



William Byrd of Stondon Place, by Henry Rushbury (1889 - 1968)

A Byrd's Eye View
Celebrating William Byrd
St Cecilia Day Concert
26 November 2023
Glebe Music Festival
Glebe Town Hall
Josie and the Emeralds

Programme

William Byrd: Pavan and Galliard (6 viols)

Byrd: Oh you that hear this voice (soprano, 4 viols)

Byrd: In Nomine a4 No.2 (4 viols)

Byrd: Come to me, grief, for ever (soprano, 4 viols)

Byrd: fantasia a4 No.3 (4 viols)

Byrd: Browning: The Leaves be Green (5 viols)

Byrd: My mind to me a Kingdom is (soprano, 4 viols)

Brooke Green: My mind to me a Kingdom is (soprano, 4 viols)

Interval

Byrd: Have mercy upon me, O God (soprano, 5 viols)

Richard Sumarte: The Nightingale (Laura Vaughan, bass viol)

Byrd: My Mistress had a little dog (soprano, 4 viols)

Byrd: fantasia a6 No.2 (6 viols)

Brooke Green: A Byrd's Eye View (soprano, 6 viols)

Josie and the Emeralds

Josie Ryan, soprano

Brooke Green, (artistic director, viol)

Laura Vaughan, Daniel Yeardon, Fiona Ziegler, Ruby Brassier, Cathy Upex, viols

Program Overview

We celebrate William Byrd's remarkable contribution to music with some of his most famous songs and a selection of music for viols, in combinations from 4 - 6 parts, culminating in his magnificent 6 part Fantasia no.2. Continuing the Byrd/bird song theme, Laura Vaughan performs *The Nightingale* by one of Byrd's contemporaries: Richard Sumarte. (as far as we know, Byrd didn't write music for solo viol). Not long after the death of William Byrd, Renaissance writer Katherine Philips evokes mournful bird calls in her poem *Orinda to Lucasia*. This was part of the inspiration for Brooke Green's new work, *A Byrd's Eye View* which we premiere today.

William Byrd's life and legacy

2023 marks 400 years since the death of one of England's most venerated and prolific Renaissance composers, William Byrd (c.1540 - 1623). Byrd wrote in almost every genre of music of his time and about 600 of his pieces have survived. As an often outspoken Catholic serving under a Protestant monarch, he was always in danger. Some would argue it was this paradox that inspired his greatest music.

Byrd's first known appointment was in 1563 as organist and master of the choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. In 1569 he was cited for 'certain matters alleged against him' and his salary was suspended. Since Puritanism was influential at Lincoln, it is possible that the allegations were connected with over-elaborate choral polyphony or organ playing. In 1572 Byrd obtained the post of Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, becoming organist and composer for the largest choir of its kind in England. For the rest of his life he remained at the centre of England's musical life. There are varying accounts of his personality - as stubborn and difficult, (as he was involved in several legal disputes), or demonstrating a high degree of tact and diplomacy.

Byrd was widely admired by his contemporaries at home and abroad. Henry Peacham (1576 - 1643) said he preferred his music above all else and called him 'our Phoenix Master'. An English scribe, Mr Baldwin, composed this in his honour:

*Yet not strangers bragg, nor these some commende,
For they may now geve place and sett themselves behynde,
An Englishman, by name William BIRDE for his skill
Which I should heve sett first, for soe it was my will,
Whose far greater skill and knowledge doth excelle all at this time
And far to strange countries abroad his skill dothe shyne...*

O You that hear this voice

from *Psalms, sonnets, and songs of sadness and piety*, 1588

words: Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), *Atrophel and Stella*, Song No.6

Which is the greater: Music, Beauty or Love? This is the main question here. Implicit is an allusion not just to the patron saint of Music, St Cecilia but also to Elizabeth I who enjoyed being compared to the figure of Music creating harmony over her realm. While Music appears to triumph by absorbing Beauty and Love, it seems that after copious arguments in favour of Music, ultimately Reason has to declare the winner. Presumably we are meant to assume that Reason, sitting in the throne of the mind is another allusion to Elizabeth. It seems that all virtues align with Elizabeth and it's perhaps no wonder that Philip Sidney was one of her favourite poets, with his cleverness handling this sort of debate. In the preface to one of their publications, Byrd and fellow composer Thomas Tallis claim that music is 'indispensable to the state'. Perhaps this is the most succinct summing up of the sentiments in Sidney's verse!

Byrd: In Nomine a4 No.2

This is one of Byrd's most beautiful settings of the *In Nomine* chant. In the first half, there is a general feeling of upward motion as each phrase rises a step or two above the previous one. About two-thirds of the way through, we've reached a turning point where there are more downward sweeps but the tension continues to the end so we finish more elevated than we began.

Byrd: Fantasia a4 No.3

The Renaissance Fantasia is an intriguing mix of strict counterpoint (note against note) and free form. On the counterpoint side, there is a development of each musical motif after it has been successively imitated by each different instrument. On the free form side, the composer's 'fancy' is apparently allowed to wander at will. Byrd's Fantasias are among the best of his time. Perhaps it is due to brilliant combination of these opposing forces (head and heart) that Byrd's Fantasies are always satisfying to play.

Byrd: Browning, The Leaves be Green

*The leaves be Green, the nuts be brown,
They grow so high they will not come down.*

Browning is based on the popular song of Byrd's time and each instrument states this tune four times as the work modulates through various key centres. The interplay of imitative motives and the rhythmic complexities makes this one of those pieces where you have to hold on tight for a fast ride, especially as we go into triplets on the last page. One source in the British Library has 'a most excellent piece' penned to the beginning of the score.

Come to me grief for ever

The first of the funerall songs of that honourable Gent. Sir Philip Sidney, Knight.

from *Psalms, sonnets, and songs of sadness and piety*, 1588

words: Thomas Watson (c.1557-92) or Edward Dyer (1543 - 1607)

Byrd set three poems by Philip Sidney. After Elizabeth and the court were shocked by Sidney's death at the Battle of Zutphen, he composed two elegies. We don't know if Byrd and Sidney knew each other personally but certainly Byrd's admiration for Sidney shines through. In this song Byrd pays homage to Sidney's poetic techniques by bringing them into his music. Some of these are to do with stress and meter. Others are to do with the echoing of sounds. For instance, the words *just grief, heart's tears* and *Sidney is dead* are echoed many times in the text and music. Each of these motifs fall down in pitch and throughout, there is a prevalence of downward motion with many falling phrases echoing each other.

My mind to me a kingdom is

words: Sir Edward Dyer

Like Philip Sidney, Sir Edward Dyer was considered one of the 'chief ornaments' at Elizabeth's court. But he claimed to dislike court life and apparently 'would not stoop to fawn.' His poem *My mind to me a kingdom is* describes the richness of a life in an imaginary kingdom, preferring the life of the mind to the pleasures of the court. Court life may have its opportunities but it is simply too dangerous: those who are 'held aloft' (up high) are in danger of falling - and he'd rather not take the risk. Yet while he despises *wylie wits* these are witty words.

Byrd: Have mercy upon me, O God

Psalms, Songs and Sonnets, 1611

This is a poignant setting of Psalm 51, showcasing Byrd's mastery in crafting expressive textures, for a combination of voices and/or viols. The piece unfolds with a sense of contrition, as the voices intertwine to convey the psalmist's plea for mercy. Byrd employs rich harmonic progressions and subtle dissonances, heightening the emotional depth of the composition. The work's intricate counterpoint and delicate phrasing reflect Byrd's great understanding of vocal writing. (Josie Ryan)

Richard Sumarte: The Nightingale

Richard Sumarte (d.after 1630) was an English composer and violist, known almost exclusively for his compositions found in the Manchester Lyra-Viol Manuscript (c.1660). Playing the viol 'lyra way' was popular in 17th-century England, and most typically involved playing dances, airs and well-known melodies solo, utilising the viol's ability to play chords and accommodate a wide variety of scordatura tunings. Sumarte's compositions show a sophisticated understanding of the instrument and the ability to arrange some of the era's most beautiful common tunes such as The Nightingale for lyra viol in a most charming manner. (Laura Vaughan)

The lyricist of **My mistress has a little dog** is anonymous, perhaps because these words are dangerously ambiguous. On the surface it appears that Byrd is sending condolences to Elizabeth for the loss of her pet. But the little dog could be Robert Devereux 2nd Earl of Essex, her long time favourite until she began to lose patience with the number of times he disobeyed her. His downfall could be the *tumble* and his execution, *the knocking out of his brains*. There are repeated calls for *a royal trial* and for the murderer of the dog to be hung as a *lout*, at *Tyburn* the site for all but the upper class. Perhaps this is to absolve the Queen from any feelings of guilt. In 1601, Essex was found guilty of treason and beheaded on Tower Green, the last person to be beheaded in the Tower of London. At least it was aristocratic!

Byrd: Fantasia a6 No.2

The mood at the beginning is one of 'serious counterpoint' but gradually this lifts with sly allusions to dance and snatches of popular songs. The elaborations build up to an almost unbearable climax. This in turn morphs into an expansive coda whose role seems to be to stabilise all this out-of-hand hedonism. Back in your box everyone!

Brooke Green: A Byrd's Eye View

Katherine Philips, (née Fowler, c.1631 - 1664) or "The Matchless Orinda", was a highly regarded writer of her time, fluent in several languages and academically precocious. After her father's death, she married Welsh Parliamentarian, James Philips and reluctantly moved from London to Cardigan, Wales. From there her writing only increased as she lamented the geographical distance between her and her friends Anne Owen and Mary Aubrey, (Lucasia and Rosania). Whilst she was at school, Katherine had created a Society of Friendship where members adopted pseudonyms drawn from French pastoral romances.

For *A Byrd's Eye View*, I took inspiration from Katherine Philips' poem *Orinda to Lucasia* which begins with an image of night birds calling for the sun to appear. Orinda compares Lucasia to the sun, lamenting that she cannot live without her. She is so caught up in her grief, it takes her a while to notice William Byrd, (now a bird), has escaped England to fly to Australia where she is. Once she notices him, she hopes that he, like her, will see *the dawning of tomorrow's sky*.

(Brooke Green)

Words

Orinda to Lucasia

Observe the weary birds e're night be done,
How they would fain call up the tardy Sun,
With Feathers hung with dew,
And trembling voices too,
They court their glorious Planet to appear,
That they may find recruits of spirits there.
The drooping flowers hang their heads,
And languish down into their beds:
While Brooks more bold and fierce than they,
Wanting those beams, from whence
All things drink influence,
Openly murmur and demand the day.

Thou my Lucasia art far more to me,
Than he to all the under-world can be;
From thee I've heat and light,
Thy absence makes my night.
But ah! my Friend, it now grows very long,
The sadness weighty, and the darkness strong:
My tears (its dew) dwell on my cheeks,
And still my heart thy dawning seeks,
And to thee mournfully it cries,
That if too long I wait,
Ev'n thou may'st come too late,

And not restore my life, but close my eyes.

Ah poor bird,
Take your flight,
Up above the sorrow
Of this dark night.

Ah poor bird,
As you fly,
Can you see the dawn
Of tomorrow's sky?

(Traditional English Folk song)



Katherine Philips

Instruments

Brooke plays a treble viol, 2002, by Jane Julier after Henry Jaye, c.1630

Laura plays a treble viol, 2007, by Jane Julier after Henry Jaye, (owner, Brooke Green)

Cathy plays a tenor viol, 2014, by Jane Julier after Henry Jaye, (owner, Brooke Green)

Fiona plays a tenor viol by Ingo Muthesius, 1968

Ruby plays a bass viol by Francis Beaulieu after Hendrik Jacobs

Danny and Laura play a new bass viol by Jane Julier, 2022, (owner, Fiona Ziegler)

Biographies

Josie Ryan holds a Masters degree in Early Vocal Music and Historical Performance Practice from the Royal Conservatory of The Hague and is currently undertaking PhD studies at Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Previously an ensemble singer with numerous European groups, Josie is now a featured soloist with Australian ensembles including Salut! Baroque, The Marais Project, The Sydney Consort, Sydney Chamber Choir, and the choirs of St James 'King Street and St Mary's Cathedral. She has been a frequent performer with both Cantillation and Pinchgut Opera since the founding of each. Josie has been the soprano of *Josie and the Emeralds* since its inception in 2011. She has also toured with the Australian Brandenburg Ensemble and Orchestra, and featured with them in the Sydney Festival season of Rembrandt Live, a theatre piece directed by John Bell, at the Art Gallery of NSW. She also featured as a soloist in the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra's 2020 online content, and with the Song Company in performances and recordings including the roles of Victory, Knowledge of God, Discretion and Patience in Hildegard of Bingen's Ordo Virtutum. Josie also enjoys working as a conductor and vocal coach with singers of all ages and experiences.

Brooke Green is the recipient of the 2023 APRA/AMCOS Art Music Fund, the 2019 Jonathan Blakeman National Composition Prize and a winner of the Viola da Gamba Society of America's Traynor Competition for New Viol Music, 2013. Brooke was commissioned by The Art Gallery of NSW while curating and performing in the concert series Music in this Stillness. In 2019, Brooke collaborated with musicians from The Night Watch to give a concert of her music in Wellington, New Zealand. The Spirit of Daphne for solo bass viol was commissioned by Laura Vaughan. In 2022, Brooke was Guest Artistic Director, performer and composer with the Arafura Music Collective, Darwin. Brooke is an associate composer with the Australian Music Centre where her published scores are available for purchase. In 2010, after studying viol and vielle with Wendy Gillespie, Brooke graduated with a Masters in Early Music Performance from the Historical Performance Institute, Bloomington, Indiana University where she also was a performer of contemporary music on historical instruments. In 2023 Brooke performed a solo treble viola recital at St James Church, King St, Sydney and at the University of Limerick, Ireland as a guest artist for their lunch time series.

Laura Vaughan

Melbourne-based viola da gamba specialist Laura Vaughan is a dynamic and well-recognised member of the early music movement in Australia. Following her return from studies at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, she has established an active performing career encompassing a wide range of solo and chamber repertoire across Australasia. Passionate about the unique sound world of the viol, Laura is committed to bringing this exquisite repertoire to audiences around the world. She is also one of the few exponents of the rare lirone and baryton. Laura records regularly for ABC Classic FM as a soloist and chamber musician and appears on numerous CD recordings. She performs with numerous ensembles including the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Adelaide Baroque, Auckland Philharmonia, Ironwood, Song Company, Accademia Arcadia and is a founding member of the multiple ARIA award nominated trio Latitude 37.

Daniel Yeadon is exceptionally versatile as a cellist and viola da gambist, performing repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to contemporary. As a chamber musician he has performed in many major venues and festivals throughout the world. He co-founded Ironwood, an Australian ensemble known for its presentations of the classics alongside new commissions for early instruments. Daniel is a part-time member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, has appeared as soloist with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and has performed on several national chamber music tours for Musica Viva Australia. He performs every year with Pinchgut Opera. For many years he was a member of the renowned period instrument ensemble Florilegium and later joined the Fitzwilliam String Quartet. Daniel continues to be guest principal cellist with many of the period instrument ensembles based in London, including the English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Daniel has made many award-winning recordings, including an ARIA winning disc of sonatas by J.S. Bach with Richard Tognetti and Neal Peres Da Costa; the J.S. Bach sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord with Neal Peres Da Costa; J.S. Bach cantatas and Brandenburg concertos with John Eliot Gardiner and English Baroque Soloists, in addition to many critically acclaimed recordings with Ironwood, Florilegium and the Fitzwilliam Quartet.

Fiona Ziegler began her violin and piano studies with her mother, violinist, Eva Kelly, later studying violin with Christopher Kimber and Harry Curby, piano with Nancy Salas and cello with Lois Simpson. Fiona, also a prominent baroque violinist, has performed with Ensemble de la Reine, The Marias Project, The Sydney Consort, Concertato, The Australian Forte Piano, the Renaissance Players and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. She has also performed regularly with The Sydney Chamber Choir, Coro Innominata, the Sydney Soloists and has led the Sydney Philharmonia since 1992. As a chamber musician Fiona has performed with the Gagliano String Quartet, the Sydney String Quartet, Trio Pollastri, the Vuillaume Trio, Josie and the Emeralds on Tenor Viol, the Grevillea Ensemble, and Plektra and Completely Plucked on mandolin and mandola. Fiona is an Assistant Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony.

Catherine Upex studied cello with Dorothy Sumner and Georg Pedersen. She attended the University of Sydney, graduating with a BMus (Hons) (majoring in Performance) in 1997. In 1994, while studying Baroque performance as part of her degree, Catherine started learning the viola da gamba with Jennifer Eriksson. Since 2000, Catherine has performed regularly with the Marais Project and played on several Marais Project CDs including “Viol Dreaming” (2007), “Love Reconciled” (2009) and “Lady Sings the Viol” (2012). She has also performed on the viola da gamba in masterclasses with Wieland Kuijken, Jaap ter Linden, Susie Napper and Margaret Little and has played with several ensembles including the Renaissance Players, Salut! Baroque, the Sydney Consort, Thoroughbass and the Opera Project. She is now a regular member of Josie and the Emeralds and Consort 8. She has also taught cello at several Sydney schools and currently teaches at the Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School, the Scots College and Lane Cove Public School.

Ruby Brallier

Originally from Seattle, Washington, Ruby moved to Sydney in 2023 with her partner Giulian and their two cats Loki and Freyja. In the United States, Ruby’s recent appearances as a chamber musician included Capitol Early Music (Washington, D.C.), Les Délices (Cleveland), the Taylor Johnson Early Music Series at Michigan State University, University of Notre Dame, Oberlin Conservatory, Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies, and Cranbrook Music Guild’s Chamber Artist Series. She enjoys volunteering for the Viola da Gamba Society of America, serving on the Outreach Committee and fundraising as the Conclave Auction Coordinator. In 2019 she was awarded an Outreach Grant by the VdGSA for her work to expand access and education on historical instruments in Northeast Ohio, including founding a tuition-free viol consort program. Ruby holds degrees in cello and viola da gamba from Oberlin Conservatory, University of Michigan, and Lawrence University. She plays a bass viol after Hendrik Jacobs by Canadian luthier Francis Beaulieu, and an 18th-century Klotz baroque cello. Since moving to Australia, Ruby has enjoyed exploring the vibrant Australian music scene, looking for the best espresso in her neighbourhood, cycling all over the city, and visiting with family in Melbourne.

Diary Dates

Wednesday 6 December, 2023

1:15 - 1:45pm

St James Church, King St, Sydney

Tickets available in person and online (for 6 days after the event)

Gamberi Musicali

Brooke Green, treble viol

Ruby Brallier, treble and bass viols

Love Cannot Dissemble

This programme features beautiful and intriguing duos and solos from some of seventeenth century England's finest composers for viol: Matthew Locke, Tobias Hume, Orlando Gibbons and Godfrey Finger. The power of love and music in an age of war is the underlying theme. Seventeenth century England was a notoriously fractious age with much of society destabilised due to the wars between royalists and parliamentarians. Cromwell's Puritan government banned music almost everywhere, including in church. Many musicians had to find other patronage, often in domestic settings. Viewed in this context, music with a theme of love seems poignantly heartfelt, and music without programmatic themes a welcome retreat for players and listeners.

Sunday 24 November, 2024, 3pm

St Cecilia Day Concert 2024

Glebe Town Hall

Glebe Music Festival

Josie and the Emeralds