

PARTHENIA

Rosamund Morley, treble viol

Lawrence Lipnik, tenor viol

Beverly Au, bass viol

Lisa Terry, bass viol

An Elizabethan Christmas

with Elisa Sutherland, mezzo-soprano

Prelude and Voluntary	William Byrd (1543-1623)
Remember, O Thou Man	Thomas Ravenscroft (c.1582-1635)
From Virgin's Womb this Day did Spring	Byrd
From <i>Pavans, Galliards, Almains and other short Aeirs</i> (1599)	Anthony Holborne (c.1550-1602)
As it fell on a Holie Eve	
The Cradle	
The Night Watch	
From <i>Gradualia seu cantionum sacrarum</i> (1607)	Byrd
O magnum misterium	
Vidimus stellam	
Puer natus est	
Gentil Madonna	Dublin Virginal Ms. (c.1600)
Sweet was the Song the Virgin Sung	Anonymous (c.1600)
Fantasia a 4	Byrd
Out of the Orient Crystal Skies	Byrd
Fantasia a 4	Giovanni Coprario (c.1570-1626)
Fantasia a 3	Byrd
Lully, lulla	Shearmen & Tailors carol (1591)
Gigge	John Bull (c. 1562-1628)
Fantasia <i>La sampogna</i>	Thomas Morley (1557-1602)
Fantasia a 4	Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger (c. 1575-1628)
Divisions on <i>Greensleeves</i>	Anonymous (mid 17 th century)
The Old Year Now Away is Fled	Traditional Waits' carol (1642)

December 8, 2024

The Church of Saint Luke in the Fields, NYC

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Queen Elizabeth I of England spent much of her reign juggling to retain her own power and independence, and to maintain peace and prosperity in her realm. Realizing that marriage to anyone at all would make England subject either to a foreign power or to a domestic faction, she skillfully warded off all suits, whether they were tendered as peace offerings or as passionate proposals (which in some cases happened at once.) She also had to balance the antipathies between Catholics and Protestants in England: as the daughter of Henry VIII she was herself a Protestant and recoiled at the idea of recognizing papal authority, but she also knew from experience that the persecution of Catholics could lead to bloody insurgency.

Fortunately for us, in the field of music a truce seemed to hold which allowed the preservation of a treasure trove of musical riches. One of Elizabeth's most respected and beloved "Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal," William Byrd, was known to be a devout Catholic, but he composed motets and liturgical music for both Protestant and "Popish" rites, with texts in either English or Latin. It seems that Elizabeth liked to hear the English service in Latin herself! Byrd was born in 1543, perhaps near Lincoln Cathedral where his first adult employment was as organist and Master of the Choristers. His post required that he teach the choirboys not just singing but also how to play the viola da gamba, so a consort of viols like ours, joined by a voice, inevitably steers us towards his music. In 1570 Byrd came to Elizabeth's court and over the next decades, despite his Catholicism, he apparently maintained close relations with many of the most powerful English lords. In 1575, in partnership with his former teacher, Thomas Tallis, who was a Protestant, Byrd secured a monopoly for the publishing of music. Their first venture was a set of Latin motets dedicated to the Queen, but over the course of many years, their biggest financial successes were Byrd's *Psalmes, Sonets and Songs* of 1588 and his *Songs of Sundrie Natures* of 1589, in which

were published the joyful "carowles" for the Christmas season on our program.

Although Byrd's influence inevitably extended over all the other composers represented here, much less is known of their personal lives. Thomas Ravenscroft was a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral – and perhaps he played the viol too - at a time when the "St. Paul's company of child actors" was famous in London. It was for boys who were educated in the choir schools that songs for a solo voice and consort of viols were first written. In adult life Ravenscroft turned to collecting and editing popular songs. "Remember, O thou man" comes from his 1611 compilation *Melismata: Muscally Phansies fitting the Court, Citie and Countrey Humours*. Anthony Holborne, described by the lutenist and composer John Dowland as a "Gentleman Usher to the Queen," published about seventy 5-part Pavans, Galliards, Almains in one collection in 1599 – virtually the only music of his that survives – from which we have culled three dances and arranged them for 4 viols.

The accession of James I in 1603 united England and Scotland after decades of struggle between the two realms and two religions. Perhaps this event brought a certain hope for an end to this mistrust since James' son, Henry, was a much loved Prince, said to have been popular even among Elizabethan courtiers who were otherwise not inclined to support the Stuarts. When Henry was made Prince of Wales in 1610, he set up his own court and continued the tradition of strong patronage of music, aspiring to an establishment as glorious as the Medicis. Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, who was Henry's music teacher, was one of the composer-performers at the center of this court where Prince and courtiers were entertained by concerts in the privy chamber, glorious masques in the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall and anthems in his chapel. Henry's sudden death in 1612 made his younger brother Charles heir to the throne, and Charles set up a musical court of his own. Playford tells us that Charles loved the instrumental music of his viol teacher, John Coprario, and that in this music the Prince

“could play his part exactly well on the bassviol.” From among the extensive surviving work of these composers we have chosen just two fantasies which well represent the most common kind of abstract instrumental music from the time.

A student of Byrd’s, Thomas Morley, was Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1592. He was a prolific composer of secular vocal and instrumental music and like Byrd, turned out both Latin and English church music as well. The little duet with its Italian title *La sampogna* (the bagpipe), reminds us of the Elizabethan passion for all things Italian – a taste that has hardly waned over the centuries. As a madrigalist, Morley was England’s chief exponent of the Italian style. We thought that since bagpipes are associated with shepherds, the piece would be appropriate for Christmas! Keyboardist and organ builder Dr. John Bull, although officially also a “Gentleman” and accorded great respect by his contemporaries

as a musician, seems to have been something of a rogue – good fodder, perhaps now, for a novel. He was forced to flee England in 1613 to escape prosecution for adultery, and sought asylum and employment in Brussels claiming to be a Catholic refugee. The Archbishop of Canturbury wrote of him, “The man hath more music than honesty and is as famous for marring of virginity as he is for fingering of organs and virginals.”

Finally, into this, as into so many Christmas programs, the ever-popular song “Greensleeves” finds its way. On a broadside sheet of the early 17th century, a text beginning “The olde year now away is fled” is indicated “to be sung to the tune of Greensleeves.” We wind down the program with a set of “divisions,” or variations, written by an anonymous Jacobean viol player on the same tune.

—*Rosamund Morley and Lucy Cross*

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Remember, O Thou Man

Thy time is spent:
Remember, O thou man,
How thou cam’st to me then,
And I did what I can,
Therefore repent.

In Bethlem was he born,
For mankind dear:
In Bethlem was he born
For us that were forlorn,
And therefore took no scorn,
Our sins to bear.

The angels all did sing,
On Sion hill:
The angels all did sing
Praises to our heavenly King,
And peace to man living,
With right good will.

From Virgin's womb this day did spring

The precious seed that saved man,
This day let man rejoice and sweetly sing
Since on this day salvation first began,
This day did Christ man's soul from death remove
With glorious saints to dwell in heaven above.
Rejoice, rejoice, with heart and voice,
In Christ his birth this day rejoice.

This day to man came pledge of perfect peace,
This day to man came love and unity,
This day man's grief began for to surcease,
This day did man receive a remedy
For each offence and every deadly sin
With guilty heart that erst he wandered in.

O magnum mysterium et admirabile
sacramentum
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum
jacentem in praeseptio.
Beata virgo cujus viscera
meruent partare Dominum Christum.
Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Beata virgo...

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament
that animals see the Lord born
lying in a manger.
Blessed virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear Lord Christ. Allelujah.
Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed virgin...

Puer natus est nobis
Et filius datus est nobis
Cuius imperium super humerum eius
Et vocabitur nomen eius
Magni confilii Angelus
Cantate Domino canticum novum
Quia mirabilia fecit
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
in secula seculorum. Amen.

A boy is born to us,
And a son is given to us,
upon whose shoulders authority rests,
and His name will be called
"The Angel of Great Counsel".
Sing to the Lord a new song,
because he has done the miraculous.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the
Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, and is
now, and always will be, in every human
generation. Amen.

Sweet was the Song the Virgin Sung

When she to Bethlem Judah came,
And was deliver'd of her Son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, Sweet Babe, quoth she,
My Son and eke a Saviour born,
Which hath vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn,
Lululla, lululla lulullaby, Sweet Babe quoth she,
And rock'd him featly on her knee.

Out of the orient crystal skies a blazing star did shine,
Showing the place where poorly lies a blessed Babe divine,
Born of a maid of royal blood who Mary hight by name,
A Sacred Rose which once did bud by grace of heavenly fame.
This shining star three kings did guide even from the farthest East,
To Bethlehem where it betide this blessed Babe did rest.
Laid in a silly manger poor, betwixt an ox and ass,
Whom these three kings did all adore as God's high pleasure was.
And for the joy of his great birth a thousand angels sing:
Glory and peace unto the earth, where born is this new King.
The shepherds dwelling there about when they this news did know,
Came singing all even in a rout, falantidingdido,
Falantidingdido.

Lully, lulla, thou little tiny Child,
By, by, lully, lullay.
Thou little tiny Child.
By, by, lully, lullay.
O sisters, too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day;
This poor Youngling for whom we sing,
By, by, lully, lullay.
Herod the King, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day;
His men of might, in his own sight,
All young children to slay.
Then woe is me, poor Child, for Thee,
And ever mourn and say;
For Thy parting, neither say nor sing,
By, by, lully, lullay.

The old year now away is fled,
The new year it is entered;
Then let us all our sins down tread,
And joyfully all appear.
Let's merry be this day,
And let us now both sport and play,
Hang grief, cast care away
God send you a happy new year!
And now with New Year's gifts each friend
Unto each other they do send;
God grant we may our lives amend,
And that truth may now appear.
Now, like the snake, your skin
Cast off, of evil thoughts and sin,
And so the year begin:
God send us a happy new year!

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The viola da gamba quartet PARTHENIA brings early music into the present with a ravishing sound and a remarkable sense of ensemble, animating both ancient and fresh-commissioned repertoire to critical acclaim. These “local early-music stars,” hailed by *The New Yorker* and music critics throughout the world, are “one of the brightest lights in New York’s early-music scene.” Parthenia is Beverly Au, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley and Lisa Terry. The ensemble appears regularly in concerts across America and produces its own series in New York City, collaborating with the world’s foremost early music specialists. The quartet has been featured in prestigious festivals and series as wide-ranging as Music Before 1800, Berkeley Early Music Festival, Early Music Now Concert Series, Arizona Early Music Society, Chamber Music Tulsa, National Gallery of Art, Harriman-Jewell Series, Maverick Concerts, Regensburg Tage Alter Musik, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Pierpont Morgan Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and at the Venice Biennale. Parthenia’s performances range from Venetian Renaissance masterpieces performed on rare reproductions of the earliest viols, to the complete viol fantasies of Henry Purcell, to a musical journey through the Habsburg empire. Parthenia also commissions and premieres new works annually, especially engaging women composers such as Calliope Tsoupaki, Frances White, Kristin Norderval, Tawnie Olson, and librettist Wendy Steiner. Parthenia’s discography includes *As it Fell on a Holie Eve – Music for an Elizabethan Christmas*, *Les Amours de Mai*, *The Flaming Fire – Mary Queen of Scots and Her World*, *A Reliquary for William Blake*, *Within the Labyrinth and Nothing Proved – New Works for Viols, Voice, and Electronics*. Parthenia is represented by Summerell Arts and records for MSR Classics.

Mezzo-soprano ELISA SUTHERLAND gives detailed, stylistic performances of early and new music with “soul-infused expressiveness and unselfconscious joie de vivre (*New York Music Daily*).” Ellie is a core member of Ekmeles, a sextet dedicated to exploring microtonal tuning and extended vocal techniques, as well as Alkemie, an ensemble made up of medieval specialists that celebrates the vibrant and timeless sounds of the past and present. This season, Ellie joins as a full-time member of the Choir of Trinity Wall Street. She has appeared in art song recitals with the Brooklyn Art Song Society (BASS) and Philadelphia’s Lyricfest, as well as with Roomful of Teeth, Blue Heron, and Bach Akademie Charlotte. Ellie is an invaluable member of many of the top vocal ensembles in the country, including The Crossing, TENET Vocal Artists, Lorelei, Ampersand, Variant 6, and Seraphic Fire. Through her work as a soloist and choral musician, Ellie has workshopped and premiered new compositions by composers Ted Hearne, Julia Wolfe, Erin Gee, Michael Gordon, Christopher Trapani, David Lang, Zosha Di Castri, Shawn Jaeger, John Luther Adams, Hannah Kendall, Caroline Shaw, Yaz Lancaster, Michael Gilbertson, Gavin Bryars, Joanne Metcalf, Kile Smith, Pablo Chin, L J White, and many more. In the world of early music, Ellie has explored repertoire ranging from the medieval to the baroque with ensembles Quicksilver Baroque, Filament, and Elm City Consort. Ellie has been featured as a soloist with Apollo’s Fire, Contemporaneous, Arcana New Music Ensemble, American Bach Soloists, and Apollo Chorus of Chicago. She has sung for over 30 commercial recordings (including three GRAMMY-winning albums) and was a soloist on The Crossing’s GRAMMY-nominated album, “Boenhoffer.”