

THE WORLD ENCOMPASSED – BACKGROUND

On Saturday 19th June 2010, Fretwork played the world premiere of a new piece by Orlando Gough, called *The World Encompassed* at Kings Place, London. It takes as its structure Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe; and uses the knowledge that he took viol players with him, and that they played to, and were played to by, native musicians in the various lands Drake visited, as the starting point for an attempt to recreate the sense of musical wonder that such encounters must have made.

It's difficult - no, it's impossible for us now, in 2010, to imagine how shocking such a clash of cultures was for musicians who had spent their entire lives playing and hearing just one style of music. The variety of music that could be heard in England in the 16th was small indeed, especially compared to our ability to pick and choose from a smorgasbord of musics, from all over the world, and from any era. But the beginnings of such musical curiosity start here in 1577 - 80, when viol players who had been playing Parsons, Tallis, Tye & Byrd all their lives are suddenly confronted with a Javanese gamelan. And *vice versa*: can we imagine what the Javanese gamelan players thought of the stark, severe Protestant hymns and psalms that the viols played with Drake?

This project has considerable personal significance for me. My father was the captain of a ship, the *Duquessa*, which, at the time when I remember traveling on it, was the largest refrigerated meat-carrying ship in the world. He mostly sailed between London and Buenos Aires, where he met my mother, and where I went with him several times in the 60s. There was a time when it was thought that I would 'go to sea', as my grand-father had done and as my brother did. My father's ship, with me on it, even took more or less the same route that Drake's did as far as the River Plate, visiting the same places: the Cape Verde Islands and Rio Grande do Sul. So here I am involved in a project which brings together two sides of my life.

When Francis Drake set sail from Plymouth on 15th November 1577 in the *Pelican*, together with the *Elizabeth*, the *Marigold*, the *Swan* and the *Benedict*,

probably only he knew exactly what was going to be attempted. Though it was termed 'a voyage of discovery', the principal reason for it was piracy, and to create as many difficulties for England's Catholic adversary, Spain, as possible. Many people, including the Queen herself, Dudley, Hatton & Walsingham had invested in the journey and were to be handsomely rewarded: they received £47 for every pound they put in. It is even possible that Drake himself had no notion to round the globe, but that his brilliant mind saw that the Spanish would be completely defenseless on the west coast of the Americas; once there, the quickest and easiest way back was to carry on across the Pacific.

That he took with him four musicians has long been known. We even know their names: Simon Wood, Thomas Meckes, Richard Clarke & "George a Musician". And we know that they played string instruments, probably viols, from a number of English & Spanish sources: Don Francisco Zarate, for example, was a Spanish nobleman who had been captured by Drake, and he later wrote that Drake dined to the music of 'vigolones'. Nuño da Silva was the Portuguese merchant and pilot that Drake had captured in the Cape Verde Islands on 30th January 1578, and who had led the little fleet across the Atlantic, through the Magellan straights and up the coast of South America. When he was put ashore in what is now Mexico, he was closely questioned by the authorities and the Inquisition to ascertain his involvement in the Protestant services Drake conducted on board ship. Da Silva revealed that 'they brought four viols, and made lamentations and sang together'. Edward Cliffe, an eyewitness, described the natives of South America being 'exceeding delighted with the sound of the trumpets and vialles'.

So viols they were. It is difficult to imagine how they played on this tiny ship - if the reproduction sitting in the little harbour on the South Bank in London is anything like correct, then it's surprising that there was room in Drake's state room for four viols and him. But we can get a very good idea of what they played, given the accounts of Drake's singing and praying with the viols. Sternold &

Jenkins had published in 1562 the first complete edition of the psalm book, together with nine hymns. The title page runs:

The whole booke of Psalmes, collected into Englysh metre by T. Starnhold, I. Hopkins, & others: conferred with the Ebrue, with apt notes to synge the[m] with al, faithfully perused and allowed according to thordre appointed in the Quenes maiesties iniunctions. Very mete t be used of all sortes of people priuately for their solace & comfort: laying apart all vngodly songes and ballades, which tende only to the norishing of vyce, and corrupting of youth

These are regarded as the first hymns of the English Protestant Church. Two were German tunes and the rest English. Tallis may have been the author of some of the tunes. This first publication offered just a single line tune; a year later appeared a four-part psalter, in four part-books, also immaculately printed by John Day (the copy I saw in the British Library could have been printed yesterday). In it we see the same tunes harmonised SATB, with sometimes the tune in the soprano, and sometimes in the tenor - this latter is what we can imagine Drake singing with the four viols - indeed, Day makes the point that the music is apt for voices and instruments.

Other than this, we have to imagine what music was available to viol players of the time. In Nomines would seem a good place to start, and Robert Parsons, who drowned in the river Trent in 1572, was one of the most popular composers of instrumental music of the time. Taverner's original In Nomine seems a likely candidate; and finally the Tye In Nomines would seem to fit.

Drake's journey took him first to Morocco, then the Cape Verde Islands, across the Atlantic to Brazil, then down the coast of South America to Patagonia and Port St Julian, where Drake encountered his first major crisis. Thomas Doughty was a personal friend, yet here he was accused of treachery and incitement to mutiny. Drake convened a trial and Doughty was found guilty; he was offered three choices: to be executed, to be put ashore and left, or to return to England for a retrial. He chose execution, and was beheaded the following day. This clearly shook the crew of the fleet and about a

month later Drake preached a sermon in place of the vicar, in which he declared that common sailors and 'gentlemen' were to work together, and be 'equal before the mast'. Then, in the midst of winter, having burned two of the smaller ships as being inadequate, the three larger vessels sailed on to traverse the Straights of Magellan, one of the most treacherous of all sea passages. It took them 16 days before they emerged into the Pacific - the first Englishmen to be there. However, they also emerged into violent storms, which were to last 50 days, and during which the *Marigold* was lost with all hands, and the *Elizabeth* turned back for England, arriving 2nd June 1579. Drake was blown south, and the ships were dispersed, so that, when the storms eventually abated, Drake had no idea of the fate of the other two ships. The *Pelican* was renamed *The Golden Hind* in honour of their principal backer, Sir Christopher Hatton, whose coat of arms includes a golden hind. He sailed up the coast hoping to meet his fellow sailors again.

Having reached the other side of the Americas, Drake's real purpose became the highest priority. He was able to plunder the Spanish territories without hinderance, and he did so with ruthless efficiency. Valparaiso was ransacked, and he heard in Lima that a heavily laden treasure ship, *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, more popularly known as the *Cacafuego*, had sailed 12 days earlier for Panama. Drake set off in pursuit and captured the vessel, which was his richest plunder.

From there, Drake sailed up the west coast of California. He may have reached Vancouver Island before returning to San Francisco, where he stayed for a month preparing for the crossing of the Pacific. Here he performed what is thought to be the first Protestant religious ceremony on North American soil and had friendly relations with the Miwok Native Americans. The *Golden Hind* left on 23rd July 1579, and sighted land in the Philippines on 16th October. They visited Ternate, bought a cargo of cloves; then they struck a reef and had to throw much of their valuable cargo overboard before floating free the next day. They next visited Java, and it was here that the most significant musical encounter took place.

Here is *The World Encompassed*, the journal published by Drake's nephew in 1628:

March 13th 1580

The 13. March our general himself with many of his gentlemen, and others went ashoare, and presented the king (of whom he was joyfully and lovingly received) with his musicke, and shewed him the manner of our use of armes, by training his men with their pikes & other weapons, which they had before him: for the present we were entertained as we desired, and at last dismissed with the promise of more victuals to be shortly sent us.

In this Island there is one chiefe, but many under governors, or petty kings, whom they call Raias, who live in great familiarie and friendship one with another. The 14 day we received victuals from two of them, and the day after that, to wit, the 15. three of these kings in their owne persons came aboard to see our Generall, and to view our ship and warlike munition. They were well pleased with what they saw, and with the entertainment which we gave them. And after these had been with us and on their returne had as it seemes related what they found, Raia Donan the chiefe king of the whole land bringing victuals with him for our reliefe: he also the next day after came aboard us. Few were the days that one or more of these kings did misse to visit us, insomuch that we grew acquainted with the names of many of them, as of Raia Patraídra, Raia Canbocapála, Raia Mangháago, Raia Bocabarra, Raia Timbánton: whom our Generall always entertained with the best cheere that we could make, and shewed all the commodities of our ship, with our ordnance and other armes and weapons, and the severall furnitures belonging to each, and the uses for which they served. His musicke also and all things else whereby he might do them pleasure, wherein they tooke exceeding great delight with admiration.

March 21

One day amongst the rest, viz. March 21. Raia Donan coming aboard us, in requital of our musick which was made to him, presented our generall with his country musick, which though it were of a very strange kind, yet the sound was pleasant and delightful:

Drake set sail for home soon after, rounded the Cape of Good Hope without landing - this was hostile Portuguese territory - stopping rather in Sierra Leone before arriving back to Plymouth on 26th September 1580, almost three years after leaving. Drake's treasure was such that the Queen's share was able to repay the entire foreign debt of the nation and also to recapitalize the Levant Company. On 4th April 1581, the *Golden Hind* was brought to Deptford, where the Queen had Drake knighted - though she didn't perform the act herself, still wary of provoking Philip of Spain.