

Corpus Christi Church, New York
Tuesday 23 February 2010 at 8.00 pm

PARTHENIA AND THE ROSE CONSORT OF VIOLS

Beverly Au, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley, Lisa Terry;
Ibi Aziz, John Bryan, Alison Crum, Roy Marks

American Garden/English Roses

In Nomine a7 No.1

Robert Parsons *c.1535–1572*

Fantasia No. 6 in F *All in a Garden Green*
Fantasia No. 14 in D

John Jenkins *1592–1678*
Jenkins

Fantasia con pause
Fantasia senza pause
Puitqu'ainsi est que suis esconduict a4
Je fille quand dieu me donne de quoy a5

Philip Van Wilder *c.1500–1553*

Fantasia a6 No. 3
Ut re mi
In Nomine a4 No. 1
De la court a5

William Byrd *c.1540–1623*
Parsons
Thomas Tallis *c.1505–1585*
Parsons

Ave Maria
The Song called Trumpets a6

Parsons
Parsons

INTERMISSION

Pavan & Galliard a6

Thomas Tomkins *1572–1656*

Diliges Dominum a8 (retrograde canon)

Byrd

Fantasy a5

Edward Blankes *1586–1638*

Super flumina a8 (sent to Byrd 1583)
Quomodo cantabimus a8 (1584 response to Monte)

Philippe de Monte *1521–1603*
Byrd

Quoniam tu Domine
Fantasia a4

Alfonso Ferrabosco senior *1543-88*
Alfonso Ferrabosco junior *c.1575–1628*

In Nomine a7
Fantazia a3 No. 1
Fantazia a4 No. 4 in G minor
Fantazia “upon one note”

Henry Purcell *1659–1695*

Hear my prayer O God a8

Programme Notes

When King Henry VIII died in 1547 an inventory was made of all the musical instruments in his possession: these included 'xix Vialles greate and small with iii cases of woodde couered with blacke leather to the same' and 'A chest collored redde with vi Vialles hauing the Kinges Armes'. Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel (c.1511–1580) outdid even this collection, apparently owning 41 viols, though we have no documentary indication that so many viols ever played together at any one time. Indeed the wonderful repertory of English music for consort of viols that survives is most commonly written for groups of four, five or six instruments; there are a few pieces for seven, but none for eight or more. This evening's programme explores the wealth of English viol consort music from the time of Henry VIII through to the last amazing flowering of the genre in the works of Henry Purcell, and capitalises on the unique opportunity for our two ensembles to collaborate in some larger-scale pieces, including instrumental performances of some eight-part vocal pieces.

The *In Nomine* is a genre unique to the English repertory. Between Tallis and Purcell, a period covering nearly 150 years, there is at least one example of an *In Nomine* by virtually every major English composer, as well as by many less well-known ones. The origin of this refined and fascinating collection of pieces is John Taverner's festal mass *Gloria tibi Trinitas* from around 1520: each subsequent setting places the mass's plainsong *cantus firmus* in slow note values in one part while the remaining parts weave elaborate counterpoint around it. In Robert Parsons' seven-part version, the sonic resources are exploited well to create a majestic warmth and richness. Parsons, who died tragically in his prime, left a number of highly effective consort pieces. *The Song called Trumpets* imitates the marching rhythms and signal calls of military bands before launching into a hectic gallop. In contrast, *De la court*, one of the most frequently copied pieces of Elizabethan instrumental music, begins each of its two substantial sections with serious vocal-style polyphony, but gradually introduces increasingly skittish ideas before ending with vivacious flourishes from the two treble viols. Parsons' *Ut re mi* may well have been intended as teaching material for the choirboys of the Chapel Royal: while the treble simply plays up and down the six-note hexachord, the lower three parts play counterpoint of some rhythmic complexity.

It was a common procedure at this time to perform vocal music without the words. Singers might employ sol-fa-ing (pitching and naming the notes of the hexachord, the six-note scale of Elizabethan music theory used by Parsons in *Ut re mi*), or the voices might be replaced altogether by instruments. A large number of surviving manuscripts preserve vocal music without the words, especially Latin-texted motets, for which there was no place in the liturgy of Protestant England. These pieces lend themselves to effective performance on viols; the motets by Byrd and Purcell's exquisite anthem *Hear my prayer* (probably the opening of a longer piece) giving us an excuse to explore a sonorous eight-part texture that would otherwise be unavailable to us.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries musicians from continental Europe exerted a strong influence on music making in England. From the 1520s there were Flemish or German players at the English court, with a group of singers and instrumentalists providing music for the King's privy chamber led by Philip Van Wilder. Besides a number of elegant chansons which were noted in English manuscripts, Van Wilder wrote an ingenious fantasia which could be performed equally well with or without rests. It was a group of itinerant Italian Jewish players who formed the first six-part viol consort at the court of King Henry VIII in the 1540s, establishing a tradition by which their royal employment was passed on to other members of their families. Perhaps the single most influential Italian musician at the English court was Alfonso Ferrabosco I. Born into a musical family in Bologna in 1543, he was already serving Queen Elizabeth I as a lutenist by 1562 and was employed by the English queen until finally

returning to Italy in 1578, leaving behind him two illegitimate children one of whom (Alfonso junior) became the most accomplished viol player and composer of his generation.

The fantasia was the single most important form for viol composers, capable of great flexibility and variety in the hands of masters such as William Byrd and John Jenkins, and still providing a stimulus for the young Henry Purcell in the 1680s. By then the form was no longer in regular use, for as the antiquarian Roger North wryly commented, 'And of these Fancys whole volumnes are left, scarce ever to be made use of but either in the ayre for kites or in the fire for singeing pullets'. It seems most likely that Purcell regarded his essays in the style as a conscious exploration of a bygone idiom, which he invested with his own expressive language that belongs firmly in the baroque: they are full of theatrical gestures, intensely passionate chromaticism and wistful dissonance. If Purcell was testing his own skill against that of his predecessors, he sets himself the ultimate challenge in the *Fantazia Upon One Note*. Here he creates a gradually evolving web of counterpoint around the most stringent of pre-conditions, for the tenor viol holds a monotone middle C throughout the entire composition.

Programme notes © John Bryan 2010

Parthenia, hailed by the *New Yorker* as "one of the brightest lights in New York's early-music scene," is a dynamic ensemble exploring the extraordinary repertory for viols from Tudor England to the court of Versailles and beyond. Known for its remarkable sense of ensemble, Parthenia is presented in concerts across America, and produces its own lively and distinguished concert series at Corpus Christi Church in New York City, collaborating regularly with the world's foremost early music specialists and has been featured on radio and television and in prestigious festivals and series as wide-ranging as Music Before 1800, Maverick Concerts and the Regensburg Tage Alter Musik.

Noteworthy among Parthenia's inventive programs have been presentations of the complete viol fantasies of Henry Purcell at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the complete instrumental works of Robert Parsons at Columbia's Miller Theatre, as well as the popular touring program "When Music & Sweet Poetry Agree," a celebration of Elizabethan poetry and music with actor Paul Hecht. Parthenia performs often at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, both in Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium and in the Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall, and appeared in conjunction with the exhibition "Searching for Shakespeare" at the Yale Center for British Art.

Parthenia's enduring interest in the bonds between poetry and music will be heard in a forthcoming release of 16th-century settings of the poems of Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Amours de Mai*, with soprano Julianne Baird and Renaissance violinist Robert Mealy. Parthenia has also recorded *Within the Labyrinth*, *Parthenia Sampler*, *A Reliquary for William Blake*, and *Trumpet after Dark*, with jazz trumpeter Randy Sandke.

Parthenia has commissioned, premiered and recorded many new works by composers such as Phil Kline, Brian Fennelly, Will Ayton, Randy Sandke, Frances White, Nicholas Patterson, funded in part through grants from the Fromm Foundation, American Composers Forum, the Camargo Foundation, Roger Williams University, the Viola da Gamba Society of America, and private donors. An ASCAP/CMA Award honored Maverick Concerts' 2002 Season, which included two world premieres of works by Brian Fennelly, commissioned especially for Parthenia by Maverick Concerts. Through a 2006 grant from the Jerome Foundation, Parthenia premiered "Nothing Proved," a song cycle for viol consort, voice and interactive audio processing, set by

composer Kristin Norderval to the extraordinary poetry of Queen Elizabeth I. More information about Parthenia's activities can be found at www.parthenia.org.

The Rose Consort of Viols takes its name from the celebrated family of viol makers, whose work spanned the growth and flowering of the English consort repertoire. With its unique blend of intimacy, intricacy, passion and flamboyance, this music ranges from Taverner and Byrd, to Lawes, Locke and Purcell, forming the basis of the Rose Consort's programmes, which may also include singers, lutes and keyboard instruments. The Rose Consort has received awards for its research and performance of newly devised programmes, and has most recently been investigating some of the earliest viol consort repertory using instruments modelled on those painted by Lorenzo Costa in 1497.

The Consort performs extensively throughout Britain and the continent of Europe, appears regularly on the BBC and in the major London concert halls, and has made a number of highly acclaimed recordings on the Amon Ra, Woodmansterne and Naxos labels. The Consort's CDs for Naxos include an anthology of Elizabethan Consort Music in addition to those of Byrd, Dowland, Gibbons, Jenkins, Lawes, Tomkins and Purcell (selected by *The Sunday Times* as the best available version) previously released. More recently the Rose Consort has issued CDs of instrumental music by the Ferraboscos (father and son) and John Ward on the German label cpo. The Rose Consort was also featured on the cover CD of the May 2008 *BBC Music Magazine* and its most recent recording is of music by *Four Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal*: Tallis, Tye, Byrd and Tomkins, on the Deux-Elles label.

Rose Consort concerts often include guest soloists such as sopranos Dame Emma Kirkby and Evelyn Tubb, mezzos Catherine King and Clare Wilkinson, the vocal groups Red Byrd, Stile Antico and the BBC Singers, lutenists Jacob Heringman and Jakob Lindberg and keyboard player Timothy Roberts. The Consort regularly performs at the York Early Music Festival and has also appeared in Canada (Festival Vancouver) and the USA (Boston; Boulder, Colorado; Portland, Oregon and Seattle) and featured as the guest ensemble at the Pan-Pacific Gamba Gathering in Hawaii. Recent engagements include performances and lecture-recitals at Boulder, Colorado, Tucson and Rio Rico, Arizona, Aberdeen University, Scotland and Queen's University, Belfast, N. Ireland. Future concerts include performances at Beverley Early Music Festival, Dartington International Summer School, the University of Huddersfield, Halifax Philharmonic Club and York Early Music Christmas Festival.

website: www.roseconsort.co.uk