*

...this warrants a top recommendation...

– *Gramophone*

What a wonderful idea for a CD! As well as being wonderful singers, Gallicantus are fast establishing themselves as one of the smartest programmers in the classical music world... The six singers sing with such impeccable blend and euphonious unanimity that it left me marvelling at the organic beauty of the sound."

– *MusicWeb International*



For further information, please contact:

UK & REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Ériu Artist Management
aoife@eriu-artists.com

T. +44 7779 585825 | +353 1 903 6211

UNITED STATES

Christie Starrett
christie.choirs@gmail.com

T. +1 917 557 0001

GERMANY

Erika Esslinger Konzertagentur
eres@konzertagentur.de

T. +49 711 722 344 0