

Tears of Joy - English lute songs and secular music.

ANONYMOUS

Shall I weep or shall I sing? [4:32]

Have I caught my heav'nly jewel [2:18]

Drewriesaccordes [1:20]

La Rossignol [1:38]

My ladies careys dump [2:14]

Butterfly (jig) [2:44]

Broadside Ballad: tobacco [2:05]

Thomas BREWER (1611-1660)

Mistake me not, I am as cold as hot [4:32]

Robert RAMSEY (fl.1616-1641)

Go perjur'd man! And if you e'er return [1:21]

Mathew LOCKE (1621-1677)

Pavane [1:48]

Thomas MORLEY (1557-1602)

Thirsis and Milla (The First Part): She straight her light green silken coats (The Second Part) [2:38]

Thomas CAMPION (1567-1620)

It fell on a summer's day [2:05]

John BARTLETT (fl.1610)

Of all the Birds that I do know [2:55]

Francis PILKINGTON (c.1570-1638)

Rest sweet Nymphs [3:21]

Henry LAWES (1596-1662)

Slide soft, you silver floods [1:51]

William WEBB (fl.1620-1656)

Pow'rful Morpheus, let thy charms [2:37]

Robert JOHNSON (c.1583-1633)

With endless tears [2:44]

The Flat Pavan – Galliard [1:55]

Have you seen the bright lily grow? [2:21]

Thomas ROBINSON (1588-1610)

A Song to the Cittern - 'Now Cupid, look about thee' [0:56]

Tobias HUME (c.1569-1645)

Tobacco [1:17]

Thomas RAVENSCROFT (c.1582-c1635)

Martin Said To His Man [1:37]

A Round of three country dances in one [2:48]

John DOWLAND (1563-1626)

Time stands still [3:25]

ZefiroTorna: Cécile Kempnaers (soprano); Didier François (nyckelharpa, vocals); PhillipeMalfeyt (renaissance lute, cittern, theorbo, baroque guitar, vocals); Jurgen De Bruyn (renaissance lute, archlute, baroque guitar, vocals, artistic direction)
rec. September 2011, Studio Toots, VRT, Brussels

Includes a bonus CD of extracts from ZefiroTorna's discs called '15th Anniversary ZefiroTorna'

Texts included

ETCETERA KTC 4038 [54:48 + bonus CD]

As Bones never quite said to Kirk: 'English lute songs, Jim, but not as we know them'. It seems to be ZefiroTorna's intention to wrench this repertoire from what it clearly identifies as the dead hand of effete performance, and plunge it into the contemporary Gaelic-cum-Shetland-cum-folk current. There's no such statement of intent in the disc booklet, nothing to indicate that its musical manifesto is to align the songs of Hume, Dowland and Ravenscroft to the post-Steeleye Span generation. But certainly there is a musical stance at work here, a didactic desire to lift what can be polite, and antiquarian, towards the world of the above examples as well as that of Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson,

What this means in performance is contentious. Rhythms are folk-sprung, the music not so much transmuted as re-clothed

in a modern image. The past is not being reclaimed: the present is being imposed. Thus, listening to Thomas Brewer's *Mistake me not, I am as cold as hot* one doesn't think of a conventional lute ensemble so much as Aly Bain. I'm a huge admirer of Bain and all his works, but to invoke him in the context of a mid-seventeenth century song is to suggest just how total is this ensemble's imposition.

The good thing about this recital is its genuinely communicative spirit. In an anonymous setting such as *Have I caught my heav'nly jewel* which can, sometimes, seem static, static is never what *this* feels like. Quite the opposite: dramatic, demotic, sprung from the clay and soil, glorying in the vitality of the now. Yet I sense a contradictory impulse in this band. When they touch upon Pilkington's lovely *Rest, Sweet Nymphs*, sung beguilingly by the excellent soprano Cécile Kempnaers, all attempt at cultural cross-pollination is removed: it's sung straight, and the mercurial, very un-English spirit that animates much of the rest of the programme - none of the players is British - is temporarily effaced.

It's often the use of the nyckelharpa, a keyed fiddle, which infuses the relentless folk spirit into these lute songs. It's this theatrical self-confidence that reaches into the dots of Robert Johnson's *With endless tears* and brings them to performing life so vividly. Whether Johnson would have recognised the result is the key question: probably not, the only realistic answer. So if you admire the Consort of Musicke's old forays into this repertoire, try not to compare and contrast their recordings of, say, Ravenscroft's *Martin said to his man* or the *Round of country dances*, with those of ZefiroTorna: you might as well ask a frog why it's not a cat. The heavily accented English vocals in the latter, complete with foot stamps, are trying to summon up the contemporary spirit more than the consort clarity of the English group. But it is surely a mistake for, I assume, Didier François to sing so beautiful a song as *Have you seen the bright lily grow?* in so voiceless a voice. It's also a solecism too far to end with a free fantasia — for that is what it is, even if not thus noted in the booklet — on Dowland's *Time stands still*.

How does one reconcile the past to the present? How does one mediate a language, and an idiom, that seems so remote and so alien? How, on disc, can an ensemble communicate the sense of vitality that they locate as central to the music's sense of self? How, then, can a band best make the English lute song live? This band's answer, largely, is to warp drive back to the future; to energise, Star Trek style, onto a distant time and planet armed with the impedimenta of post-1960s folk music. They have boldly gone where few, if any, have gone before. Lute songs, Jim, but not as we know them.

Jonathan Woolf

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http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2012/May12/Tears_of_joy_KTC4038.htm