Full informative essays to accompany the CD *Gentleman Extraordinary*
(Resonus Classics, RES10325)

Thomas Weelkes: Gentleman Extraordinary
By Dr Andrew Johnstone

Thomas Weelkes described himself as a 'gentleman' in two senses, both of which have implications for a life-story in many respects incomplete and in others scandalous. The more general sense was the social rank specified in his will, drawn up at the London home of his friend Henry Drinkwater (up to whose name Weelkes seems not exactly to have lived) and dated 30 November 1623, the day before his burial in St Bride's Church, Fleet Street. By so styling himself, Weelkes claimed well-to-do parentage, perhaps that of the Sussex clergyman John Weeke whose son Thomas was baptised at Elsted church on 25 October 1576. This elder Weeke, furthermore, was doubtless acquainted with one George Phillpot, a local grandee to whom in 1597 the young composer dedicated his first printed book of madrigals. Of Thomas's education and musical training, nothing can be ascertained except that on supplicating for his Oxford music degree in 1602 he averred he had been studying music for sixteen years. At any rate, his training was such to have qualified him, some five years previously, for the not inconspicuous post of organist at Winchester College.

It was in 1608, on the title page of his fourth and final madrigal book, that Weelkes styled himself 'gentleman' in a more specific sense, this time pertaining to membership of the royal household chapel choir. According to that title page, he was by then a 'Batchelar of Musicke, and Organest of the Cathedral Church of Chichester', and these circumstances are attested by ample official records. Of his being a 'Gentleman of his Maiesties Chappell', however, the Old Cheque Book of the Chapel Royal contains not a single mention. There can be no suspicion of disingenuity on Weelkes's part: the Stationers' Company exercised, through its own courthouse, strict legal authority over the London print trade, and the consequences of emblazoning such a publication with any false claim would have been potentially ruinous for the printer, William Barley. Moreover, ultimate control over English music printing still rested with William Byrd, himself a Gentleman in Ordinary or permanent member of the Chapel since 1572, and the relevant royal patentee since 1575.

The likeliest explanation for the 1608 title page, then, is that Weelkes was a Gentleman Extraordinary, i.e. a supernumerary or probationary member of the Chapel. That he may have become persona non grata in the royal household is perhaps intimated by the anthem word-book copied for the Chapel around 1630, into which, of Weelkes's known output of some forty anthems, a mere two were entered (as opposed to more than twenty by Orlando Gibbons and twice that number by Thomas Tomkins). Nor, if Weelkes had been in receipt of the £40 salary paid each year for life to a Gentleman in Ordinary, would we expect to find in his will a debt (to Drinkwater) of fifty shillings, and bequests of only five shillings each to two of his three children. What had gone wrong?

Certainly Weelkes seems to have been no slouch in currying royal favour, for time and again his choice of anthem texts touches on monarchical subjects. 'O Lord God Almighty' (a prayer for King James and his family) and 'O Lord, how joyful is the king' are obvious examples, as too—from the present selection—are 'Give the

king thy judgements, O God' (Track 6) and 'O Lord, grant the king a long life' (Track 14). Possibly 'Hosanna to the Son of David' (Track 19) belongs in the same category, for here, having opened with a line from Matthew 21:9, Weelkes deftly switched to Luke 19:38, so that instead of 'blessed is he that cometh' the anthem continues with 'blessed be the king'. Could this piece—which lacks certain usual characteristics of a church anthem, and which survives in no church sources—have rather been written as a courtly welcome song on the accession to the English throne of King James, who as king of Scotland could count two predecessors named David? If so, then the words of 'O Lord, arise into thy resting place' (Track 8) can be seen as performing—albeit more obliquely, and in true church style—a similar welcoming function.

After 1608, Weelkes was to see no more of his compositions in print other than two songs, of which 'Most mighty and all-knowing Lord' (Track 7) shows in its contrapuntal texture and unpretentious melodic style the influence of the (vastly more numerous) solo songs of Byrd. Weelkes's songs were commissioned by Sir William Leighton for his Teares or Lamentacions of a Sorrowfull Soule, a collection of poems first published in 1613 and reissued the following year with music by twenty-one composers including Byrd, John Bull, Gibbons and Leighton himself. Of Leighton's twenty collaborators, the names of nineteen appear in an intricate circular design specially engraved for the title page; below this, in italic type, appears the solitary name of Th[omas] Weelkes. Perhaps Weelkes's commissioning was an afterthought; perhaps his contribution was submitted too late. Yet the appearance of his name literally outside the circle seems unhappily symbolic of the indifferent reception accorded to his anthems at the Chapel Royal.

A similar impression is conveyed by John Barnard's 1641 anthology The First Book of Selected Church Musick, the first English publication with such content since 1565. Here, among more than twenty services and more than fifty anthems, Weelkes is represented by just one composition: the full anthem 'O Lord, grant the king a long life'. Though nine more of his anthems are to be found in Barnard's personal manuscript collection, four of those are unique to it (or almost so), and Barnard clearly judged them unworthy of printing. Excepting the huge book of church music copied by Barnard's St Paul's Cathedral colleague Adrian Batten, which contains the organ parts or short scores of some thirty of Weelkes's compositions, his representation in the manuscripts of the period is patchy at best. Among the music recorded here, the instrumental ensemble items (Tracks 2, 5, 9, 16) appear as rare or isolated chance survivals, while none of the three services has survived intact.

In accounting for the decline in Weelkes's fortunes, it is impossible to say whether alcoholism was the cause, the effect, a combination of the two, or perhaps even neither. On the basis of chapter minutes and other records at Chichester Cathedral, his biographer David Brown implicated Weelkes in a series of cases involving absenteeism, negligence and drunkenness which appear to have led inexorably to his dismissal, by Bishop Samuel Harsnett on 16 January 1617, from the three positions of lay clerk, master of the choristers, and organist.

As John Shepherd has shown, however, the relevant records remain open to interpretation. It can hardly have mattered that Weelkes absented himself during Bishop Lancelot Andrewes's visitation of 1609: so too did the dean. Of the charge of a public report concerning drunkenness in 1613, Weelkes apparently cleared himself on the oaths of three lay vicars and three reputable neighbours. Complaints of inadequate attendance in 1615 were levelled at all the men of the choir, not at Weelkes in particular, while precise directions for the conduct

of chorister rehearsals issued in the following year form part of a review of the entire cathedral administration, and are plainly not the outcome of an enquiry into negligence on Weelkes's part.

The two records most often quoted in connection with Weelkes, moreover, may well both originate from a single deponent, the lay succentor William Lawes (who is not to be confused with the celebrated composer of that name). Granted, it is not known by whom the charge was made, in October 1616, 'that he hath been, and is noted and famed for a common drunkard and a notorious swearer and blasphemer'. But three years later, it was in similar telltale language that Lawes testified to Bishop George Carleton:

Most of the choir … demean themselves religiously at all time of prayers, save only Thomas Weelkes, who divers times and very often comes so disguised from the tavern or alehouse into the choir as is much to be lamented, for in these humours he will both curse and swear most dreadfully, and so profane the service of God … I know not any of the choir or other the officers of the Church to be a common drunkard but Mr Weelkes.

Though there may have been more than a grain of truth in these allegations, it is not hard to see them as signs of friction between the two men. If animosity developed into a personal and puritanical vendetta on Lawes's part, then its effects on Weelkes's reputation have been lasting ones.

In fact, his dismissal by Bishop Harsnett proved very largely a formality, for although a new master of the choristers was appointed to succeed him, Weelkes seems unofficially to have retained his lay clerkship (by far the best remunerated of his three positions), and by 1622 he was again being listed as cathedral organist. Clearly he was able to rely on the support both of the chapter and (especially) of Dean John Thorne, who had been known to him at Winchester College, alongside whom he had taken his university degree, and who surely had been responsible for appointing him to Chichester in the first place. On this reading of the evidence, what comes to the fore is not so much Weelkes's bad behaviour as the Cathedral's determination, come what may, to keep him in its service.

The extent to which Weelkes's church music was sung in Chichester remains just as uncertain as the true extent of his misdemeanours. Although an inventory of the choir library compiled in 1621 mentions him only as a music scribe, and not as a composer, it is hard to believe that the 'eight books … of Mr Weelkes his pricking [i.e. copying]' did not contain at least some of his own compositions. Given that in the cathedral records the Chichester choir is described as 'single' (as opposed to the 'double' choirs of other institutions), it may be no coincidence that the Trebles Service (Tracks 3, 4) contains none of the usual antiphony between the equal and opposing forces termed 'decani' and 'cantoris'. Rather, this music deploys the chorus as a unified body throughout, notably augmenting it with a line of acute boys' voices of the kind unheard of in English church music since before the Reformation. The same goes for the Service *in Medio chori* (Tracks 17, 18), though here it remains uncertain whether the passages for three high voices are marked 'medio' because they were intended for an antiphonal group 'in the middle of the choir [stalls]' or because they were meant for the upper half of the full chorus.

Whether or not Weelkes wrote these two services for his own choir, there can be little doubt that the 'Ninth' Service (Tracks 11, 12; the numbering is modern) was destined not for Chichester but for the Chapel Royal, at

that time perhaps the only English choir really equal to a work of such lavish scoring and vast proportions. The evening canticles of Byrd's Great Service, which are in the same key and are scored for the same configuration of ten voice-parts, clearly served as a model. Like Byrd, and like Robert Parsons before Byrd, Weelkes scored the verse 'He hath shewed strength with his arm' for a combination of six voices without Tenors. His forthright setting of this verse also echoes the battle scenes so quaintly depicted in certain of Byrd's keyboard pieces. At 204 breves, Weelkes's Magnificat falls short of Byrd's by some ten per cent, but the Nunc dimittis exceeds the elder composer's by precisely forty breves, and is by some distance the most imposing setting of that canticle from the period.

It is also the bitterest. After the almost incessant major harmonies of the Magnificat, Weelkes veered quickly into the relative minor mode and fixedly remained there up to and beyond the words 'Glory be to the Father'. The intervening passages, and most notably 'To be a light', are strongly coloured by false relations, those acerbic clashes of major and minor thirds that characterise English music from Tallis to Purcell, and the likes of which were seldom to be heard again until the generation of Bartók and the blues. Weelkes's fondness for this homegrown variety of poignant musical expression is evident from many of the compositions here recorded, but its rapid infestation of the 'Ninth' Nunc dimittis seems particularly telling. Could he have been at work on this very part of the service when the shattering news came through that he was not to be made a Gentleman in Ordinary of the Chapel Royal? If that was so, then this service may never had been heard in the Chapel—nor, indeed, anywhere at all until its rediscovery in the twentieth century.

The *Nunc dimittis* nonetheless ends optimistically with a jubilant 'Amen' that also serves, note for note, to conclude the anthem 'O Lord, grant the king a long life'. The gesture closes a circle that has begun with the first three chords of the Magnificat, which serve also to open the anthem. This is not to be understood as lazy self-borrowing on Weelkes's part, for he made a point of pairing an anthem and a service in much the same way as his Catholic continental contemporaries made a point of pairing a motet and a mass. Works thus paired are characterised by the same keynote and signature, the same or similar configurations of voices, and common themes or passages. Weelkes's most striking example is perhaps the Nunc dimittis of the Trebles Service, which at the words 'and ever shall be' shares fourteen breves' worth of full choir music with the closing pages of the anthem 'Alleluia, I heard a voice' (Track 1).

Nor are Weelkes's thematic connections restricted to strict service-anthem pairings. The swift accumulation of cascading entries that opens 'Alleluia', for example, does duty not only for the same word at the end of 'O Lord, arise' (albeit switched from minor to major) but also at 'sent empty away' in the *Medio chori* Magnificat. The central section of the same anthem, at the words 'and to the Lamb for evermore' shares six breves' worth of music with the third strain of the instrumental Pavan No 1. The four-note pattern that opens 'Give ear, O Lord' (Track 15) serves also twice in the *Medio chori* Magnificat (at 'for he that is mighty' and 'and to his seed'). Within works too, themes recur in conjunction with fresh portions of the words. In the second duet passage of 'Give ear, O Lord', for example, the phrases 'My soul desires to drink' and 'But bow thy tender ear' are set to virtually the same melody. In the chorus passages of the same anthem, moreover, the theme of the verbal refrain is successively treated to what later generations of musicians would describe as 'development'.

Multiple connections extending to—or from—other works are found in the verse anthem 'Give the king thy judgements'. The organ introduction has much in common with the opening bars of one of Weelkes's two solo organ voluntaries (Track 10). The word 'behold' receives the same pattern of rising fourths as in 'Give ear, O Lord'. The phrase 'and look upon the face of thine anointed' is set in much the same way as are the phrases 'thou that sittest in the highest heavens' (in 'Hosanna to the son of David') and, switched to the major, 'throughout all generations' (in the 'Ninth' Magnificat). The words 'O God' are initially set to a descending semitone-tone-semitone pattern that crops up also in 'Hosanna to the son of David' (at 'the king'), in the Trebles Magnificat (at 'and to the Son' and 'and ever shall be'), in the *Medio chori* Magnificat (at 'Israel' and 'Abraham') and in the other of the two voluntaries (Track 13).

To judge Weelkes by the rhetoric-based standards of his own time (as his sternest modern critic Philip Brett insisted we should), such reliance on a meagre store of themes would signal an incapacity for inventio, the element of expression to which *dispositio* (form) and *elocutio* (style) serve as adjuncts. Yet the fact remains that we can hear this music only through modern ears conditioned by such subsequent developments as ritornello form, organicism, reminiscence motifs, minimalism, and—perhaps above all—the assumption that a good composer must be a distinctive composer. Whether or not there was anything prophetic in Weelkes's obsessive recourse to the same and similar material, the result after 400 years is a unique musical brand that will permanently stand out from the more polished products of his English contemporaries.
—Andrew Johnstone

About the Instrumentation
By Dr Helen Roberts

Cornetts and sackbuts were a regular feature of the English cathedral soundscape during the first half of the 17th century, where the presence of resident wind bands evidences renewed interest and investment in sacred music performed by cathedral choirs following the economic challenges of the late Elizabethan years. Canterbury Cathedral employed two cornettists and two sackbut players 'for the decorum of our quire' from 1598 until the 1670s and at Durham, where one of the sources of Weelkes 'Ninth Service' survives (copied c. 1635), the same line-up of instrumentalists contributed to services from around the 1620s until the outbreak of the English Civil Wars. Indeed, the band at Durham caused significant controversy amongst the more puritan elements of the Cathedral Chapter during this turbulent period, reportedly 'piping so loud at the communion table they could be heard half a mile from the church'. Whilst their presence is well documented and long acknowledged in the literature, incorporating cornetts and sackbuts into performances of English sacred vocal music from this period had not, in the past, been commonly embraced by historically informed ensembles performing this repertoire. At first glance, a historical line-up of two cornetts and two sackbuts is an uneasy fit with the antiphonal scoring and common 5-part compositional texture and the unblemished, homogenous sound of a cathedral choir favoured by many is disrupted by the introduction of winds. Yet recent research—not to mention the recording of this disc—has shown that the historically informed consideration of performing pitch (in this case a close approximation to Quire pitch, about a semitone higher than concert pitch), voice-types, the constitution of the choir, the choice of organ stops and the arrangement of other instruments can transport the music of Weelkes and his time to entirely new worlds of sound.
—Helen Roberts

About the reconstructions
By Dr Andrew Johnstone

Though all of the anthems and services here recorded have appeared in modern editions, the requirements of historic performing pitch and of period-copy instruments prompted a re-appraisal of the primary musical sources, particularly those that have been incompletely preserved. The 'Ninth' Service lacks three of what must have been its original ten voice parts (Contratenor II cantoris, Tenor decani and Tenor cantoris); the *Medio chori* service lacks all of its original five voice parts, which must be extrapolated as far as possible from the fairly complete short score contained in Batten's organ-book. The missing parts of both services were initially reconstructed from scratch, and although reference was subsequently made to existing editions the present reconstructions differ substantively, particularly at the words 'To be a light…' in the 'Ninth' Nunc dimittis, and 'He hath put down … and hath exalted …' in the *Medio chori* Magnificat.

Reconstructing the fugal passage 'and the rich he hath sent empty away' from the 'Ninth' Magnificat led to a surprising discovery about the associated full anthem 'O Lord, grant the king a long life'. In the Magnificat passage, the missing Contratenor II cantoris is supplied by the surviving Contratenor I decani (by which it was at this point clearly duplicated in the same manner that Contratenor I cantoris is duplicated by Contratenor II decani). The missing Tenor decani and Tenor cantoris, assumed likewise to have been duplicates, could simply have been derived from full 'O Lord, grant the king', where the same music serves also for the words 'so shall we alway sing and praise they name'. But since this passage therefore presented an opportunity to test the accuracy of the reconstruction method, it was initially reconstructed without reference to the anthem. When the reconstructed part was compared with the extant part, the two turned out not only to be completely different from each other but also equally compatible both mutually and with the other six contrapuntal parts. 'O Lord, grant the king' thus proves to have been more than the seven-part piece it has been taken for in modern times, and is here recorded for the first time in its original eight-part format.

Listeners familiar with modern editions of the items with organ accompaniment will be quick to notice the sparser textures of the organ parts played here, which correspond more closely to the manuscripts than to the tastes of twentieth-century editors brought up on a rich diet of Victorian hymnody. In verse passages, it has been assumed that the organ should enclose the voice part(s) with independent bass and descant parts; in the Trebles Service an independent descant has been reconstructed at those points where the manuscripts instead supply a mere doubling of a voice part.
—Andrew Johnstone

The St Teilo Organ

The St Teilo organ attempts to recreate the type of instrument known to have been used around 1520. Designed and constructed by Goetze and Gwynn in collaboration with John Harper, it is based on two early sixteenth-century soundboards found at Wetheringsett and Wingfield, Suffolk, dating from ca. 1530s. Voicing style is familiar from seventeenth-century English, Italian and Spanish organs; the pipes—very narrow-scaled and without nicking—are based on the only survivals from the medieval West Country tradition, John Loosemore's 1665 organ for Nettlecombe Court, chosen because of the medieval trade links with Wales across the Bristol Channel. The hand-operated bellows are based on medieval illustrations.

Key compass & Specification

1. I Open metal principal 5ft (C – g#1 in front)
2. II Open metal principal 5ft (co - a2)
3. III Open metal octave
4. IV Open metal octave
5. V Open metal fifteenth
6. VI Stopped wood diapason 10ft (full compass)

The key compass is C to a^2, 46 notes, which is the number of grooves in the Wetheringsett soundboard and the compass specified in the contract for Holy Trinity Coventry (1526). The nominal pitch is 5ft, i.e. a plainsong pitch a fourth above singing pitch, the basis for all the Tudor organs of which we know. The actual pitch is a semitone above A440 at singing pitch.

Tuning

The tuning system, based upon Arnolt Schlick's *Spiegel der Orgelmacher* (Heidelberg, 1511) is a modified mean tone tuning, with good (not pure) major thirds and the wolf spread to some extent over neighbouring fifths to allow some modulation (though a-flat is still much closer to being g-sharp).

—Taken from notes by Sally Harper

More information on the St Teilo Organ available at:

http://www.experienceofworship.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/da_01_org.pdf