

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:14

Time for a little bit more choral music! As many of our previous *SUSPENSIONS* have been, this piece is a setting of a liturgical text, namely John 14:15-21, which is one of this Sunday's lessons. In this instance, the gorgeous setting is by English composer Thomas Tallis, and is called 'If Ye Love Me'.

This piece is another example of a motet (see *SUSPENSION 10*), this time featuring four voice parts. In this case the motet is comprised of what we call 'homophony', meaning that all four voice parts move at the same time, save for a few instances of imitation. This differs from previous motets discussed in this series, which feature the more heavily imitative, 'contrapuntal' style which was also popular.

In the history of English choral music and indeed, English music more widely, Tallis was just about as influential as it gets. Serving in the Chapel Royal for over 40 years, Tallis navigated his way through one of the most turbulent times in the Church's history, through four monarchs, and multiple changes in lectionary, worship and music. Many music historians have analysed how all of those changes can be easily seen reflected in Tallis' output through his life.

In some ways that's quite a comforting thought at this time. Christians have lived through all sorts of difficult and troubling times, and have always managed to find creative and beautiful ways to express their devotion and admiration for God, his word, and his creation. Maybe Christians of the future will look to the music of our times for comfort and inspiration.

Something to listen out for in this piece: The recording that I have linked displays the musical score. It's worth noting that the music wouldn't have looked like this when Tallis wrote it, as this features modern musical notation. However, if you follow along, you'll hear my favourite bit; the line 'that he may bide with you forever'. I personally think that the way Tallis writes all the parts to converge on 'forever' is

so beautiful and so powerful. Indeed, it's another example of word painting, which we discussed in last week's *SUSPENSION*.

Enjoy,
Sarah

Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqt005j1dB0>