

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 10 January 2024
7.30pm

Byrd Compared: Byrd and English Song

Anna Prohaska soprano
Phantasm

Laurence Dreyfus treble viol, director • Jonathan Manson tenor viol
Emilia Benjamin tenor viol • Markku Luolajan-Mikkola bass viol

THE DEMISE OF TALLIS

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

A Solfing Song ¹
O nata lux de lumine (pub. 1575) ²
Te lucis ante terminum ¹
Why fum'th in fight (pub. 1567) ³
Come woeful Orpheus (pub. 1611) ¹
Fantasia a4 No. 1 in D minor ⁴
Ye sacred muses (pub. 1588) ⁵

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)
Thomas Tallis
William Byrd

HINTS OF THE EROTIC

William Byrd

Susanna fair (pub. 1588) ⁶
Though Amaryllis dance in green (pub. 1588) ⁶
In fields abroad (pub. 1588) ⁶
In Nomine a4 No. 2 ⁴
La virginella (pub. 1588) ⁶
Itene, o miei sospiri (1611) ⁷

Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

Interval

TEARS AND JOYS

John Dowland (1563-1626)

From silent night, true register of moanes (pub. 1612) ⁹
Flow, my tears (pub. 1600) ⁹
Shall I strive with words to move (pub. 1612) ⁹
My thoughts are wing'd with hopes (pub. 1597) ⁹
Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears (pub. 1600) ^{8,9}

DEVOTION AND PIETY

William Byrd

Miserere ¹
Lullaby (pub. 1588) ⁶ ¹edited by Laurence Dreyfus
Fantasia a3 No. 1 in F ⁴ ²edited by Allen Garvin
O Lord, how vain ⁵ ³transcribed by Laurence Dreyfus

FALLEN HEROES

William Byrd

Fair Britain isle ⁵ ⁴edited by George Hunter
Fantasia a3 No. 2 in F ⁴ ⁵edited by Fretwork Editions
Fantasia a3 No. 3 in C ⁴ ⁶edited by Ian Gammie
My mistress had a little dog ⁵ ⁷arranged by Laurence Dreyfus
⁸arranged by William Wigthorpe
⁹arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

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In 'Byrd compared', Phantasm presents the complete consort music of William Byrd (c.1540-1623) in a triptych of programmes heard next to compositions by other singular spirits such as JS Bach, Dowland, Jenkins, Lawes and Purcell. While six of Byrd's instrumental works are also heard tonight, this second programme focuses chiefly on Byrd's unusual repertory of consort songs which are set alongside the vocal music of Tallis, Gesualdo and especially, John Dowland.

From the 1580s through to his old age, **Byrd** cultivated a unique English genre in which a single voice is accompanied by consort of four viols. Covering an astonishing range of styles, these works show Byrd going out of his way to ensure the independence of each contrapuntal line. Indeed, one of the pleasures in listening to consort songs is to notice how the instrumental parts manage to 'articulate' the words, encompassing but never overwhelming the solo voice.

The pieces in 'The Demise of Tallis' reflect on the precarious travails of Catholic recusants in Elizabethan England, with the inclusion of hymn settings from the Roman rite as well as the stern syllabic paraphrases of psalms penned by the very Protestant Archbishop Parker and set by **Tallis**. In the 16th Century, a chest of viols was often brought into cathedrals and choral foundations to help choristers master sightreading, and this link between choir and consort inspires Tallis's 'Solting [sol-fa] song', a piece to be either bowed or sung to the syllables of the venerable Guidonian hexachord. In 'Ye sacred muses', marking the death of Thomas Tallis in 1586, Byrd fashioned in an unforgettable lament graced by an extraordinary text setting and an uncanny harmonic flow. While the poem indulges in elegiac platitudes, Byrd's music not only records his personal loss but elevates the final rhetorical figure - 'Tallis is dead and music dies' - to artistic immortality.

Byrd delights in the eroticism of 'La virginella', his only song in Italian and set to verses from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* often declaimed in Italy at celebrations of betrothals. Here Byrd negotiates several Italianate manoeuvres - such as the gently undulating harmonies - but ignores the obvious gimmicks beloved of his Italian contemporaries such as the madrigalian word-painting he had copied more overtly in 'Come woeful Orpheus'. In 'Susanna fair', Byrd sets a translation of a French text by G rault ('Susanne un jour') first 'Englished' by Ferrabosco. Stemming from the apocryphal book of Daniel, the poem retells the biblical story of two old men who espy a young married woman while she is bathing. Rebuffing their advances, Susanna is falsely accused of adultery though eventually she establishes her chastity. Visual depictions of this narrative were widespread in Italian painting of the time, and some (such as those by Tintoretto and Veronese) delight in the lascivious gaze upon naked flesh while never undermining Susanna's innocence.

In the pastoral 'Though Amaryllis dance in green', a shepherd renounces love after being repeatedly denied it by Amaryllis: he's content - so he disingenuously claims - to abandon his lustful inclinations. The erotic also marks the ballad 'In fields abroad', where a tale of military valour ends in a bawdy encounter with a 'gallant lady whose petticoat is unlaced'.

In Philip Sidney's 'O Lord, how vain', the inspired devotional verses receive a moving rendition, just as does the touching language of 'Fair Britain Isle' that laments the much-mourned Henry Stuart, Prince of Wales, acclaimed at his passing as an ideal monarch who might have presided over a new Golden Age. The verbal high jinks of 'My mistress had a little dog', however, are not to be taken literally, but surely intend an allegory on the execution of Robert Devereux. The Earl of Essex, one of the most dashing if impetuous Elizabethans, was the Queen's great favourite before his betrayal by Francis Bacon. This amusing text relishes not-so-subtle political allusions, and the song evokes a surprising sympathy for the murdered 'dog': notice Byrd's strangely moving music for 'But out, alas! I'll speak no more'. Notorious as a military daredevil and gallant rake, Devereux also protected his Roman Catholic friends at a time when religious heterodoxy was even more dangerous than sexual impropriety. The final part of the song stages a mock trial heard before a jury of hounds and beagles - the sympathetic Catholic nobility - who condemn the perpetrator, a 'beastly man or manly beast', to Tyburn (at today's Marble Arch), the ghastly venue where Catholic martyrs had been publicly executed after being tortured some years earlier on Elizabeth's orders.

Byrd's love of strict polyphony apparently kept him distant from the 'lute song' with its more relaxed approach to counterpoint, yet he surely esteemed the undisputed master of this genre, **John Dowland**, who had converted to Catholicism around 1580. Dowland's masterful *Lachrimae* collection for lute and viols, drenched in tearful melancholy, constituted his only foray into consort music, but even here his seven 'passionate pavans' can't resist a reference to his song 'Flow, my tears', much as two *Lachrimae* galliards also hark back to earlier works for voice and lute. To conflate these versions into settings for voice and viols is easy, just as it was done in the 17th Century, when William Wigthorpe arranged 'Sorrow, stay' in this way. Taking a small step further, we have reconfigured 'From silent night' in similar fashion for four viols, as Dowland had already added a treble and bass viol to the lute in a kind of 'broken consort'. Comparing 'like with like' via these idiomatic arrangements, we can appreciate how the musical path pursued by the unparalleled tunesmith, John Dowland, contrasts with William Byrd's carefully crafted, if equally inspired songs for voice and viol consort.

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THE DEMISE OF TALLIS

Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)

A Solfing Song

edited by Laurence Dreyfus

O nata lux de lumine

(pub. 1575)

edited by Allen Garvin

Anonymous

O nata lux de lumine
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare Clemens
supplicum
Laudes precesque
sumere.

Qui carne quondam contegi
Dignatus es pro perditis,
Nos membra confer effici
Tui beati corporis.

O light born of light

Oh light, born of light,
Jesus, Saviour of the world,
be merciful to all who
entreat you,
accept their praises and
prayers!

Who once became flesh
for the sake of the lost ones,
may our limbs be joined
with your blessed body.

William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

Te lucis ante terminum

edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Thomas Tallis

Why fum'th in fight (pub. 1567)

transcribed by Laurence Dreyfus

Matthew Parker

Why fum'th in fight the Gentiles' spite,
In fury raging stout?
Why taketh in hand the people fond,
Vain thing to bring about?

The kings arise, the lords devise,
In councils met thereto:
Against the Lord with false accord,
Against his Christ they go.

Then shall his ire speak all in fire,
To them again therefore:
He shall with threat their malice beat,
In his displeasure sore.

Yet am I set: a king so great,
On Sion hill full fast:
Though me they kill, yet will that hill,
My law and word outcast.

The Lorde in fear: your service bear,
With dread to him rejoice:
Let rages be resist not ye,

Him serve with joyful voice.

The son kiss ye, lest wroth he be,
Lose not the way of rest:
For when his ire is set on fire,
Who trust in him be blest.

William Byrd

Come woeful Orpheus (pub. 1611)

edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Anonymous

Come woeful Orpheus with thy charming Lyre,
And tune my voice unto thy skilful wire,
Some strange Chromatic Notes do you devise,
That best with mournful accents do sympathise,
Of sourest Sharps and uncouth Flats make choice,
And I'll thereto compassionate my voice.

Fantasia a4 No. 1 in D minor

edited by George Hunter

Ye sacred muses (pub. 1588)

edited by Fretwork Editions

Anonymous

Ye sacred Muses, race of Jove,
Whom Music's lore delighteth,
Come down from crystal heav'ns above
To earth, where sorrow dwelleth,
In mourning weeds with tears in eyes:
Tallis is dead, and Music dies.

HINTS OF THE EROTIC

William Byrd

Susanna fair (pub. 1588)

edited by Ian Gammie

Anonymous, after Guillaume Guérout

Susanna fair some time assaulted was
By two old men desiring their delight,
Whose false intent they thought to bring to pass
If not by tender love, by force and might.
To whom she said: if I your suit deny
You will me falsely accuse and make me die.

And if I grant to that which you request,
My chastity shall then deflowered be,
Which is so dear to me that I detest
My life, if it berefted be from me;
And rather would I die of mine accord
Ten thousand times than once offend the Lord.

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Though Amaryllis dance in green (pub. 1588)

edited by Ian Gammie

Anonymous

Though Amaryllis dance in green
Like Fairy Queen,
And sing full clear
Corina can with smiling cheer,
Yet since their eyes make heart so sore,
Hey ho, 'chill love no more.

My sheep are lost for want of food,
And I so would
That all the day
I sit and watch a herd maid gay,
Who laughs to see me sigh so sore,
Hey ho, 'chill love no more.

Ah wanton eyes, my friendly foes
And cause of woes,
Your sweet desire
Breeds flames of ice and freeze in fire;
Ye scorn to see me weep so sore,
Hey ho, 'chill love no more.

In fields abroad (pub. 1588)

edited by Ian Gammie

Anonymous

In fields abroad, where trumpets shrill do sound,
Where glaives and shields do give and take the knocks,
Where bodies dead do overspread the ground,
And friends to foes are common butchers' blocks,
A gallant shot well managing his piece,
In my conceit, deserves a golden fleece.

Amid the seas a gallant ship set out,
Wherein nor men nor yet munitions lacks,
In greatest winds that spareth not a clout,
But cuts the waves in spite of weather's wracks,
Would force a swain that comes of cowards' kind
To change himself and be of noble mind.

By that bedside where sits a gallant Dame,
Who casteth off her brave and rich attire,
Whose petticoat sets forth as fair a frame
As mortal men or gods can well desire,
Who sits and sees her petticoat unlaced,
I say no more, the rest are all disgraced.

In Nomine a4 No. 2

edited by George Hunter

La virginella (pub. 1588)

edited by Ian Gammie

Ludovico Ariosto

La virginella è simil' alla
rosa
Ch'in bel giardin sulla nativa
spina
Mentre sola e sicura si riposa.
Nè gregge, nè pastor, se le
avvicina:
L'aura soave, e l'alba
rugiadosa,
L'acqua, la terra, al suo favor
s'inchina:
Giovani vaghi, e donn'
innamorate,
Amano averne, e seni e
tempie ornate.

The virgin

The maiden is like the
rose that rests awhile
alone and safe on its own
thorn
in a fine garden.
Neither flock nor shepherd
approaches it.
It nods to the favours of
the gentle breeze,
the rosy dawn, the water,
the earth.
yearning youths and
enamoured ladies
love to have their bosoms
and brows so adorned.

Carlo Gesualdo (c.1561-1613)

Itene, o miei sospiri

(1611)

arranged by Laurence
Dreyfus

Itene, o miei sospiri
Precipitate il volo a lei
Che m'è cagion d'aspiri
martiri.
Ditele per pietà del mio gran
duolo
Ch'or mai ella mi sia
Come bella, ancor pia
Che l'amaro mio pianto
Cangerò lieto in amoroso canto.

Go now, O my sighs

My sighs, may you hasten
the flight to her
who causes me bitter
sufferings.
For pity's sake, tell her of
my great distress.
If she will be as merciful
as she is pleasing to me,
I shall turn my bitter cries
into a love song.

Interval

TEARS AND JOYS

John Dowland (1563-1626)

From silent night, true register of moanes

(pub. 1612)

arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Robert Devereux

From silent night, true register of moans
From saddest Soule consumed with deepest sins
From hard quite rent with sighs and heavy groans
My wailing Muse her woeful work begins.
And to the world brings tunes of sad despair
Sounding nought else but sorrow, grief and care.

If any eye therefore can spare a tear
To fill the well-spring that must wet my cheeks
O let that eye to this sad feast draw near
Refuse me not my humble soul beseekes
For all the teares mine eyes have ever wept
Were now too little had they all been kept.

Flow, my tears (pub. 1600)

arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Anonymous

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!
Exiled for ever, let me mourn;
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!
No nights are dark enough for those
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,
Since pity is fled;
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment
My fortune is thrown;
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,
Learn to contemn light.
Happy, happy they that in hell
Feel not the world's despite.

Shall I strive with words to move (pub. 1612)

arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Anonymous

Shall I strive with words to move,
When deeds receive not due regard?
Shall I speak, and neither please,
Nor be freely heard?

Grief alas though all in vain,
Her restless anguish must reveal:
She alone my wound shall know,
Though she will not heal.

All woes have end, though awhile delayed,
Our patience proving.
O that Time's strange effects
Could but make her loving.

Storms calm at last, and why may not she
Leave off her frowning?
O sweet love, help her hands
My affection crowning.

I wooed her, I loved her, and none but her admire.
O come dear joy, and answer my desire.

My thoughts are wing'd with hopes (pub. 1597)

arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Anonymous

My thoughts are wing'd with hopes, my hopes with love.
Mount love unto the moone in clearest night,
And say as she doth in the heavens move,
In earth so wanes and waxeth my delight;
And whisper this but softly in her eares,
Hope oft doth hang the head, and trust shead teares.

If she, for this, with clouds do maske her eyes,
And make the heavens darke with her disdaine,
With windy sighes, disperse them in the skies,
Or with thy teares dissolve them into raine;
Thoughts, hopes, and love return to me no more
Till Cynthia shine as she hath done before.

Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears

(pub. 1600)

arranged by William Wigthorpe

arranged and edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Anonymous

Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears,
To a woeful wretched wight,
Hence, despair with thy tormenting fears:

O do not my poor heart affright.
Pity, help now or never,
Mark me not to endless pain,
Alas I am condemned ever,
No hope, no help there doth remain,
But down, down, down, down I fall,
Down and arise I never shall.

DEVOTION AND PIETY

William Byrd

Miserere

edited by Laurence Dreyfus

Lullaby (pub. 1588)

edited by Ian Gammie

Anonymous

Lulla, lullaby,
My sweet little Baby, what meanest thou to cry.

Be still my blessed Babe, though cause thou hast to
mourn,
Whose blood most innocent to shed the cruel king hath
sworn.
Shedding the blood of infants all, sweet saviour, for thy
sake.
A king is born, they say, which king this king would kill,
O woe, and woeful heavy day, when wretches have their
will.

Fantasia a3 No. 1 in F

edited by George Hunter

O Lord, how vain

edited by Fretwork Editions

Sir Philip Sidney

O Lord, how vain are all our frail delights;
How mix'd with sour the sweet of our desire;
How subject oft to Fortune's subtle sleights;
How soon consum'd like snow against the fire.
Sith in this life our pleasures all be vain,
O Lord, grant me that I may them disdain.

What prince so great as doth not seem to want;
What man so rich but still doth covet more;
To whom so large was ever Fortune's grant
As for to have a quiet mind in store.
Sith in this life our pleasures all be vain,
O Lord, grant me that I may them disdain.

FALLEN HEROES

William Byrd

Fair Britain isle

edited by Fretwork Editions

Fair Britain Isle, the Mistress of the West,
Famous for wealth, but more for fertile soil,
Sits all alone with sorrows oppressed,
In sable clad by Death's most spiteful spoil;
Who took away in moment of one hour,
Henry our Prince of Princes all the flower.

Fantasia a3 No. 2 in F

edited by George Hunter

Fantasia a3 No. 3 in C

edited by George Hunter

My mistress had a little dog

edited by Fretwork Editions

Anonymous

My mistress had a little dog
Whose name was Pretty Royal
Who neither hunted sheep nor hog
But was without denial
A tumbler fine, that might be seen
To wait upon a fairy queen.

Upon his mistress he would wait
In courteous wise and humble,
And with his craft and false deceit,
When she would have him tumble,
Of coney in the pleasant prime
He would kill twenty at a time.

But out, alas! I'll speak no more.
My heart with grief doth shake.
This pretty dog was wounded sore
E'en for his mistress' sake:
A beastly man, or manly beast
Knocked out his brains; and so I rest.

A trial royal! Oyez!
Ye hounds and beagles all,
If ye sat in Appleton Hall,

Would you not judge that out of doubt
Tyburn were fit for such a lout?

*'O nata lux de lumine', 'La virginella' and 'Itene, o miei sospiri' translated
by Laurence Dreyfus.*