

Christ Church Upper Library

Tudor Partbooks & the Music Collection



**Tunc Po-
nulum cur-
teram mar-
nistra man-
nulum ip-
dexteræ m-
ponfatillas
singulis:**



12 May - 13 August 2016

Musice summis dominatur astris ;
Musice terra dominatur ima ;
Musice ponto dominatur alto ;
Cuncta pererrans .

Musice mentis medicina maestra ;
Musice multum minuit malorum ;
Musice magnis. medys. minutis ;
Maxima mittit .

<http://library.chch.ox.ac.uk/music/>



Tudor Partbooks and the Music Collection will be open from 12 May to 13 August 2016 in the Upper Library at Christ Church. The exhibition showcases the music-books used by singers in the age of Queen Elizabeth I, with special emphasis on partbooks.

This is the result of a successful collaboration with the Tudor Partbooks Project (Oxford University, Faculty of Music) and the Oxford Early Music Festival.

The exhibition is curated by Dr John Milsom and Dr Cristina Neagu.

Visiting hours:

Monday - Friday

10.00 am - 1.00 pm

2:00 pm - 4.30 pm

(provided there is a member of staff available in the Upper Library).



The new exhibition opened with a concert by *Magnificat*, featuring pieces from the Christ Church Music Collection. This is one of the world's premier vocal ensembles, internationally acclaimed for its performance of Renaissance choral masterpieces.

Concert programme

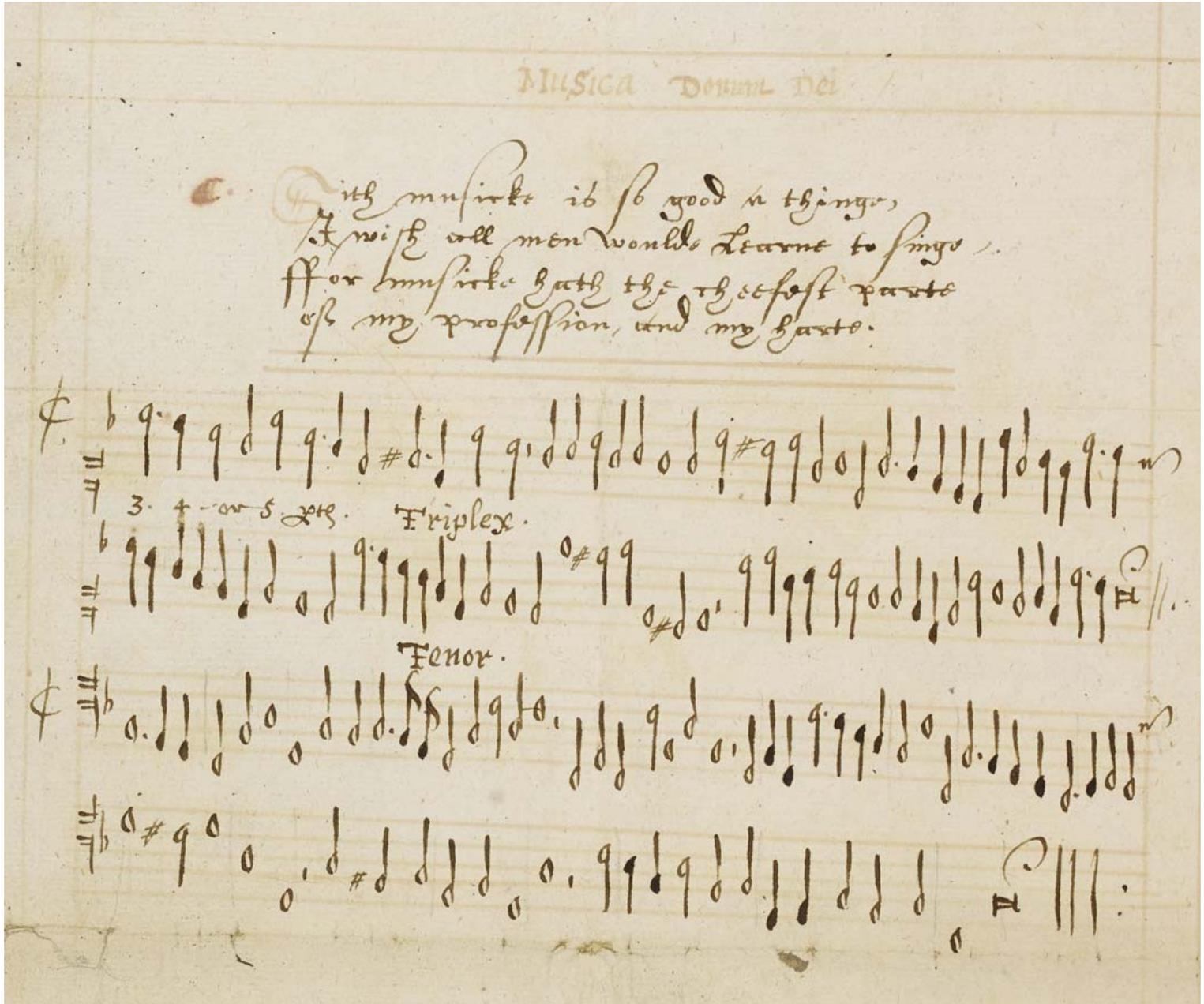
Robert White
Christe qui lux
Lamentations

William Byrd
Come to me grief
O that most rare breast

Thomas Tallis
Salvator mundi (II)
Salvator mundi (I)

The concert was followed by a talk by Dr John Milsom, leading Tudor music scholar, and a drinks reception in the Cathedral.

TUDOR PARTBOOKS AND THE MUSIC COLLECTION



Detail from Mus 864b

CHOIRBOOKS

1. CHOIRBOOK LAYOUT: A CLASSIC FOUR-VOICE MOTET

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, church choirs typically sang from large choirbooks, in which different areas of the double-page spread displayed the various voice-parts of a composition. This example shows the famous Ave Maria ... virgo serena by Josquin Desprez. Each of the motet's four voices is headed with a large capital A. Four or more singers stand in front of the book, each reading her or his own part. As choirbooks go, this is a small volume. Some choirbooks are four times its size, and had to be made from parchment or dense paper that could withstand repeated turning of the leaves. Choirbook size was determined partly by the size of the choir likely to read from it, partly by the number of voice-parts a composition contained. For instance, the celebrated Eton Choirbook, copied in England around 1500, had to be massive because it contains works in up to nine voice-parts, and might be read simultaneously by twenty singers or more. Choirbooks also needed special bindings, so that the volume will sit flat when placed on a lectern. In the sixteenth century, choirbooks were gradually superseded by sets of partbooks, in

which each singer is presented with only his or her own part; thus a four-voice motet would be distributed across four volumes, one for each singer. A set of partbooks becomes useless, however, if one of its volumes is damaged or lost. This may explain why some church choirs remained loyal to sturdy choirbooks, which more securely preserved a repertory.

Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon* (Basel, 1547)
Mus. 801

2. CHOIRBOOK LAYOUT: THE MUSIC GOES BACKWARDS

Western music notation evolved in parallel with the writing of Latin texts, and it therefore reads from left to right. When a Hebrew text is set to music, however, by necessity the notation too must proceed from right to left, as in this example. This is a four-voice setting of the cantillation for the reading of the Torah, laid out in choirbook format. In performance, four singers read from the volume, looking at the four discrete areas of the double-page spread, headed *Discantus*, *Altus*, *Tenor* and *Bassus*. The music is printed from woodblock – which is to say that the notation has been carved in relief on segments of a hardwood such as box, and the blocks then interspersed with metal type used for the Hebrew text. The earliest music printing was all done from woodblock. Only after 1500 was this technology gradually superseded by ones using metal type – as, for instance, in the other printed items displayed in this case. This particular book has been lightly annotated in manuscript, implying that it has been used by singers.

Johann Reuchlin, *De accentibus, et orthographia, linguae Hebraicae* (Hagenau, 1518)
ME.4.14

3. FOUR SINGERS, TWO VOLUMES

This is a rare example of a hybrid format falling mid-way between choirbook and partbook. Between them, these two volumes contain a four-voice composition; the upper volume has music on facing pages for the *Superius* and *Tenor*, while the lower one has parts for the *Contratenor* and *Bassus*. The piece shown here is a characteristically bawdy chanson by Clement Janequin, the words of which might pass muster for broadcast on Radio 3 in their original French, but not in an English translation. The book was printed in Paris by Pierre Attaingnant, who is usually credited with revolutionising the technology of printing music. Look carefully at the notes: each one of them sits on its own portion of five-line stave, separated by tiny gaps. Moveable type of this kind made it possible to typeset music in the same way that words were typeset from individually cast metal letters. The technology was pioneered in London, at John Rastell's printing house in the early 1520s, but it was Attaingnant who first fully exploited it.

Quintiesme livre contenant xix. chansons nouvelles a quatre parties de la facture et composition de maistre Clement Jennequin (Paris, 1540)
Mus. 515-16

4. MUSIC FOR SINGERS OR SILENT READERS?

Thomas Morley's manual *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke*, first published in 1597, was written to instruct novices in the rudiments of music notation and composition. The book is unusual in that sections of it are suited to silent reading, while others demand the presence of two or more singers. This double-page spread shows the difference. It starts with six-voice music notated in score, which is comprehensible to a silent reader. It then continues with three-voice music presented in choirbook format, which invites three musicians to sing its three separate voice-parts, *Cantus*, *Tenor* and *Bassus*. In the score, Morley quotes part of a madrigal by Alessandro Striggio in which each of the six voices simultaneously uses a different style of rhythmic notation, a playful conceit that speaks solely to the eyes of the reader, not to the ears of the audience. Choirbook notation is then used for the piece called 'Christès cross'. In this long composition, the *Cantus* repeatedly sings a tuneful alphabet song, accompanied by a textless *Tenor* and *Bassus* whose music gets dizzily complicated as the piece proceeds. (It continues overleaf; page-turns are co-ordinated for the three singers.) The text of the *Cantus* alphabet-song derives from schoolroom pedagogy, and would have been as familiar to Elizabethan readers as 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' is to us today.

Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (2nd edn, London, 1608)
Mus. 802

5. CHOIRBOOK LAYOUT: TRANSMITTING A SINGLE SHORT WORK

Many sixteenth-century compositions are short, and could therefore be compactly notated in a small amount of space. On those occasions when a single short piece needed to be copied separately – for instance, to serve as a gift, or to be sent to a recipient – then the scribe had two options: either to notate the entire composition on a single sheet, or to create a set of performing parts on separate sheets, one for each musician. The piece shown here uses the first of these layouts; its five voices are notated separately on the facing pages of a bifolium. This format ensures that the piece remains intact on a single sheet of paper, but it is not ideal for performers, since five singers would find it hard to read from it simultaneously. Perhaps it was hoped that the parts would be re-copied on five separate sheets, one for each singer or instrumentalist. (The work is textless, so it may have been meant to be played by viols.) As explained by the verses and image, this is a piece about the chiming of a clock. Its fourth voice, called ‘The dial’, uses repeated notes to sound the hours of 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, rising through the hexachord (C, D, E, F, G, A), then the hours of 1-6 descending through the hexachord (A-C). No composer’s name is given, and the piece survives nowhere else. A date around 1600 seems likely.

Mus. 864(b)

PARTBOOKS

6. JOHN BALDWIN’S PARTBOOKS: A UNIQUE COMPOSITION

We have the scribe John Baldwin to thank for saving many important Tudor compositions from oblivion. Without the copies he made in his partbooks, many dozens of pieces would have been partly or wholly lost. Here for instance is his copy of John Sheppard’s six-voice *Media vita* (treble voice), a work that some would judge to be the supreme expression of this composer’s distinctive soaring style. (The piece has been recorded by The Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen, among others.) Without Baldwin’s copy, this composition would have disappeared without trace – as indeed would many of Sheppard’s other works, together with music by Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, and many of their contemporaries. Some of these pieces, including *Media vita*, had been composed in the mid 1550s for use in the Catholic liturgy, which fell out of use at the Reformation; so why did Baldwin make copies of them three decades later? Possibly he cherished this music and understood its increasing rarity. Possibly he looked ahead to a time when England might return to the Catholic faith. Sadly, Baldwin’s copies are now defective: the Tenor partbook of his six-volume set went astray in the seventeenth century, and now only five partbooks survive. However, the missing Tenors of some of these unique pieces quote traditional plainchant melodies, which can be recovered from liturgical books such as antiphoners or hymnals. This is the case with *Media vita*; its missing Tenor was chant-based, so it can be restored with reasonable confidence.

John Sheppard, *Media vita in morte sumus a6* (treble part)

Mus. 979-83, no. 118

A facsimile of Baldwin’s partbooks is in preparation for publication probably in 2018.

7. ROBERT DOW’S PARTBOOKS

No other manuscripts in the Christ Church music collection are finer than the set of five partbooks copied by Robert Dow (Mus. 984-8). Two of them are shown on the right; Dow’s other partbooks are displayed elsewhere in cases 2 and 3. An inscription in the lower book supplies the date of 1581, which presumably marks the year when Dow started work on the set; the partbooks were fairly well filled but clearly not complete when he died seven years later, aged 35. Dow was a lawyer by profession, and a fellow of All Souls College, so his partbooks are in effect the product of his leisure time, and they combine his love of music with his interest in calligraphy. Dow’s first act when creating the books was to purchase 120 large sheets of paper, each of which was printed on each side with four blocks of five red staves. (Almost certainly he bought these sheets from the London printer Thomas Vautrollier working under licence from Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, who held exclusive rights in England to produce and market printed music paper.) Dow folded each sheet into four, gathered the resulting quires into five unbound piles, and started to copy the musical works, which he assembled in discrete layers. The first and largest layer is devoted to motets, starting with Robert White’s five-voice *Lamentations* (lower partbook on the right). For these Latin-texted works, Dow wrote out the words in an elegant italic script, always copying the words first, then adding the music above. His second layer contains English anthems, the words of which are written in secretary script; see the upper

partbook on the right, which shows Byrd's setting of a prayer to the queen, O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth. Dow's last layers contain music for viols, including consort songs for voices and viols. Overall, Dow's most favoured composer is William Byrd, with Robert White coming a close second. Some important Tudor composers are poorly represented. For instance, Dow included almost nothing by John Sheppard. Possibly he disliked Sheppard's music; possibly he simply did not have access to copies of it.

Lower: Robert White, Lamentations a5 (Meane part)

Upper: William Byrd, O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth (Bass part)

Mus. 984-8, nos. 1 and 58

A facsimile of Robert Dow's partbooks (Mus. 984-8) was published in 2010.



Mus 984-988

8. TWO COPIES OF ROBERT WHITE'S LAMENTATIONS

Until the 1590s, music in England circulated largely in manuscript, rather than in printed copies. There are various reasons for this. The small size of the market probably discouraged printing; some composers may have wanted to control the availability of their works; and some collectors preferred to make personal selections of the pieces they liked or needed. As a result, much Tudor polyphony survives only in handwritten copies that vary in the level of their accuracy and authority. The two most important partbooks sets at Christ Church, copied by John Baldwin and Robert Dow respectively, are generally reckoned to be reliable sources of the pieces they contain, but both scribes were inclined to edit the music as they copied it, and Dow in particular often had strong views about how he felt the words should fit with the melodic lines. In the two partbooks on the left, Baldwin and Dow have each made a copy of the Meane part of Robert White's five-voice Lamentations, starting with the Hebrew letter 'Heth'. Baldwin's copy (near left, written on black staves) is probably the earlier of the two, and is likely also to be the more reliable; but the Tenor partbook from Baldwin's set is now lost, so his copy is incomplete. Dow's copy (far left, written on red staves) is intact, but may have been edited by Dow to reflect his views about how the words should be declaimed. Various other copies of White's Lamentations survive. Each one is slightly different.

Robert White, Lamentations a5 (Meane part)

Left: Mus. 984-8, no. 1 (Dow)

Right: Mus. 979-83, no. 33 (Baldwin)

A facsimile of Robert Dow's partbooks (Mus. 984-8) was published in 2010. A facsimile of John Baldwin's partbooks (Mus. 979-83) is in preparation for publication probably in 2018.

9. A CHRIST CHURCH LINK

The makers of the partbooks displayed in this case, John Baldwin or Robert Dow, both liked to include biographical details of the composers whose music they copied. In the partbook displayed here, from Baldwin's set, we find a comment that relates directly to Christ Church. When the college came into existence in the 1520s, it was initially known as Cardinal College in acknowledgement of its founder and main benefactor, Thomas Wolsey. A splendid choir was assembled to sing chapel services, and the distinguished composer John Taverner was appointed to serve as director of music. By the end of the decade, however, Wolsey had fallen from grace, the choir was disbanded, and Taverner moved to Boston in Lincolnshire, where he spent the rest of his life and was buried. Much of this information is recorded in Baldwin's annotation, which he added at the end of Taverner's antiphon *Gaude plurimum*, and before another Taverner piece, *Ave dei patris filia*. It is not known whether either of these two pieces was actually composed at Cardinal College, but they could well have formed part of the choir's repertory. As it happens, a set of partbooks used at Cardinal College in the 1520s does survive, but it is no longer at Christ Church. These are the so-called 'Forrest-Heather' partbooks, which (much to Christ Church's chagrin) are now held over the road in the Bodleian Library.

John Taverner, end of *Gaude plurimum* a5 and start of *Ave dei patris filia* a5 (bass parts)

Mus. 979-83, nos. 48-9

A facsimile of Baldwin's partbooks is in preparation for publication probably in 2018.

10. JOHN BALDWIN MAKES TWO COPIES OF THE SAME MOTET

The two partbooks on the right were both copied by John Baldwin, a lay clerk who was also a professional scribe, specialising in making fine music manuscripts. Here, Baldwin has made two visually different copies of the same motet, Robert Parsons's five-voice *O bone Jesu*. The lower version, which is copied in Baldwin's personal partbooks (Mus. 979-83), was made for his own use, and is written in his informal hand. It was probably copied out fairly quickly, but is nonetheless careful, fluent, accurate, and commendably consistent in appearance. The upper copy, written on red printed staves, shows Baldwin's more formal hand. Its larger lozenge-shaped notes would have been more laborious to copy, requiring frequent lifting and tilting of the pen, and greater precision of spacing. Notwithstanding their different appearances, the two copies are textually very similar to one another, and it is even possible that the upper one was copied from the lower. The version written on red staves occurs in the set of partbooks created and principally copied by the Oxford don Robert Dow (Mus. 984-8). There is no evidence that Baldwin and Dow knew one another, so how has this happened? The most likely explanation is that, on Dow's death in 1588, his partbooks passed to his friend Giles Tomson, who in 1603 was appointed Dean of Windsor. (The books have the initials 'G.T.' stamped on their covers.) Baldwin was a lay clerk at St George's Chapel, Windsor, so Tomson may have commissioned Baldwin to copy extra music on pages that Dow had not filled before he died.

Robert Parsons, *O bone Jesu* a5 (second Meane part)

Lower: Mus. 979-83, no. 54 (John Baldwin's partbooks)

Upper: Mus. 984-8, no. 53 (Robert Dow's partbooks)

A facsimile of Robert Dow's partbooks (Mus. 984-8) was published in 2010. A facsimile of John Baldwin's partbooks (Mus. 979-83) is in preparation for publication probably in 2018.

11. SCRIBAL LAYERS IN JOHN BALDWIN'S PARTBOOKS

The partbook on the lower left is one of a set of six copied in the last quarter of the sixteenth century by the Windsor-based scribe John Baldwin (Mus. 979-83). The other four surviving partbooks from this set are displayed elsewhere in cases 2 and 3; Baldwin's Tenor partbook was lost in the seventeenth century. At first sight these partbooks look remarkably consistent from start to end. Baldwin's style of copying never changes significantly, and the musical contents follow on from one another without gaps. On closer inspection, however, the books were clearly created in different layers at different times, and only at a late stage did Baldwin join these layers together, not always in the order of copying. One of his joins can be seen in the partbook on the lower left. Look closely at how the letter 'e' has

been written in minuscule (lower-case). Baldwin's 'e' on the right-hand page adopts various forms of secretary script, but on the left-hand page his minuscule 'e' is always italic. At some stage, Baldwin permanently adopted italic 'e' when writing Latin texts, so the left-hand page must be later than the right-hand one, notwithstanding the fact that the music runs on perfectly from one page to the next. How has this happened? Just visible in the book's gutter between the pages is the stub of an excised leaf. Presumably when joining the layers together, Baldwin needed to achieve a seamless transition, so he cut out the first page of this motet, and recopied its music on a new facing page. It is not known how many years Baldwin spent making these partbooks, but the earliest layers could date from the mid 1570s or earlier, and the last addition is dated 1600, so the books probably represent more than two decades of collecting, copying and assembling.

Robert Parsons, *O bone Jesu a5* (second meane part)

Mus. 979-83, no. 54

A facsimile of Baldwin's partbooks is in preparation for publication probably in 2018.

Christ Church holds three copies of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*, at the following call-numbers: Mus. 962-7(6), Mus. 968-73(7) and Mus. 979-83

12. A CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

In 1575, the London printer Thomas Vautrollier issued a set of six partbooks containing motets by Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. It bears the title *Cantiones ... sacrae* ('sacred songs'), and is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth. This book is a landmark in many senses. Before it, little music had been printed in England (and none more elegantly); after it, no further music was printed for more than a decade. The book's musical contents are preceded by texts that sing the praises of English music (and the queen), and they explicitly state that the book was meant to impress the eyes and ears of foreigners. This last point calls for amplification. In the sixteenth century, the English language was barely spoken beyond Britain's shores, so continental Europe had no access to the wealth of English literature. A collection of superb Latin-texted motets, however, could be admired by any educated European, and in that sense it might serve as a cultural ambassador, in a way that the poetry of Sir Philip Sidney or (later) the plays of Shakespeare could not. Christ Church holds three copies of the 1575 *Cantiones ... sacrae*, including one originally owned by John Baldwin, who bound it at the end of his manuscript partbooks. The upper volume displayed on the left is a partbook from Baldwin's set, in which a manuscript copy of one of his own compositions (*Cuckoo, as I me walked*) is followed by the printed Contratenor titlepage of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*. The lower partbooks shows Latin verses by Ferdinand Richardson praising Tallis and Byrd, followed by the first motet in the collection, Tallis's *Salvator mundi* [I].

John Baldwin's partbooks: Mus. 979-83

Other copies of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*: Mus. 962-7(6) and Mus. 968-73(7)

13. A FINANCIAL DEAL FOR TALLIS AND BYRD

In Elizabethan England, some printers were given exclusive rights to publish and sell specific titles or kinds of book. In 1575, Queen Elizabeth awarded one of these monopolies to the composers Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. The text of this royal patent is displayed on the right. In summary, it gave them three privileges: first, sole rights to print and publish music in England; second, to print and sell sheets of paper with printed staves, ready for making music manuscripts; and third, to import foreign music for sale in England. Almost certainly the financial gains to be had from these three clauses were the reverse of the order in which they appear. Good profits could be made from importing and selling foreign music; the printed music paper was also profitable; but publishing music in England was a risky financial venture, and Tallis and Byrd made little use of this clause. They did, however, launch the enterprise in spectacular fashion, by publishing a collection of their own motets in a book called *Cantiones ... sacrae* ('sacred songs'). Dedicated to the queen, it was expressly meant to impress foreign ears and eyes, and therefore to serve as a cultural ambassador. Possibly it was created as a *quid pro quo* for the royal patent, which is printed at the end of the book.

Also displayed above is a sample of the printed music paper sold under the 1575 licence. These particular leaves form part of Robert Dow's manuscript partbooks, in which the staves are unusually printed in red. John Baldwin's manuscript partbooks also have printed staves throughout, but this time in black. Research is currently in progress on the distinctive kinks that can be seen in these staves. The brass rules used to print them were damaged over time, and the kinks therefore yield important information about chronology, especially in Baldwin's partbooks. Baldwin acquired his paper in batches, and each batch has a different configuration of staves with telling kinks.

Christ Church holds three copies of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*, at the following call-numbers: Mus. 962-7(6), Mus. 968-73(7) and Mus. 979-83

14. FUN AND GAMES WITH CANONS

In their 1575 anthology of motets called *Cantiones ... sacrae* ('sacred songs'), Thomas Tallis and William Byrd set out to impress foreign eyes and ears with the glories of Tudor music. In the two pieces displayed here, they not only show off their skills, but also play games with music notation. The upper motet, Byrd's *Diliges Dominum*, is for eight singers, but is notated in only four melodic lines. Two singers read from each line, one reading the music forwards, the other backwards – which means that the piece is a perfect palindrome. By necessity, the words for the backwards-reading singer had to be printed upside down, even though its music is read as seen. Cleverer still is the last motet in the book, the seven-voice *Miserere nostri* (lower partbook), which conceals truly spectacular complexity beneath its serene sound. The partbook displayed here explains part of the game – but it also raises a question. Preceding the music is a 'canon' (instruction) explaining that four singers must sing this melodic line simultaneously, all starting on the same note and at the same time. The first sings the music exactly as written. The second doubles the note-values and inverts the intervals, so that the melody is both stretched and turned upside down. The third quadruples the notes and re-inverts the intervals. The fourth octuples the notes and inverts. This delightful conceit, which is impossible for the listener to follow, cannot have been easy to compose. Notice however, that this extraordinarily clever music is attributed to William Byrd, whereas in the other partbooks *Miserere nostri* is attributed to Thomas Tallis. Is this a mistake? Careful scrutiny of the *Cantiones ... sacrae* suggests otherwise, for it contains very few errors, and none would be greater than this one. The most likely explanation is that Byrd and Tallis collaborated over writing this motet, Byrd composing the four-voice canon, Tallis then adding a superstructure of two sopranos (who sing another canon), plus a free seventh voice to plug some gaps.

In the two volumes displayed here, the copy of the 1575 *Cantiones ... sacrae* has been bound with various sets of motets by Orlande de Lassus and other continental composers, in editions printed in France and Germany. As explained elsewhere in this case (item 13), Tallis and Byrd held exclusive rights to import foreign printed music into England, so these volumes exemplify what they brought in, and what their English clients could buy. They serve to remind us that, in Elizabethan England, singers enjoyed not only works by their fellow countrymen, but also an international repertory available to them in print.

Christ Church holds three copies of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*; the ones displayed here come from Mus. 962-7(6) and Mus. 968-73(7)

15. HANDSOME AND WELL MADE BOOKS

Some of the books in which Tudor music survives are finely made objects in their own right. In the two displayed here, one printed, the other manuscript, we can view the care that might go into transmitting a single work; see the right-hand pages, both of which show the Tenor of Tallis's *Salvator mundi* [II]. The printed version (lower) comes from the 1575 anthology of motets called *Cantiones ... sacrae* ('sacred songs'), which is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, and in which Thomas Tallis and William Byrd set out to impress foreign eyes and ears with the splendours of Tudor music. Much care has gone into its design and appearance. Its printer, the London-based Thomas Vautrollier, acquired his type from one of Europe's leading type-cutters, Pierre Haultin of La Rochelle. (Both men were Huguenots.) Vautrollier's typesetters worked with great care to achieve not only elegance of appearance but also maximum accuracy, and the press was often stopped to correct minor errors. Compare their outcome with the manuscript copy made by Robert Dow in his partbooks of 1581-8 (upper volume). A lawyer by profession, Dow was trained in calligraphy, and his partbooks demonstrate his skills. For the Latin words he used an elegant italic script, rather than the secretary hand more commonly used in Elizabethan handwriting. Note in particular how he enjoys varying the word 'noster'. Above the words he then added the music notation, clearly aiming to achieve maximum consistency of note-shapes. Erasures are few, mistakes even rarer, and almost no pages were excised, so clearly Dow worked with exceptional care and attention to detail. On the left-hand page, he uses space at the end of Tallis's *O sacrum convivium* to add information about its composer, in verses he may have composed himself. They are not entirely easy to construe, but could be translated as follows:

This Tallis lived in fame under four monarchs,
An old man worthy of his great honour.
If ever a musician had to be accounted outstanding,
Tallis was always their chief glory

Robert Dow's partbooks: Mus. 984-8

Christ Church holds three copies of the *Cantiones ... sacrae*, at the following call-numbers: Mus. 962-7(6), Mus. 968-73(7) and Mus. 979-83

16. MUSIC FINELY BOUND FOR ITS DEDICATEE

From the 1590s to around 1620, there was something of a craze in England for printed books of madrigals, all of which bear dedications to specific patrons, both women and men. Displayed here is a handsome five-partbooks set containing Orlando Gibbons's *The first set of madrigals and mottets of 5 parts: apt for viols and voyces* (London, 1612). This set has been finely bound for (or perhaps by) the book's dedicatee, Sir Christopher Hatton II. The upper and lower covers are tooled with gilt panels showing the Hatton crest, a hind statant upon a torse, and are probably the work of John Bateman, bookbinder to King James I; the corner-pieces have been identified as tools from his shop. Stubs of blue ribbon ties remain at the fore-edges. Most unusually, the pages of the contents have been minimally trimmed, and indeed may have been printed on larger sheets than normal, in order to increase the size of the finished book. The opened partbook shows the Cantus (soprano) part of Gibbons's most famous song, *The silver swan*.

Orlando Gibbons, *The first set of madrigals and mottets of 5 parts: apt for viols and voyces* (London, 1612) Mus. 708-12; Christ Church holds a second copy of this publication at Mus. 449-54(8)

TABLEBOOKS

17. TABLEBOOK LAYOUT: MUSIC FOR BEGINNERS?

This is one of the most curious music manuscripts at Christ Church. Copied in England in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, it is laid out in tablebook format, which requires the singers to sit around the opened volume, reading from two, three or four different directions. Almost all the music in this book consists of short extracts from large-scale Latin-texted compositions, by John Taverner, Christopher Tye, Thomas Tallis and others. Here, for instance, the scribe has copied only the 'O vos omnes' section of Robert White's five-voice *Lamentations*; the rest of the work is missing. Possibly these bleeding chunks were used as exercises for inexperienced singers or children; certainly the compact size of the book points to intimacy, since the singers must sit close together. Five singers are needed for this extract, two of whom read one line in canon (headed '2 in one'; this is equivalent to two people singing 'Three blind mice', but starting on different pitches as well as at different times). Tablebooks resemble choirbooks in the sense that a single volume contains all the music needed by the performers. The format is not confined to books: a number of small square-topped tables from Renaissance Germany have music carved into their surfaces, inviting musicians to sit round and sing, and there is at least one example of music being printed on linen in tablebook layout, presumably to be used as a tablecloth.

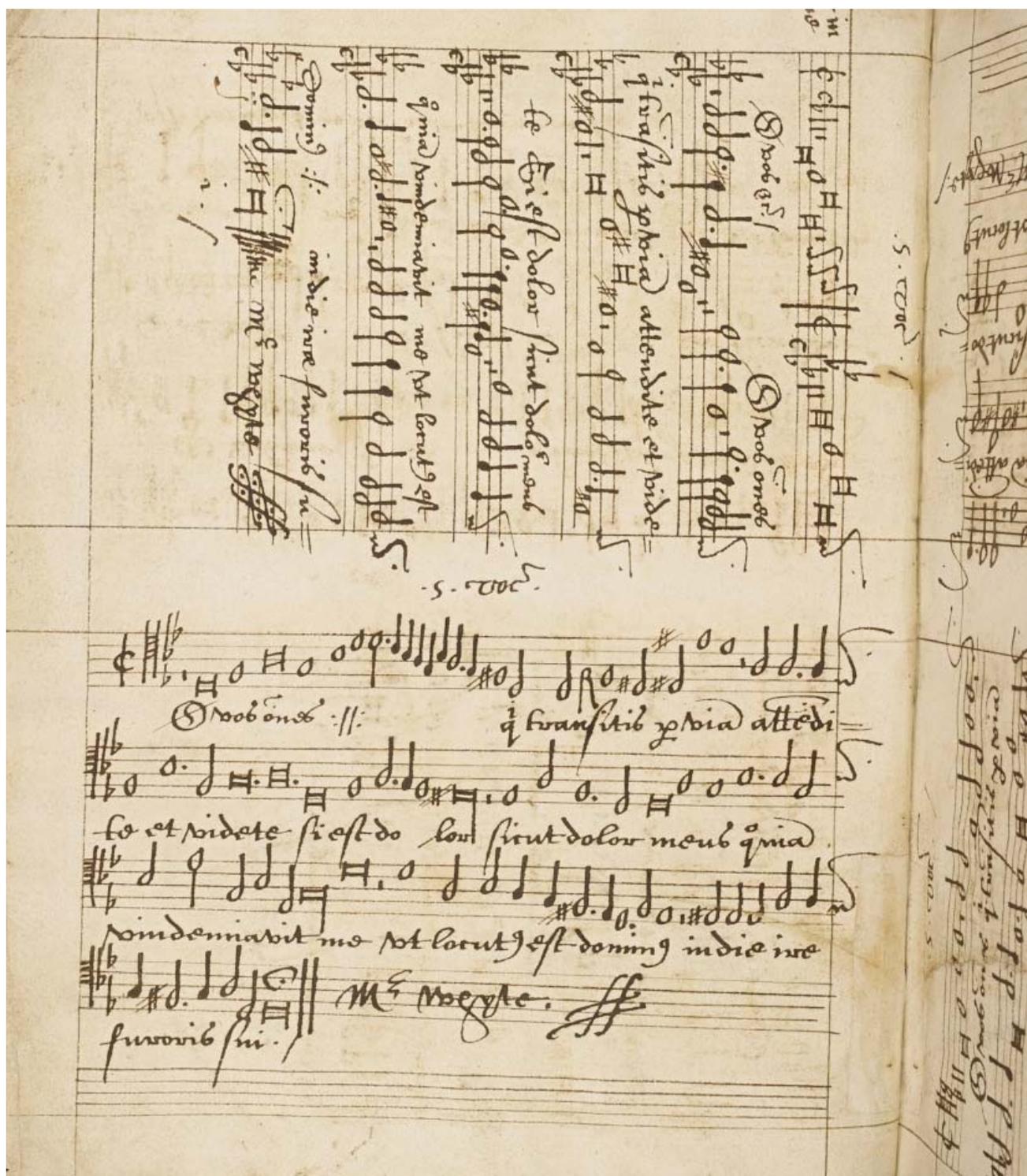
Robert White, *Lamentations* a5, extract.
MUS. 45

18. TABLEBOOK LAYOUT: MULTIPLE PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

Nowadays we usually hear John Dowland's songs performed by a single voice accompanied by a lute. As originally published, however, these songs were open to various kinds of interpretation. The piece shown here can be sung by a solo singer with lute accompaniment, perhaps with a viol playing the Bassus part; or it can be sung by four singers, with or without lute and/or bass viol; or it can be played by four viols or even recorders, with or without lute accompaniment. Thus the music is adaptable to whatever performing resources come to hand. Works of this kind were typically printed in tablebook format: the performers cluster round a single volume, reading from different areas of the double-page spread. The generous size of the volume, and indeed of the notation, is adequate for four or five musicians, but a larger ensemble would need to use more than one copy of the printed book. Note that the main vocal line is aligned with the lute part; this allows the lutenist to sing to her or his own accompaniment. The lute reads from tablature, which uses letters to show where the fingers fall on the instrument's six strings, with rhythmic symbols placed above. Lutes were fashionable in Tudor England, and many educated men and women learnt to play them.

Queen Elizabeth is depicted playing the lute in a famous portrait miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, now in the collections at Berkeley Castle, Glos..

John Dowland, The first booke of songs or ayres of foure parts, with tableture for the lute (2nd edn; London, 1613)
Mus. 834



Detail of layout from Mus 45

19. MUSIC NOTATION 'GONE ALMOST QUITE OUT OF MEMORY'

In his manual *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke*, first published in 1597, Thomas Morley largely addresses issues of music theory and notation that were directly relevant to novice musicians in the 1590s. Towards the book's end, however, Morley touches on issues from the past – including, on this double-page spread, the use and meaning of red notation. This four-voice motet shows how music was typically notated a century earlier, for instance in the famous Eton Choirbook of around 1500. The base notation is 'full black', which means that minims, semibreves and breves are shown in solid black, not with the void note-heads of modern notation. Red has two uses; red notes with stems are crotchets, whereas longer notes in red signify 'coloration', whereby a note is robbed of a

third of its value. Thus a black breve is worth three semibreves, but a red breve has the value of only two semibreves. A variant of tablebook layout is used here: two singers read from one side of the opened volume, the other two from the facing side. These pages were printed by double impression, which means that the sheet had to pass through the press twice, first to print the notes in red, then to print the black content.

Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (2nd edn, London, 1608)
Mus. 803

20. A WEARY AUTHOR SIGNS OFF – AND THEN RESUMES ...

Thomas Morley's manual *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke*, first published in 1597, attempts to explain the rudiments of music notation and composition to beginners. Morley had originally planned to end his book with the three-voice canzonet *O sleep, fond fancy*, which occupies the left-hand page of the double-page spread shown here. Its music is laid out in tablebook format: three singers, Cantus, Altus and Bassus, read from three different sides of the opened book. Having worked long and hard on devising and writing this treatise, Morley signs off in this song by setting words that express his weariness: 'Thy Master's head hath need of sleep and resting'. Evidently Morley then circulated his book among friends, possibly in printed form up to this page. Evidently a host of comments and criticisms came back to him, for Morley then wrote various supplementary 'Annotations' to his textbook. They were separately printed, starting with the right-hand page. In these Annotations, Morley tackles subjects he had evaded in the main body of his book – starting with a vain attempt to define the word 'Music' itself.

Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (2nd edn, London, 1608)
Mus. 804

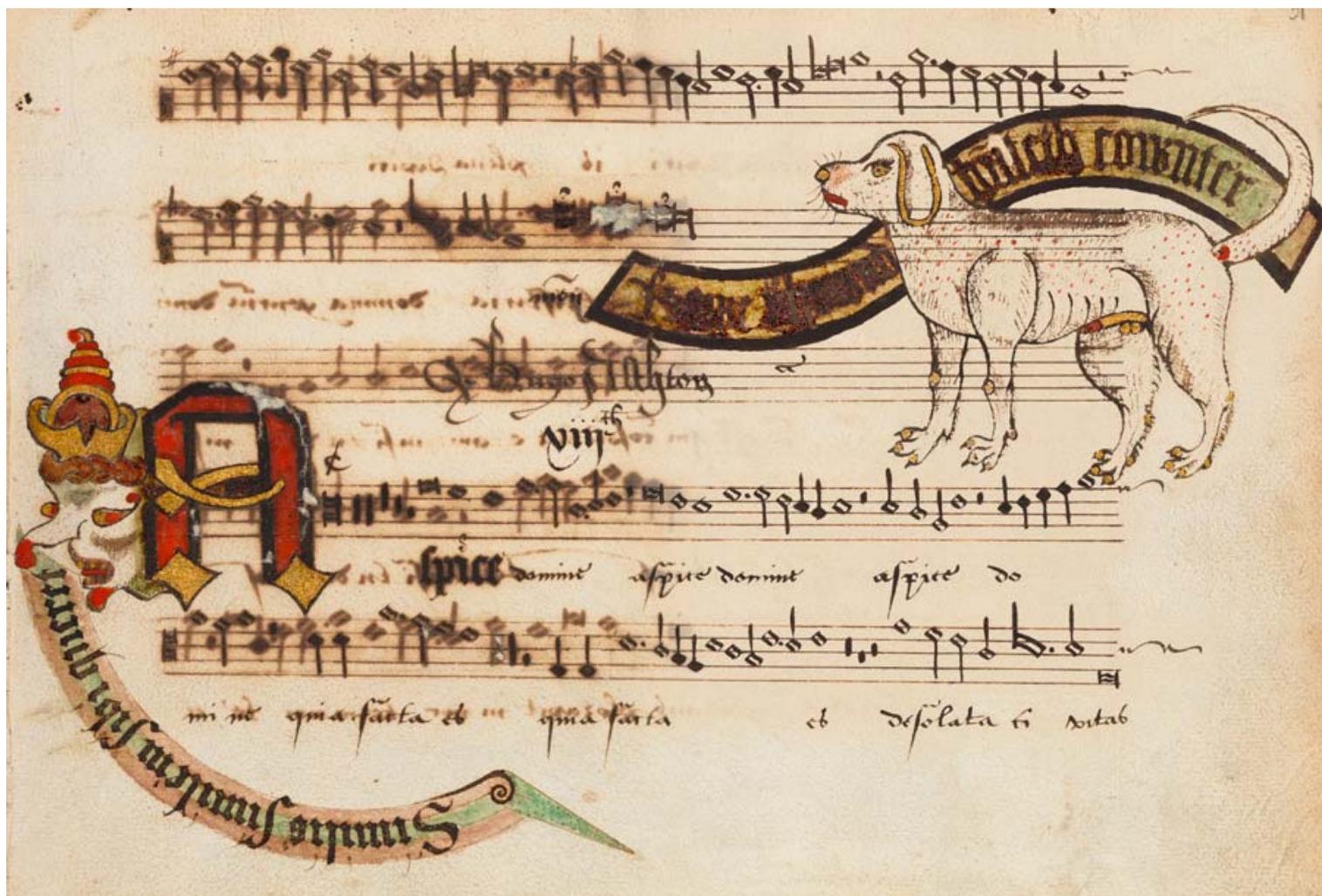
21. AN EARLY PRINTED SCORE: MONTEVERDI'S OPERA ORFEO

Christ Church is lucky to own a rare second edition of Claudio Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo*, printed in Venice by Ricciardo Amadino in 1615. The pages on display show part of the celebrated monody 'Possente spirto', in which Orfeo sings to the accompaniment of two cornetts, plus a continuo bass intended for organ and bass lute. Score layout is used here, allowing the reader to view the overall music effect; for an actual performance, a set of manuscript parts would be copied from the score for the players to use. Orfeo's singing part is given in two forms, first in a simplified version that can be sung plain or ornamented, then in an ornate version devised by Monteverdi himself. Performers today always use this second version.

Also on display are the two cornetts bought by Christ Church for the visit of king James I on 27 August 1605. Monteverdi's *Orfeo* was premiered in 1607, so these instruments are exactly contemporary; and they may even have been made in Italy. Cornetts could be used as solo instruments, but they also combined well with a choir, and this is apparently why they were acquired by Christ Church. According to a contemporary report, 'The King and Queen heard excellent voices mixed with instruments at a service in the cathedral'. The cornetts are made from wood covered probably with thin leather, and are still in perfect playing condition. They cost the college £2 13s.

Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo: favola in musica* (2nd edition; Venice, 1615)
Mus. 795(1)

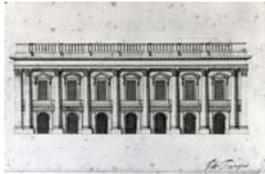
THE TUDOR PARTBOOKS PROJECT



The Tudor Partbooks project is a three-year collaboration between the Universities of Oxford and Newcastle, funded by the AHRC, that will digitize all the extant English manuscripts of Tudor polyphonic music from c.1510–90 preserved in partbook format. Moreover there are two reconstructive projects: one to reconstruct the missing tenor parts from incomplete set of John Baldwin (now at Christ Church), and the other to digitally restore the complete but poorly preserved partbooks of John Sadler (now in the Bodleian library).

The project posters on display provide some examples of the range of partbooks the project is digitizing and researching, as well as an introduction to how we are digitally reconstructing the partbooks of John Sadler. Sadler copied his partbooks during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, but used an ink that was too acidic and has therefore burned through the pages over the centuries. This has left the books nearly illegible in many places and so fragile that they have been withdrawn from public view. The Bodleian library have taken high quality images of the partbooks (now available at www.diamm.ac.uk) and we're using tools from Adobe Photoshop to digitally remove the effects of the acidic ink and return the manuscripts to easy readability. The results will be published online and in a printed facsimile to be used by performers, scholars and music lovers around the world. We have a team of c.40 volunteers assisting with the reconstruction and if you fancy having a go visit www.tudorpartbooks.ac.uk/getinvolved to find out more.

DIAMM Publications facsimiles, the Dow Partbooks and the Byrd Masses for 3, 4 and 5 voices will be available to buy.



**Christ Church Library
Oxford OX1 1DP
01865 276165**