

## Foreword

**Orlando Gibbons** (baptised 25 December 1583 – 5 June 1625) was a virginalist and organist of the late Tudor and early Jacobean periods.

### **His Life**

Gibbons was born in 1583 (most likely in December) and baptised on Christmas Day at Oxford, where his father William Gibbons was working as a wait.

Between 1596 and 1598 he sang in the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, where his brother Edward Gibbons (1568–1650), eldest of the four sons of William Gibbons, was master of the choristers. The second brother Ellis Gibbons (1573–1603) was also a promising composer, but died young. Orlando entered the university as a sizar in 1598 and achieved the degree of Bachelor of Music in 1606.

That same year he married Elizabeth Patten, daughter of a Yeoman of the Vestry, and they went on to have seven children (Gibbons himself was the seventh of 10 children).

King James I appointed him a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, where he served as an organist from at least 1615 until his death. In 1623 he became senior organist at the Chapel Royal, with Thomas Tomkins as junior organist. He also held positions as keyboard player in the privy chamber of the court of Prince Charles (later King Charles I), and organist at Westminster Abbey.

He died at age 41 in Canterbury of apoplexy, and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral. His death was a shock to his peers and brought about a post-mortem, though the cause of death aroused less comment than the haste of his burial and his body not being returned to London.

His wife, Elizabeth, died a little over a year later, in her mid-30s, leaving Orlando's eldest brother, Edward, to care for the orphaned children. Of these children only the eldest son, Christopher Gibbons, was to become a musician.

### **His Work**

One of the most versatile English composers of his time, Gibbons wrote a large number of keyboard works, **around thirty fantasias for viols**, a number of madrigals (the best-known being "The Silver Swan"), and many popular verse anthems, all to English texts. Perhaps his most well-known verse anthem is "This Is the Record of John", which sets an Advent text for solo countertenor or tenor, alternating with full chorus.

He also produced two major settings of Evensong, the Short Service and the Second Service, an extended composition combining verse and full sections. Gibbons's full anthems include the expressive "O Lord, in thy wrath", and the Ascension Day anthem "O clap your hands together" for eight voices.

He contributed six pieces to the first printed collection of keyboard music in England, *Parthenia* (to which he was by far the youngest of the three contributors), published in about 1611. Gibbons's surviving keyboard output comprises some 45 pieces.

The polyphonic **fantasia** and **dance forms** are the best represented genres. Gibbons's writing exhibits a command of three- and four-part counterpoint. Most of the fantasias are complex, multi-sectional pieces, treating multiple subjects imitatively. Gibbons's approach to melody, in both his fantasias and his dances, features extensive development of simple musical ideas, as for example in *Pavane in D minor* and "**Lord Salisbury's Pavan and Galliard**".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Orlando Gibbons, in: Wikipedia. Retrieved September 15, 2017, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orlando\\_Gibbons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orlando_Gibbons)

## Why should Orlando Gibbons's works be performed on the nyckelharpa?

In his book "Syntagma Musicum, Tomus Secundus" Michael Praetorius wrote about an English viola with sympathetic strings, the viola bastarda:

*"Jetzo ist in Engelland noch etwas sonderbares darzu erfunden / daß vnter den rechten gemeinen sechs Saitten / noch acht andere Stälene vnd gedrebeta Messings=Saitten / vff eim Messingen Steige (gleich die vff den Pandorren gebraucht werden) liegen / welche mit den Obersten gleich vnd gar rein eingestimmt werden müssen. Wenn nun der obersten dermern Saitten eine mit dem Finger oder Bogen gerühret wird / so resonirt die vnterste Messings= oder Stälene Saitten per consensum zugleich mit zittern vnd tremuliren, also / daß die Liebligheit der Harmony hierdurch gleichsam vermehret vnd erweitert wird."*<sup>2</sup>

In the last few years, we have noticed great interest in performances of Early Music by nyckelharpa players! Our beloved instrument, not only as a one more or less correct historical reconstruction, e.g. of the so-called "Siena keyed vielle" or the "Moraharpa", but also in its modern 4-row "continental" version, and its sound suit the music from the Late Middle Ages to Baroque perfectly.

Gibbons's consort works have an exciting sound when performed by two or more nyckelharpor.

Some time ago, we started arranging this music for our students. Having spent a long time rehearsing and performing the Fantasies, we have finally decided to spread the word and share our work in the form of this publication.

This edition of the Fantasies is designed especially for 4-row nyckelharpor, tuned in fifths. Note that in nearly all cases, the upper voices are also suitable for 3-row instruments in both the traditional and fifth tunings.

An issue that arises in arranging music for different instruments of the nyckelharpa family is the musical clefs used in the scores. It is in this case a relatively recent debate, mostly unnoticed in the Scandinavian milieu, due to the wider dissemination on the continent of instruments with four rows of keys.

The Swedish "traditional" instrument, with its tuning, the three rows of keys and the use of the fourth string as a drone, does not require writing notes below the third open string (G). For this reason the Swedish repertoire is normally written in the treble clef.

The case of four-rows-keyboard nyckelharpa is clearly different. How to write down the notes made possible by the keys on the fourth string? In this case we have decided to use three different ways of writing: treble clef (G clef), treble clef octave lower (G clef) and bass clef (F clef).

Enjoy!

Caterina Other & Marco Ambrosini  
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<sup>2</sup> Michael Praetorius: Syntagma Musicum, Vol. II: De Organographia (Wolfenbüttel 1619), 47.

**Orlando Gibbons**  
**Fantasies of Two, Three and Six Parts**

Arranged for Nyckelharpa – Viola d'amore a chiavi – Schlüsselfidel  
by Caterina Other & Marco Ambrosini

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