



Oklahoma Choral Directors Association
Summer Conference
University of Central Oklahoma
Radke Fine Arts Theater
Monday, July 12, 2021
6:30pm

The Triumphs of Oriana (1601) A Selection of the Five-Voice Madrigals

Concert Script:

Hence Stars! Too dim of light

Michael East (c1580-1648)

Good evening Oklahoma Choral Directors Director's Association! We are Schola Cantorum Oklahoma and we are delighted to be here this evening to present a program of selected five-voice madrigals from the wonderful collection, *The Triumphs of Oriana*. We began with Micheal East's "Hence Stars! Too dim of light."

With the delightful revelry of forest deities, nymphs and swains, and even the goddess Diana, Thomas Morley's anthology of 25 madrigals by 23 composers, published in 1601, continues to laud Queen Elizabeth I. The next selection we will sing is "Long Live Fair Oriana" by Ellis Gibbons, brother of the more famous Orlando Gibbons. Ellis, along with Thomas Morley composed two madrigals for the collection. We follow "Long Live Fair Oriana" with "The nymphs and shepherds danced" by George Marson.

Long live fair Oriana

Ellis Gibbons (c.1573-c.1603)

The nymphs and shepherds danced

George Marson (c.1573-1632)

By now, you've no doubt noticed a recurring refrain. Indeed, all 25 madrigals close with the couplet, "Then sang the nymphs and shepherds of Diana, Long live fair Oriana." This refrain comes from Nicholas Yonge's translation of Giovanni Croce's "Ove tra l'herb'ei fiori," for inclusion in the enormously influential, *Musica Transalpina*. Incidentally, Thomas Morley would later enlarge and reset Croce's madrigal for *The Triumphs of Oriana* as "Hard by a crystal fountain" for six voices.

It is worth noting that Croce's madrigal appeared in an earlier Italian anthology entitled *Il Trionfo di Dori* in which each of the 29 madrigals ends with the refrain "Viva la Bella Dori." Morley's anthology followed this pattern. We next sing Richard Nicholson's "Sing shepherds all."

Sing, shepherds all, and in your roundelay.

Richard Nicholson (c.1563-1639)

The fauns and satyrs tripping

Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)

We ended there with “The fauns and satyrs tripping” by Thomas Tomkins. Who, you may ask, is Oriana and why is she so special? Among the several honorific names given to Elizabeth I, including Pandora, Gloriana, Cynthia, Belpheobe, and Astraea is the name Oriana, which refers to the “chaste and beautiful” daughter of Lisuarte, king of Great Britain in the chivalric romance *Amadís de Gaule*. Due to the enormous popularity of *Amadís*, writers in the sixteenth century referred to ladies as Oriana. In England, Oriana especially befitted the cult of the virgin queen.

Thomas Morley was evidently a devoted subject, perhaps not least because Elizabeth I granted him a monopoly to print music in 1598. By 1601, The Queen was nearly 70 and in poor health. She was also in rather sad spirits as a result of the rebellion of her favorite, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who led a failed *coup d'état* and was executed for treason in February of 1601.

It was in the midst of the sad realities of life that Morley undertook the ambitious plan to laud and cheer the Queen. With a sincere wish, if not fleeting a hope, Morley and his colleagues depicted an ageless queen ruling over an idyllic, pastoral Arcadia in which even the nymphs and shepherds of the goddess Diana show favor by singing, “Long live fair Oriana.”

The next madrigal that we will sing is the delicately beautiful “Come Gentle Swains” by Michael Cavendish.

Come, gentle swains.

Michael Cavendish (c. 1565-c. 1628)

Arise, awake, awake

Thomas Morley (c. 1557-1602)

We finished there with Thomas Morley’s five-voice contribution, “Arise, awake, awake.”

The coronavirus pandemic was perhaps a peculiar time to create a new vocal ensemble, but we believe in the power and indispensable nature of the choral art. The opportunity to emerge from the pandemic to perform here this evening is so very liberating.

We performed all 14 of the five-voice madrigals on May 8 and we look forward to performing the remaining 11 six-voice madrigals in the fall. We end the program with perhaps the most famous of the five-voice madrigals, John Bennet’s delightful, “All creatures now are merry-minded.”