



CHACONNE

Thomas Tomkins  
*When David Heard*  
SACRED CHORAL WORKS

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge  
Andrew Nethsingha

CHANDOS early music



Ben Wright

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge,  
with its Director of Music, Andrew Nethsingha

**Thomas Tomkins** (1572 – 1656)

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| <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">1</div> | <p><b>When David heard that Absalom was slain</b> 5:28<br/>Full anthem for five-part choir</p>  |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">2</div> | <p><b>Almighty God, which hast knit together</b> 5:09<br/>Verse anthem for eight-part choir and organ<br/>Alec D'Oyly treble<br/>Robert Murray John treble<br/>Hamish McLaren counter-tenor<br/>Thomas Blackie counter-tenor<br/>John Clapham tenor<br/>Kieran Brunt tenor<br/>Xavier Hetherington tenor<br/>Geoffrey Clapham bass<br/>Jonathan Hyde bass</p> |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;">3</div> | <p><b>Magnificat</b> 5:40<br/>for five-part choir and organ<br/>from the Sixth Service<br/>Alec D'Oyly treble<br/>Oliver Brown treble<br/>Hamish McLaren counter-tenor<br/>Thomas Blackie counter-tenor</p>   |

<b>4</b>	<b>Nunc dimittis</b> for five-part choir and organ from the Sixth Service Alec D'Oyly treble Oliver Brown treble Alexander Simpson counter-tenor Hamish McLaren counter-tenor	<b>2:49</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom</b> Full anthem for five-part choir	<b>7:14</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>A Sad Pavan for these distracted times</b>	<b>3:30</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>My shepherd is the living Lord</b> Verse anthem for four-part choir and organ Thomas Blackie counter-tenor Samuel Oladeinde tenor	<b>3:51</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Behold, I bring you glad tidings</b> Verse anthem for ten-part choir and organ	<b>3:39</b>

<b>9</b>	<b>Voluntary in A minor</b>	<b>3:32</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Jubilate</b> for ten-part choir with organ from the Third ('Great') Service <b>Alexander Simpson</b> counter-tenor <b>Hamish McLaren</b> counter-tenor <b>Oliver El-Holiby</b> counter-tenor <b>Thomas Blackie</b> counter-tenor <b>Guy Edmund-Jones</b> tenor <b>Kieran Brunt</b> tenor <b>Samuel Oladeinde</b> tenor <b>Xavier Hetherington</b> tenor <b>Augustus Perkins Ray</b> bass <b>Geoffrey Clapham</b> bass <b>John Holland-Avery</b> bass <b>Jonathan Hyde</b> bass	<b>7:09</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Clarifica me Pater</b>	<b>2:25</b>

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### Te Deum

for ten-part choir with organ  
from the Third ('Great') Service

Alexander Simpson counter-tenor

Hamish McLaren counter-tenor

Oliver El-Holiby counter-tenor

Thomas Blackie counter-tenor

Guy Edmund-Jones tenor

Kieran Brunt tenor

Samuel Oladeinde tenor

Xavier Hetherington tenor

Augustus Perkins Ray bass

Geoffrey Clapham bass

John Holland-Avery bass

Jonathan Hyde bass

11:45

TT 62:21

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

Freddie James organ

Andrew Nethsingha



Andrew Nethsingha



## Thomas Tomkins: Sacred Choral Works

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The modern revival of interest in the music of Thomas Tomkins (1572 – 1656) began less than a century ago. First came the 1928 publication of Tomkins's English Service music in the *Tudor Church Music* series; the complete edition of the keyboard music and Denis Stevens's biography of Tomkins appeared in the 1950s; and Bernard Rose's edition of the ninety-four anthems in the posthumous publication *Musica Deo Sacra* ('Music to the service of God') was drip-fed from the early 1960s to the early 1990s in a series of six volumes. More recently, Tomkins has been the subject of renewed enthusiasm with the publication in 2005 of Anthony Boden's *Thomas Tomkins: the last Elizabethan*.

### **Behold, I bring you glad tidings**

Tomkins excelled in the genre of the verse anthem, and three of his finest are presented on this recording. *Behold, I bring you glad tidings* shows both the sophistication and directness of musical expression that were typical of the early seventeenth century – characteristics that Tomkins was able to

display more convincingly than any of his contemporaries. The glad tidings of Christ's birth are sung by the trebles alone, in the reserved manner appropriate to church delivery, while behind them the organ frolics away (especially at the word 'joy') with secular abandon. The angel throng then sings 'Glory be to God in the highest' in messily ebullient ten-part polyphony: these angels are in party mode. The arrival of 'peace on earth' is presented in reverential homophony before 'good will' sets up a repeated plagal ostinato to bring this seasonal anthem to a reassuring close.

### **My shepherd is the living Lord**

*My shepherd is the living Lord* sets the mid-sixteenth century metrical version of the 23rd Psalm ('The Lord is my shepherd') and is cast in calming pastoral tones. First a solo counter-tenor and then a tenor and counter-tenor duet are answered by measured four-part choir.

### **Almighty God, which hast knit together**

*Almighty God, which hast knit together* is a setting of the Collect for All Saints' Day,



which achieves its effect with characteristic effortlessness on Tomkins's part. Solo voices appear one after the other, inexorably leading to choral conjunction in order to show the knitting together of the chosen ones 'in one communion and fellowship'. Thereafter, the 'unspeakable joys' are just that – musical syncopations that paint the idea of joy much more economically and effectively than a thousand words could. The choir's final 'Amen' is similarly effective. You can say the word 'Amen' as many times as you like, but prayerful closure is best achieved by marshalling jovially assured eight-voice polyphony.

**Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom**

The two full anthems included here are for five voices (in both cases the counter-tenor divides). *Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom* is a masterpiece of careful text setting. The pleading suspension at the word 'beseech', the transparent desolation at the words 'we cannot ask', and the plangent homophony cascading towards the word 'worthiness' culminate in the crucifyingly uncomfortable harmonic false relations that drive the nails into the name 'Jesus Christ'. But the message of this post-Communion collect, in spite of its self-deprecating tone, is

that this prayer for compassion will ultimately be answered; so Tomkins sets the final Amen with music that is smoulderingly glamorous in its gratitude.

**When David heard that Absalom was slain**

*When David heard that Absalom was slain* is Tomkins's most famous anthem. It is a setting of words taken from the Old Testament's Second Book of Samuel, and its narrative makes this masterwork more akin to the genre of the sacred madrigal than to the church anthem. The heart-rending grief of David at the loss of his son offers a foretaste of the tragedy that Tomkins himself would suffer, which began with the death of his wife in 1642, four years before parliamentary forces took over Worcester and ripped the organ out of the cathedral, and with it the heart of Tomkins's musical contribution to that institution.

**A Sad Pavan for these distracted times**

It is hardly surprising that when his musical leadership at Worcester Cathedral was terminated by surrender to the Parliamentarians, Tomkins turned to composing music which he himself could play in private at the keyboard. 'A Sad Pavan for these distracted times' is a despondent enough

title in itself, and the music within it is compelling because of its sincere melancholy. At times his heart almost stops beating, but Tomkins the ardent royalist carries on his nostalgic grieving until the bitter end of this iconic work.

#### **Voluntary in A minor**

The Voluntary in A minor shows the joint influences of the keyboard styles of William Byrd (c. 1540 – 1623, the assumed former teacher of Tomkins) and John Bull (c. 1560 – 1628). Tomkins revered the music of those two composers for different reasons: Byrd's music 'for Substance' and Bull's music 'for the Hand'. Indeed, Tomkins's keyboard music replicates both the tight counterpoint of Byrd's style and the virtuosity of Bull's.

#### **Clarifica me Pater**

This is demonstrated nowhere better than in *Clarifica me Pater* (dated September 1650, when Tomkins was two years short of his eightieth birthday). The *cantus firmus* that makes up the top voice of the keyboard texture is the plainchant melody of the Passiontide antiphon that Tomkins himself incorrectly labelled *Glorifica me Pater*. But as the Roman Catholic plainchant is used purely as antique scaffolding beneath which

the composer constructed a 'distracted' non-liturgical creation, that error matters little.

#### **Third Service: Te Deum / Jubilate**

The Third Service is the largest and most ambitious of the collections of canticles that Tomkins wrote. It is dubbed 'Mr Tomkins's Great Service' in its manuscript source, this moniker indicating that the setting is not just substantial, but that it is constructed on the principle of alternating passages for soloists with those for full choir. The choir splits into ten real parts on occasion, and the richness of the solo writing means that it is not always instantly possible to distinguish aurally between passages for full and reduced textures. The scale and expertise required of all the singers make it probable that this was a work written for use at the Chapel Royal.

#### **Sixth Service: Magnificat / Nunc dimittis**

By contrast, the more modest Sixth Service was written at the very end of the sixteenth century when Tomkins was in his twenties, and shows clearly the debt that Tomkins owed to William Byrd and Thomas Morley (1557 / 58 – 1602) – a copy of Morley's *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* survives with Tomkins's annotations. The fascination that Tomkins had for the

musical practices of his forbears never left him, and although he lived until the years of the Protectorate, he was by birth and temperament an Elizabethan. Thomas Tomkins is the paradigm of a composer who is individually innovative yet generically conservative.

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**The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge** is one of the finest men and boys choirs in the world, known and loved by millions from its recordings, broadcasts, and concert tours. A cornerstone of the great English choral tradition since the 1670s, it is recognised for its distinctive, rich, and expressive sound. Under the current directorship of Andrew Nethsingha, the Choir is made up of sixteen Choristers and four Probationers who are educated at St John's College School. The alto, tenor, and bass parts are usually taken by fifteen Undergraduates, with two Organ Scholars assisting in the daily running of the Choir. Frequently broadcast on BBC Radio 3, services in the College Chapel follow the Cathedral tradition of the Church of England, with Evensong six days a week during term and Sung Eucharist on Sunday mornings. On the concert platform, in

high-profile venues around the UK, the Choir regularly performs with orchestras and ensembles such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, and Philharmonia Orchestra. In the course of a busy international touring schedule it has visited the USA, Canada, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, Australia, and continental Europe.

The singers receive a unique musical education in an extremely varied repertoire, from Renaissance polyphony and the masses of Haydn to twentieth-century and specially commissioned contemporary music. Committed to engaging with a wide audience through digital innovations, the Choir is the first in Britain to broadcast its services in weekly webcasts all year round, and in 2011 launched SJC Live, an online archive for music lovers and choirmasters. A key innovation of Nethsingha's is the establishment of St John's Sinfonia, a professional period-instrument ensemble formed with Margaret Faultless in 2011, with which the Choir gives termly liturgical performances of cantatas by Bach. Under Nethsingha and the former Directors of Music George Guest, Christopher Robinson, and David Hill, the Choir has produced an extraordinary and extensive discography.

Since signing an exclusive contract with Chandos Records in 2009, it has released eight CDs, spanning music from across 500 years, which have garnered international critical acclaim. Renowned for championing contemporary music, the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge regularly commissions new works, and has recently performed the world premieres of works by Nico Muhly, John McCabe, Michael Finnissy, and Tim Watts. [www.sjcchoir.co.uk](http://www.sjcchoir.co.uk)

**Freddie James** began his musical education at Southwark Cathedral where he was a chorister for seven years. While a music scholar at Westminster School he was Organ Scholar at Croydon Minster. After leaving Westminster School he spent a year studying organ with Professor Jacques van Oortmerssen at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, assisted by a Nicholas Danby Trust bursary and a grant from the Eric Thompson Trust, and was Assistant Organist of the Basiliek van de Heilige Nicolaas, Amsterdam. In June 2013 he graduated with a double first from St John's College, Cambridge, where he had been organ scholar for three years. During this time he studied organ with Dr Gordon Stewart. He then stayed in Cambridge to study for an M.Phil., supported by an Arts &

Humanities Research Council Studentship. He has given recitals at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, Westminster Abbey, St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Coventry Cathedral, Grote Kerk, Rotterdam, and King's College, Cambridge, among others. Freddie James won all the prizes in the Fellowship examinations of the Royal College of Organists and was awarded both a Silver Medal and the W.T. Best Memorial Scholarship by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

Performing as a conductor and organist in North America, South Africa, the Far East, and throughout Europe, **Andrew Nethsingha** has since 2007 been Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge, where his innovations have included weekly webcasts and a termly Bach cantata series. He received his early musical training as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral, where his father was organist for over a quarter of a century. He later studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won seven prizes, and at St John's College, Cambridge. He held Organ Scholarships under Christopher Robinson at St George's, Windsor and George Guest at St John's, before becoming Assistant Organist at Wells Cathedral. He was subsequently Director of Music at Truro and

Gloucester cathedrals. Additionally, he has held the positions of Artistic Director of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and Musical Director of the Gloucester Choral Society, among others, and served as President of the Cathedral Organists' Association.

Andrew Nethsingha has worked with some of the leading orchestras in the UK. His concerts with the Philharmonia Orchestra have included performances of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Britten's *War Requiem*, Brahms's *Ein deutsches*

*Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Kingdom*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Poulenc's Gloria, and Duruflé's Requiem. He has also worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Britten Sinfonia, Aarhus Symfoniorkester, and BBC Concert Orchestra, and recently conducted at the BBC Proms, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and Suntory Hall, Tokyo. He regularly runs choral courses abroad, notably in France, Mexico, and the USA.



Ben Wright

Freddie James

**[1] When David heard that Absalom was slain**

When David heard that Absalom was slain,  
he went up to his chamber over the gate,  
and wept;  
and thus he said:  
O my son Absalom, my son, my son  
Absalom,  
would God I had died for thee,  
  
O Absalom, my son, my son.

2 Samuel 18: 33

**[2] Almighty God, which hast knit together**

Almighty God, which hast knit together  
thine elect in one communion and  
fellowship,  
in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our  
Lord:  
Grant us grace so to follow thy holy Saints  
in all godly and virtuous living,  
that we may come to those unspeakable  
joys  
which thou hast prepared for them  
that unfeignedly love thee;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for All Saints' Day,  
Book of Common Prayer

**[3] Magnificat from the Sixth Service**

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my  
spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his  
hand-maiden.  
For behold, from henceforth: all  
generations shall call me blessed.  
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on them that fear him:  
throughout all generations.  
He hath shewed strength with his arm:  
he hath scattered the proud in the  
imagination of their hearts.  
He hath put down the mighty from their  
seat: and hath exalted the humble and  
meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good  
things: and the rich he hath sent empty  
away.  
He remembering his mercy hath holpen  
his servant Israel: as he promised to our  
forefathers, Abraham and his seed for  
ever.

Luke 1



Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and  
to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be:  
World without end. Amen

**4 Nunc dimittis**  
**from the Sixth Service**  
Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart  
in peace: according to thy word.  
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation;  
Which thou hast prepared: before the face  
of all people;  
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to  
be the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2: 29

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and  
to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be:  
World without end. Amen

**5 Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom**  
Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom  
who knowest our necessities before we ask,  
and our ignorance in asking;  
We beseech thee to have compassion on  
our infirmities;  
and those things, which for our  
unworthiness we dare not,  
and for our blindness we cannot ask,  
vouchsafe to give us;  
for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen.

Holy Communion, Book of Common Prayer

**7 My shepherd is the living Lord**  
My shepherd is the living Lord, nothing  
therefore I need,  
in pastures fair with waters calm he sets me  
for to feed,  
  
he did convert and glad my soul and  
brought my mind in frame  
to walk in paths of righteousness for his  
most holy name.

Through all my life thy favour is so frankly  
shewed to me  
that in thy house for evermore my dwelling  
place shall be. Amen.

Psalms 23: 1 – 3

**8 Behold, I bring you glad tidings**

Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy,  
that shall be to all people,  
that unto you is born this day,  
in the city of David, a Saviour which is  
Christ the Lord.

Glory be to God in the highest,  
and peace on earth,  
and towards men good will.

Luke 2: 10 – 14

**10 Jubilate**

**from the Third ('Great') Service**  
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands:  
serve the Lord with gladness,  
and come before his presence with a song.  
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God:  
it is he that hath made us and not we  
ourselves;

we are his people, and the sheep of his  
pasture.

O go your way into his gates with  
thanksgiving,  
and into his courts with praise:  
be thankful unto him,  
and speak good of his Name.  
For the Lord is gracious,  
his mercy is everlasting:  
and his truth endures from generation to  
generation.

Psalms 100

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and  
to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever  
shall be:  
World without end. Amen.

**12 Te Deum**

**from the Third ('Great') Service**

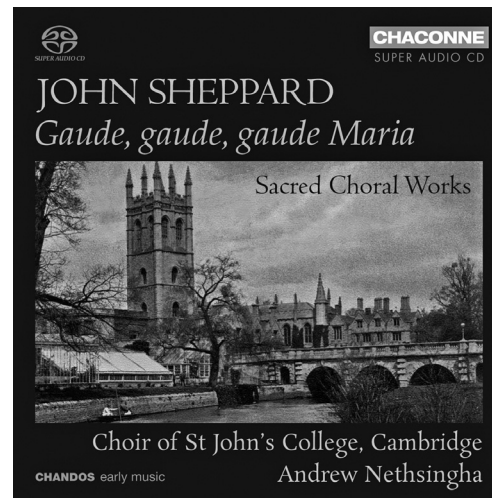
We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge  
thee to be the Lord.  
All the earth doth worship thee: the Father  
everlasting.  
To thee all Angels cry aloud: the heavens  
and all the powers therein.

To thee Cherubim and Seraphim:  
continually do cry,  
Holy, Holy, Holy: Lord God of Sabaoth;  
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty:  
of thy glory.  
The glorious company of the Apostles:  
praise thee.  
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets:  
praise thee.  
The noble army of Martyrs: praise thee.  
The holy Church throughout all the world:  
doth acknowledge thee;  
The Father: of an infinite Majesty;  
Thine honourable, true: and only Son;  
Also the Holy Ghost: the Comforter.  
Thou art the King of glory: O Christ.  
Thou art the everlasting Son: of the Father.  
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver  
man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin's  
womb.  
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness  
of death:  
thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to  
all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in  
the glory of the Father.  
We believe that thou shalt come: to be our  
Judge.  
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants:  
whom thou hast redeemed with thy  
precious blood.  
Make them to be numbered with thy  
Saints: in glory everlasting.  
O Lord, save thy people: and bless thine  
heritage.  
Govern them: and lift them up for ever.  
Day by day: we magnify thee;  
And we worship thy Name: ever world  
without end.  
Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day  
without sin.  
O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy  
upon us.  
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as  
our trust is in thee.  
O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never  
be confounded.

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CHSA 0401

Sheppard  
Sacred Choral Works



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Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester,  
Essex CO2 8HX, UK.

E-mail: [enquiries@chandos.net](mailto:enquiries@chandos.net) Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201



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**Chandos 24-bit / 96 kHz recording**

The Chandos policy of being at the forefront of technology is now further advanced by the use of 24-bit / 96 kHz recording. In order to reproduce the original waveform as closely as possible we use 24-bit, as it has a dynamic range that is up to 48 dB greater and up to 256 times the resolution of standard 16-bit recordings. Recording at the 44.1 kHz sample rate, the highest frequencies generated will be around 22 kHz. That is 2 kHz higher than can be heard by the typical human with excellent hearing. However, we use the 96 kHz sample rate, which will translate into the potentially highest frequency of 48 kHz. The theory is that, even though we do not hear it, audio energy exists, and it has an effect on the lower frequencies which we do hear, the higher sample rate thereby reproducing a better sound.

**Choir of St John's College, Cambridge**  
**Andrew Nethsingha** Director of Music  
**Freddie James** Organ Scholar

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<i>treble</i>	Matthew Holman	<i>counter-tenor</i>	<i>bass</i>
Maximilian Boorman	Andrew Jones	Thomas Blackie	Joseph Ataman
Joel Branston	Robert Murray John	Oliver El-Holiby	Quintin Beer
Oliver Brown	Peter Nethsingha	Hamish McLaren	Geoffrey Clapham
Francis Bushell	Rufus Pawsey	Alexander Simpson	John Holland-Avery
Jason Cobb	Michael Tuft		Jonathan Hyde
William Collison	Jed Upjohn	<i>tenor</i>	Augustus Perkins Ray
Alec D'Oyly	Sebastian Wade	Kieran Brunt	
Peter Hicks	Samuel Williams	John Clapham	
		Guy Edmund-Jones	
		Xavier Hetherington	
		Samuel Oladeinde	

**Vocal consultant** David Lowe

**Recording producer** Rachel Smith

**Sound engineer** Jonathan Cooper

**Editor** Rachel Smith

**A & R administrator** Sue Shortridge

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**Front cover** *Worcester Cathedral, River Severn*, painting (oil on canvas) attributed to David Cox the elder (1783 – 1859), courtesy of Worcester City Museum Collection

**Back cover** Photograph of Andrew Nethsingha by Ronald Knapp

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Andrew Nethsingha with the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge



CHACONNE DIGITAL

CHAN 0804

## Thomas Tomkins (1572 – 1656)

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|----|--|----------|
| 1  | When David heard that Absalom was slain<br><i>Full anthem for five-part choir</i>            | 5:28     |
| 2  | Almighty God, which hast knit together<br><i>Verse anthem for eight-part choir and organ</i> | 5:09     |
| 3  | Magnificat<br><i>for five-part choir and organ, from the Sixth Service</i>                   | 5:40     |
| 4  | Nunc dimittis<br><i>for five-part choir and organ, from the Sixth Service</i>                | 2:49     |
| 5  | Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom<br><i>Full anthem for five-part choir</i>           | 7:14     |
| 6  | A Sad Pavan for these distracted times   | 3:30     |
| 7  | My shepherd is the living Lord<br><i>Verse anthem for four-part choir and organ</i>          | 3:51     |
| 8  | Behold, I bring you glad tidings<br><i>Verse anthem for ten-part choir and organ</i>         | 3:39     |
| 9  | Voluntary in A minor   | 3:32     |
| 10 | Jubilate<br><i>for ten-part choir with organ, from the Third ('Great') Service</i>           | 7:09     |
| 11 | Clarifica me Pater   | 2:25     |
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Choir of St John's College,  
 Cambridge  
 Freddie James organ  
 Andrew Nethsingha