CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD



From the Beginning of the World

for 8 Voices

CADENZA MUSIC

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From the Beginning of the World was commissioned by the Cardinall's Musick and premiered at Cadogan Hall on the 20th July 2015 in the first of the 2015 BBC Proms Chamber Music Concerts. The concert launched *The Tallis Edition*, a new project by the ensemble with an aim to throw new light on Tallis's work, and part of the commission brief was that my new piece should be a homage to this great English polyphonist.

I spent several weeks in libraries attempting to find a suitable text, eventually settling on excerpts from Tycho Brahe's *German Treatise on the Great Comet of 1577*. Whether Tallis knew about the comet is unknown of course, but this seismic event, to me, seemed emblematic of all the great changes that occurred during his lifetime, in areas such as religion, the calendar, and time-keeping (finding out that Tallis lived out his last days in Greenwich was an extra bonus). The text also seems to speak to contemporary times: whilst Brahe may have thought the comet's birth would cause the sun to 'bring unnatural heat', nowadays we know that its 'venom [will be] spewed over the lands' due to mankind's continued pillaging of the earth's natural resources. Yet our political 'pseudo prophets' prefer to distract us with an austerity delusion rather than confront a reality perpetuated by certain corporations for whom 'seek[ing] their own honour' is of primary value.

The music itself is very influenced by Tallis, and canons and imitation abound. During my time as a 'cellist at the Yehudi Menuhin School, I performed Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* many times, and so *From the Beginning of the World*, which also uses Tallis's *Third Mode Melody* from the *English Hymnal*, is really a homage to both composers.

Funded by the Cocheme Charitable Trust and private donations.

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CADENZA MUSIC

From the beginning of the world

Then it comes to pass that something new is born in the heavens
Contrary to the custom of nature
And all mankind holds it to be a great wonder.

Videte Miraculum *(Behold the miracle)*
A miracle of the heavens.

From the beginning of the world
From the uppermost sphere of the fixed stars
This new birth reveals itself
A comet with a very long tail.
Something new can be generated in the heavens.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto *(Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost)*

But what do such unnatural births mean?

Creator caeli et terrae *(Creator of Heaven and Earth,*
Respice humilitatem nostram *Be mindful of our lowliness*
Peccavi *Have mercy)*

Great mortality among mankind.
Mighty and destructive wind storms
Peccavi
Poisonings of the air
Peccavi
Terrible earthquakes
Great harm by fire.

Great mortality among mankind.
The sun will bring unnatural heat
The sun will bring harmful, unnatural heat
It will spew its venom over the lands

Great mortality among mankind
Gruesome pestilence
Incurable pains
(Pestilential)

Those who deal with political regimes
Will be much stifled
(Creator caeli et terrae)
Those who seek their own honour as pseudo prophets
(Respice humilitatem nostram)
Will be punished, punished.

Great wars and bloodsheddings.
Peccavi
Miserere Nostri *(Have mercy on us)*

However, there are actually no reliable grounds
For predicting the end of the world from this comet.
It thus behooves us to use well our short life here on earth,
So that we may praise him for all eternity.
Our short life here on earth...
Amen.

Dedicated to The Cardinall's Musick

From the beginning of the world

A homage to Thomas Tallis and Ralph Vaughan Williams

Tycho Brahe
(from the *German Treatise on the Great Comet of 1577)*

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD



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* The dynamics of each vocal part can/should rise and fall with register and phrase: nevertheless the overall feeling of these bars should be of quiet wonder/contemplation.

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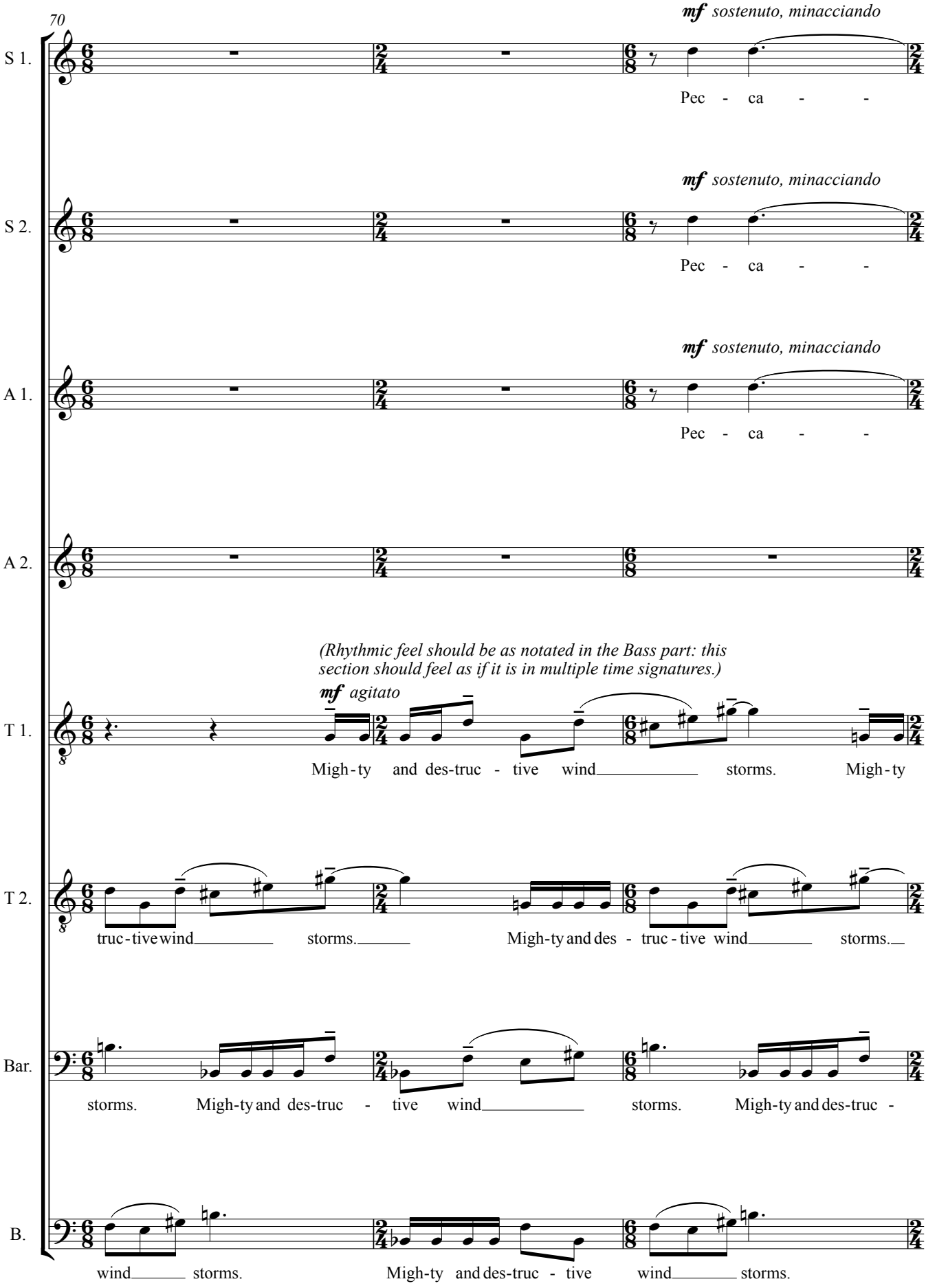
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* *sfz*'s should sound like very violent over-pronunciations

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Cheryl Frances-Hoad, June 2015

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