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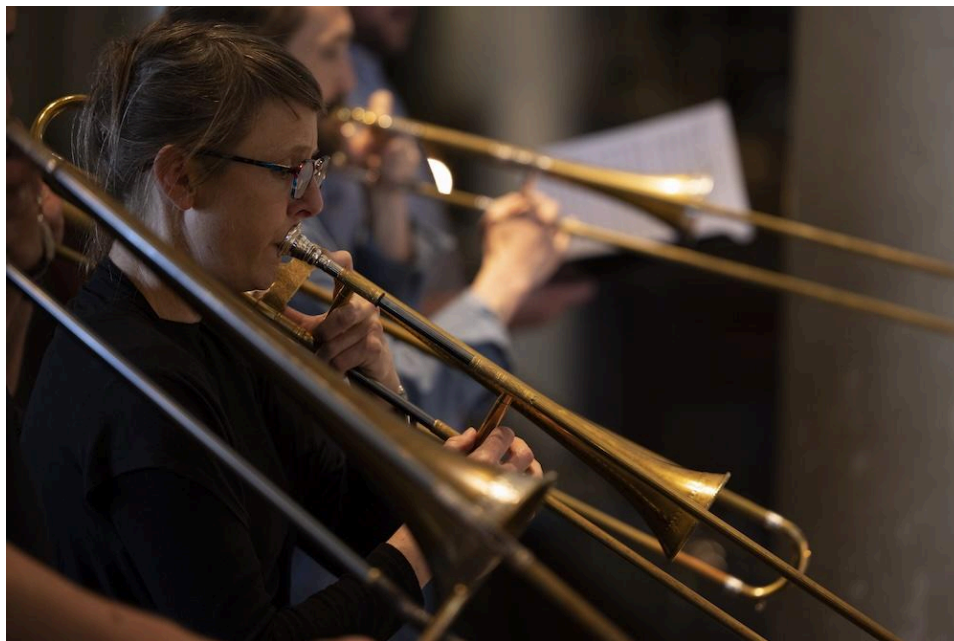
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A Venetian Coronation 1595, Gabrieli, McCreesh, Temple Church review - choral and instrumental magnificence

Period instruments and voices recreate the glory of a historical investiture

by [Bernard Hughes](#) | Wednesday, 20 May 2026

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The sackbuts of Gabrieli

Photo © Frances Marshall

In 1595 a new Doge was invested in St Mark's in [Venice](#), an occasion celebrated with the full [musical panoply](#) at the state's command. Which was a lot, the Venetians not doing things by halves. In 1990 the Gabrieli Consort and McCreesh made their name – and a fine album – by speculatively recreating the music of this occasion, in all its church-ceremony-meets-political-showcase splendour. And last night they revisited this programme at Temple Church in London and gave a sold-out audience a glorious glimpse of what that might have sounded.

The Gabrieli Consort made a second Venetian Coronation album in 2012 and last night's programme followed the repertoire of that more closely than the original

[1 free article left](#) on the music of uncle-and-nephew pair Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, serving the servants of St Mark's. Their use of brass instruments is particularly distinctive – here we heard 10 sackbuts (proto-trombones), five [Privacy settings](#)

“The bass sackbut was a treat in the final bars, where the sound flared and roared to wonderful effect”

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generous acoustic.

The event was theatrically staged, starting with a chanting choir processing from outside the church, followed by a volley of trumpets and drums from the back of the church. The Venetian service would have taken the form of a formal Mass, the supposition is the priest would have quietly spoken some bits of the text to avoid interrupting the flow of the music. And it became clear that some of the organ interludes were there to cover movements of personnel, as well as their intrinsic musical value.



The choir numbered 11 men, including three countertenors, and the generally low tessitura was matched in the brass, with the preponderance of sackbuts giving a strong foundation to the sound, over which Jeremy West's cornett could float. (The cornett as an instrument died out mainly because it's so bloody hard to play, but in the hands of last night's quartet we could revel in the instrument's unique and beautiful sound.) The bass sackbut, in the hands of Adrian France, was a treat, not least in the final bars of the final number, where his sound flared and roared to wonderful effect. There were times I thought I was too near to the performers to get the full benefit of the acoustic – but I was glad to be close enough at this point to feel the resonance in my body.

There were terrific solos by tenor Jeremy Budd and bass Jimmy Holliday and a sparkling, dancing countertenor duet for the Offertory. Paul McCreesh (pictured above) conducted the whole 80-minute performance from memory, leading the chant with little nods of his head, and holding the final chords of movements for longer than seemed feasible – that last chord then floating into the upper reaches of the church. In the final movement, a Giovanni Gabrieli spectacular with all hands on deck, waves of sound and overlapping contrapuntal entries gave a sense of sheer sonic magnificence which was as stirring and inspiring in 2026 as it must have been in 1595.

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