



(LEMS 8083, formerly released as LLST 7246)

Music of the English Renaissance

Walter Frye:
Missa Nobilis et Pulchra
Motets ~ Chansons

John Bedingham:
Myn hertis lust

Capella Cordina
Alejandro Planchart, *Director*

All during the 15th century, English music had an enormous influence and popularity throughout Europe. Ironically, few English sources for this repertory survive, and most of it has come down to us in Continental copies. The composers, when we know their names, remain at best shadowy figures.

This is the case of Walter Frye. From the many copies of the handful of his works that survive, we can gather that he was very popular, but of his life we know only that in 1457 he was a member of the London Guild of Musicians, and that he died in 1475. Only one of his works, *Sospitati dedit*, has come down to us in an English manuscript.

English pieces were often copied anonymously or with wrong ascriptions in the Continent. *Tout a par moy* and *So ys emprentid* appear also with ascriptions to Gilles Binchois and to John Bedingham respectively, though Frye is most likely the composer. *Myn hertis lust*,

however, is by Bedingham. We have included it here because it compliments Frye's ballads in their main source, the Mellon Chansonnier.

Continental scribes seldom made any sense of the English texts. Often they adapted French or Latin words to these pieces. This is the case with the three ballads in this record, for which only the Mellon Chansonnier has the English words. Even in this case, the copyist mauled them so badly that a reconstruction was necessary. The reconstruction used here is that of the forthcoming edition of the Chansonnier by Leeman Perkins and Howard Garey.

Frye's songs and the motets derived from them, such as the Ave Regina, were his best known works. They show him as a lyrical composer equal to Dufay or Binchois, although his melodies, like those of Bedingham, are more direct than those of the French masters. Only in *Tout a par moy* does Frye approach the Burgundian melodic style.

Sospitati dedit and the Mass present a different picture. Both are intense, austere-sounding works that belong squarely in the English tradition. The motet, a prose for Saint Nicholas, uses a cantus firmus in the tenor and resembles a carol in its literal repeats and its alternations of solo and chorus. The Mass itself is built on a cantus firmus taken from a Sarum respond for Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The cantus firmus returns, unchanged, in each movement, but in the duet sections the tenor is silent or else it becomes a free voice. All of the movements begin with the same motto; they all share the same alternation of duos and chorus, and the same metric scheme: O (3/2), C (2/2), O (3/2). Within each movement, however, the formal cycles produced by the text division, the alternation of duos and chorus, and the metric scheme, are so set that none coincide, thus producing a wholly irrational structure.

Following English practice, we use singers in all parts in the Mass. Like other English composers, Frye uses C instead of , but within a notational context that clearly calls for double-time in C.

Missa Nobilis et Pulchra

Discant: 3-6 Singers. Cornemuse.

Tenor: 2-3 singers. Sackbut.

Contratenor: 2-4 singers. Bassoon.

The Kyrie uses the prosule *Deus Creator*. In the Credo, the text from *Et in spiritum* to *venture saeculi* was not set. Since the Mass text is readily available, only the prosula is given below.

God, creator of everything, you, our God, holy one, have mercy. You we praise with rejoicing, great king of kings, we pray you, have mercy. Praise, virtue, peace, and domination that abide forever, have mercy. Christ, only king, born of the gentle father and equally eternal, have mercy. You that saved lost man from death, life-giver, have mercy. May your grazing sheep not die, O Jesus, the good shepherd, have mercy. O Consoling Spirit, humbly we pray you, have mercy on us. O giver of grace, grant us, compassionately, the gifts of life, and consent to have mercy on us.

So ys emprentid (Ballad)

Discant: Jeanine Dovell. Lute.

Tenor: Cromorne.

Contratenot: Viola.

So it is imprinted in my remembrance your woman head, your youth, your gentleness, your godly port, your friendly countenance, your prized beauty, with your kindness, that Lord that knows all

I take to witness that wake I, sleep I, or what with thing I do, in well, in woe, in joy or heaviness, my heart is with you, go where that you go.

Alas, alas (Ballad)

Discant: Christine Hunter.

Tenor: Sackbut, recorder.

Contratenor: Bassoon.

Alas, alas. Alas is my chief song, for pain and woe none other can I sing. Instead of rest, a sob I tale along, for my unease and death along sighing. The ground of woe, I feel, is departing, the more long the more biting the pain. With the true turtle all change forswearing: "Welcome my certain death," I into e and plaint.

John Bedingham: Myn hertis lust (Ballad)

Discant: Millicent Allison. Lute.

Tenor: Viola, recorder.

Contratenor: Bassoon.

My heart's desire, star of my comfort, which is the guide unto my perfect life. Charity, that well of pleasance and disport, whom I serve with an attentive heart. And since for you is my care and strife of woman head, so have I, upon my peace, given you my truth and my loyalty.

Tout a par moy (Rondeau)

Discant: Amy Caitlin. Recorder.

Tenor: Viola, lute, recorder.

Contratenor: Bassoon.

All by myself so that no one will see me, so full of sorrow as no one ever was, I kept alone like a soul in torment, full of regret for my painful life, and for fate, which has fought me so hard. Think of the sorrow my misfortune brings me, for my ills grow like mounts, so that I fear shortly they will kill me. All by myself...But nonetheless, if I die for serving you, my joy, and if you were even harder to me, I fear not that I will forget you, for it is my lot to be yours. All by myself...

O florens rosa

Discant: Kathryn Sencabaugh. Recorder.

Tenor: Franck Avril. Recorder.

Contratenor: Viola.

O flowering rose, beautiful Mother of the Lord, O gentle Virgin, O most fruitful vine, O clearer dawn, pray for us, so that we may be worthy of rejoicing in the light beyond.

Ave Regina

Discant: Jeanine Dovell.

Tenor: David Richie. Lute.

Contratenor: Viola.

Hail, queen of heaven! Mother of the king of angels, O Mary, flower of virgins, as a rose, as a lily. Pray to your son for the salvation of the faithful. O Mary, flower of virgins, as a rose, as a lily.

Sospitati dedit

Discant: 4 singers. Recorder. Solos: Caitlin, Dovell.
Tenor: 4 singers. Bassoon. Solos: Newton, Richie.
Contratenor: 4 singers. Sackbut.

The seeping oil gives health to the sick. Nicholas presides over the help to shipwrecks. He brings the dead from death at the crossroads. The Jew is baptized, having seen the gold. What a wonderful increase in God's harvest shows the Holy Man. The vessel, lost at sea, is returned to the father and his son. Therefore this congregation sings praises to Nicholas. For whoever asks him from the heart is given back salvation. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Choir: Susan Addiss, Millicent Allison, Amy Caitlin, Jeanine Dovell, Christine Hunter, Kerala Snyder, Kathryn Sencabaugh, Franck Avril, Stephen Hartke, David Carr, Thomas MacCracken, David Marsh, George Newton, David Richie.

Players: Anne Johnson, viola, Karen Kleeman, lute, Francis Braunlich, cornemuse, recorder, Charles Scott, sackbut, Kim Kowalke, bassoon, Christopher Wall, recorder.

Recorded May 20 and 27, 1972, at Marquand Chapel, Yale University, by Frederick Bashour.

Track Lengths:

Missa Nobilis Et Pulchra

- 1. Kyrie deus creator 5:09
- 2. Gloria 5:38
- 3. Credo 5:40
- 4. Sanctus 5:24
- 5. Agnus Dei (Conclusion of Mass) 4:46

Chansons and Motets

- 6. So ys emprentid 1:55
- 7. Alas Alas 3:00
- 8. Myn hertis lust (John Bedingham) 2:02
- 9. Tout a par moy 5:25
- 10. O florens rosa 3:00
- 11. Ave regina 1:39
- 12. Sospitati dedit 4:05



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