



(LEMS 8015)

## **MUSIC OF WILLIAM BYRD (1543- 1623) THE NEW YORK CONSORT OF VIOLS**

Lucy Bardo, bass viol

Judith Davidoff, treble and bass viols

Lawrence Lipnik, tenor viol, countertenor

Rosamund Morley, treble and tenor viols

Assistant Artist: Patricia Neely, treble and tenor viols

Guest Soloists: Tamara Crout, Soprano, Louis Bagger, harpsichord

### **WILLIAM BYRD AND HIS MUSIC**

Hailed by his contemporaries as “Britannicae Musicae Parens” (Father of English music), William Byrd (1543-1623) was, by any standard, the greatest and most influential composer in his country’s history. A prudent man, well aware of his abilities, he established himself at the head of his profession by hard work and skillful exploitation of his talent, and was able to maintain this position throughout his long life in spite of religious persecution due to his Catholic faith.

Byrd wrote music for every medium in use at the time, with the single exception of plucked instruments such as the lute. His music comprises sacred choral music for both Catholic and Anglican services, secular and spiritual madrigals and solo songs, keyboard music, and consort music for instrumental ensembles. His contributions to the development of the verse anthem and the consort song are of such originality that Byrd could well be credited with the invention of these two forms. He rescued English keyboard music from a lackluster style and blazed new paths to its brilliant future.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the viol consort usually consisted of instruments of different sizes. When not in use, the instruments were stored in a large chest, hence the term “a chest of viols.” Consort music might be written for as few as two, or as many as six instruments. The most common forms used for viol music were the Fantasia – an instrumental derivation of variations based on familiar songs or dance-tunes.

Prelude and Voluntary has been preserved as a keyboard composition in the famous collection of William Byrd’s music known as *My Ladye Nevells Booke*. Many features of the work, however, give rise to the speculation that it may have been composed originally as a fantasia for a quartet of viols. The reconstruction for viol consort performed here was made by George Hunter.

In their brief perfection, Byrd’s two Fantasias a3 exhibit his command of graceful melodic writing and contrapuntal skill. The first trio is performed on the lower pitched tenor and bass viols, while the second one features the brighter sound of the treble viol.

Fantasia a4 in G is the only one of Byrd’s four-part fantasias to have survived intact to the present time. The composer may have been particularly proud of this work, since he included it in his 1611 madrigal collection: *Psalms, Songs and Sonnets*. In typical fantasia structure, it consists of a number of sections in which contrasting themes are introduced and treated contrapuntally as the composition moves through a variety of moods.

Fantasia a4 in D has come down to us lacking the treble part, which is a modern reconstruction in the present performance. Although the work bears the attribution “Fantasia Mr Bird” in the manuscript source, it is different in style from his other music and may not be a composition of William Byrd.

The popular song, “Browning”, frequently served as the basis for instrumental variations and – judging from the number of surviving manuscript copies – Byrd’s setting of the tune for five viols must have been one of his most popular pieces of consort music. The Browning tune wanders from viol to viol through various keys for a total of twenty statements. Meanwhile the elaborate interplay of imitative motives – often derived from the song tune – and the skillful pacing of rhythmic complexities serve to build a satisfying climax and make this a particularly well-contrived composition. The final cadence contains a rather surprising harmonic twist. In this performance, the variations are prefaced by a performance of the original song with its text: *The leaves bee greene, the nuts be browne; thay hange soe highe thay will not come downe.*

In the consort song – a form especially associated with the name of William Byrd – the words of the poem are sung by a solo voice while a consort of several viols provides accompaniment. “Word painting,” so characteristic a feature of the English madrigal is rarely found in Byrd’s consort songs. Instead, the words of the poem are set in clear, syllabic style with only occasional melismas and repetition of words at cadential points.

The viols are not relegated to a subsidiary role, but are equal partners with the voice while providing a rich contrapuntal background for the comparatively straightforward delivery of the text by the singer.

“Rejoice unto the Lord” is a hymn of praise for Queen Elizabeth in the 28th year of her reign. The introductory incantation serves also as a postlude at the close of the song.

“Delight is dead” -- a duet for two voices of equal compass – is sung here by a soprano and a countertenor, thus providing a contrast in timbre between the answering and overlapping phrases of the song.

The text of the strophic song: “Farewell false love” is a bitter denunciation of the cruel delusion and deception of love. The words are attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh.

“Who made thee, hob, forsake the plow?” is a rustic dialogue two shepherds. The humorous irregularity of the rhythm aptly reflects the bucolic flavor of the text.

“My mistress had a little dog,” relates to the killing of a lady’s pet dog at Appleton Hall in Norfolk, home of Edward Paston, one of Byrd’s patrons. With mock seriousness, the poem tells of the “murder” and then proposes that the murderer should stand trial before a jury of the dog’s canine peers and suffer public execution.

“Ye sacred muses” is a tribute to the memory of the composer Thomas Tallis, William Byrd’s teacher and mentor, who died in 1585. The elegy, with its apt reflection of the text and its moving refrain: “Tallis is dead and Music dies,” is without doubt one of Byrd’s most beautiful compositions.

Notes by George Hunter, Urbana, Illinois, December, 1993

#### NOTES ON THE HARPSICHORD MUSIC

All the harpsichord pieces on this recording except the Prelude, Pavan and Galliard are preserved in the manuscript collection of Byrd’s Virginal music known as My Ladye Nevell’s Booke. Copied out on the composer’s behalf by John Baldwin and bearing the date of completion 11, Sept. 1591, this manuscript is the earliest of the great collections of virginal music in England, or, on anything approaching its level of accomplishment, anywhere else.

(“Virginals” referred at this time not only to the particular kind of small harpsichord for which we reserve the term today, but to any jack instrument including the wing-shaped form we now call “harpsichord.”) In 1551 Byrd was nearing his fiftieth year and for this collection made a selection of his works from the preceding couple of decades.

The style of this music is new and original, posing and solving new compositional and instrumental problems, but what is most remarkable is its maturity, its synthesis and balance of varied and even apparently opposed stylistic elements: vocal melody and instrumental figuration, four-square dance and song phrasing against polyphonic

suppleness. The extended pieces in the collection show scrupulous care and sure mastery in constructing convincing large forms.

In the eleventh century Guido of Arezzo assigned the mnemonic syllables, Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La, to what we would call the first six notes of the major scale on G, C, and F. These are termed respectively the hard, natural, and soft hexachord. This is essentially a “movable do” (rather, ut) system. This, rather than the octave scales familiar today, was the system by which musicians mapped the tonal territory. Composing instrumental fantasies on this most elemental of *sogetti* was a project undertaken often and by many composers around Byrd’s time. Byrd’s *Ut re mi fa sol las* begins with imitative polyphony based on the hexachord, then continues as is normal in a fantasy with a succession of different motives and musical ideas. The whole is unified by *cantus firmus* appearances of the hexachord in whole notes, first ascending, then descending.

(This fantasy contains two notes, an a flat and a d sharp, one each, which exceed the proper limits of the mean-tone tuning I use for this recording. I like to think of the sour notes as signposts: “thus far and no further,” which dramatize the harmonic scope of the composition.)

#### THE PAVAN AND GALLIARD “PHILIP TREGIAN”

These are not in my *Ladye Nevells Booke*. They undoubtedly date from later than 1591. The prelude I play to introduce them is preserved without attribution in one 1624 source in conjunction with just the galliard. On the basis of style and the harmonic source in conjunction with just the galliard. On the basis of style and the harmonic parallelism between the prelude and the pavan’s opening bars, Oliver Neighbor firmly asserts that Byrd himself composed it for the use to which I put it.

Among genres of instrumental music, Thomas Morley considered the pavan as second in importance only to the fantasy. In the hands of Byrd and his contemporaries, the pavan far transcended its dance origins to become a vehicle for lyrical polyphony and often “passionate” (Dowland’s word) expression. More often than not, we find the pavan paired with a galliard. Nuclear suites of this sort, pairing a dance in duple meter with an “after-dance” (*Nachtanz*) in compound (triplet) meter were common in the sixteenth-century lute repertory. Byrd’s galliards are, however, always-independent compositions, typically, as here, characterized by lively metric displacements and vigorous plays of 6/4 against 3/2 meter. The Philip Tregian pavan and galliard are in the usual form of three strains with varied repeats. These repeats display not only the craft of ornamentation, but also the recasting of passages of consort-like polyphony into an entirely different instrumental language.

The openings of prelude, pavan, and galliard show the left hand in the fifth octave chord position in which it remains locked through so much trivial dance music for quilled instruments in the sixteenth century. This position is like a harpsichord signature. As the left hand moves from this primitive chord into taking its part in the unfolding polyphony of a pavan, the player can have a tactile sense of the blending of contrary styles, which this music represents.

The Maiden's Song, close in texture to actual viol consort music, is probably an early work. The tune is treated as a cantus firmus in the treble for six variations, moving to tenor and alto straightforward build-up of activity culminates in the virtuoso two-part variation 6. The last two variations are in serene and steady eighth-note instrumental polyphony.

--Louis Bagger, New York City, December 1993

#### THE HARPSICHORD USED IN THIS RECORDING

The harpsichord used in this recording was made by Frank Hubbard in 1969. It has one manual and a range of four octaves and one tone: C-d. It is based on Italian prototypes of the 17th century, most specifically an anonymous instrument of 1600, now in the Raymond Russel collection, Edinburgh. Its somewhat unusual sonority is partly due to a hollow westplank.

#### TRACKS AND TIMING:

01. Prelude and Voluntary - 3:13
02. Rejoice unto the Lord, sacred song for voice & 4 viols - 4:08
03. Fantasia a3 in C - 1:59
04. Fantasia a3 in C - :52
05. Ut re mi fa sol la, for keyboard in G major, MB 64 - 6:18
06. Fantasia a 4, for instrumental consort in G major (first part only) - 2:43
07. Delight is dead, song for voices & viols - 4:06
08. Farewell false love, song for voice & 4 viols - 5:26
09. Fantasia a4 In D - 1:38
10. Pavan & Galliard ("Ph. Tregian"), for keyboard in F major, No. 2, MB 60 - 5:58
11. Who Made Thee, Hob, Forsake the Plough, dialogue for 2 voices & 4 viols - 3:43
12. My mistress had a little dog, consort song for voices & 4 viols - 6:09
13. The Maiden's Song, variations for keyboard, MB 82 - 4:44
14. Browning a 5, for instrumental consort ("The Leaves Bee Greene") - 5:03
15. Ye sacred Muses (elegy for Thomas Tallis), consort song for voice & 4 viols - 3:09

#### WORDS TO THE SELECTIONS CONTAINING WORDS:

##### TRACK 2. REJOICE UNTO THE LORD

Rejoice unto the Lord with mirth, which us from foreign fears  
Preserved hath in quiet state these eight and twenty years, Amen.  
The mercies of the Lord our God pour'd down upon this land  
Doth far surmount in quantity the number of the sand;  
So that the people Israel did never feel nor see  
More certain tokens of God's love in their delivery  
Than we of England, whom the Lord hath blessed these many years  
Through his handmaid, Elizabeth, in peace from foreign fears;  
Whereas the nations on each side with troubles are beset,  
Devoid of peace and quietness, and live in terrors great.

### TRACK 7. DELIGHT IS DEAD

Delight is dead, what now for me remains? Delight is dead; should  
Worldly glories give?  
Delight is dead: the purchase of my pains; Delight is dead: and I alas,  
Do live  
A life in strife that dies ten times a day, And yet no whit such dying  
Dare bewray.  
Lift up, my lute, thy sacred silver sound; Ring out her knell, for my  
Delight is dead. One silly frown it was that gave the wound, With pen  
Perverse whereby her bane was bred.  
Ring out, ring out: cease passing bell to toll: bereft hath left to me a  
Mourning soul.

### TRACK 8. FAREWELL FALSE LOVE

Farewell, false love, the oracle of lies, A mortal foe, an enemy to rest,  
An envious boy, from whom all cares arise,  
A bastard vile, a beast with rage  
Possess'd,  
A way of error, a temple full of treason, In all effects contrary unto reason.

A poison'd serpent cover'd all with flow'rs, Mother of sighs and murderer  
Of repose,  
A sea of sorrows from whence are drawn such show'rs As moisture lend to  
every grief that grows,  
A school of guile, a net of deep deceit, A gilded hook that holds a  
poison'd bait.

A fortress foil'd which reason did defend, A syren song, a fever of the mind,  
A maze wherein affection finds no end, A raging cloud that runs before the wind,  
A substance like the shadow of the sun, A goal of grief for which the wisest run.  
A quenchless fire, a nurse of trembling fear, A path that  
leads to peril and mishap,  
A true retreat of sorrow and despair, An idle boy that  
Sleeps in pleasure's lap,  
A deep distrust of that which certain seems, A hope of that  
Which reason doubtful deems.

--Attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh, (1551-1618)

### TRACK 11. WHO MADE THEE, HOB, FORSAKE THE PLOW?

Who made thee, Hob, forsake the plough and fall in love?  
Sweet beauty which hath pow'r to bow the Gods above.  
What! Dost thou serve a shepherdess? Ay, such as has no peer I guess.  
Sylvana fair, of high desert, whom I love best.  
O Hob I feat she looks too high, Yet love I must or else I die, I die.

#### TRACK 12. MY MISTRESS HAD A LITTLE DOG

My mistress had a little dog whose name was Pretty Royal,  
Who neither hunted sheep nor hot, 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 ad humble,  
And with his craft and false deceit, when she would have him tumble,  
Of coneyes in the pleasant prime, he would kill twenty at a time.

The goddess which Diana hight among her beagles dainty  
Had not a hound so fair and white, nor graced with such beauty;  
And yet his beauty was not such, but his conditions were as rich.

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 knock'd out his brains and so I rest.

A trial royal, royal a trial, a trial! O yez!  
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?

#### TRACK 15. YE SACRED MUSES

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.

#### THE ARTISTS

Since its founding in 1972 under the direction of Judith Davidoff, the New York Consort of Viols has brought to life a large repertoire of viol music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Since 1974 the consort has commissioned and presented new works for viol consort. Several of these works have been recorded on a CD, *Illicita Cosa*, recently released by Musical Heritage. The New York Consort of Viols presents frequent workshops for amateur and pre-professional viol players. Individually, the Consort members perform with today's foremost early music ensembles.

Soprono Tamara Crout is the winner of the 1993 *Musica Sacra* Bach Vocal competition. She has been a featured soloist with many internationally known ensembles, such as the Waverly Consort, the Dallas Bach Society, and the Ensemble for Early Music. In the 1992- 1993 season Ms. Crout made her debut with the New York Consort of Viols, Concert Royal, Four Nations Ensemble and the Bach Ensemble.

Harpsichordist Louis Bagger is widely recognized as one of America's leading artist as well as an inspiring teacher. He studied with Ralph Kirkpatrick and Gustav Leonhardt and was a Fulbright scholar in Rome. He is featured on eight recordings for VOX,

Monitor and Musical Heritage. Of his playing The New York Times wrote, “He has technique to do anything he wants.”

Patricia Neely specializes in the vielle and violone as well as the viol. She is a member of the ARTEK Ensemble, Genesee Baroque Players and Parthenia.

#### CREDITS

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