

# PARTHENIA

Lawrence Lipnik, treble and tenor viol

Rosamund Morley, treble viol

Beverly Au, bass viol

Lisa Terry, bass viol

with

Daniel Moody, countertenor

[guest], tenor viol

[guest], lute and theorbo

## THEATRICAL MUSIC *for* DRAMATIC TIMES

Long live fair Oriana

Al primo giorno

Ellis Gibbons (1573-1603)

Giovanni Coprario (c.1570-1626)

Pour down ye powers divine ~ No grief is like to mine

Pavan ~ Galliard

Robert Parsons (c. 1534-1572)

Peter Philips (c.1560-1628)

Care charming sleep

Fire, fire, lo here I burn!

Robert Johnson (c.1583-1633)

Nicholas Lanier (1588-1666)

Fantasia "Attendite"

Martin Peerson (1572-1651)

Sweeter than roses

O let me weep!

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

*Fantasia*

What is our life?

*Thomas Lupo (1571-1627)*

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

### INTERMISSION

Canzon decimasettima

Gagliarda Quarta, alla Spagnola

Antonio Troilo (fl. 1606-8)

Giovanni Maria Trabaci (c.1575-1647)

Canzonetta Spirituale sopra alla nanna

Tarquino Merula (1594/95-1665)

Three madrigal fantasias:

Era l'anima

Ond'ei di morte

Clorinda

Benedetto Pallavicino (c.1551-1601)

Luca Marenzio (1553/54-1599)

Orazio Vecchi (1550-1605)

Sestina: *Lagime d'amante al sepolcro dell'amata*

Prima parte: Incenerite spoglie

Seconda parte: Detelo o fiumi

Terza parte: Darà la notte il sol

Quarta parte: Ma te raccoglie

Quinta parte: O chiome d'or

Sesta & ultima parte: Dunque amate reliquie

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

## PROGRAM NOTES

The English Reformation—beginning in 1534 with Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries—instituted a remarkable shift in England’s musical culture. The replacement of Latin texts with vernacular ones demanded a new, more syllabic style of liturgical composition, which was readily supplied by the court musicians of the Chapel Royal. This new style ushered in the beginning of a golden age of English secular music, which reached its apex during the long and relatively stable reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), herself an avid musician and dancer. Literature and the theatrical arts also prospered under Elizabeth, who saw the rise of the English sonnet and the success of plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries at performances in public and at court, with songs and incidental music heightening moments of joy and tragedy on the stage.

English Renaissance music kept in close contact with continental developments. Chief among the forms imported from mainland Europe was the Italian madrigal, a polyphonic secular song form that influenced both vocal and instrumental music in England. Alfonso Ferrabosco I, an Italian musician working at Elizabeth’s court, composed a number of madrigals in the 1550s and 60s, and in 1588 Londoner Nicholas Yonge published *Musica Transalpina*, a book of Italian madrigals fitted with English words. Yonge’s book, and the works in it, were widely imitated, setting off a fashion for Italianate polyphonic style and dramatic text setting among English composers.

Tonight’s program opens with a panegyric to Queen Elizabeth. Ellis Gibbons’ “Long Live Fair Oriana” is one of two madrigals Gibbons contributed to Thomas Morley’s 1601 anthology *The Triumphs of Oriana*; the works may originally have been composed for a pageant or masque performed in front of the queen. Each madrigal in Morley’s collection closes with a salutation to the Oriana, queen of Arcadia, standing in allegorically for the English monarch: “Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana: Long live fair Oriana!”

The influence of Italian madrigals in England was by no means limited to vocal music. John Cooper, an English court musician and viol player who taught and served Charles I (r. 1625–1649), wrote many instrumental consorts and suites in the traditional English style. He journeyed to Italy in the early years of the seventeenth century, and upon return to England styled himself “Giovanni Coprario. Coprario transcribed many of his vocal madrigals for instruments; his five- and six-part consort works therefore bear Italian titles, many of them the

incipits of madrigal texts set by Italian composers like Luca Marenzio.

Robert Parsons was one of the musicians called upon during Elizabeth’s reign to prove that vernacular English liturgy could be as splendid as the Latin music that characterized Catholic practice. While this task occupied the majority of his time, he also wrote a number of secular works, including the songs “Pour down, you pow’rs divine” and “No grief is like to mine.” Though little is known about the provenance of these pieces, the plaintive setting and the alliteration in the texts—a feature parodied by Shakespeare in *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—suggest that they might have originally punctuated a theatrical entertainment.

Like many other Catholics living under Elizabeth’s reign, Peter Philips, a virtuoso keyboard player and Catholic priest, left England’s shores in 1582. Philips traveled widely in Europe; on a 1593 trip to Amsterdam to hear the Flemish organist Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, he was imprisoned and tried for complicity in a plot on Queen Elizabeth’s life. (He was later acquitted.) Despite his expatriate status, Philips continued to write traditionally “English” forms of keyboard and consort music, including fantasias and dance pairs, including the pavan, a stately entrance dance, and its closely associated galliard, a more agile triple-time form.

English-born lutenist Robert Johnson’s life was also dramatic, though in a different sense. His employer, the Lord Chamberlain George Carey, patronized not only musicians—including England’s best-known lutenist, John Dowland—but also The King’s Men Players, a theater company who performed masques at the Globe and Blackfriars theaters. Johnson soon became involved in the composition and performance of music for these entertainments, including composing original settings of Shakespeares’ texts. “Care charming sleep” was written for the climactic scene of John Fletcher’s “revenge tragedy” *Valentinian*, when the Roman emperor Valentinian III, who has assaulted the young Lucina, lays dying after having been poisoned by her husband.

Like Johnson, organist and virginalist Martin Peerson was associated with Blackfriars, and spent much of his early life writing music for theatrical entertainments in his early life. He also composed madrigals, consort songs, which he published in his 1620 collection *Private Musicke*, and instrumental fantasias, all of which were intended for noble amateurs to perform at home.

Although Henry Purcell's best known contribution to the London stage was his development, alongside John Blow, of fully-sung English opera, he spent much more time composing incidental music for spoken plays. Purcell's famous song "Sweeter than Roses," composed in the last year of his life, was written to accompany Richard Norton's tragic play *Pausanius, the Betrayer of his Country*. In happy contrast the ominous title of the play, the song itself describes the memory of a lover's first kiss.

Several families of Italian musicians secured prominent positions at the English court. Thomas Lupo, a viol player at Elizabeth's court and one of the principal figures in the development of the consort fantasia in England, was born to a Venetian musician who settled in London via Antwerp. Though his fantasies are less directly indebted to specific Italian madrigals than Coprario's are, his contrapuntal style nonetheless recalls the work of Italian madrigalists.

Orlando Gibbons, younger brother to Ellis, was a leading figure in the development of a distinctly Protestant style of Anglican church music; he was also one of the publishers of *Parthenia*, the first printed book of English keyboard music. His melancholic madrigal "What is Our Life," from his 1612 collection *Madrigals and Motets*, sets a text written by Sir Walter Raleigh, a favorite of Elizabeth who after her death was imprisoned and faced execution at the hands of James I; the text was likely written during his incarceration.

While it was the polyphonic vocal madrigal that was most influential in England, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw an expansion of ever-more-virtuosic madrigal styles in different regions in Italy. Meanwhile, the monodic style established by operas like Monteverdi's 1607 *Orfeo* challenged the traditional polyphonic madrigal styles, expanding the form to comprise mixed compositions for voices and viols, and virtuosic and theatrical solo singing in addition to polyphony. The expansion of the modes of expression available to madrigalists allowed them to convey a heightened range of emotions, and broadened the form to include narrative compositions.

Little is known of Antonio Troilo beyond the fact that he was born in Verona and worked in the nearby Vicenza. He published two books of instrumental *canzonas*, which differ from *fantasias* like Lupo's in their markedly rhythmic and separation into distinct sections. Giovanni Maria Trabaci, a Neapolitan tenor and organist with a wide and varied output, served as organist of the royal chapel for the Spanish viceroys in Naples. He thus had a close

connection to the "Spanish" style he imitates in this Galliard.

Cremonese organist Tarquinio Merula's innovative and affecting "Canzonetta Spirituale sopra alla nanna" is a prayerful lullaby, sung by the Virgin Mary to her infant son as she imagines his passion on the cross. The hypnotic, oscillating two-note figure that forms the greater part of the accompaniment conjures a hypnotic and mournful image of the mother rocking the infant to sleep while imagining his death.

Benedetto Pallavicino, Luca Marenzio, and Orazio Vecchi were all prolific madrigalists. Pallavicino spent most of his life in the service of the Mantuan court. In 1596 he was awarded the top position in the musical establishment of the Gonzaga family after the death of renowned madrigalist Giaches de Wert over his bitter rival, Claudio Monteverdi. Luca Marenzio moved frequently, serving prominent families including the Gonzaga, the Este, and the Medici, before settling for a time in Rome. He wrote an astonishing seventeen books of madrigals between 1580 and 1589—more than the entire sum of madrigal publications in England—and a number of his early madrigals appeared in *Musica Transalpina*. Orazio Vecchi, a collaborator of Monteverdi, traveled widely in Italy before settling in his native Modena. His "Clorinda" comes from his first book of madrigals (1589). Vecchi was most famous for his "madrigal comedies," light entertainments that strung madrigals together in a loosely-structured narrative. Such works were an important precursor to opera. [These three madrigals copied in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by an English musician, likely intended for viol consort performance, are preserved in a manuscript at Christ Church, Oxford].

The final work on tonight's program comes from Claudio Monteverdi's sixth book of madrigals (1616). Most of the songs from this book deal with grief and loss, themes central to Monteverdi's life while he was composing the works. In 1607 Monteverdi's wife Claudia died, leaving behind two young sons; in the following year, his former student Caterina Martinelli died at the age of eighteen shortly before debuting the title role in Monteverdi's 1608 opera *Arianna*. Monteverdi's patron, the Mantuan duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, had discovered Martinelli and treasured her talent; he commissioned Monteverdi to set a sestina by Scipione Agnelli in her memory. Monteverdi sets each of the six verses of the poem—the plangent lament of the shepherd Glauco over the tomb of his beloved nymph, Corinna—as a brooding, declamatory madrigal, reminiscent of his dramatic style.