

David J. Smith (organ, harpsichord, recorder)

Programme

England (1560/61-1582)

1580 Pavan

Peter Philips
(1560/61-1628)

When in Rome... (1582-1585)

Two settings of *Amarilli, mia bella*

Amarilli, mia bella

Amarilli

Giulio Caccini
(1551-1618)
Set by Jacob Van Eyck
(1589/90-1657)
Set by Peter Philips

On the Road with Thomas Paget (1585-1590)

Paget Pavan and Galliard

Peter Philips

A Choice Selection of Pieces from *James Thomson's Music Book*,
1702 (National Library of Scotland, MS. 2833)

The Banks of Yaro

Jumping John

The Lasses of Edenburah

The Three Sheeps Skinnis

What Shall I Do to Show

Horne Pipe

Improvisation

Interval

Pieces from *Diversi capricci per sonare* (Naples,
1603)

Ascanio Mayone
(c.1565-1627)

Toccata terza

Canzon francese seconda

Ricercar primo

Canzon francese quarta

Toccata quinta

England Remembered

Piper's Galliard

John Dowland (1563-1626), set by Peter Philips

At the Spanish Court in Brussels (1597-1628)

Margot, labourez les vignes

Orlando di Lasso (1532?-1594), set by Peter
Philips

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Peter Philips

Improvisation

Peter Philips (1560/61-1628)

We do not know exactly when Peter Philips was born, but a document dated 1597 records his age as '36 annes', so he must have been born in 1560 or 1561. Philips was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral under Sebastian Westcote, a staunch Catholic who managed to avoid religious persecution largely by providing Elizabeth I with a play acted by the choristers each Christmas. Perhaps it was the influence of Westcote that led Philips to adhere to the Catholic faith throughout his life. The first piece in tonight's programme is a pavan dated 1580 in its source, the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, where it is described as 'the first one Philips made'. In all likelihood it reflects the influence of his teacher, William Byrd, who was turning his hand to the composition of pavans for keyboard at just about this time. Dances such as the pavan fall into three repeated sections; on each repeat, the composer adorns the texture with idiomatic keyboard figuration. This particular piece by Philips became immensely popular, both in England and on the continent. It was arranged for all sorts of instruments: there are versions for lute solo, lute duet, consorts of viols and other ensembles. It crops up in sources from England, the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia.

Two years after composing this piece, Westcote died and Philips lost a valuable patron and protector. He left England 'to live after his conscience and to see Italy where he had heard that there were many excellent men of his faculty', becoming organist at the English College, Rome. Philips remained a great devotee of Italian music - for example, he composed madrigals on Italian texts without ever setting one in English. He evidently kept abreast of the latest developments in Italian music, and may even have been responsible for the ensemble version of Caccini's famous song, *Amarilli, mia bella*, on which his keyboard piece of 1603 is based. Caccini's *Amarilli* was arranged also by Jacob Van Eyck, a renowned seventeenth-century Dutch recorder player.

In 1585 it was time for Philips to move on. He was fortunate that Thomas Lord Paget visited the English College and took the musician under his wing. William Byrd had connections with the Paget family, so perhaps Philips's name was already familiar to Paget, who was escaping from his involvement in the failed Throgmorton plot. Philips accompanied Paget on his travels around Europe, which included time spent with Thomas's brother Charles in Paris. The melancholy pavan was one way in which an English musician expressed his grief for a recently departed patron, and the Paget Pavan would certainly fit the bill; it may have been written on Thomas's death in 1590. However, in one source it appears dedicated to Charles, who appears to have been a particularly successful double (or triple?) agent: to this day, it is unclear where his loyalties lay - was he a genuinely loyal Catholic refugee, or was he working for the English government?

From 1590 to 1597, Philips worked as a freelance musician in Antwerp, teaching the keyboard to the children of rich Italian merchants and bankers, publishing music and marrying into a family of painters. Sadly, his wife died in 1592 leaving Philips a widower; his daughter was brought up by her grandmother (but died too in 1599). In 1593, Philips made a journey from the Catholic south to Protestant Amsterdam to meet the great Dutch organist, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck on whom he seems to have had quite an influence. On his way back he stopped in the port of Middelburg to recuperate from an illness; he was arrested, charged with plotting to assassinate Elizabeth I, imprisoned in The Hague for interrogation, before eventually being released on word from London that he was essentially a harmless musician. However, all may not have been as it seems. Musicians were able to travel widely: then, as now, they made exceptionally good spies and messengers. It is unclear why Philips was in Middelburg: it was not, after all, on his way home. Under interrogation, he also denied ever having met Charles Paget, which was patently untrue. It seems that, like so many musicians down the ages, Philips was caught up in the murky world of espionage.

In 1597 Philips was appointed the most highly paid organist at the court of Archduke Albert in Brussels, and he spent the rest of his life in its service. Having lost both his wife and child, Philips was in a position to take Holy Orders, and in 1610 became a priest, which allowed him ecclesiastical preferment on top of his musical duties. Philips based most of his keyboard music on existing works for instrumental ensemble (in the case of dances) or vocal music. A setting of an ensemble piece by the English lutenist, John Dowland, can be found in a manuscript copied at court; his *Margot, labourez les vignes* is a keyboard arrangement (or 'intabulation') of a French chanson by Orlando di Lasso which is dated 1605 in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. This is the latest date associated with a piece of secular music by Philips: after his ordination, he seems to have eschewed the secular for the sacred. The final piece by Philips in this programme is one of only two surviving liturgical pieces for organ. In some ways, this seems curious: Philips was an organist for most of his career. However, whereas teaching involved writing out music for pupils, thus helping to ensure its preservation, organ playing was largely an improvised affair.

Improvisation

Each half of this recital ends with an improvisation on the organ, one of which will be based on theme(s) provided to the organist a quarter of an hour or so before the concert.

Ascanio Mayone (c.1565-1627)

The second half of tonight's programme begins with a sequence of pieces by the Neapolitan composer, Ascanio Mayone, who was a contemporary of Philips. Mayone's music is experimental to the point at which it cannot be performed exactly as it is written: some of Mayone's music is quite literally impossible to play, containing stretches beyond the reach of all but the largest hand. Mayone's virtuosity provides a contrast to the more refined music of Philips: these pieces were published in 1603, more or less the same time as Philips was composing works such as *Amarilli* and *Margot, labourez les vignes*.

As with much of our own contemporary music, it is clear that the contents of the 1603 book did not go down all that well in some quarters, and that some found fault in terms of the 'rules' of composition: in his second book of 1609 Mayone explains that 'in passagework...there are always some false notes contrary to the rules of counterpoint, without which it is impossible to play effectively; I point this out to whoever may see this music lest they be shocked and reckon me to be unobservant of the rules of counterpoint... and if they should not like this kind of music, they can look at and play the ricercars at the beginning of the book'.

Mayone begins his 1603 collection with four ricercars. The word 'ricercar' derives from the Italian verb 'to seek out'; the ricercar proceeds mainly in 'white' note values (minims and semibreves), exploring counterpoint in a manner not dissimilar to old-style vocal motets. The canzona was an instrumental genre derived from the sixteenth-century Parisian chanson which was characterised by a rhythm of one long note followed by two short ones; here the note values are that much shorter, and the pieces are reminiscent of lighter secular vocal music. Mayone includes five toccatas in a much freer style in his collection. Often in anthologies of music at this period, special pieces are put in prominent positions, either opening or closing a group of works. The fifth toccata takes the new virtuoso style playing to new heights. The only one not to close with an imitative section, it poses a musical challenge to the performer by containing writing which moves in very slow note values alongside extremely fast ornamental patterns. The opening motif of a descending fourth is heard intermittently throughout; even in the most decorative passages it will suddenly emerge from the texture, usually in the top part.

James Thomson's Music Book

James Thomson's Music Book is a manuscript in the National Library of Scotland containing, amongst other things, a collection of Scottish tunes intended for performance on the treble recorder. The name 'James Thomson' appears on the flyleaf, and gives the book its name; he was probably the first owner, responsible for copying the recorder pieces. The date 1702 also appears, and could mark the beginning or the end of the initial copying process - either way, it gives us some idea of when the manuscript dates from. The tunes include a number of London theatre tunes as well as Scottish tunes, which were popular in London at the end of the seventeenth century. However, the spelling of Thomson (without a 'p') suggests Scottish provenance.

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