

PARTHENIA

Beverly Au, treble & bass viol
Lawrence Lipnik, treble, tenor & bass viol
Rosamund Morley, treble, tenor & bass viol
Lisa Terry, treble & bass viol
with
Annalisa Pappano, treble & bass viol
Motomi Igarashi, treble & bass viol

PURCELL'S ROOTS

Fantasia "Di sei soprani"	William Daman (1540-1591)
Pavan and Galliard a6	William Byrd (1538-1623)
Quemadmodum a6	John Taverner (1490-1545)
In nomine a5	Picforth (fl. c. 1580)
In nomine a6	Anonymous 16 th c.
De la court a5	Robert Parsons (c.1535-1572)
A fancy a4	Renaldo Paradiso (d. 1570)
Fantasia #3 a6	Byrd

Intermission

Suite for four viols	Matthew Locke (1621-1677)
Fantasie	
Courante	
Ayre	
Sarabande	
Fantasia "Di sei bassi"	Alfonso Ferrabosco I (1543-1588)
Fantasia #2 a6	Giovanni Coprario (c. 1570-1627)
Fantasia #3 a6	Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)
Fantasia a6 "Goe from my window"	Gibbons
Pavan #2 a6	John Jenkins (1592-1678)
Fantasia #10 a6	Jenkins
Fantasia a5 "Upon one note"	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
In nomine a6	Purcell

Sunday, May 6, 2018 at 4 o'clock p.m.
The Church of Saint Luke in the Fields, New York City

Purcell's Roots: Jacobean Fantasies for Six
Viols May 6, 2018
Program Note

Henry Purcell's sudden and untimely death in 1695 cut short that composer's life at the age of thirty-six. Despite the brevity of his career, Purcell produced a body of music that has secured his legacy as the most celebrated English composer prior to the twentieth century. That reputation rests especially on Purcell's songs and music for the theater; his *Dido and Aeneas* was not the first work of its kind written in English, but its enduring popularity has earned it pride of place in the modern operatic repertory. Yet Purcell also left his mark in the realm of instrumental music, with works that form the apotheosis of a rich tradition of English consort music stretching back to the middle of the sixteenth century. Today's program celebrates that achievement by presenting two of his works for consort alongside some of the gems of the tradition that preceded them, from the time of Henry VIII through the Restoration.

William Daman was born in Liège around 1540. A register of foreigners living in London records that his residence there began some twenty-five years later in the employ of Thomas Sackville (later Lord Buckhurst), who kept a large stable of musicians. His first publication, a book of simple four-voice harmonizations of psalm tunes, appeared in London in 1579, the same year he entered the service of Queen Elizabeth. The highly unusual texture of Daman's "Fantasia di sei soprani," for six instruments in the treble register, may reflect his specialization as a recorder player, since the only other comparable pieces from the period were composed for cornets. In the event, the "Fantasia" for six trebles, uniquely preserved in a manuscript at the New York Public Library, is just as well suited to the lush texture of viols. Because the six trebles overlap exactly in register, the opening point of imitation undertakes some minor acrobatics to aid the listener in differentiating between the entries of the voices. Related strategies prevail throughout the work, as Daman exploits the ambitus of the instrument in order to achieve six independent lines.

Daman's "Fantasia" is not quite in a class of its own. Its mirror image is the Fantasy for six basses ("Di sei bassi") by his Italian contemporary Alfonso Ferrabosco. If anything, works composed entirely for bass voices or instruments were even more unusual than those for trebles, the best-known example being Cipriano de Rore's song "Calami sonum ferentes," setting a Latin text by Catullus. So unusual was Rore's song that one modern musicologist has developed a theory to explain why it was deliberately designed to grate against the ears. On viols, however, the bass-only texture achieves an effect is that of remarkable tranquility, even as Ferrabosco outdoes Rore by writing in six parts. Here the principal means of differentiating between the voices is rhythmic, but the lines readily blend into one another as the opening point of imitation gives way to freer counterpoint.

Born in Bologna in 1543, Ferrabosco came to England by way of France, where he achieved much renown during his teenage years. By 1562, he was serving Queen Elizabeth, who reportedly placed great value on his services as a musician and diplomat—and even, by some accounts, a spy, in a type of arrangement that would not have been unprecedented. Peddling information was easy business for musicians of the day, who were often privy to the inner circles at court, but it was also risky. As an Italian at the protestant English court, Ferrabosco never fully rose above suspicion as an agent of one side or the other of the Reformation. He also served as one of the conduits by which contemporary Italianate compositional practices reached England from the continent. Evidence for his influence surfaces in the works of Robert Parsons, among others, and Henry Peacham would later write of the spirit of "friendly aemulation" that he enjoyed with his most formidable English contemporary, William Byrd.

A similar spirit suffused the longstanding English tradition of composing works for consort based on the “In Nomine” tune. This tradition had a distinctively local character, moreover, because the tune at its core was derived from an antiphon sung during Vespers on Trinity Sunday in the Sarum rite, the liturgy used exclusively in pre-Reformation England. It served as the structural basis for the instrumental tradition by way of John Taverner’s setting of the words “In nomine Domini” (“in the name of the Lord”) in his six-part Mass *Gloria tibi trinitas*, which came detached from its parent work and circulated widely as an independent movement. Taverner’s “Quemadmodum,” is an instrumental work in two sections whose title, the opening word of the Vulgate Psalm 41, suggests that it may also have been used for sol-faing (singing music to the syllables of the scale), a common vocal consort practice in Elizabethan England, and it demonstrates the contrapuntal facility of his mature style. Taverner, like so many of his contemporaries, seems not to have distinguished strongly between writing for viols or voices; much music of the period, like this piece, must have passed fluidly between the two modes of performance.

Imitative textures such as we hear in Taverner’s work came to characterize much of the “In Nomine” tradition, for the stolid *cantus firmus* supported much contrapuntal ingenuity among the newly composed voices. The “In Nomine” for five viols attributed to one “Picforth” combines its imitation with the highly original choice of assigning each voice a single note value to be played throughout the entire work. While one of the bass viols plays the “In Nomine” tune in whole notes, that is, the four other instruments (from the bass upward) play exclusively in dotted half notes, half notes, quarter notes, and dotted quarter notes, respectively. We know nothing more about Picforth than the attribution of this curious work to him in the source that preserves it, but it gives testimony to the imaginative musical mind of its maker. The anonymous composer of the other six-voice “In Nomine” also organized that work around an interesting rhythmic conceit: the note value assigned to the tune is three-quarters of a breve (equivalent to the measure unit in transcription), so that the two are often out of sync. It too stands in as an affecting exemplar of a tradition that ran to more than 150 works, ranging across the chronology of this program, from Taverner to Purcell.

Beyond works based on the “In Nomine” tune, two of the other important forms within the English consort tradition were dances and fantasies. Perhaps no sixteenth-century composer was more adept in all these categories (and sometimes two of them at once) than Byrd. Born in London around 1540, Byrd was sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1572, taking the place of Robert Parsons, whose accidental death by drowning had left a sudden vacancy. This prized position afforded protections rarely extended to other members of the community of recusant Catholics to which he belonged, in part because his music was so highly regarded by many well-placed members of the court, including the Queen herself. Byrd’s admiration for the man he replaced in the Chapel Royal is evident in the “Fantasia” for six parts, probably composed in the 1580s.

This work, which Byrd published in 1611, and another G-minor fantasia for six parts, which he did not, owe several debts to Parson’s five-part “De la court,” which had become one of the most popular consort works of the day after his death. The most apparent debt concerns the organization of the large-scale forms of these works into self-contained sections, beginning with expansive points of imitation that open out onto livelier music with a triple division of the beat. Byrd also appears to have taken from Parsons several means of creating interest: antiphonal, echo-like contrasts of texture and quotations of short phrases that evoke well-known tunes. In the “Fantasia” on today’s program, however, Byrd departs from the organization of his model by achieving a three-part, rather than two-part sectional division.

The climactic final section of this masterful and mature work is based on the galliard, a type of dance in compound duple meter, with the added twist of a metric displacement that propels us into the coda. Thus it makes for instructive comparison with Byrd's only known galliard for consort, paired here (as was the convention) with a pavan, a type of dance comprising three repeated sections in duple meter. Departing from his characteristic approach to dance-based works (most of them for keyboard), Byrd begins both movements with similar musical material, and they share other audible thematic resonances. By contrast with the galliard-like section of the "Fantasia," Byrd has offered a more straightforward pair of dance movements, but these late works, which probably date to well after the turn of the seventeenth century, are no less distinguished.

Apart from Ferrabosco, the second half of the program features composers whose influence Purcell must have felt more directly, not least since they, too, had served Stuart monarchs. Giovanni Coprario enjoyed a long association with Charles I, perhaps, as later tradition has held, as his tutor on the viol. The prolific writer and amateur viol-player Roger North, an astute commentator on the tradition, describes him wryly as "Coperario, who by the way was plain Cooper but affected an Itallian termination." Coprario, that is, was English by birth, and he was one of the most prominent composers in a remarkable circle of musicians that also included Orlando Gibbons and Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, among others. His passion for Italianate music manifested in his Fantasias for five or six parts, which trade heavily in tricks drawn from the virtuoso Italian madrigal of the late *cinquecento*—a very few of these even bear texts from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and Guarini's *Il pastor fido*. The Fantasia on today's program was never texted, so far as we know, but it paints with the vivid affective palette of the Italian madrigal all the same.

Gibbons too was associated with Charles I, and he was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1603 until his death in 1625. Born in Oxford in 1583, he was already well on his way to becoming one of the leading composers of the day when he assumed that position, and then as now his music was prized both for the intricacy and craftsmanship of its counterpoint and for its wit and accessibility. All of these characteristics are on display in today's selections, a pair of Fantasias for six parts. Somewhat unusual, however, is the second of these, a set of variations based on a tune called "Goe from my window." The climax of this demanding and extraordinary work features the two bass viols playing passagework at breakneck speed, one after the other, trading ripostes in quick succession. Their spectacular exchange owes a debt to the tradition of the division-viol, in which virtuosic embellishments were played, often extemporaneously, by one or two bass soloists.

John Jenkins, who came of age in the Jacobean era and lived into the Restoration, passed much of his career as what today we would call a freelancer, enjoying the patronage of many without taking a permanent position. In this he found much success, since his works were in high demand among amateur musicians around the country at mid-century. In 1660 he took up the appointment of theorbo player in the Private Musick of Charles II, but comments by his pupil North suggest that he seldom played at court, presumably owing to his advancing age (he was by then in his sixties). His long life serves as a bridge to Matthew Locke and Purcell.

Locke was Purcell's immediate predecessor as the composer for the court violin band, modeled after a similar group kept by Louis XIV of France, the Twenty-Four Violins of the King. Locke also directed the King's Private Music, which provided domestic music for members of the royal household. His "Suite for Four Viols," in D, likely represents one of his most mature works for consort, since it belongs to a group that North later praised as a glorious sunset: "a magnifick consort of 4 parts, after the old style, which was the last of the kind that hath bin made." The

organization of the movements—Fantasie, Courante, Ayre, Sarabande—was conventional, designed to achieve variety across the work as a whole.

Charles II reportedly disliked the counterpoint that was characteristic of Fantasias in general, and in some of his works Locke accordingly kept the writing simple. Not here: Locke's work opens with a lengthy point of imitation. The formal freedoms of the Fantasia in general invited a diverse array of responses on the part of composers, as today's program reveals. Indeed Purcell's "Fantasia 'Upon One Note'" carries the technique of composition based on the pre-existing material of a *cantus firmus* to its extreme. In this work, a full texture grows out of the ground of a single note, C, held throughout by a single line (traded, in this performance, between two of the players). Like the Fantasie in Locke's suite, Purcell's work clearly divides into multiple sections differentiated by tempo and tonality, but his ability to squeeze a single note for all its worth is almost without precedent.

With his "In Nomine," however, Purcell looked past his immediate contemporaries to the roots of the consort tradition, and a form that had gradually faded into disuse by the early 1680s, the period from which the work dates. It marks the composer's intense interest in counterpoint in those years, when he undertook self-study in the subject; his debt to Elizabethan composers is apparent not only in the piquant dissonances and pungent cross-relations of this work, but also in his return to the "In Nomine" settings that had once been at the core of the consort repertory. Purcell's homage to that history is a work of dignified introspection, though its audience at the time was likely limited to a select few of the composer's friends and colleagues. North felt that the tradition had come to a close with Locke, but in Purcell it lived a little longer, and with extraordinary consequence.

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