

Pphantasm, an award-winning consort of viols, was founded in 1994 by Laurence Dreyfus and has become recognised as the most exciting viol consort active on the world scene today. The ensemble catapulted into international prominence when its debut CD of works by Henry Purcell won a Gramophone Award for the Best Baroque Instrumental Recording of 1997. It has since won two further Gramophone Awards - for Orlando Gibbons (2004) and John Dowland's *Lachrimae* (2017).

The consort has travelled the world over, performing in festivals and on concert series in cities such as Prague, Tokyo, Istanbul, Helsinki and Washington DC. Recent engagements have included the Trigone Festival (Austria), Barcelona Early Music Festival, the Bergen International Festival, the Lufthansa Early Music Festival in London, Mazovia Baroque in Warsaw, the Stockholm Early Music Festival, Brussels' Palais des Beaux Arts and Ghent's De Bijloke hall.



"Phantasm's playing brims with imaginative fantasy and dance-like momentum"

- Gramophone

Phantasm's 20 recordings have won consistent praise. Their first recording for the Scottish LINN label was Editor's Choice in BBC Music Magazine as well as a finalist for the 2010 Gramophone Early Music Award. Their CD with the Complete Consort Music of William Byrd was awarded a Diapason d'Or, CD of the Month by BBC Music Magazine, and was a Gramophone finalist for the best Early Music recording of 2011. Lawes's *Consorts to the Organ* was nominated for the annual Chamber Music Award in BBC Music Magazine, September 2012. Their recording of Lawes's *Royal Consort* not

only became the CD of the week in various broadcast stations all over Europe and in the US, but also ranked high on the UK specialist Classical Charts for several months before winning the 2016 Chamber Music Prize from Limelight Magazine (Australia).

"Rigorous intellect with sensitive musicianship"

- BBC Music Magazine

Phantasm was based at the University of Oxford from 2005 when they were appointed Consort-in-Residence. In Autumn 2010, they began a new association as Consort-in-Residence at Magdalen College, where they performed, recorded, and collaborated with the acclaimed College Choir. Phantasm have also making regular appearances for several seasons at the Wigmore Hall, appearing a total of three times during the 2017/2018 season.

In 2015, Phantasm moved its base of operations to Berlin, Germany, where director Laurence Dreyfus plans the consort's activities and pursues his own independent research in musicology, performance studies, and music analysis.

Laurence Dreyfus
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GRAMOPHONE

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

LOCKE For Lovers of Consort Music

Author:

Julie Anne Sadie



LOCKE For Lovers of Consort Music

- (The) Flatt Consort, 'for my cousin Kemble', Suite No 1
- Consort of Fower Parts
- Canon '4 in 2' on a plain song
- Canon '4 in 2' on the hexachord
- (The) Flatt Consort, 'for my cousin Kemble', Suite No 2

This recording should come with a warning not to read the booklet notes until after listening to the CD. Look no further than the opening sentence, in which Phantasm's founder and leader Laurence Dreyfus provocatively suggests that 'there may be no good reason to like the consort music of Matthew Locke'. Donning his professorial mortar board, Dreyfus at once enlightens us on the idiosyncratic nature of the music while parodying it in his prose. A tour de force? I fear some will be dissuaded from listening to the disc, which would be a shame, because it is indisputably superb.

Locke's music – suites and canons for four to six viols composed during the 1650s – is surprisingly tuneful and harmonically engaging. Phantasm's performances are compelling, their immaculate ensemble always internally balanced to best effect, their near-miraculous transparent textures brilliantly captured by the engineer. Dreyfus's choices of tempo and application of rubato are both refreshing and nuanced. Elizabeth Kenny's polished and beautifully judged theorbo accompaniments subtly enrich Locke's delicately chromatically inflected textures.

Each suite begins with a 'Fantazie' (each of *The Flat Consorts for my cousin Kemble* sports two) that is constructed in a series of contrasting sections (some of which are fugal), not unlike a miniature sinfonia or theatrical overture, and is succeeded by characterful, danceable courantes, sarabands and jiggs (in *The Flat Consorts*) or ayres (in the *Consorts of Four Parts*). The two exquisitely constructed canons in six parts are a true delight for lovers of consort music. It is recordings of this calibre that will attract new listeners to the English consort repertoire.

Main-Echo

Verführerische Klänge aus ferner Zeit

Bachtage: Berliner Gamben-Consort Phantasm ließ die Schwüle im Kapitelsaal des Stiftsmuseums vergessen

Aschaffenburg Mittwoch, 25.07.2018 - 20:28 Uhr



Das Gambenconsort Phantasm - mit (von links) Laurence Dreyfus (Diskant-Gambe und musikalische Leitung), Jonathan Manson (Tenor-Gambe) sowie Markku Luolajan-Mikkola (Bass-Gambe). Foto: Stefan Gregor
Foto: Stefan Gregor

Hat es so geklungen am englischen Königshof zu Zeiten von Elisabeth I. und Jakob I? Waren es Klänge so weich und verführerisch, so fein und harmonisch, wie das Gamben-Consort Phantasm - ein zutreffender Name - am Dienstagabend ihren selten zu hörenden Instrumenten entlockten und damit die Zuhörer die Schwüle im aufgeheizten Kapitelsaal des Stiftsmuseums vergessen ließen?

Strenge Reduziertheit

Es war eine ferne Welt, in die man sich erst einhören musste, um in der Reduziertheit der streng geregelten musikalischen Ausdrucksformen die kompositorische Raffinesse zu entdecken - und um die Sensibilität und Virtuosität der Musiker Laurence Dreyfus (Diskant-Gambe), Jonathan Manson (Tenor-Gambe) aus Schottland und Markku Luolajan-Mikkola (Bass-Gambe) aus Finnland richtig würdigen zu können. Es gibt Kritiker, die das seit 1994 durch die Welt tourende Ensemble Phantasm, zu dem noch zwei weitere Musiker gehören, als weltbestes Gamben-Consort einschätzen.

Dessen aus Boston stammender und jetzt in Berlin lebender Gründer Dreyfuß ist auch Musikhistoriker und Mitglied der British Academy. Der Fachmann für Gamben-Literatur der englischen Renaissance und frühen Barockzeit hatte für den Auftritt im Rahmen der Aschaffenburger Bachtage »Perlen der Polyphonie« zusammengestellt.

Selbstverständlich schlug das Programm den Bogen hin zu Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 bis 1750). Dessen *Contrapunctus 8* aus der »Kunst der Fuge« war der krönende Schluss. Dem Trio mit den zu Bachs Lebzeiten noch sehr gebräuchlichen Instrumenten gelang ein bemerkenswerter Brückenschlag. Zum einem bewerkstelligte es mit der historisch durchaus möglichen Besetzung - Bach selbst hat keine Anweisung hinterlassen - eine Verankerung in der langen Tradition des Gamen-Consorts, dessen meist höfische Berufsmusiker den Kontrapunkt, die Lehre von der Organisation mehrstimmiger Musik, zur Blüte gebracht hatten. Zum anderen ließ die brillante Umsetzung von Bachs komplexer Tonkunst bereits spätere Musikepochen wie Klassik und Romantik aufschimmern.

Dass beim virtuosen Phantasm-Spielkurz ein unbeabsichtigtes Zirpen wie von einer Grille erklang, erhöhte den Reiz des späten Bachschen Meisterwerks nur noch. Didaktisch geschickt gewählt war die Zugabe. Eine anmutige und lebhafte Pavane von Thomas Lupo führte die Zuhörer zurück zum Anfang des Konzerts und zur Erkenntnis, dass Gamen-Consorts eventuell süchtig machen, sicher aber neugierig auf mehr von diesen englischen Meistern der raffiniert wechselnden Rhythmen und der innig miteinander verflochtenen Melodien.

Wundervoll aufpoliert

Elway Bevin (1554 bis 1638) kam mit »Browning« zu Ehren, dessen Motiv aus einem Volkslied über die braunen Haselnüsse im Herbst stammt. Weiter ging es mit Fantasien von Thomas Tomkins (1572 bis 1656), von dessen Lehrer William Byrd (1540 bis 1623) und von Orlando Gibbons (1583 bis 1625). Zwei Suiten aus der Sammlung »The Flat Consort« stellten Matthew Locke (1622 bis 1677) als Meister der kunstvoll stilisierten Tänze dar. Locke beeinflusste den großen englischen Komponisten Henry Purcell so stark, dass auch er sich der - damals schon etwas altmodischen - Gattung Gamen-Consort annahm und Kostbarkeiten wie die »Three Fantazias« schuf. Schön, sie so wundervoll aufpoliert zu bekommen vom fantastischen Phantasm.

MELANIE POLLINGER

Classical review: Phantasm works its magic on town hall crowd

2 May, 2018 5:00am

2 minutes to read



Phantasm (clockwise from left) Markku Luolajan-Mikkola, Laurence Dreyfus, Jonathan Manson and Emilia Benjamin provided an immersive concert experience.

NZ Herald

By: William Dart

How apt that Chamber Music New Zealand had Phantasm working its magic on us in the intimacy of the Auckland Town Hall concert chamber, rather than marooning its four violists on its main stage.

Their programme, *Pearls of Polyphony*, expertly navigated us from Elizabethan and Jacobean times to Bach, a century later, when the robust sonorities of the violin family had usurped the famed sweetness of viols.

Works by Ferrabosco, Byrd and Tomkins, would have been, in their day, played by civilised amateurs; this concert offered the opportunity to enjoy a rare surrogate music-making experience.

How many, like me, were drawn into the lilting rhythms and criss-crossing lines as if we were part of the group? How many experienced goosebumps and shivers, caught up in the volatile flow between major and minor, or held the breath when pianissimo chords seemed to float in their own radiant firmament above us?

This was no precious academic exercise. Markku Luolajan-Mikkola's athletic bass viol would have stood him in good stead in a jazz club, while one Orlando Gibbons piece cast Laurence Dreyfus and Emilia Benjamin's treble instruments as folkish duelling viols.

After interval, four Purcell Fantasias showed the expressive contrapuntal power of a composer mainly known for his often toe-tapping theatre music. After three particularly buoyant Bach fugues, arranged by Mozart, we had a privileged taste of his *The Art of Fugue*.

This magnum opus, written in Bach's last years, saw the blind composer drawing incredible complexities from the simplest of themes in a score that has been dismissed as more for the head than the heart.

Not so here. One extract almost danced off the stage with its dotted rhythms and the learned canon that followed was a feathery whirlwind of sound. In another, Bach's intense chromaticism, perfectly articulated by the musicians, transported us into the realm of the visionary.

A welcome encore looked beyond viol repertoire to a Domenico Scarlatti keyboard sonata, with the dying fall of its phrases adding a special poignancy to the farewell.

What: Phantasm

Where: Auckland Town Hall Concert Chamber

Reviewer: William Dart

RONDO

Das
Klassik
& Jazz
Magazin



Christopher Tye

Complete Consort Music

Phantasm

Linn/Naxos CKD 571

(67 Min., 9/2016)



Wahrscheinlich im Jahr 1505 und damit fast zeitgleich mit Thomas Tallis soll Christopher Tye das Licht der Welt erblickt haben. Und wie seinem englischen Landsmann und Komponistenkollegen sind Tye geistliche Vokalwerke von zeitlos eindringlicher Schönheit gelungen. Wenngleich seine Kirchenmusik dementsprechend ihren festen Platz bei jenen Vokalensembles hat, die sich auf die Alte Musik spezialisiert haben, so genießt eine außergewöhnliche Instrumentalsammlung aus der Feder dieses Renaissance-Komponisten eine noch größere Popularität. Es handelt sich dabei um immerhin 21 vollständig überlieferte „In nomine“-Stücke, mit denen Tye den Grundstein für eine besonders in England intensive musikalische Beschäftigung mit der Passage „in nomine Domini“ aus einer Messe von John Taverner legte. Wie etwa Henry Purcells ebenfalls für Gamen geschriebene „In nomine“-Fantasien besitzen zwar auch Tyes bisweilen gerade einminütigen „In nomine“-Kunstwerke keinen liturgischen Bezug. Dafür kommen die oftmals mit Titeln wie „Trust“, „I Come“ oder „Believe Me“ versehenen Stücke bei aller packenden Intensität, wie sie typisch für die Consortmusik des Elisabethanisches Zeitalter gewesen ist, mit geradezu aufreizendem Raffinement im Harmonischen sowie sogar lautmalerischen Gimmicks daher. Der Schluss des mehrstimmigen, würdevoll dahingleitenden „Say So“ wird urplötzlich dissonant zerfasert. Und mit „In nomine ,Cry“ fühlt man sich ein wenig wie auf einem Londoner Marktplatz mit den entsprechenden lautstarken Händlern. So reizvoll diese kleine musikalische Szene ist – auch hier legt das fünfköpfige englische Gamenensemble Phantasm größten Wert auf eine Klang- und Ausdrucksfülle, mit der man das gesamte Tye-Album zu einem Ereignis und Erlebnis gemacht hat. Mit entsprechendem Gespür für Tyes Kunst, rhythmische Komplexität und harmonischen Reichtum mit einer vom tiefen Glauben gespeisten Ernsthaftigkeit zu versöhnen, veredeln die Musiker um Ensemblegründer Laurence Dreyfus dementsprechend auch die zehn weiteren Stücke. Und allein das sechsminütige, lamentogleiche „Sit fast“ gehört zu den absoluten Wunderwerken der Consortmusik des 16. Jahrhunderts – vorausgesetzt, es wird so dargeboten wie jetzt von Phantasm.

The Telegraph

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Phantasm make Byrd take wing at Wigmore Hall ★★★★☆

By Ivan Hewett

If Mahlerian excess and Beethovenian excitement are what light your fire, the pleasures of a consort of viols – six antique stringed instruments ranging from treble to bass – might seem just too quietly refined. Add the fact that this concert was entirely devoted to Elizabethan composer William Byrd, a man “naturally disposed towards gravity and piety” as a contemporary observer put it, and you have a recipe for something that could surely only appeal to a handful of fervent devotees, like those obscure Spanish artists who paint only small still-lifes of cabbages and wine-jugs.

But if the composer is great, as Byrd undoubtedly was, an evening-long immersion is bound to reveal all kinds of things lurking under an apparently unvaried surface. That was the case with this superb concert from Phantasm, one of the best viol consorts around (ok, it's not a crowded field, but there are others). These players know how to aerate Byrd's smooth weave of independent lines, by slipping in telling pauses. They enliven the dances by pointing up the ingenious way Byrd makes the melodies skip across the regular underlying tread. Viol consorts often play with a perfectly smooth reedy sound, but these players – above all the founder and treble violist Laurence Dreyfus – weren't afraid to warm the sound with a touch of vibrato.

All this, plus a surprising variety of tone and weight, made the dark-brown world of Byrd's music glow with an inner light. The three movements from Byrd's four-part Mass were indeed filled with gravity and piety, but the feeling was so intense that one didn't miss the absence of words (and as the programme notes reminded us, sacred music was often transferred to instruments in those days).

The Fantasias were serious too, but in a completely different way, each instrument chasing its neighbour in an ingenious contrapuntal pile-up that by the end was almost hectic. The four In Nomine stood out for their extraordinary spicy harmonic clashes, an effect the players clearly relished.

At the opposite pole were the dances, the stately Pavan and skipping Galliard, which in these performances really did skip. Most engaging of all were the fantasias on popular tunes, which kept leaping eccentrically from one tempo to another, a tricky effect that the players managed with aplomb. By the end they had proved that Byrd's expressive world was surprisingly roomy, and full of quiet intensity and surprise.

**Phantasm return to the Wigmore Hall on 14 May to play music by John Jenkins and William Lawes o20
7935 2141**