

**BRIGHTON CONSORT**  
**DIRECTOR: GREG SKIDMORE**

# SOWING TEARS & *Reaping Joy*

**FROM MOURNING TO REJOICING**

Renaissance laments, psalms, and motets that chart  
a journey showing that pain and loss never last forever

---

**Saturday, 28th June 2025, 7:00pm**

Church St Mary-de-Haura, Shoreham-by-Sea, BN43 5DQ

---

**Sunday, 29th June 2025, 7:00pm**

St Nicholas' Church, Arundel, BN18 9AT

---

**Sunday, 6th July 2025, 7:00pm**

St Paul's Church, West Street, Brighton, BN1 2RE

Tickets: £15, £8 concessions (with valid ID), under 12s free

[brightonconsort.org.uk](http://brightonconsort.org.uk) or on the door

Information: [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)

Brighton Consort: registered charity no. 1096432



# **Sowing Tears and Reaping Joy**

## **From mourning to rejoicing**

### **Brighton Consort**

**Greg Skidmore**, Musical Director

Saturday, 28 June 2025  
7:00pm

Parish Church of St Mary-de-Haura  
Shoreham-by-Sea

Sunday, 29 June 2025  
7:00pm

St Nicholas Church  
Arundel

Sunday, 6 July 2025  
7:00pm

St Paul's West Street  
Brighton

Drawing on the rich heritage of Renaissance laments, and focussing especially on the many settings of King David's lament for his son Absalon, Brighton Consort contrasts music for mourning with music brimming with life and a spirit of joyful triumph of life over death.

## Concert Programme

William Billings  
Thomas Tomkins  
Cristobal de Morales

David's Lament  
When David Heard  
Lamentabatur Jacob

Josquin des Prez  
Robert Ramsey  
Nicolas Gombert

Absalon fili mi  
When David Heard  
Lugebat David Absalon

Thomas Weelkes

When David Heard

## INTERVAL

William Billings  
Tomás Luis de Victoria

When the Lord turned again  
Victimae Paschali laudes

William Byrd  
Heinrich Schütz

Turn our captivity, O Lord  
Die mit Tränen

Orlande de Lassus  
Jean L'Heritier

Surrexit pastor bonus  
Surrexit pastor bonus

John Sheppard  
William Byrd

Haec dies  
Haec dies

Thomas Tomkins

O sing unto the Lord

## Programme note

Tonight's programme is about contrasts. Contrasts in subject matter, contrasts in musical style, contrasts in context. The two halves of our programme are each defined by a single idea, with the interval serving as a clear boundary. These ideas are linked, but somewhat at odds. Through these contrasts are also woven unifying threads that bind the whole programme together, expressed in different ways.

The themes upon which our programme of music rests are drawn from the Bible. In the first half of our concert, the first of these is David's lament over the death of his son Absalon. This short but powerful passage of text is taken from the book of Samuel in the Old Testament and while the text itself is undeniably expressive, knowing its narrative context heightens its power. David, the most famous king of ancient Israel, had exiled Absalon as punishment for killing his brother, another of David's sons. When Absalon was finally allowed back into Jerusalem, rather than repenting and joining his father, Absalon raised a rebellion against David and civil war broke out. Absalon was eventually killed in battle by soldiers loyal to David, but acting against David's strict orders to be gentle with him. David's famous lament, 'Oh, my son, Absalon, would that I had died instead of you!' is more than just the cry of a parent at the loss of a child, therefore, and yet its immediacy, simplicity, and universal relevance transcends the complicated and harrowing story.

The power of this text was doubtless felt keenly in the Renaissance, just as now. A trio of famous settings by English composers provide the building blocks for our first half, with settings by three Jacobean composers Thomas Tomkins, Robert Ramsey, and Thomas Weelkes surrounded by contrasting works on the same theme. Works by the two Flemish masters Josquin des Prez and Nicolas Gombert treat precisely the same subject, while a very similar one is approached in *Lamentabatur Jacob*, another lament of a father over the loss of his sons taken from the Old Testament, but this being Jacob mourning the loss of Joseph (of techni-colour dreamcoat fame) and Benjamin, set here with devastating effect by Spanish composer Cristobal de Morales.

The first half begins, however, with a very stark musical contrast, one which we return to at the beginning of the second half. We are exploring in this concert the fascinating musical world of William Billings, known as 'America's first choral composer'. If the text of 'When David heard' is direct and to the point, Billings' music, though written in the late 18th century, hundreds of years and a continent away from the Renaissance composers who feature in this half, is the natural complement. Born in Boston in 1746, when it was still the capital of the English colony known as the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Billings was a largely self-taught but successful musician, composer, and music teacher and spent his entire life in the city of his birth. His style is extremely simple and almost abrupt, designed to be sung by British colonists at a time and in a place when the sophistication of European courts and cathedrals was an impossible - and perhaps also completely unknown - luxury. Yet here similarities exist too. Was Billings aware of the multitude of settings of this text? Did he choose it for its musical significance or just its textual power? It seems unlikely that his contribution to the tradition of settings of David's lament was completely by chance, but his approach is certainly novel and almost brutal when compared with the sophistication of the Jacobean masters.

The second half of tonight's programme contrasts joy and redemption with the sadness and loss of the first half. Music for Easter, the church's celebration of the triumph of love and life over sadness and death, is paired with settings of Psalm 126 from which the title of tonight's programme comes. Psalm 126 is a psalm of rejoicing, the emphasis here definitely not being on the tears but instead on the joy!

What better way to begin than with another piece by Billings in which he makes his inimitable contribution to an existing tradition of European high choral art? *When the Lord turned again* is a setting of sections of Psalm 126 in exactly the same way William Byrd's *Turn our captivity, O Lord*, and Heinrich Schutz' *Die mit Traenen* are, but what a different approach!

Lest this comparison become overused and suffer as a result, rather than pairing Billings' music with yet more sophisticated and subtle music in the second half, we instead show that Renaissance composers known for their complexity and passion can also write clean, clear, simple, and effective music. Tomas Luis de Victoria, the undisputed leader of Spanish High Renaissance composers, set the Easter Sequence *Victime paschali laudes* (a piece of plainsong specifically meant to be sung on Easter Day) in a remarkable way. Short phrases, a very terse double choir texture with predictable echos, and a repeating refrain, make for a transparent and, frankly, simple setting from the pen of a Renaissance master known for flowing counterpoint and emotional complexity. Billings and Victoria here find common ground whereas Billings and Tomkins, in the first half, did not.

Our next contrast is not one of context, but of execution. While not direct contemporaries, Jean L'Heritier and Orlande de Lassus were both Franco-Flemish Renaissance composers with similar influences and from similar traditions. In his setting of the Easter Monday responsory *Surrexit pastor bonus*, Lassus concentrates on the joyful Alleluias, elongating and emphasising them almost at the expense of the rest of the text, whereas L'Heritier constructs a mysterious and almost-haunting work that conjures the world-bending, cosmic power of the resurrection. Both are pieces for Easter, setting precisely the same text, but expressing very different aspects of the Christianity's central story.

As our programme progresses, and the joy of these texts becomes more irresistible, our contrasts begin to lessen too. William Byrd and John Sheppard, both Tudor polyphonists of immense skill and royal patronage, who, while again not direct contemporaries (though Sheppard, the older of the two men, may have known Byrd when he a boy chorister), sang in the same choirs in the same cities and even in the same buildings, both wrote a setting of the Gradual at Mass for Easter Day, *Haec dies*. The text contained in this piece 'Let us rejoice and be glad in it' characterises both settings. Sheppard gives us a blast of a piece - constant texture, ambitious in range, and brimming with energy. Byrd's piece is more elegant and contrapuntal, with complex rhythms and interesting textures. Both pieces, however, are about as far as it is possible to get from the laments of the first half.

But it is possible to get even farther! To finish our concert, and to truly reap the joy we sowed with the tears of the first half, we turn again to Thomas Tomkins, the man who wrote our first 'When David heart' setting. Tomkins' *O sing unto the Lord a new song* is neither a setting of Psalm 126 nor a setting of an Easter text, but we hope you'll forgive us as it is a piece that truly defines joy in music. Its conclusion, of course setting the word 'Alleluia', is truly extraordinary as both soprano lines reach new heights and both bass

parts rumble up full-octave scales. In this piece, all of the sorrow of the laments of the first half is completely wiped away. The contrasts of this programme have helped to highlight features of the music and have taken us on a journey, but in the end joy has triumphed, unequivocally.

*Programme note by Greg Skidmore*

*June 2025*

---

## **Brighton Consort**

Musical Director, Greg Skidmore

| <b>Soprano</b> | <b>Alto</b>       | <b>Tenor</b>     | <b>Bass</b>        |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Sue Clough     | Jenny Clemens     | Maya Davis       | David Game †       |
| Diana Gobel    | Eleanor Clapp † † | Richard Davis    | John Petley †      |
| Kathy Holloway | Stella Holman     | Paul Lane        | Alessio Santamaria |
| Hannah Loach   | Alicia Newell *   | David Waterhouse | Nick Tier          |
| Dena Mynett    | Liz Petty         | Jan White        |                    |
|                | Susie Pontin *    | Stephen White    |                    |

*\* indicates a singer who will be absent on Sunday, 29 June*

*† indicates a singer who will only be present on Saturday, 28 June*

*† † indicates a singer who will only be present on Sunday, 6 July*

*We are grateful to London-based professional singers Lily Robson, Chrissy Eastwood, Allyn Wu, Luca Wetherall, and Sebastian Thomas for their help in covering our absences at various concerts as part of this project..*

## Sowing Tears and Reaping Joy: From mourning to rejoicing

### Texts & Translations

#### David's Lament

David, the king, was grieved and moved,  
He went to his chamber and wept;  
And as he went he wept, and said:  
"O my son! O my son!  
Would to God I had died  
For thee, O Absalom, my son!"

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

**Lamentabatur Jacob** de duobus filiis.  
'Heu me, dolens sum de Josepho perduto  
Et tristis nimis de Benjamin  
Ducto pro alimoniis.  
Precor caelestem Regem  
ut me dolentem faciat eos cernere.'  
Prosternens se, Jacob  
vehementer cum lacrimis  
pronus in terram et adorans ait:  
'Heu me, dolens sum de Josepho perduto  
Et tristis nimis de Benjamin  
Ducto pro alimoniis.  
Precor caelestem Regem  
ut me dolentem faciat eos cernere.'

Jacob was in mourning over two sons.  
'Woe is me, I am grieving for my lost Joseph  
And exceedingly sad over Benjamin  
Led away to slavery because of food rations.  
I pray the heavenly King  
To allow me in my grief to see them.'  
Falling to the ground, Jacob  
Amid floods of tears  
face down on the ground and praying said:  
'Woe is me, I am grieving for my lost Joseph  
And exceedingly sad over Benjamin  
Led away to slavery because of food rations.  
I pray the heavenly King  
To allow me in my grief to see them.'

**Absalon, fili mi,**  
Quis det ut moriar pro te,  
fili mi Absalon.  
Non vivam ultra, sed descendam in infernum  
plorans.

Absalon my son,  
Who will grant that I may die for you,  
my son Absalon.  
I will not continue to live, but I will descend into  
Hell, weeping.

**Lugebat David Absalon,**  
pius pater filium,  
tristis senex puerum.  
'Heu me, fili mi Absalon,  
Quis mihi det ut moriar,  
Ut ego pro te moriar,  
O fili mi Absalon!  
Rex autem David filium  
cooperto flebat capite:  
'Quis mihi det ut moriar, O fili mi !'  
Porro rex operuit caput suum  
Et clamabat voce magna:  
'Fili mi Absalon, O fili mi.'

David was mourning Absalon,  
The dutiful father mourning his son,  
A sad old man mourning his child.  
'Woe is me, my son Absalon  
Who will grant that I may die,\*  
That I may die for you,\*  
O my son Absalon.'  
But indeed King David  
With covered head, wept for his son.  
'Who will grant my wish to die, o my son?'  
Furthermore, the king covered his head  
And began to cry in a loud voice:  
'My son Absalon, O my son.'

**When the Lord turned again**

the captivity of Zion,  
Then was our mouth filled  
with laughter and joy.  
For they said among the heathen,  
The Lord hath done great things for them,  
Whereof they are glad.  
Turn again our captivity, O Lord,  
as the rivers in the south,  
For they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

*Chant***Victimae Paschali laudes**

immolent Christiani.  
Agnus redemit oves:  
Christus innocens Patri  
reconciliavit peccatores.  
Mors et vita duello  
confluxerunt mirando:  
dux vitae mortuus regnat vivus.

*Refrain*

Dic nobis, Maria, quid vidisti in via?

*Verses*

Sepulchrum Christi viventis:  
et gloriam vidi resurgentis.  
Angelicos testes, sudarium et vestes.  
Surrexit Christus spes mea,  
praecedet vos in Galilaeam.  
Scimus Christum surrexisse  
a mortis vere.  
Tu nobis rex miserere, Alleluia.

**Turn our captivity, O Lord,**

as a brook in the South.  
They that sow in tears, shall reap in joyfulness.  
Going they went and wept, casting their seeds.  
But coming, they shall come with joy,  
carrying their sheaves with them.

**Die mit Tränen** säen,

werden mit Freuden ernten.  
Sie gehen hin und weinen  
und tragen edlen Samen  
und kommen mit Freuden  
und bringen ihre Garben.

**Surrexit pastor bonus**

qui animam suam posuit pro ovibus suis,  
et pro grege suo mori dignatus est.  
Alleluia.

**Haec dies** quam fecit Dominus.

Exultemus et laetemur in ea.  
Alleluia.

*Chant*

Christians will offer prayers  
to the Paschal victim.  
The Lamb has redeemed the sheep:  
the innocent Christ has with the Father  
reconciled sinners.  
Death and Life have fought  
in remarkable single combat:  
the deceased lord of life lives and reigns.

*Refrain*

Tell us, Mary, what did you see on the road?

*Verses*

The tomb of the living Christ:  
and I saw the glory of the risen one.  
Angels as witnesses, a cloth and his clothes.  
Christ, my hope,  
has risen and will be in Galilee before you.  
We know that Christ has risen  
from the dead indeed.  
You, o king, have mercy on us. Alleluia.

They that sow in tears

shall reap in joy.  
He that goeth forth and weepeth,  
bearing precious seed,  
shall doubtless come again with joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

The good shepherd has risen,  
he who laid down his life for his sheep,  
And thought it fitting to die for his flock.  
Alleluia.

This is the day which the Lord has made.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Alleluia.



**O sing unto the Lord** a new song:  
let the congregation of saints  
Sing praise unto him.  
Let Israel rejoice in him that made him  
And let the children of Zion  
Forever sing Alleluia.

---

## Biographies

**Brighton Consort** was formed by the late Daphne Elston in 1971 and is best known for its ambitious exploration of the rich repertoire of renaissance and early baroque music. Its Musical Directors have included Deborah Roberts, Katie Thomas, James Dixon and the present director Greg Skidmore. Brighton Consort's programmes have included collaborations with Ensemble Reza, the Paul Nieman Brass Ensemble and Nick Houghton, and the choir has performed in the Voices of London Festival and at various events in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Although our core repertoire mainly consists of Renaissance choral music, in order to offer variety to audiences and singers alike, our programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods.

Born in Canada, **Greg Skidmore** arrived in England as an undergraduate at Royal Holloway College, University of London. After graduating with First Class Honours in Music, his post-graduate Choral Scholarship at Wells Cathedral led him to Lay Clerkships at Gloucester Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. He now lives in London and pursues a varied career as a consort, choral, and solo oratorio singer alongside work as a conductor and workshop leader. He has appeared with *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinall's Musick*, *I Fagiolini*, *Tenebrae*, *Gabrieli Consort*, *Alamire*, *Contrapunctus*, and *Collegium Vocale Ghent*. He can be heard on recordings released by Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Harmonia Mundi USA, and Gimell Records and in February 2022, Greg made his hundredth appearance with *The Tallis Scholars*. While at Christ Church in Oxford, he began a course of doctoral research in Musicology at the University of Oxford. He founded *The Lacock Scholars*, one of the UK's premier amateur vocal consorts and recently completed major coaching projects with students at the University of York, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Royal Academy of Music. He has given workshops and masterclasses in the UK, France, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in association with *The Sixteen*, *I Fagiolini*, and on his own and he is increasingly engaged in Canada as a guest conductor, clinician, and record producer, founding *The Canadian Renaissance Music Summer Schools* in 2018. He has been published in *Early Music* and his writing has appeared in programmes and CD liner notes for *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinall's Musick*, *The Gabrieli Consort*, *Tenebrae*, and *Ex Cathedra*.

## Interested in joining us?

**Brighton Consort** performs mainly Renaissance and early Baroque choral music but programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too. We normally present three concert programmes per year, usually with two performances of each. We usually rehearse on Wednesday evenings at St George's Church, Kemptown. Rehearsals take place throughout the year, with a break during July and August.

We are always looking to hear from new singers in all voice parts and the best way to inquire about joining us is to get in touch to arrange an audition. We're very open to meeting new people and can't wait to hear from you.

To reach us, please email [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)

---

## More Information

For more information about **Brighton Consort**, to browse through our past projects, and learn more about the choir and our musical director, please [visit our website](http://brightonconsort.org.uk):

[brightonconsort.org.uk](http://brightonconsort.org.uk)

or [email](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk): [info@brightonconsort.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonconsort.org.uk)

We can also be found on [social media](#):

[facebook.com/BrightonConsort](https://facebook.com/BrightonConsort)  
[twitter.com/BrightonConsort](https://twitter.com/BrightonConsort)

Our 2025-26 season has yet to be planned. Please keep in touch and look out for information about our next concerts.