

BENSLOW MUSIC 2021

TUESDAY 13 JULY 2021 AT 5.45 PM AND 8.00 PM

ROSE CONSORT OF VIOLS

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Music from Home and Abroad

Many manuscripts of English viol music also contain pieces by composers from continental Europe, some of whom visited England, but many who were known here only by their wonderful motets, chansons and madrigals. These pieces were often copied without their original texts, and make ideal repertory for the consort of viols. Today's programme explores the wealth and variety of continental music known in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, rubbing shoulders with pieces by native composers.

Fantasia 1 a6	William Byrd c.1543–1623
Si grand'e la pieta a6	Anon.
Fantasia Alfoncius a6	Alfonso Ferrabosco senior 1543–88
Contentes vous	Claudin de Sermisy arr. Pierre Certon
Quaemadmodum a6	John Taverner c.1490–1545
Ayez pite du grand mal	Sermisy arr. Antonio Gardane
In nomine a6	Christopher Tye c.1505–1572
Duo Alphonso	Ferrabosco
Arousez vo violette a6	Philip Van Wilder c.1500–1553
Domine ne in furore a4	Josquin des Pres c.1450–1521
The song called trumpets a6	Robert Parsons c.1535–1572
Vidi civitatem a6	Nicolas Gombert c.1495–c.1560 or Van Wilder
Ubi est Abel a5	Orlande de Lassus 1532–1594
Salvator mundi a5	Thomas Tallis c.1505–1585
Fantasia 3 a6	Byrd

Programme notes

It is all too easy to think of Tudor England as an isolated island state, frequently under threat of attack from enemies on the continent of Europe. Henry VIII was alternately at war with France or seeking alliances with the French against the Holy Roman Empire. Elizabeth I's almost constant fear of invasion by Catholic forces became reality with the appearance of the Spanish Armada in her coastal waters. So it is also easy to think of Tudor culture as being separated from that of its neighbours, ploughing its own furrow, oblivious of ideas from abroad. Yet London in the sixteenth century was one of Europe's greatest trading centres, with merchants and craftsmen from all over the world establishing businesses or visiting to sell the latest goods from home. The cosmopolitan atmosphere was reflected in the arts: painters and sculptors from Italy and Germany worked at court; manuscript books of hours and music anthologies arrived from France and the Low Countries; exquisitely decorated armour came from Germany and expensive leather goods from Spain.

Music and musicians from continental Europe travelled to England too. One of the most influential figures at the early Tudor court was Philip Van Wilder, who rose to become the director of a group of singing boys and men and string players who worked in the privy chamber of Henry VIII and teaching Prince Edward, a position that would later come to be known as 'Master of the King's Musick'. Van Wilder hailed from the South Netherlands and brought with him the skill of writing imitative counterpoint, where several voices in a composition share the same melodic material woven together to create a rich polyphonic fabric, that was new in England. Van Wilder's music was still being copied well into the Elizabethan period, usually shorn of its original words, and attributed to 'Mr. Phillips'.

A later visitor, this time from Italy, was Alfonso Ferrabosco, who worked as a lutenist for Elizabeth I from 1562. Despite frequent visits to the continent, either to deal with family affairs in Bologna or possibly to act as a spy for Elizabeth, he was employed by the queen until finally returning to Italy in 1578. His music was influential on that of his English contemporaries such as William Byrd, with whom he was said to have entered a 'friendly emulation' in setting the same madrigal text. He is represented here not by one of his more learned motets or madrigals, but by a tiny playful duet which is to be found in a manuscript from around 1570 now in York Minster Library. This is also the source of the duos by French court composer Claudio de Sermisy.

Other Tudor manuscript music anthologies also include a good number of pieces by continental composers jostling up against pieces by indigenous composers. The copyists, such as Clement Woodcock, who around 1578 copied a huge number of pieces into a table-book manuscript (designed so the performers faced each other around the table, with the book placed in the middle with parts facing outwards), were not always very accurate in attributing the overseas music: he puts the name 'Philippes' against *Vidi civitatem* which is a large-scale motet perhaps more likely to have been written by the Flemish composer Nicolas Gombert (it is attributed to 'Nycholas Gumbarde' in another Tudor part-book collection). The partbooks copied by Robert Dow and John Baldwin contain a number of Latin-texted motets that would have no liturgical place in Protestant Elizabethan England, but which might be enjoyed at home, performed wordlessly on the viols that were becoming

fashionable among the wealthier classes of English music lovers. Our sequence here from Baldwin's and Dow's books pits the native Tallis against his slightly younger continental contemporaries Maillard and Lassus.

One composer who is not well represented in Elizabethan sources is Josquin des Pres, who we remember this year, 500 years after his death. However, one piece by Josquin, his motet *Domine ne in furore* is depicted in an anonymous English painting from around 1560. It is a portrait of four unidentified children by the 'Master of the Countess of Warwick': the oldest boy holds in his hand a copy of the bass part of a 1538 print containing Josquin's motet, probably regarded as something of a status symbol. We include the motet here, alongside works by some of Josquin's famous successors, performing these works in the same way that they were collected by their Tudor copyists: sharing space with examples of the best native music by composers such as Taverner, Tye and Parsons.

The concert is framed by two wonderful six-part fantasias by William Byrd. The first is an exercise in the style of imitative counterpoint he might have developed with some influence from Ferrabosco, while the third shows his complete mastery of the idiom. In this final piece Byrd amalgamates the most inventive of counterpoint with sections of dance music and references to popular tunes of his day, producing some of the most satisfying music of the Elizabethan age.

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The Rose Consort of Viols takes its name from a famous family of sixteenth-century viol makers, whose instruments coincided with the growth of English consort music. With its unique blend of intimacy, intricacy, passion and flamboyance, this music ranges from Taverner and Byrd, to Lawes, Locke and Purcell, and forms the nucleus of the Rose Consort's programmes. For nearly four decades the Rose Consort has been delighting audiences across the UK, Europe and further afield. It has performed in London's Wigmore and South Bank Halls, is heard regularly on the BBC, including a Prom concert from Cadogan Hall, and makes frequent appearances at the London International Exhibition of Early Music and York Early Music Festival. It has performed at Festivals in Canada (Festival Vancouver) and the USA (Boston, New York, Boulder, Portland, and Seattle), and also featured as a guest ensemble at the Pan-Pacific Gamba Gathering in Hawaii. It has also performed with the choirs of Chichester Cathedral and Oslo Cathedral, as well as at festivals in Bratislava, Nuremberg, Cologne and in Austria. The consort has received awards for research and performance of specially devised programmes, and has also commissioned and performed new pieces for voices and viols by Judith Bingham, John Woolrich, and Ivan Moody. The Consort has appeared at Dartington International Summer School, giving concerts and coaching ensembles, activities it now continues here at Benslow Music in Hitchin.

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