

THE FLAMING FIRE

Music from the Elizabethan and Stuart Royal Courts

Ryland Angel, countertenor

Parthenia, a consort of viols

Beverly Au, Lawrence Lipnik, Rosamund Morley, Lisa Terry

Mary's Scotland

Scottish Songs

Anonymous *mid 16th century*

In a garden so greene
Come, my Children dere
The flaming fire
Depairte, depairte

Royal Dances and Fantasies

James Lauder's Paven ~ Galliard
Wilson's Fantasie
Knell of Johnson

James Lauder *c. 1535-1595*
attr. Wilson *c. mid 16th century*
Robert Johnson *c. 1500-c. 1560*

Kirk, Croft and Chapel

Ane lessone upon the First Psalme
Our father, whiche in heaven art
Psalm 18
In nomine
Ave Maria

Anon.
John Angus *c. 1543-1595*
David Peebles *c. 1530-1576*
attrib. Robert Johnson *c. 1500-c. 1560*
Robert Parsons *c. 1535-c. 1572*

Elizabeth's England

A Royal Entertainment

The Queine of England's Paven ~ Gallyard
Eliza, her name gives honor
Venus birds
Duo
Pour down ye powers divine
No grief is like to mine
A Fancy

Anon. *16th c.*
John Bennet *fl. 1590*
Bennet
Alfonso Ferrabosco senior *1543-1588*
Parsons
Renaldo Paradiso *d. 1570*

An Elizabethan Chapel

Selections from Archbishop Parker's Psalter
Ut re mi
If ye be risen again with Christ
In nomine

Thomas Tallis *c. 1515-1585*
Parsons
Christopher Tye *c. 1505-1572*
William Byrd *c. 1540-1623*

Lament of Mary Queen of Scots

Anon. Scottish Folk Tune/Robert Burns
Arranged by Richard Einhorn

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Although only nine years younger than the English monarch, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (1542–1587), was the daughter of Queen Elizabeth I's (1533–1603) first cousin, James V of Scotland (his mother was Margaret Tudor, elder sister to Henry VIII). This close relationship was at the root of their mortal conflict: Mary maintained all her life, in spite of allegiances, treaties, battles, intrigues, reversals, and murders, that she was heir to the throne of England (as well as thrones of France and Scotland), if not in Elizabeth's immediate stead, at least upon the event of her death. To put an impossibly complicated political and religious situation into a nutshell (even Schiller could not deal with all of it in his epic drama), Mary's insistence was intolerable to the Virgin Queen.

In fact Mary ruled in Scotland for a scant six years. Mary's father died six days after her birth; thus she became "queen regnant" before it was assured that she would live at all, and the government was entrusted to a sequence of noble regents. At five she was sent to France as the intended wife of the Dauphin Francis, son of the powerful Henry II (who fully purposed thus to acquire Scotland), and grew up in the French court, where she was a great favorite, skilled in music, poesy (in French, Latin, Greek, Spanish, and Italian, as well as Scots and English), horsemanship, falconry, and needlework. She married at sixteen, her husband died a year later, and she returned to Scotland at eighteen as Queen. She was unprepared for the snake pit that awaited her.

During that violently turbulent year of 1560 a group of Protestant Lords under the leadership of John Knox (c. 1514–1572) had succeeded in ousting Scotland's Catholic government and Mary's current regent (her mother), and establishing the Reformed Church, effecting a formal break between the Scottish Kirk (Presbyterian) and Rome. Mary, always a Catholic, hoped for mutual tolerance, but conflict broke out at every turn. She married her cousin Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, four years later, but in February 1567 he was assassinated. She was herself accused of complicity in the plot, tried, and despite lack of any verdict, imprisoned and forced to abdicate in favor of her one-year-old son James VI of Scotland, later James I of England. Needless to say, all the regents for the young king thereafter were Protestants.

After an abortive military attempt to regain her throne, Mary fled to England to seek the protection of Queen Elizabeth I of England. The consequences of this misstep are too well known to rehearse here.

The ascendancy of the Reformed Church had a disastrous effect upon the musical life of Scots. The Royal Court of James V, although less lavish than those of Henry VIII or Elizabeth of England, did its best to emulate its cousins to the south, maintaining a stable of professional musicians and composers. Many of the larger Churches had "Sang Schules" to train their choristers, and frequently sent their star pupils to study abroad. The new Kirk, on the other hand, considered all polyphony "prophaine" or "filthie," all dancing "promuscuous," and all instruments, even church organs, of the Devil. All printing of secular music was now forbidden. As a result, all that remains of Scottish music – other than chordal hymns – for a hundred years, from 1560 to 1662, is from manuscript, in most cases fragmentary: three dozen songs, half a dozen dances, and a handful of instrumental fantasies.

One of the first musicians to be employed at Mary's court at Edinburgh in 1561 (though he may have been in her mother's service previously) was James Lauder. A record survives – from 1552; he was then eighteen – of the day-long deliberations of the provost, bailiffs, counselors, and deacons of his "song school" concerning a grant of permission for him to travel to England and France to "get better eruditioun in musick and playing nor he hes." His "paven," dated 1584 while he was in service to James VI, was widely known as "My Lord of Marche Paven," in honor of the king's half-brother, Robert Stewart, Seventh Earl of Lennox. It, and the galliard that follows it, were most probably composed for performance by the quartet of brothers who played viols at the Royal Court, by the name of Hutchison or Hudson.

Robert Johnson (1500–1560) was a Scot by birth alone, spending most of his productive life south of the border. Beginning his career as a Catholic priest, he was accused of Lutheran heresy and fled to England, where his name

became associated with the condemned Anne Boleyn (d. 1536): he may have set some of her writings to music. All his music comes from English sources, even his big five-voice works for the Roman rite, with which the “In nomine” attributed to him would be contemporaneous. His “Knell,” based on an ostinato, is another possible reference to Henry’s doomed Queen.

We may take the example of John Black, the probable composer of “Ane Lesson upon the First Psalm,” to be typical of the career of many a 16th-century Scottish composer. The earliest record of him is as a singer and organist’s assistant at “Sanct Nicholace Kirk” in Aberdeen, taking over as Master of its “Sang Schule” in 1556. When the church broke with the Papacy, Black refused to renounce his Catholicism and apparently left the country. But he must have converted to Protestantism in distant parts, for in 1575 he was back at the Kirk as “Maister” – now with a wife – remaining there until his death in 1587.

John Angus was a Benedictine monk at Dunfermline in Fife before the medieval Abbey was sacked and ruined by Protestants in 1560. Yet by 1595 he was a Presbyterian Parson in Crieff. His nine-stanza Scots version of the Lord’s Prayer is heard here in a 1635 English translation.

Robert Stewart, the Lord of March, must have been a patron of music for some time, for he commissioned an ambitious motet (“verray grave and dulce”) by David Peebles in 1576. Peebles (c.1510–1579), “one of the principall musitians in all this land in his tyme,” early in his career was a canon in the Abbey of St. Andrews and presented an Antiphon in 1530 to the then king, James V. His setting of Psalm 18 (“O God, my strength and fortitude”) represents a simpler type of composition – homophonic, square, restrained – typical of post-Reformation music.

Robert Parsons, being from Newark-on-Trent, England’s “Gateway to the North,” was not a Scot, but his magnificent five-part “Ave Maria” was known far and wide. He came to Elizabeth’s Chapel Royal in 1563, five years after her succession, to oversee the secular entertainments presented by the choirboys. He drowned at the age of forty while attempting to ford the Trent in January 1570, and his loss was mourned by musicians everywhere.

Elizabeth Regina’s entertainments were not simply a cultural adhesive, but an essential element in the maintenance of her power and popularity. Taking a cue from the “Maskes and Revels” staged at her father’s court, she had hit upon a most ingenious way of drawing her nobles close and, at the same time, preserving the royal exchequer: going “on progress.” She would travel for months in the year with a large retinue to the houses of earls and barons, gracing them with her presence but also expecting to be feted, lodged and fed, and given gifts in exchange. “The women did dance before her,” went one report, “whilst cornets did salute from the gallery; and she did vouchsafe to eat two morsels of rich comfit cake, and drank a small cordial from a gold cup. ... Six drums and six trumpets waited in the Court, and sounded at her approach and departure.” All this at the host’s expense, of course.

Contributing to the repertoire of the entertainments were many dances and songs composed in “Eliza’s” honor. Near the end of her 44-year reign, Thomas Morley collected and published *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601), containing 25 madrigals in her praise, all ending: “Long live fair Oriana!” John Bennet, (c. 1675–1614), a madrigalist in the tradition of Morley, Wilbye, and Weelkes, contributed one of the collection’s most popular pieces, “All Creatures Now Are Merry-minded.” His “Eliza, her name” and “Venus birds,” in the same vein, were probably composed about a decade earlier.

Private theatrical masks were also staged, indoors, for the elite: Parsons’s bipartite “Pour down, ye pow’rs divine,” sung by a gifted choirboy, would have been a feature of one of these masks.

If producing a full-scale Elizabethan entertainment was beyond the means of most sixteenth-century households, emulating the ceremonies in her Chapel was not. An enthusiasm for singing the Psalms in metrical translation had seized all of the British Isles, not just Scotland. Matthew Parker, first Archbishop of Canterbury (reigned 1559–1575) and a primary architect of Anglican doctrine, commissioned a publication of such verse translations, and in 1567 Thomas Tallis contributed nine harmonized tunes to the collection. Each of those tunes might well have been intended to serve for several of the Psalms. The third tune, later referred to as “the third mode melody,” became, centuries later, the basis of Ralph Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*; the eighth tune is “Tallis’s Canon.”

Christopher Tye was music tutor to both Edward VI and Elizabeth I during their childhood. He left London in 1560 to serve as a country parson in Cambridgeshire; it is not known whether he wrote any music after that date. It was he who greatly popularized the use of the “In nomine” cantus firmus for all later English composers by writing as many as twenty-nine fantasias on it. William Byrd – with only seven “In nomines” to his name – replaced Robert Parsons at Elizabeth’s court after Parsons’s death, and became one of the most respected and beloved “Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal,” in spite of his Catholicism. He composed motets and liturgical music for both Protestant and “Popish” rites, with texts in either English or Latin. (It seems that Elizabeth herself had a taste for the English service in Latin.)

Byrd’s first post had been at Lincoln Cathedral, where he was required to teach the choirboys not just singing but how to play the viola da gamba. It is not surprising that a consort of viols like ours inevitably arrives at the music of William Byrd.

– Lucy E. Cross