

A MIDSUMMER CONCERT

From the Henry VIII manuscript

Henry VIII	<i>Pastime with good company</i>	Anon
William Cornysh	<i>Adieu mes amours</i>	Anon
Anon	<i>England be glad</i>	Anon
Richard Pygott	<i>Quid petis, O fili</i>	Anon
Anon	<i>Hey trolly lolly lo!</i>	Anon

The Reformation

John Taverner	<i>Leroy Kyrie</i>	
Thomas Tallis	<i>Why fum'th in fight?</i>	From Archbishop Parker's Psalter
William Byrd	<i>Civitas sancti tui</i>	From Jeremiah

Elizabethan England

William Byrd	<i>Though Amaryllis dance in green</i>	Anon
John Ward	<i>Hope of my heart</i>	Francis Davison
John Dowland	<i>O sweet woods</i>	Sir Philip Sidney
John Bennet	<i>All creatures now</i>	Anon

INTERVAL

Later settings of Tudor verse

Charles Villiers Stanford	<i>Diaphenia</i>	Anon
E J Moeran	<i>The Treasure of my heart</i>	Sir Philip Sidney
Alexander Goehr	<i>The Man of Life</i>	Thomas Campion
Ralph Vaughan Williams	<i>Three Shakespeare Songs</i>	William Shakespeare

Glorifying the Tudor myth: Elizabeth II's coronation

from 'A Garland for the Queen':

Gerald Finzi	<i>White flowering days</i>	Edmund Blunden
John Ireland	<i>The Hills</i>	James Kirkup

from 'Gloriana'

Benjamin Britten	<i>Dances from Gloriana</i>	William Plomer
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Welcome to our concert exploring the interaction between Tudor verse and music across the centuries. The first half of the concert is of repertoire contemporary with the poetry; in the second half we explore the influence of Tudor verse, and of the 'Tudor myth', on more recent composers.

Our first group consists of five pieces from the Henry VIII manuscript, a collection of music performed at the early Tudor court. In his earlier years Henry proved himself a very cultured prince, skilled in music, poetry and languages. Following his accession in 1509 the English court rapidly, if belatedly, developed the trappings of a Renaissance court, as was demonstrated by the competitive extravagance of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. Continental influence is revealed in *Adieu mes amours*, by Cornysh, head of music in the Chapel Royal, and by Pygott's sophisticated carol. The group also includes a call to arms dating from the early years of Henry's reign, when he joined a papal alliance "against the Frenchmen".

Our second group of pieces looks briefly at the major historical development of Henry's reign, the Reformation. John Taverner's *Leroy Kyrie* illustrates the long, flowing melismatic lines of the pre-Reformation English style: exactly which Henry it was composed in honour of is not known. With the accession of Edward VI in 1537 the Protestant Reformation became more firmly established. Thomas Tallis's hymn, though not published until 1567, perfectly illustrates the demand for a much simpler musical style, with only one note per syllable. William Byrd's motet *Civitas sancti tui* from 1589 illustrates the reverse side of the coin, the persecution of recusant Catholics. Unlike other catholic English composers Byrd did not flee abroad, but survived owing to the protection of Elizabeth I. The text of the motet, which laments the destruction of Jerusalem, is a metaphor for the destruction of the Catholic faith in England.

Our third group consists of four madrigals in varying styles. The madrigal, imported from Italy in 1588, rapidly became the most important secular form in late Tudor England. Byrd's *Though Amaryllis* shows the close relationship between vocal music and dance, for this is written in the alternating rhythms of the galliard, interpreted by Byrd with particular sophistication. Ward's output was relatively small, but often more serious in character. John Dowland was an internationally famous lutenist and a composer of tuneful ayres, often imbued with a special melancholy: *O sweet woods* is no exception. The final piece in this half, John Bennet's *All creatures now*, was written in 1601 for *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a volume of madrigals by different composers written in honour of Elizabeth I. Each ends with the refrain "Long live fair Oriana", though ironically the volume was not published until after her death in 1603.

For our fourth group of pieces we turn to later settings of Tudor verse. In the 19th century, a revival of interest in both the poetry and music of the past inspired the composition of a large number of partsongs. Stanford's *Diaphenia* is typical of the genre in matching trite, pastoral poetry to an effortless musical style, and in its verse structure. Moeran's *The Treasure of my heart* is more serious both in its choice of text and in musical style. Goehr's *The Man of Life* is a comparatively rare example of a more recent setting. Vaughan Williams' settings of texts from *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are wonderfully evocative: their individual titles are *Full Fathom Five*, *The Cloud-Capp'd Towers* and *Over Hill, Over Dale*.

The latter part of the 20th century saw a huge resurgence of interest in all things Tudor. The pieces in our final group were commissioned to celebrate the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. Finzi's *White-flowering days* and Ireland's *The Hills* come from *A Garland for the Queen*, a collection of ten works by different English composers to texts by ten contemporary British poets, designed to emulate *The Triumphs of Oriana*, which we met earlier in the programme. They are highly evocative pieces, though very different in style and mood. Britten's set of 'choral dances' come from his opera *Gloriana*, which deliberately evokes the world of Elizabeth I in tribute to the new queen. The six dances come from the most overtly ceremonial scene in the opera, in which the Queen visits Norwich, where a masque is performed in her honour. They are entitled *Time, Concord, Time and Concord, Country Girls, Rustics and Fishermen* and *Final Dance of Homage*.

Keith Bennett – director

Keith Bennett studied music at Oxford, where he was organ scholar at Brasenose College, and subsequently at Trinity College of Music. He was awarded a doctorate from Oxford in 1978 for his study of Luca Marenzio, the Italian madrigalist. From 1979-2004 he taught at Bath Spa University, where for eighteen years he was a principal lecturer and Course Director of the BA (Hons) Music degree. Keith has been conductor of the Paragon Singers for many years; under him it has become one of the south-west's leading chamber choirs, specialising particularly in early music and contemporary music. He has also performed widely as an accompanist, continuo player and singer.

Paragon Singers

Paragon Singers was formed in 1976 and specializes in Renaissance, Baroque and contemporary music. Under Keith Bennett's direction it has gained a reputation as a leading chamber choir in these fields in the south-west. It performs several times a year in Bath and its environs as well as making occasional appearances elsewhere. The choir has made concert tours to Kenya, Ireland, France and Holland, having five times visited Alkmaar as guests of its 'twin choir', Good Company.

<i>sopranos</i>	<i>altos</i>	<i>tenors</i>	<i>basses</i>
Pamela Bennett	Gill Clarke	Rupert Bevan	Phil Brotheridge
Julia Draper	Louise Gibb	Mike Gumbley	Jonathan Dawes
Mary Henderson	Margaret Graham	James Henderson	David Riding
Jane Hunt	Adele Reynolds	Christopher Rogers	Nicholas Stuart
Stephanie Lockhart	Catherine Richards		Martin Warren
Rebecca Wall			
Hazel Watson			