



HER HEAVENLY HARMONY

PROFANE MUSIC FROM
THE ROYAL COURT

THE QUEEN'S SIX

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The Queen's Six

Daniel Brittain *countertenor*
Timothy Carleston *countertenor*
Nicholas Madden *tenor*
Dominic Bland *tenor*
Andrew Thompson *baritone*
Simon Whiteley *bass*

About The Queen's Six:

*'They bring seamless blend and balance to music from
the reign of Elizabeth I, from whom they take their name'*

The Observer

*'[...] the bond that comes from working together several times
each week [...] produces some glorious performances'*

Early Music Today

Royalty

Thomas Morley (c. 1557-1602)

1. **Hard by a crystal fountain** [3:02]
2. **Arise, awake** [2:11]

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

3. **The fauns and satyrs stripping** [4:11]

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

4. **O ye tender babes** [1:19]

Thomas Weelkes (c. 1575-1623)

5. **Like two proud armies** [1:35]

Balletts

Thomas Tomkins

6. **See, see the shepherds' Queen** [2:09]
7. **O let me live for true love –
O let me die for true love** [3:42]

Thomas Morley

8. **No, no, Nigella** [1:46]

Bi(y)rds

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

9. **Compel the hawk** [2:53]
10. **The eagle's force** [2:23]

Thomas Tallis

11. **Like as the doleful dove** [1:28]

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

12. **The silver swan** [1:55]
13. **Dainty fine bird** [2:34]

The Natural World

Thomas Morley

14. **Now is the gentle season** [2:49]

Thomas Weelkes

15. **Thule, the period of cosmography –
The Andalusian merchant** [4:01]

Orlando Gibbons

16. **Fair is the rose** [3:07]

Dedications

William Byrd

17. **Ye sacred muses** [3:24]

Thomas Tomkins

18. **Cloris when as I woo** [2:31]

Thomas Weelkes

19. **Death hath deprived me** [2:20]

Love and Death

Thomas Weelkes	
20. Mars in a fury	[1:35]
William Byrd	
21. And think ye nymphs	[1:52]
Orlando Gibbons	
22. Ah, dear heart	[1:58]
Thomas Tallis	
23. When shall my sorrowful sighing slake	[3:48]
Thomas Tomkins	
24. Music divine	[3:34]
Total playing time	[62:19]

Her Heavenly Harmony: Profane Music from the Royal Court

In several ways this new disc from The Queen's Six acts as a pendant to their debut album on Resonus. Concentrating on the same six composers, but this time on their secular music, the two recordings taken together provide an unusually detailed insight into the varied musical activities which surrounded Queen Elizabeth I. Once again the singers go deep into a repertoire which is only partly known today: comparing famous masterpieces like Thomas Weelkes's *Thule, the period of cosmography* and Orlando Gibbons's *The silver swan*, with such rare treasures as Tallis's only-known secular vocal compositions.

All these pieces can correctly be called 'madrigals'. However within this blanket term there are several shades of style, which in fact were never very clearly maintained even at the time: the differences between a madrigal, an ayre, a catch and a ballett can easily blur in the hands of a master. Since in these six composers we are dealing with the some of the most inventive minds of the period, it comes as no surprise to find that there is not very much of the block-chord, love-sick style of partsong, full of obvious word-painting

and bawdy double-meanings, which originally came from Italy and set the English school going. On balance this is a disc of serious messages, dressed in an artless idiom.

With the **Royalty** theme in mind, the collection opens with five madrigals in praise of Elizabeth I. The first three are taken from a collection known as the *Triumphs of Oriana*, which was compiled and published by Thomas Morley in 1601. This involved twenty-five items written by twenty-three composers, there being two each by Morley and Ellis Gibbons. The two by Morley open this disc. 'Oriana' was a well-accepted soubriquet for Elizabeth I (extended into recent times by Benjamin Britten when he revived it in the word *Gloriana*, the title of his opera for the current Queen Elizabeth). Every madrigal in the collection ends with the couplet 'Thus sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana: long live fair Oriana', which is often set as a separate section, sometimes introduced with deliberately impressive block chords.

The conceit that Oriana, a legendary English princess and maiden, lived a pastoral existence surrounded by shepherds and nymphs whom she had the power to woo away from Diana, their mistress, is maintained in all these settings, with the usual supporting cast of birds, winds, lambs, fountains and brooks. In the six-voice *Hard by a crystal*

fountain Morley puts us straight into the routine of word-painting – and deft triple-time writing for nymphs dancing – which characterises much of the lighter madrigal repertoire. Thomas Tomkins, in his *The fauns and satyrs tripping* (a 5), writes a more substantial piece, seeming to swoon at first mention of Oriana early on, and then taking this rapturous mood into the final refrain.

The three pieces by Thomas Tallis on this recording are something special. Like Tomás Luis de Victoria, Tallis is not thought of as a composer of secular vocal music: the only partsong by him to have achieved any fame (probably because of its wonderful title – *Fond youth is a bubble*) turns out to be a contrafactum of the anthem *Purge me, O Lord*. However the pieces recorded here, for all that they sound like his religious music and have careful, improving texts, are stand-alone compositions, conjuring a hybrid, almost eerie sound-world, an echo from long ago. They also offer something different from the music surrounding them, not least in being for four voices. This is immediately clear when Weelkes's tremendous six-voice *Like two proud armies* strides onto the stage, sweeping all before it. In the inverse of Tallis, Weelkes's best sacred music benefits from his genius at writing

madrigals, especially from his impulsive reaction to colourful words.

A *Ballett* was originally a straightforward madrigal, in four parts, so called because the performers could dance to the tune. They differ from madrigals in their regular rhythm and the indispensable singing of 'fa-la-la' between the clauses. The three gathered here have clearly moved on from these origins – it would be difficult to dance to the Tomkins items for example – and only *O let me live for true love* is in four parts, the others are in five. The mournful tone of the fa-la-las in *O let me live* hints at a mature view of love. The nearest in spirit to the old ballett is Morley's *No, no, Nigella* which, although in five parts, maintains the traditional steady chordal rhythm for the main body of its text.

Perhaps it is no surprise that with composers of this quality the music in the **Bi(y)rds** category does little to suggest avian chirping. Instead all three composers take the image of a bird as a way into something more substantial. The two pieces by Byrd, respectively from his *Songs of sundrie natures* (1589) and *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets* (1611), are through-composed, contrapuntally inventive pieces, delivering a strong message. *The eagle's force* is unusual in being written for three voices only (AAT);



Photography: Cora Beattie

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



but then this whole repertoire of Byrd's, numbering about 160 pieces, is unusual.

This is not so true of Gibbons, whose gentle moralising has become part of our view of English Renaissance musical culture. Nothing in his beautifully crafted pieces is superficial, from the texts to his incomparable mastery of part-writing, but it is the simplest which is probably the best-loved – *The silver swan*. It is striking that Gibbons, like Byrd in *The eagle's force*, by some roundabout process of thought, begins with a bird and ends with fools. His *Dainty fine bird* is a more sustained lament on the trials of love, the final 'die' being the least sexually explicit use of this stock-in-trade double-meaning I've ever come across. And then, as before, Tallis offers us something in the same line of thought but in a style that seems to be timeless.

For **The Natural World** the mood lightens, though Gibbons is ever keen to remind us of the transitory nature of the beauty to be found there. However if one would prefer something more uncomplicatedly pastoral it was surely Morley who was best equipped to provide it. *Now is the gentle season* is as artless as one could wish, ending with a beautiful sequence on the words 'I love' (having underplayed the delicious 'and full of kindly lust').

Weelkes's six-voice *Thule, the period of cosmography*, with its second part *The Andalusian merchant*, is one of the greatest achievements of this repertoire. Weelkes's gamut of arresting harmonies to conjure up outlandish places and extreme natural happenings, alongside a constantly renewing stock of teeming polyphonic detail, keeps the listener in a state of almost unbearable excitement. Gibbons's *Fair is the rose* is ideally paced to calm us down again.

The three pieces in the **Dedications** section, which neatly refer to all six of the featured composers on the disc, are like light and shade. Byrd mourns Tallis, and Weelkes mourns Morley, in the most sustained and dignified music, while Tomkins serenades Gibbons almost entirely with the word 'no'. The explanation is that Byrd and Weelkes were commemorating much loved colleagues who had died, while Tomkins was simply having fun. The Byrd lament was originally written for four viols and solo voice, the highest of the five parts only being texted in the original source. Given the scrupulously contrapuntal nature of the writing, however, it is not difficult to fit the very moving words to all the parts. If anything Weelkes's lament is even more passionately distressed than Byrd's, the composer showing again that his instinctive method is to wear his heart on his sleeve, here with sustained

phrases, slow dissonances and wrenching harmonies. These two pieces represent an extreme end of the madrigal tradition, far from the popular view that it normally deals with frolicking nymphs. Cloris, of course, takes us right back there.

The final section is a summation of much that the disc, and the repertoire in general, stands for: love, death, nymphs, furious gods, sorrowing hearts, sighing – and divine music. Weelkes again leads off with a six-voice classic, rushing from martial endeavour to languorous dying via some spectacular word-painting in no time. Byrd approaches nymphs with his customary wit, fully equal to the word-play in the anonymous text, the second part written in a slow triple-time which contrasts teasingly with what has gone before.

Gibbons's five-voice *Ah, dear heart* is another of his epigrammatic statements on life and love, compact, sober and passionate. The writing at 'the light that shines comes from your eyes' is possibly the most famous single phrase in any madrigal. Tallis's *When shall my sorrowful sighing slake* forms another extraordinary interlude before Tomkins wraps things up with a leisurely six-part paean to music itself. *Music divine* is yet another example

of a masterpiece by one of England's most significant composers which is rarely heard. This could be said of many of the pieces on this seminal disc, as revelatory as it is beautifully sung.

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Texts

Thomas Morley (c. 1557-1602)

1. **Hard by a crystal fountain**

Hard by a crystal fountain,
Oriana the bright
Lay down asleeping.
The birds they finely chirped,
The winds were stilled;
Sweetly with these accenting
The air was filled.
This is that fair, whose head a crown deserveth,
which heav'n for her reserveth.
Leave, shepherds, your lambs keeping,
Upon the barren mountain,
And nymphs attend on her and leave your bowers,
For she the shepherd's life maintains and yours.
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana!

2. **Arise, awake**

Arise, awake, awake,
You silly shepherds sleeping;
Devise some honour for her sake,
By mirth to banish weeping.
Lo where, she comes in gaudy green arraying,
A prince of beauty rich and rare for her delighting
Pretends to go a-maying.
You stately nymphs draw near,
And strew your paths with roses;
In you her trust reposes.
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana.

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

3. **The fauns and satyrs tripping**

The fauns and satyrs tripping,
with lively nymphs
of fresh cool brooks and fountains,
and those of woods and mountains:
Like roes came nimbly skipping,
by signs their mirth unripping,
My fair Queen, they presented
with Amaltheas twenty
brimful of wealthy plenty,
and still to give frequented,
with bare gifts not contented.
The demigods pray to the gods supernal;
her life, her wealth, her fame may be eternal.
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:
Long live fair Oriana!

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

4. **O ye tender babes**

O ye tender babes of England,
shake off slothfulness, set wantonness apart.
Apply your wits wholly to learning and virtue,
whereby you may do your duty to God and your King.
Make glad your parents, profit yourselves,
And much advance the commonweal of your country.

Thomas Weelkes (c. 1575-1623)

5. **Like two proud armies**

Like two proud armies marching in the field,
joining a thund'ring fight, each scorns to yield;

So in my heart, your beauty and my reason,
the one claims the crown,
the other says 'tis treason.
But O your beauty shineth as the sun,
and dazzl'd reason yields as quite undone.

Thomas Tomkins

6. **See, see the shepherds' Queen**

See, see the shepherds' Queen,
Fair Phyllis all in green,
Fa la la...
The shepherds home her bringing
With piping and with singing,
Fa la la...
Then dance we on a row,
And chant it as we go.
Fa la la...

7. **O let me live for true love – O let me die for true love**

O let me live for true love;
Fa la la...
O let me live, yet let me live no longer,
than that my life may make my love the stronger.
O let me live for true Love;
Fa la la...

O let me die for true love;
Fa la la...
Let not hope or old time come to end my woe.
O let me die for true love,
Fa la la...

Thomas Morley
8. No, no, Nigella

No, no, no, no Nigella,
Let who list prove thee,
I cannot love thee,
Fa la la...
Have I deserved
Thus to be served?
Well then content thee,
If thou repent thee.
Fa la la...

No, no, no, no Nigella,
In sign I spite thee,
Lo I requite thee.
Fa la la...
Hence forth complaining
Thy love's disdainig,
Sit thy hands wringing,
Whilst I go singing.
Fa la la...

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

9. **Compel the hawk**

Compel the hawk to sit that is unmanned,
or make the hound untaught, to draw the deer,
or bring the free against his will in band,
or move the sad a pleasant tale to hear,
your time is lost, and you are ne'er the near:
So Love ne learns by force the knot to knit,
he serves but those that feel sweet fancy's fit.

10. The eagle's force

The eagle's force subdues each bird that flies:
What metal may resist the flaming fire?
Doth not the sun dazzle the clearest eyes?
And melt the ice, and make the frost retire?
Who can withstand a puissant king's desire?
The stiffest stones are pierced through with tools:
The wisest are with princes made but fools.

Thomas Tallis

11. Like as the doleful dove

Like as the doleful dove delights alone to be,
and doth refuse the bloomed branch,
choosing the leafless tree,
Whereon wailing his chance,
his bitter tears besprent,
doth with his bill his tender breast
oft pierce and all to rent;
Whose grievous groanings tho',
whose grips of pining pain,
whose ghastly looks,
whose bloody streams
outflowing from each vein,
whose falling from the tree,
whose panting on the ground,
examples be of mine estate,
tho' there appear no wound.

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

12. The silver swan

The silver swan who, living, had no note,
When death approach'd, unlock'd her silent throat.
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sang her first and last,
And sang no more:
Farewell, all joys,
O death come close mine eyes.
More geese than swans now live,
more fools than wise!

13. Dainty fine bird

Dainty fine bird that art incaged there,
Alas, how like thine and my fortunes are?
Both pris'ners be; and both singing thus,
Strive to please her that hath imprison'd us.
Only thus we differ thou and I,
Thou liv'st singing, but I sing and die.

Thomas Morley

14. Now is the gentle season

Now is the gentle season freshly flow'ring,
To sing and play and dance while May endureth,
And woo and wed too, that sweet delight procureth.

The fields abroad with spangled flowers are gilded,
The meads are mantled and closes;
In May each bush arrayed, and sweet wild roses.



Photography: Gill Aspel

The nightingale her bower hath gaily builded,
And full of kindly lust, and love's inspiring,
"I love, I love" she sings, hark: her mate desiring.

Thomas Weelkes

15. **Thule, the period of cosmography –
The Andalusian merchant**

Thule, the period of cosmography,
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulfurious fire
Doth melt the frozen clime and thaw the sky:
Trinacrian Aetna's flames ascend not higher,
These things seem wond'rous,
yet more wond'rous I,
Whose heart with fear doth freeze,
with love doth fry.

The Andalusian merchant, that returns
Laden with cochineal and China dishes,
Reports in Spain how strangely Fogo burns,
Amidst an ocean full of flying fishes!
These things seem wond'rous,
yet more wond'rous I,
Whose heart with fear doth freeze,
with love doth fry.

Orlando Gibbons

16. **Fair is the rose**

Fair is the rose, yet fades with heat or cold,
Sweet are the violets, yet soon grow old.
The lily's white, yet in one day 'tis done.
White is the snow, yet melts against the sun

So white, so sweet was my fair mistress' face,
Yet alter'd quite in one short hour's space.
So short-liv'd beauty a vain gloss doth borrow,
Breathing delight today, but none tomorrow.

William Byrd

17. **Ye sacred muses**

Ye sacred muses, race of Jove,
whom music's love delighteth,
Come down from crystal heav'ns above
to earth where sorrow dwelleth,
In mourning weeds, with tears in eyes:
Tallis is dead, and music dies.

Thomas Tomkins

18. **Cloris when as I woo**

Cloris, when as I woo,
Why still repli'st thou no?
If as a maid you use it,
Say no, and ne'er refuse it.

Thomas Weelkes

19. **Death hath deprived me**

Death hath deprived me of my dearest friend,
My dearest friend is dead and laid in grave,
In grave he rests until the world shall end
As end must all things have.
All things must have an end that nature wrought,
Must unto dust be brought.

20. **Mars in a fury**

Mars in a fury 'gainst love's brightest queen,
Put on his helm and took him to his lance,
And marching to the mount this warrior was seen,
And there his ensigns did the god advance,
And by heaven's greatest gates he stoutly swore,
Venus should die for she had wrong'd him sore.

William Byrd

21. **And think ye nymphs**

And think ye nymphs to scorn at love?
as if his fire were but of straws:
he made the mighty gods above,
to stoop and bow unto his laws,
and with his shafts of beauty bright,
he slays the hearts that scorn his might.

Love is a fit of pleasure,
bred out of idle brains,
his fancies have no measure,
no more than have his pains,
his vain affections like the weather,
precise or fond, we wot not whether.

Orlando Gibbons

22. **Ah, dear heart**

Ah, dear heart, why do you rise?
The light that shines comes from your eyes;
The day breaks not, it is my heart,

To think that you and I must part.
O, stay, or else my joys will die,
And perish in their infancy.

Thomas Tallis

23. **When shall my sorrowing sighing slake**

When shall my sorrowful sighing slake,
When shall my woeful wailing cease,
When shall my tears and mourning make
Mercy and pity me to release?
When shall the pensive heart find peace,
When shall the mind find quiet rest,
That hath been long with thought oppressed?

How long shall I in woe lament,
How long shall I in care complain,
How long shall danger me torment,
Augmenting still my deadly pain?
Till hope and dread between them twain
Agree that hope have her request,
Till then live I with thought oppressed.

Thomas Tomkins

24. **Music divine**

Music divine, proceeding from above,
whose sacred subject oftentimes is love,
in this appears her heav'nly harmony,
where tuneful concords, sweetly do agree.
And yet in this her slander is unjust,
to call that love which is indeed but lust.

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 two albums, 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 drawn from 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, 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, Germany Portugal and Spain. In the shorttime 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.

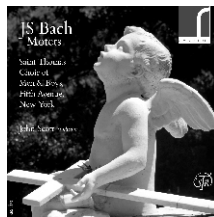
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Recorded in Ascot Priory on 14-16 September 2015
Producer, Engineer & Editor: Adam Binks
Recorded at 24-bit / 96kHz resolution (DDD)
Cover image: Detail from Queen Elizabeth I (The Ditchley Portrait)
by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1561-1636)
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Thanks are due to Fr. Paul McLaren-Cook of Ascot Priory for his generous assistance in making this recording.

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