



## The Orlando Gibbons Project 2020

Angel Early Music, Foxtons  
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'In Chains of Gold – The English Pre Restoration verse anthem, Volume 2' was released on June the 26th, to immediate wide acclaim. It was immediately named 'Recording of the week' on Prestomusic.com:

[www.prestomusic.com/classical/articles/3346--recording-of-the-week-byrd-and-more-from-the-magdalena-consort-and-friends](http://www.prestomusic.com/classical/articles/3346--recording-of-the-week-byrd-and-more-from-the-magdalena-consort-and-friends)

*For many people, verse-anthems are a phenomenon encountered exclusively in Anglican evensong services, accompanied by the organ. If you somehow missed the original Chains of Gold and are expecting that 'churchy' sound here – delightful, but perhaps a little tame – then prepare for a pleasant surprise .... genuinely made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up ... a magnificent sequel. A third volume is planned, and I for one can't wait.*

Here are some other reviews:

*It's a really fascinating programme ... I think this is a very, very special recording... very much worth procuring*

BBC Record Review, June 27th 2020

*... an intense, beautifully considered atmosphere ... a beautifully performed and well judged disc, where the striving for historically informed performance does not mask the high level of musicianship and an engaging intimacy of performance. The repertoire is remarkably varied, and it forms not only a striking history but a lovely recital.*

Planet Hugill, June 30 2020

*... wonderful music with a dazzling kaleidoscope of colours.*

The Times, July 3 2020

*The performances leave nothing to be desired. The viols and wind are ... the top of their profession. All the singers are excellent ... every individual performer, alongside their technical and musicological colleagues, has been crucial in making this an outstanding disc.*

Early Music Review, July 6 2020

*This is the second volume of Bill Hunt's great project to edit and record the corpus of pre-Restoration Verse Anthems, of which Volume 1, focussing on Gibbons, appeared in 2018 and was reviewed in January of that year ... This second volume has a wonderful range of music starting with William Byrd ... The ensemble singing is outstanding ... While the singing is agile as well as rich (listen to the nimble rhythms in 'Christ rising again'), the playing is equally elegant. Fretwork shares the bulk of it, and their sinuous lines weave a magical backdrop to the voices ... But the real triumph of this project is to unite scholarship, performance practice and passionate music-making. Often two of these three are fulfilled, but rarely all three. You can sense the energy and passion in the project from the commitment of the musicians, all skilled practitioners in their fields ... To raise more questions than you answer and to excite your followers with the same passion to find out more is the mark of all inspired educators, and this CD is with its splendid notes is a fine example of that.*

Early Music Review, July 10 2020

Volume 1 of this ongoing project had been a first complete recording of the consort anthems of Orlando Gibbons, released in late 2017. The same team of Magdalena Consort, Fretwork and His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts was assembled again in January 2019 to record a second volume of verse music, this time from the earlier period of consort anthems, featuring sacred music from the beginning of England's 'Golden Age', such as William Byrd's Easter anthem *Christ rising* and Thomas Morley's *Out of the deep*. It also includes some significant pieces of reconstruction. *Look and bow down* is a setting by William Byrd of the words of Queen Elizabeth on the defeat of the Armada. Long reputed to have been performed before her in November 1588 in a great procession before St Paul's Cathedral, the music has only recently been extracted from a piece of lute intabulation. *O God of gods* is a magnificent anthem for soloists and double choir, written to celebrate the accession of James I by Edmund Hooper, a leading contemporary of Gibbons, who was highly regarded in his own time but is scarcely known today. *Hearken ye nations*, also by Hooper, is an impassioned expression of thanksgiving for deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, presumably performed for James and, like the other pieces, almost certainly never heard again until now. In addition to the rich array of viols and early wind used on our Gibbons CD, the instrumental accompaniment this time includes a specially reconstructed 'Tudor organ', made by the historical makers Goetze and Gwynn – fascinatingly different in character from anything you are likely to have heard in music of this kind.

As can easily be imagined, this was hugely expensive recording to produce, involving some 27 participants. It would have been impossible without the generous contributions of a significant number of private donors and also of trust foundations, amongst which the support of Angel Early Music was immensely appreciated. The release of this recording in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, a period in which the world of artistic performance has been devastated, has made us all the more aware that musical performance in the future will depend even more on such enlightened and generous support. In the case of our own project, it has enabled us to bring greater attention to one of this country's finest bodies of music, to which most of the greatest composers of the period contributed but of which remarkably little is known today.

With many thanks and best wishes

Bill Hunt, Artistic Director