

Essex Voices

Annabel Malton - soprano
Anne-Dore Beaton and Kate Evans - alto
Nick Castell - tenor
Gerald Malton - baritone
Nick Webb - bass

Chelys Consort of Viols

Ibi Aziz, Harry Buckoke, Jenny Bullock,
Kate Conway, Alison Kinder.

O all true faithful hearts	Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)
This is the record of John	Orlando Gibbons
Christ rising again	William Byrd (1543-1623)
Fantasia 'two parts in one'	William Byrd
Haec Dies	William Byrd
Pavan and Almain	Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)
Thou art my King	Thomas Tomkins
Above the starrs	Thomas Tomkins
-----Interval-----	
Glorious and powerful God	Orlando Gibbons
Fantasia a3 No 1	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Fantasia a4 No 8	
See, see, the Word is incarnate	Orlando Gibbons
Suite of Dances:	Anthony Holborne (1545-1602)
Pavana 'Patiencia'	
Almaine 'The Choice'	
Galliard 'Muy Linda'	
The Silver Swan	Orlando Gibbons
The Cries of London	Orlando Gibbons

Essex Voices

Essex Voices draws together some of the most accomplished amateur singers from Essex and the surrounding counties. Its origins go back nearly thirty years to four singers who met periodically on Friday evenings to sing madrigals for their own enjoyment. Over the intervening years the group has grown to number, at full strength, some twenty singers. We still meet, almost always on Friday evening, for our own enjoyment and tackle wide-ranging unaccompanied repertoire from the early Renaissance to the present day, by way of romantic part-songs and lighter jazz arrangements.

Occasionally we give public performances, often with a smaller group drawn from the larger one, singing one-a-part. These have included fund-raising recitals in north Essex and Norfolk churches, a Christmas concert for the Ongar Music Club, choral evensong at Great Waltham Church and a concert at Christ's College, Cambridge in aid of the local hospice.

All the members of the group are enthusiastic and confident choral singers and come with a diverse range of experience. We welcome good sight-readers with pleasant, blending voices who are confident holding a line singing one-a-part. To find out more, to book the group or to be sent details of forthcoming concerts, please contact Annabel Malton at annabel@maltons.me.uk.

Chelys Consort of Viols

Described by Gramophone as having released 'unquestionably the most beautiful recording of the Lachrimae', Chelys have garnered a reputation for their faithful yet fresh interpretations of the consort repertoire. They take their name from an ancient Greek word which referred to a bowed lyre, said to have been invented by the god Hermes. The word was borrowed by the English violist Christopher Simpson on the title page of his treatise 'The Division Viol' when he translated the work into Latin.

The members of Chelys are among the UK's leading exponents of the viol, particularly as a consort instrument, and their consort viols are strung entirely in gut (not strings overwound with metal), which lends them a particularly distinctive sound. They frequently collaborate with other period instrumentalists and singers, particularly enjoying repertoire for voices and viols. Recent highlights have included a project with vocal consort Fieri, recording the complete 5-part viol fantasias of Michael East alongside some of East's compositions for voices and viols, a programme which the two groups are looking forward to performing in the coming months as the lock-

down lifts. Another exciting project is the commissioning of a new piece from composer Jill Jarman, with four voices and percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie. It's called The Language of Bells and examines what the sound of bells has signified to people across hundreds of years of history.

Chelys record for the BIS label, and their next disc will be the music of Henry Purcell, some of the latest, and many would say best music written for the viol consort. Their discs have received considerable critical acclaim, being praised by BBC Music Magazine for their 'light as gossamer' sound, and the Guardian for being 'wonderfully supple, propulsive and alive'.

Angel Early Music

Angel Early Music is delighted to lend support to tonight's concert, one of the first locally for many months. We are a charity with the purpose of supporting Early Music education and performance, both professional and amateur, at a high level, particularly in the geographic South-East of England. We do this through grants for projects that would otherwise not get off the ground for lack of funding, through bursaries for students to attend recognised courses, both full-time and part-time, and by promoting our own events championing Early Music. Our income is made up of donations and revenue from our fundraising projects. There is much more information about the charity, the projects we are supporting and how you can get involved, including signing up to our mailing list so that you don't miss any of our events at:

<http://angelearlymusic.org.uk>

Notes on the music

Tonight's concert celebrates the music of Orlando Gibbons and some of the composers working at around the same time in England. The sharp-eyed among you will have noticed that the title of the concert does not actually feature tonight. *O clap your hands* is an eight-part vocal piece and in the end, very sadly, we have only been allowed 6 singers.

Music in England flourished in the late sixteenth century and when Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, many of the composers represented tonight were at the height of their powers and influence. During the early seventeenth century, a form of church anthem developed in which solo verse sections were interspersed with chorus sections, all accompanied and in English, and it is these pieces which form the backbone of our programme tonight, along with some of the sublime instrumental music for viol consort.

Orlando Gibbons came from a musical family, his father held positions as chief wait at both Oxford and Cambridge and his brothers were also musicians. At the age of 12, he became a member of Edward's Choir of King's College, Cambridge. It is not known who taught him composition, it may have been his father or older brother, or possibly even William Byrd, but by the age of 15 he was composing and continued to do so throughout his life, writing examples of all the different types of music available to him. *O all true faithful hearts* is a verse anthem written as "A thanks Giving for the Kings happie recoverie from a great dangerous sicknes", in April 1619. By then Gibbons was the most prominent composer at court and had recently been appointed to attend the privy chamber of James 1. The first verse starts with just one voice and as the anthem progresses more and more voices join in, each verse ending with a joyful refrain.

We continue with *This is the Record of John* which recounts the prophecy of John the Baptist foretelling the coming of Jesus. It was written at the request of William Laud for St John's College Oxford and presumably received its first performance there. A solo alto voice tells the story, and the chorus takes up the soloist's words in each of the three sections.

Christ rising again is an Easter Sunday anthem published by William Byrd in *Songs of Sundrie Natures* in 1589, just six years after Gibbons was born. The verses are given to the two upper voices and in the first part, the chorus comments on text of the verses. By the second part the infectious triple rhythms encourage the chorus to take up in exuberant fashion the material introduced by the solo voices.

Byrd is probably best known for his vocal writing, and publications with his teacher and friend Thomas Tallis. Instrumentally he wrote extensively for the keyboard, but his music for viol consort is among some of our favourite. He combines reverent and playful elements in beautifully graceful writing, and his fantasias are often two or three times the length of those of those of his contemporaries, but are endlessly inventive and always entertaining. The full title of this one is *Two parts in one in the 4th above* which sounds terribly complicated, but just means that two of the players are playing the same part, like in a round, but one is playing a 4th higher than the other. Generally, rounds are quite short, because it's jolly difficult to write something that will always work in partnership with itself and not get monotonous, but Byrd keeps the canon going through the entire six-minute piece here, whilst simultaneously handling three other beautifully integrated contrapuntal lines.

Byrd was a life-long Catholic, who managed to navigate his way through a very turbulent period. He was supported by the Petre family who had properties at Thorndon and at Ingatestone. Ingatestone Hall remains in the private ownership of the current Lord Petre. Byrd spent his last years at Stondon Massey not far from here. Whereas the other anthems tonight were all written for the Protestant liturgy and are in English, *Haec dies* is in the Latin of the Catholic tradition. It is a motet using an antiphon text associated with Easter, full of energy and rhythmic vitality. Byrd loves to confuse by throwing things off the beat and this piece is no exception!

This is the day which the Lord hath made:
let us be glad and rejoice therein.
Alleluia.

Thomas Tomkins wrote some fabulous consort music, in a style that is often more harmonically conservative than much of his vocal writing. The Pavan and Almain here have echoes of his early teacher William Byrd, though you can hear connections to Orlando Gibbons, senior organist when Tomkins was at the Chapel Royal. Having two equal soprano parts in 5-part writing is not a common trait in English instrumental music of this period, it is more common vocally and in 6-part writing, but several of Tomkins's 5-part pavans are scored this way. In the Almain we think he had a brief moment of accidentally writing a bass part for a keyboard instead of a viol, and the bass player has a sudden and rather unexpectedly athletic few bars!

Byrd had been helpful in finding the young Tomkins a place as a Chorister at the Chapel Royal. The younger composer held the position of organist at Worcester and eventually became a Gentleman Extraordinary of the Chapel

Royal. James I died in 1625 and the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal had to prepare music for James' funeral and for the coronation of Charles I. This all proved too much for Gibbons who died of a stroke. Fortunately for Tomkins the coronation was delayed because of plague, giving him time to write the 8 anthems that were performed for the occasion. *Thou art my King* is a setting of words from Psalm 44. The chorus takes up the bass soloist's words at the end of each verse and towards the end of the piece short phrases are tossed back and forth. We follow this with *Above the starrs*, also by Tomkins, which sets a devotional text attributed to Joseph Hall, then Dean of Worcester. Here the verses are set for pairs of soloists and some of the word painting seems spill over from Tomkins' mastery of the secular madrigal.

Interval

The text of *Glorious and powerful God* is assigned to Whit Sunday and commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit to Christ's disciples. As in *Above the starrs* which we heard in the first half, the verses are set for pairs of soloists, here the same pair of male voices throughout. The soloists' text is taken up by all the voices at the end of each section culminating in a stately Amen.

The Purcell fantasias are some of the latest and most sophisticated writing for the viol consort in England. We half suspect that Purcell might have had a harmony teacher he didn't really like and was seeing how far he could try his patience, because some of the unprepared (though admittedly usually appropriately resolved) dissonances break every rule in the harmony book. Number 8 is a particular favourite of ours, not least because of its exuberant ending.

See, see the Word is incarnate is effectively a potted history of the life of Jesus! We hear the angels singing "Glory be to God on high" at the Nativity, the miracles are described, Hosannas are sung, the Paschal Lamb is sacrificed, the glorious Ascension is celebrated, Christ sits on high, and sinners may enter the kingdom of Heaven. All in about 5 minutes or so!

Anthony Holborne published a collection of 65 five-part pavans, galliards and almains in 1599. They are charming pieces, and many have titles, ranging from the floral 'marie-golde' to the more intellectual 'mens innovata', and the rather less optimistic 'image of melancholy'. The pavans and galliards mostly appear in pairs in the same key, with the six almains coming together towards the end of the collection, before a final five galliards which are of particular rhythmic complexity. We have selected the three dances here to form a suite.

The Silver Swan is probably the best-known of Gibbons' madrigals. It was published in his *First set of madrigals and motets of 5 parts* in 1612 and tells the legend of the swan who only sings as its death approaches. The last line, "More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise" has been taken as a general comment on the loss of the late Elizabethan tradition. I will leave you to judge whether it remains apposite today!

To finish our programme tonight we would like to perform a piece which does not fit into any of the categories we have already explored. Whilst verse anthems, motets and madrigals can be described as highbrow, art music, Gibbons' *The cries of London* takes as its starting point the life on a London street and the cries of the traders going about trying to sell their wares. Lowbrow content perhaps but delivered in a highbrow manner! We hear first the town crier announcing the dawn and then follows a succession of snippets. The most obvious equivalent in modern times is market traders and the Big Issue sellers normally found in most town centres. Their falling minor third cry was obviously common in seventeenth century England too! As the city wakes up we hear the fishmongers, people selling all sorts of herbs, fruit and vegetables, pies, ink, gloves and garters, starch, milk, rosasolis (an aphrodisiac!), straw and oranges, as well as encountering a man broadcasting the fact that he has lost a grey mare, a charity worker, women prisoners and a chimney sweep. At last, the night watchman announces that it is twelve o'clock, time to lock up and snuff out candles and fires.

Notes on the vocal pieces by Annabel Malton.

Notes on the instrumental pieces by Alison Kinder. ©