



MUSIC OF THE REALM
TUDOR MUSIC FOR MEN'S VOICES

THE QUEEN'S SIX

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The Queen's Six

Daniel Brittain *countertenor*

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Andrew Thompson *baritone*

Simon Whiteley *bass*

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

1. **O Lord, make thy servant
Elizabeth our Queen**

[3:04]

Thomas Morley (c. 1557-1602)

2. **Laboravi in gemitu meo**

[5:30]

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

3. **Almighty God, the fountain
of all wisdom**

[5:35]

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

4. **Videte miraculum**

[9:33]

William Byrd

5. **Haec dies**

[2:15]

Thomas Weelkes (c. 1575-1623)

6. **O how amiable**

[3:08]

William Byrd

7. **Attend mine humble prayer**

[2:56]

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

8. **Almighty and everlasting God**

[2:13]

Thomas Tomkins

9. **When David heard**

[4:11]

Thomas Weelkes

10. **When David heard**

[3:55]

11. **O Jonathan, woe is me**

[2:11]

Thomas Morley

12. **Haec dies**

[1:27]

Orlando Gibbons

13. **O Lord in thy wrath**

[3:10]

Thomas Tallis

14. **O sacrum convivium**

[3:37]

Thomas Morley

15. **O amica mea**

[6:00]

Thomas Tomkins

16. **Turn unto the Lord**

[2:25]

Orlando Gibbons

17. **Lift up your heads**

[2:36]

Total playing time

[63:56]

**Music of the Realm:
Tudor Music for Men's Voices**

This intriguing and resourceful survey of late-Tudor and early-Stuart sacred music goes deep into a repertoire which is only known in part today. Here are some famous masterpieces – William Byrd's *Haec dies* and Thomas Tallis's *O sacrum convivium* – alongside some completely neglected ones, like Thomas Morley's *O amica mea* and Thomas Weelkes's *O how amiable*. The selection also neatly exemplifies its title, *Music of the Realm*, by putting forward six composers who were probably associated with the Chapel Royal of Queen Elizabeth I. Such music is also the realm – and daily fare – of the six singers who make up The Queen's Six, in their turn serving Queen Elizabeth II as half of the Lay Clerks in the royal peculiar of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

The disc begins with the entirely appropriate setting by William Byrd of *O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth our Queen* (adapted from psalm 21, vv. 1-4) known as a royal psalm, in which the poet gives thanks for a strong ruler. The smooth lie of Byrd's polyphony suggests it is an early work, though none the less heart-felt for that. The miracle of it comes in the 'Amen' which seems to be almost a separate composition, leaning to subdominant

tonality where all the previous material has been strongly dominant.

This is followed by one of the most fluent expressions of penitence from the whole period – Morley's *Laboravi in gemitu meo*. Unfortunately it seems as though Morley didn't actually write it: with the publication of the complete works in modern edition of Philippe Rogier in 1982 it became apparent that he had somehow stolen it (see P. Phillips: *Music and Letters*, lxiii (1982)). We shall never know why he did this. It may be relevant that by 1591 he was up to his neck in religious intrigue, acting as a spy in Flanders for the Catholics, before being unmasked and in grave danger of being hanged back home. Presumably he found the Rogier original in Flanders, felt that its deeply passionate expression rather suited his situation, and possibly just copied it out for his own study.

Thomas Tomkins' *Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom* also follows the royal theme of the disc, since its text, taken from the Book of Common Prayer, is customarily recited at the Coronation. For much of the piece Tomkins keeps his music to the simplest service style, undemonstrative and largely chordal. However this simplicity has a charge which slowly builds to the final two passages. Unexpected, the music falls



effortlessly into an exploration of the false relation – a dissonance the English particularly relished. Having reviewed this familiar world, Tomkins then writes an ‘Amen’ without parallel, based on three rising tones, each decorated by a falling quaver. Only in Purcell is there harmony to rival this lance into the future.

Tallis’s *Videte miraculum* must be the earliest piece on the disc, though there is debate as to whether it was composed in Mary’s or Elizabeth’s reign. As a Latin respond, which had belonged to the old rite, the earlier date seems likely, though it is a work of real maturity and deep, almost sensual expression. The power of the word ‘Maria’, brought about by artful repetition, is unforgettable. Byrd’s *Haec dies* for six voices perhaps needs little introduction. Written on a text associated with Easter Day, Byrd dazzles the listener firstly with dancing rhythms, and then with a protracted, rising sequence on the word ‘Alleluia’.

The next three pieces form a small group by themselves. Written to English texts and for reduced forces, they provide a less spectacular type of sacred writing. The most elaborate is Weelkes’s *O how amiable*, scored for five voices and taken from psalm 84. If the music sounds familiar

it may be because some of it is a reworking of (or was used again in) his *Magnificat* for five voices, especially in the two ‘Amens’. The unhurried nature of the opening section however – not used in the *Magnificat* – sets an appropriately restful mood for what follows. Byrd’s *Attend mine humble prayer* (taken from psalm 143) will probably not be known to Anglican congregations since it was conceived as devotional music in the home. Published in Byrd’s 1589 ‘Songs of Sundry Natures’ it joins six other penitential psalms, all scored for three voices. Byrd’s setting is reminiscent of his Mass for Three Voices, probably coeval with this publication, in making so much of such restricted means. Orlando Gibbons’s *Almighty and everlasting God*, on the other hand, is widely performed in church. Choosing the Collect for the Third Sunday after Epiphany as his text, Gibbons gives us a classic display of four-part writing at its most transparent: moving from tonic to dominant by exactly the half-way point, before moving back again for the final cadence.

These three pieces are followed by three more which are linked. They probably formed part of a substantial set of works, including plays, masques and poems, which poured out of the leading artists in London on the much-lamented death of

Henry, Prince of Wales, in 1612. So far I have identified nine settings of *When David heard* from this period. In addition to the two by Weelkes and Tomkins, there is evidence of others by William Bearsley, Richard Dering, Thomas East, Giles Farnaby, John Milton (father of the poet), Robert Ramsey and E? Smith. One or two of these are very fine, though none rivals the two on this disc, which stand as fascinating examples of how to do a similar thing at the same point in time in completely different ways. Where the Tomkins is sustained and relentless in its grief, Weelkes confronts the grief head-on. Where Tomkins writes slow counterpoint to build up the tension, Weelkes writes much shorter more compact phrases, including diminished chords and other dissonances. One could argue that the Tomkins finds some resolution towards the end; the Weelkes never lets go. This is also true of Weelkes’s *O Jonathan, woe is me*, which must be related to *When David heard*, even though the texts come from different parts of II Samuel. The setting of the words ‘O Jonathan’ has a very similar resonance to that of ‘O Absalom’.

Morley’s *Haec dies* is a straightforward arrangement (by James Gibb) of an unspecified original work for three

voices, setting the same text for Easter Day which was noticed earlier by Byrd. By comparison Gibbons’s *O Lord in thy wrath* is an elaborate setting of adapted parts of Psalm 38, one of the most desperate of all outpourings of hurt and guilt, begging for God’s mercy. Gibbons sets it with all his command of harmony and counterpoint, the former peaking on the diminished chord at ‘how long’. Much of the uniquely powerful atmosphere of this piece is generated by suspensions – at least one a bar in the opening phrase.

Tallis’s much performed motet, *O sacrum convivium*, offers quieter moments. Setting words by Thomas Aquinas to honour the Blessed Sacrament, it is often heard at communion. Tallis’s music was published in the 1575 *Cantiones Sacrae*, which probably means it was written towards the end of his long life. Certainly the impeccable imitative polyphony suggests a highly refined technique. Morley’s *O amica mea* is altogether less well known, and presents another riddle from this unusual man. No-one can deny that it is music of the highest sophistication, a beautifully sustained love-offering along the lines of so many such offerings where the words of the Song of Songs (here Chapter 4, verses 1 and 2) are concerned. But the choice of text is almost comic. And the

piece was originally published at the end of Morley's theoretical manual *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597) without any explanation as to why it is there. Perhaps all Morley's students needed to know was how to write polyphony of such power.

It is also possible that Tomkins had a didactic intent when he wrote his six-voice anthem *Turn unto the Lord*. Dedicated to his son Nathaniel, it has the correctness of a consort song by Byrd, reinforced by a text with an edifying message (from Joel II and Psalm 100, an unusual mix which Tomkins must surely have made himself). With its carefully worked points of imitation it gives the impression of a composer at the height of his powers, revisiting the techniques of his youth the better to adorn the nature of the text he has chosen.

Gibbons's *Lift up your heads* is also scored for six voices and also displays some classically-worked counterpoint. However in this case the overriding impression is one of uncontainable energy. The music piles in on itself, point after point, syncopation after syncopation, until breathlessly we arrive at the final phrase, only to be delivered a harmonic kick in the pants via a flattened leading-note in

the top part, as cheeky as it is tantalising, to send us on our way. The Queen's Six give it a thrilling performance.

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The Queen's Six
(from left to right: Timothy Carleston, Nicholas Madden, Andrew Thompson,
Simon Whiteley, Daniel Brittain, Dominic Bland)

Texts

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

1. O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth our Queen

O Lord, make thy servant, Elizabeth our Queen,
to rejoice in thy strength;
give her her heart's desire,
and deny not the request of her lips;
but prevent her with thine everlasting blessing,
and give her a long life,
even for ever and ever. Amen.

Words based on Psalm 21

Thomas Morley (c. 1557-1602)

2. Laboravi in gemitu meo

Laboravi in gemitu meo; lavabo per singulas
noctes lectum meum:
lacrimis meis stratum meum rigabo.

*I am weary of my groaning; every night wash I
my bed:
and water my couch with my tears.*

Psalm 6: 6

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

3. Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom,
who knowest our necessities before we ask,
and our ignorance in asking;
we beseech thee to have compassion upon
our infirmities;
and those things which for our unworthiness
we dare not,
and for our blindness we cannot ask,
vouchsafe to give us for the worthiness of thy
Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

4. Videte miraculum

Videte miraculum matris Domini:
conceptit virgo virilis ignara consortii,
stans onerata nobili onere Maria;
et matrem se laetam cognoscit,
que se nescit uxorem.
Haec speciosum forma praefiliis hominum
castis conceptit miseribus,
et benedicta in aeternum
Deum nobis protulit et hominem.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

*Behold the miracle of the of the Lord's mother:
she has conceived as a virgin though she
knows not a man,
Mary stands heavy with her noble burden;
knowing not that she is a wife,
she rejoices as a mother.
Her pure womb has conceived
one who is wonderful beyond the sons of men,
and forever blessed,
she has delivered God and man for us.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the
Holy Ghost.*

*Responsory at the First Vespers
of the Purification*

William Byrd

5. Haec dies

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus:
exultemus et laetemur in ea.
Alleluia.

*This is the day which the Lord hath made,
let us be glad and rejoice in it.
Alleluia.*

Psalm 118: 24

Thomas Weelkes (c. 1575-1623)

6. O how amiable

O how amiable are thy dwellings:
thou Lord of hosts!
My soul hath a desire and longing to enter
into the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
O Lord God of hosts: blessed is the man that
putteth his trust in thee.
Amen.

Psalm 84: 1-2 & 13

William Byrd

7. Attend mine humble prayer

Attend mine humble prayer Lord,
with thine attentive ear,
even in thy truth and justice Lord,
vouchsafe my suit to hear.

And into judgement enter not,
with thy poor servant here,
because none shall be justified
and stand before thee clear.

Words based on Psalm 143: 1-2

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)
8. Almighty and everlasting God

Almighty and everlasting God,
mercifully look upon our infirmities,
and in all our dangers and necessities
stretch forth thy right hand to help and
defend us,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Collect for the Third Sunday after Epiphany

Thomas Tomkins
9. When David heard
&
Thomas Weelkes
10. When David heard

When David heard that Absalom was slain,
he went up to his chamber over the gate,
and wept: and thus he said, O my son Absalom.
Would God I had died for thee, Absalom, my son.

2 Samuel 18: 33

Thomas Weelkes
11. O Jonathan, woe is me

O Jonathan, woe is me for thee,
my brother Jonathan:

very kind hast thou been unto me:
thy love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.

2 Samuel 1: 25-26

Thomas Morley
12. Haec dies

Haec dies quem fecit Dominus:
exultemus et laetemur in ea.
Tu es Deus noster, gratia agimus tibi. Alleluia.

*This is the day which the Lord has made,
let us be glad and rejoice in it.
You are our God, we give thanks to you. Alleluia.*

from Psalm 118

Orlando Gibbons
13. O Lord in thy wrath

O Lord, in thy wrath rebuke me not:
neither chasten me in thy displeasure.
Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak:
O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed.
My soul is also sore troubled:
but, Lord, how long wilt thou punish me?
O save me, for thy mercy's sake.

Psalm 6: 1-4

Thomas Tallis
14. O sacrum convivium

O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur;
recolitur memoria passionis ejus;
mens impletur gratia;
et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.

*O sacred banquet,
in which Christ is received,
the memory of his Passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future glory to us is given.*

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Thomas Morley
15. O amica mea

O amica mea,
sunt capilli tui sicut greges caprarum quae
ascenderunt de monte Galaad.
Dentes tui sicut greges tonsarum
quae ascenderunt de lavacro.

*O my love, your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down mount Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
which have come up from the wash.*

Song of Songs

Thomas Tomkins
16. Turn unto the Lord

Turn unto the Lord our God
for the Lord is gracious,
his mercy is everlasting,
and his truth endureth from
generation to generation.

Text based on Joel 2: 13 and Psalm 100: 1

Orlando Gibbons
17. Lift up your heads

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the King of glory?
it is the Lord strong and mighty.
Even the Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory.

Psalm 24

The Queen's Six

Founded in 2008, The Queen's Six was established on the 450th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth I, from whom the group takes its name.

Elizabeth I was a great patroness of the arts, and often engaged the services of musicians to write and perform for her at court. Featured on the group's first album, the notable 'six' from this era were Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, Thomas Tomkins, Thomas Morley, Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Weelkes.

Based in Windsor Castle, England, the group consists of two countertenors, two tenors, a baritone and a bass. By day, all the members of the 21st century 'Queen's Six' are also half of the Lay Clerks of St George's Chapel, whose homes lie within the Castle walls.

The Chapel Choir, which consists of boy trebles and twelve professional adult male singers, performs some eight services a week, as well as at private and state occasions, often before the British Royal Family. This rare privilege demands the highest musical standards. Most significantly however, it is the familiarity of living

and singing together every day in the Royal Chapel that lends this group its distinctive closeness and blend, as well as an irresistible informality and charm.

The Queen's Six's repertoire extends far beyond the reach of the choir stalls: from austere early chant and florid Renaissance polyphony, to lewd madrigals, haunting folk songs and upbeat Jazz and Pop arrangements.

Individually, members of The Queen's Six appear regularly in all of the most prestigious vocal ensembles both nationally and internationally, including Tenebrae, Polyphony, The BBC Singers, The Cardinal's Musick, Collegium Vocale Gent, The Gabrieli Consort, EXAUDI, The King's Consort, The Tallis Scholars and The Sixteen.

As an ensemble, The Queen's Six have performed to critical acclaim at music festivals in the UK and Spain. In the short time since they began, they have also released a commercial EP, and had the privilege of performing at a private function for HM The Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

www.thequeensix.com

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