

NAXOS

**BYRD**

**My Ladye  
Nevells  
Booke**

**Elizabeth  
Farr,  
Harpsichord**

**3 CDs**



# William Byrd (c. 1540–1623)

## My Ladye Nevells Booke (1591)

### CD 1

- 1 No. 1 My Ladye Nevells Grownde L 6:37  
2 No. 2 Qui Passe: for my Ladye Nevell dZ 4:25  
3 No. 3 The Marche Before the Battell AR 4:33
- No. 4 The Battell AR (13:03)
- 4 The souldiers sommons 1:26  
5 The marche of footemen 0:57  
6 The marche of horsmen 1:17  
7 The trumpetts 1:11  
8 The Irishe marche 1:32  
9 The bagpipe and the drone 1:15  
10 The flute and the drome 2:04  
11 The marche to the fighte 2:28  
12 The retreat 0:54
- 13 No. 5 The Galliarde to the Victorie AR 2:12  
14 No. 6 The Barelye Breake CR 9:31  
15 No. 7 Galliards Gygge L 2:16  
16 No. 8 The Huntess Upp CR 7:54  
17 No. 9 Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La dZ 8:37  
18 No. 10 The Firste Pavian CR 4:41  
19 No. 11 The Galliarde to the Firste Pavian CR 1:57  
20 No. 12 The Seconde Pavian L 2:46  
21 No. 13 The Galliarde to the Seconde Pavian L 2:06  
22 No. 14 The Third Pavian CR 4:51  
23 No. 15 The Galliarde to the Third Pavian CR 1:54

### CD 2

- 1 No. 16 The Fourth Pavian dZ 2:38  
2 No. 17 The Galliarde to the Fourth Pavian dZ 1:57  
3 No. 18 The Fifte Pavian CR 4:43  
4 No. 19 The Galliarde to the Fifte Pavian CR 1:56  
5 No. 20 Pavana the Sixte: Kinbrugh Goodd L 5:02  
6 No. 21 The Galliarde to the Sixte Pavian L 1:58  
7 No. 22 The Seventh Pavian dZ 4:36  
8 No. 23 The Eighte Pavian L 4:47  
9 No. 24 The Passinge Mesures: the Nynthe Pavian CR 7:20

- 10 No. 25 The Galliarde to the Nynthe Pavian CR 5:31  
11 No. 26 A Voluntarie: for my Ladye Nevell dZ 5:37  
12 No. 27 Will Yow Walke the Woods Soe Wylde L 4:35  
13 No. 28 The Maidens Songe dZ 5:46  
14 No. 29 A Lesson of Voluntarie dZ 9:17  
15 No. 30 The Second Grownde CR 9:49

### CD 3

- 1 No. 31 Have with Yow to Walsingame CR 9:20  
2 No. 32 All in a Garden Grine L 4:47  
3 No. 33 Lord Willobies Welcome Home L 2:59  
4 No. 34 The Carmans Whistle dZ 5:06  
5 No. 35 Hughe Ashtons Grownde CR 8:36  
6 No. 36 A Fancie AR 6:21  
7 No. 37 Sellingers Rownde AR 7:32  
8 No. 38 Munsers Almaine L 8:28  
9 No. 39 The Tennthe Pavian: Mr. W. Peter L 5:06  
10 No. 40 The Galliarde to the Tennthe Pavian L 2:18  
11 No. 41 A Fancie AR 6:05  
12 No. 42 A Voluntarie L 3:31

### The instruments

L Lautenwerk designed and made by Keith Hill in Manchester, Michigan in 2000 (1x8")  
dZ Italian Single manual harpsichord by Jerome de Zentis made in Rome in 1658 (2x8"), restored by Keith Hill  
CR Flemish Double manual harpsichord by Keith Hill made in Manchester, Michigan in 1999 after the 1624 Colmar Ruckers (2x8", 4")  
AR Flemish Double manual harpsichord by Keith Hill made in Manchester, Michigan in 2002 after the Ahaus Ruckers 1640 with the addition of a 16' stop (16", 2x8", 4")

### Edition used

Dover (c. 1969) – a reprint of the original edition (J. Curwen, London, 1926) edited by Hilda Andrews with a new introduction by Blanche Winogron.

William Byrd was undoubtedly the greatest English composer of his era. Being a Catholic in Elizabethan England, he manoeuvred his way carefully through its highly charged religious arena to maintain powerful political connections, especially the favour of Elizabeth I, and secure his ability to work. It is believed that Byrd studied with Thomas Tallis in London. In 1563, at the age of 23, he was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. Five years later he married Juliana Birley. Although Byrd left Lincoln for London in 1570, the cathedral continued to pay him a partial salary until 1581, even after his successor had been named, owing to the intervention of a growing number of influential people with whom Byrd was linked. *The Hunted Upp* is thought to come from this early period.

Byrd became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1572, serving as organist with Tallis. In spite of his official capacity in the Chapel, Byrd remained a Catholic. His associations with powerful persons who were also Catholics – a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of the time – included Thomas Lord Paget, the Earl of Worcester, the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Northumberland, and the Petre family. He undoubtedly gave musical instruction to some of them, or to members of their families. The *Passinge Mesures Pavian* and *Galliarde* and the variation set *Have with you to Walsingame* are believed to come from this period.

Byrd was awarded the monopoly patent for the printing and sales of music and music paper with Tallis in 1575. This facilitated the publication of Byrd’s own works, particularly Latin vocal music and English music for voices and/or viol consort. Byrd’s series of pavans and galliards most likely come from the mid-1570s. During 1588–1593, Byrd compiled anthologies of his greatest works in different genres. *My Ladye Nevells Booke* is an unpublished manuscript of 42 of his best works for keyboard, unpublished in part owing to the rather laborious process necessary for printing keyboard music, as opposed to that for music in part-books. *Will you walke the woods soe wilde* (dated in 1590) and *The Tennthe Pavian and Galliarde* come from this period.

Upon leaving London in 1593, at the age of 53, Byrd moved to Stondon Massey in Essex. Here he was close to

Sir John Petre and other Catholics in a less politically charged environment. Between 1593 and 1595 he boldly published three Latin Masses. Even though he had previously published Latin vocal music, none of it had been music for the Catholic Mass, which was publicly forbidden. Nevertheless, he remained free. The *Gradualia*, or *Propers* for the Mass, followed in 1605 and 1607. Byrd died in 1623 and, by his request, was buried in Stondon Massey.

Byrd powerfully influenced a generation of English composers – Thomas Morley, Thomas Tomkins, Peter Philips, John Bull, and Thomas Weelkes – most of whom were his pupils. Many of his keyboard works were copied into the large manuscript known today as the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. Will Forster’s virginal book (1624), *Parthenia* (1612-13), and a manuscript thought to have been compiled by Thomas Weelkes contain keyboard music by Byrd. In the eighteenth century Charles Burney published *The Carmans Whistle*, followed by publications of the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* (1899, Maitland and Squire) and *My Ladye Nevells Booke* (1926, Hilda Andrews). More recently *Musica Britannica* devoted two volumes to his keyboard music, edited by Alan Brown.

Typical of the fact that most women were not remembered by history, the identity of Lady Nevell has remained conjectural until recently. John Harley (*Music and Letters, Vol. 86, No. 1*, 2005) convincingly argues that the lady in question could only have been the third wife of Sir Henry Nevell, Elizabeth Bacon (born c. 1541). Sir Henry was her second husband. She was an educated woman of considerable means, and was the only woman in the Nevell family who could have properly carried the title of Lady in the year of Byrd’s dedication – 1591. Nothing is known of her musical talents, if any, but it is possible that she had connections with the Byrd family by way of the town of Hambleton, in close proximity to residences of William and his brothers, where she had lived with her first husband.

The *Booke* is beautifully bound in brown leather, decorated with gold, and coloured with red and green. The copyist was John Baldwin, a Windsor scribe, who is thought to have worked from Byrd’s own manuscripts.

Baldwin later wrote these lines in admiration of Byrd, “whose greate skill and knowledge dothe excelle all at this tyme, and farre to strange countries abroade his skill dothe shyne.” The Nevell coat-of-arms and Henry Nevell’s initials are featured at the front of the volume. Although the manuscript has been privately owned since its dedication to Lady Nevell, it came into the British Museum’s collection in 2006 (coincidentally, the same year as this recording).

*My Ladye Nevells Booke* contains 42 pieces, six not found in any other manuscript or collection (Nos. 1, 6, 7, 23, 26, 30, and 42 in terms of its present form). The volume begins with two compositions dedicated to Lady Nevell. With the tenth piece a series of nine pavans commences, all but two of which are paired with a galliard. Another composition dedicated to Lady Nevell introduces the remaining pieces, including several late works composed specifically for the collection.

The volume is a collection of grounds (variations on a bass pattern or melody), variation sets (variations on a popular song tune), dance pieces (primarily pavans and galliards), contrapuntal works (hexachord fantasia, voluntary, fancy), and *battaglia* medleys. Byrd’s style showcases certain elements that are heard to different effect in all the works: increasing levels of figuration, flourishes and codas, cross-rhythms, cross-relations, tripla sections, keyboard textures borrowed from lute or consorts, and accental ornaments that reinforce strong beats and enliven weak beats in predictable and surprising ways.

A pair of grounds, *My Ladye Nevells Grownde* [1] and *Qui passe: for my Ladye Nevell* [2], open the volume. In the first, a ground of 24 measures is heard six times. In the second, the bass harmonic pattern of forty measures borrowed from the popular song *Chi passa per questa strada* is heard three times. The latter work is graceful and lyrical while the former is both grand and playful.

The ground of *The Huntes Upp* [8] is taken from the song of the same title listed in Chappell’s monumental book *Old English Popular Music* (1838-40), and is a revision by Byrd of his own earlier setting. The bass pattern is sixteen measures in length, and is heard eleven times. The sounds of hunting horns and the chaotic chase

peak in the ninth repetition.

*The Second Grownde* [30] and *Hughe Ashtons Grownde* [35] are on a larger scale. The former employs a ground of eight measures, enlarged to twelve by the insertion of short ‘echo’ phrases, which is heard eleven times in the bass and six times as a treble melody. The piece concludes with a brilliant short coda. For the latter Byrd is presumed to have borrowed the bass from *Hugh Aston’s Maske*. It is a simple harmonic ground of eight notes, expanded here to sixteen measures by rhythmic pitch repetitions. Its initial mood of elegance develops strength and energy gradually over twelve repetitions that culminate in a grand conclusion.

*The Passinge Mesures* [24-25] employs the famous *passamezzo antico*. To cap his series of pavans and galliards, Byrd chose a very familiar ground (familiar to us, too, as *Greensleeves* is also founded on it) for a large set of variations utilising the dance rhythms of pavan and galliard. The ground of sixteen measures is heard six times in the pavan, and nine times in the galliard. Philips, Morley and Bull also wrote a pavan and galliard on the *passamezzo antico*, and may have been inspired to do so by Byrd’s masterful setting.

The rest of the pavans and galliards [10-23] use a tripartite form, each section followed by an ornamented repeat (*repetendum*). Pavans are slower and in duple metre, with the character of a stately procession. Galliards are livelier and in triple metre with more robust steps, making use of hemiola and cross-rhythms. Byrd’s series of pavans and galliards alternates pairs of dances in minor and major key centres, although he still uses modality at times.

The first and the fifth pairs are in C minor. Their affects are similar, although the first pavan is more serious and epic while the fifth seems melancholic. The first galliard makes reference to the song *Crimson Velvet*, a song mentioning Catholic Queen Mary. Its affect is determined, while the fifth is more resolute. The fourth and sixth pairs are both in C major, although the fourth pavan begins on F as if in the Lydian mode. The sixth bears the name of Kinborough Good, young daughter of Dr James Good. Both pavans in this key are gentle and sweet, radiating good will, while the galliards are upright and smiling. The

second pair is in G major. Its pavan has a rustic feeling, and its galliard is earthy as if danced by common folk. The third pair has a similarly energetic galliard, while its pavan is richly coloured.

The seventh and eighth pavans are not paired with galliards. The seventh, concluding in G major, features a melodic canon at the fifth between soprano and alto voices. The staunch rhythmic pacing and modality create an affect that is serious and expansive. The eighth pavan is in A minor, and is reminiscent of toccatas for the elevation. Its affect is devout and mysterious.

The tenth pavan and galliard [39-40] was added near the end of the volume, and bears the name of young William Petre, whose family was both friend and patron to Byrd. In G minor, and often exhibiting the *brisé* texture of lute music, the tender and exquisite affect of the pavan is transformed into one of assurance and determination in the galliard.

The only other dance movement in the volume is *Musers Almaine* [38], 'munser' being an English spelling of 'monsieur'. A popular tune (taking its name most likely from François Duke of Alençon), this allemande is actually a set of three variations. Each section has two parts that are each varied in a *repetendum*. It also exhibits a distinctive lute-like *brisé* texture. *Galliards Gygge* [7] is neither galliard nor jig. Exuding high energy and winsome charm, it may derive from a song or dance tune and has the form ABCB, each section repeated with embellishments.

The variation sets, works based on melodies of popular songs, are all found in the second half of the volume. Chappell did not print the words for *Will Yow Walke the Woods Soe Wylde* [27], owing to its fragmentary text, or *The Carmans Whistle* [34], because its text was too bawdy for his taste. *Will yow walke* has a meandering, drone-like effect that mirrors the words 'Shall I go walk the wood so wild, wandering, wandering, here and there'. *Carmans Whistle* refers to a working class of cart men who were known as legendary whistlers. In the case of this song, the story line involves a young maiden and attaches a hint of double-entendre to the title words.

*Sellinges Rownde* [37] was a dancing tune that was often associated with the Maypole. The tune bears a

striking similarity to the hymn *St Theodulph* ('*All glory, laud and honour*'). This large set of nine variations thrives on a joyful vitality that is exploited rhythmically and melodically, and occasionally harmonically. *The Maidens Songe* [28] has not been clearly linked to any particular song. The character of the piece is one of quiet strength, and recalls consort writing and textures.

*All in a Garden Grine* [32] is a sweet song about the joys of springtime and true love. '*All in a garden green, two lovers sat at ease ... I will love thee long as life in me shall last, now I am strong and young, and when my youth is past.*' Byrd's music matches the effusive sentiments, and is serene and touching. *Lord Willobies Welcome Home* [33] is the shortest set. Its song text speaks of brave Lord Willoughby, a military hero of the era. Some repetitive musical figures similar to those found in *battaglia* pieces can be heard.

*Have with Yow to Walsingame* [31] was composed on a grand scale of 22 variations. Chappell asserts that the original ballad was written before 1538, when the Priory of Walsingham was dissolved. '*As I went to Walsingham, to the shrine with speed*' is a story of holy pilgrimage. In Byrd's setting the melody is heard in every voice at one time or another. The texture exploits every range of the keyboard and every type of figuration.

Two large works, both of which can be described as *battaglia* medleys are found side by side in the collection: *The Battell* [4], a sectional work that also includes *The Marche Before the Battell* [3] and *The Galliarde for the Victorie* [5]; and *The Barelye Breake* [6]. The former in its entirety depicts a military battle, probably an Irish rebellion. The march is a bit more pompous and outgoing than the summons, just as contemplating being a hero is more fun than actually becoming one. The footmen walk, while the horses canter. Whereas the English march into battle to the sound of trumpets, the Irish dance their way in to a country jig accompanied by the wailing drone of bagpipes. Fife and drum counter in contrast. At last the battle begins, and in this recording we use here the full resources of the 16' or 'double' harpsichord described below. The movement employs faster and faster note values approaching '*the battels be joyned*' and is followed

by a stunned aftermath and hasty retreat. What other dance than a galliard could proclaim the victory?

*Barleye* or *Barley Break* describes a game played outdoors by three couples. The rules of the game make things as difficult as possible in this lover's tug-of-war. A dance-like opening in triple metre is reorganized into the compound duple metre of a country jig, followed by the tune 'The leaves bee greene' in simple duple metre. The 'battle' ensues, sounding in many ways very similar to the preceding battle. It concludes with the tune 'The bells of Osney', which is set using repetitive cadence figures and metric swing to emulate the pealing of bells.

The masterful *Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La* [9] may be the first hexachord fantasia ever composed. The theme can be traced up and down through the fabric of the counterpoint, and is heard in all voices and various transpositions. Motivic material picks up the scalar material of the theme, or colours its mood with contrasting melodies and rhythms.

There are two pieces entitled *A Fancie* [36 and 41]. The first is a cheerful piece in C major that develops each 'point' or theme through imitation and bravura keyboard

figuration. The last is a more solemn piece in D minor with sections of rhythmic groupings that defy the metric pulse, and an increase in figural activity that produces a brilliant ending.

*A Voluntarie: for my Ladye Nevell* [26], *A Lesson of Voluntarie* [29], and *A Voluntarie* [42] complete the contrapuntal works. In the first of these a brief introduction precedes the first point. This short dedicatory piece has a sweet affect anchored in G. The next voluntary, much weightier, begins canonically and is believed to be a transcription of a consort fantasia. Following its tripla section, the piece moves along by shorter note values to a stirring conclusion that reinforces its grandeur. The final voluntary is apparently only the second half of a longer voluntary in C. Why Byrd closed an important dedicated volume in this way, a volume representing part of his plan to gather his greatest compositions into anthologies, is not known. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine a more serene and uplifting ending that gratefully appears here just as it is.

**Elizabeth Farr**

## The Harpsichords

Of all keyboard instrument makers, those of the Ruckers family of Antwerp were the most famous. Members of this famous family dominated the harpsichord making craft for almost a hundred years, and considerably longer if you include members of the Couchet family. Unlike the instruments of most of their contemporaries, the instruments of the Ruckers dynasty exhibit musical proportions such as those found in the overtone series in the construction of all their parts. These proportions yielded the strength, intensity, clarity, power, and richness of tone in the sound of their instruments.

The Ruckers inspired harpsichord used for this recording is based on the double made by Hans Ruckers the younger (also known as Johannes Ruckers), which stands in the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar, France. The 1624 Ruckers began life as a transposing double

manual harpsichord. Late in the seventeenth century in France it was outfitted with new keyboards and the key blocks were virtually eliminated, thus expanding the instrument's compass to GG (without the low GG#) to d<sup>7</sup>. This was done without altering the width of the case or soundboard, making the instrument the largest small instrument in existence - large in compass, small in case dimensions. This decision preserves all the benefits of a small case, such as intensity of colour and focus, yet allows a large repertoire of pieces to be played upon it without running out of keys.

The harpsichord with the 16' stop imitates the design of the so-called Ahaus Ruckers made in Antwerp in 1640 also by Johannes Ruckers. In the tradition of the north German makers, like members of the Hass family, I took a successful 8' harpsichord design and added a 16'

extension to the case and soundboard. Unlike the German makers, I chose to adhere to the sizes of bridge and soundboard thickness used by Ruckers. The eighteenth-century German makers would have more than doubled the mass of the 8' and 4' bridges and made the 16' bridge mass even greater. This tends to make the German harpsichords have a smaller more consonant sound at the ictus and a slightly more sustained and longer lasting bloom.

This 16' instrument was chosen for the recording because we agree with the belief that the "double" harpsichords listed in the musical instrument collection of Henry VIII refer not to the number of keyboards but to the inclusion of a 16' set of strings with the usual 8' harpsichord. You can observe such an instrument in one of the plates to be found in Praetorius's *Syntagma Musicum*. In the plate, the harpsichord depicted is clearly longer than nine feet or three meters, meaning that it has two 16' sets of strings and two 8' sets of strings, as can be observed by the bridge pins and hitch pins depicted in the plate.

Since there are no existing seventeenth or eighteenth century models of lute harpsichords, every maker today is free to invent his or her own design for this type of instrument. I devised the design of this particular instrument based on the specifications set down by J. S. Bach for his own lute-harpsichords. That specification is

for two sets of 8' gut strings and one set of 4' strings in brass, playable from two manuals. Johann Nicholas Bach, a relative of J. S. Bach, built a lute harpsichord with only one set of gut strings which was playable from three keyboards, apparently to allow for the maximum variety of colour changes. The aim always is to imitate the sound of the lute as closely as possible.

Jerome de Zentis built the Italian harpsichord used in this recording in the year 1658. Whereas the proportions employed by the Ruckers family of makers emphasized the harmonic series proportions, de Zentis utilized the non-harmonic proportions. These proportions yield a sound that is exquisite and charming. You can read about this instrument in greater detail by visiting the following website:

**[www.keithhillharpsichords.com/1658dezentis.html](http://www.keithhillharpsichords.com/1658dezentis.html)**

In all ancient instrument-making traditions, it was the intensity of blooming behaviour in the sound and the proportioning of it that gave breath and a natural inflection to the sound. And how the bloom in the sound was proportioned depended on the sound of inflection in the language spoken by the maker. It was the business of creating these qualities and proportions that occupied the ancient instrument makers in the exercise of their craft.

**Keith Hill**

## Elizabeth Farr

Elizabeth Farr specialises in the performance of keyboard music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She has performed solo recitals on the harpsichord, organ, and pedal harpsichord to critical acclaim throughout the United States and in Germany. Her performances as a collaborative artist, concerto soloist, and basso-continuo player have also earned high praise. Her recording of Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre's *Suites Nos. 1-6 for Harpsichord* (Naxos 8.557654-55) was awarded the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik, Bestenliste 1/2006, and the 2007 Eaton Faculty Award for achievement in the Arts and Humanities from the University of Colorado. Her recording of harpsichord works of Peter Philips (Naxos 8.557864) is the first recording featuring the newly restored harpsichord built by Jerome de Zentis in 1658. Elizabeth Farr holds degrees in harpsichord and organ performance from Stetson University, the Juilliard School, and the University of Michigan, having studied with Paul Jenkins, Vernon de Tar, and Edward Parmentier. Currently on the faculty of the University of Colorado, she teaches harpsichord and organ, conducts the Early Music Ensemble, and offers classes in performance practices, keyboard literature, and basso-continuo playing.







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DDD

Playing Time  
224:51

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*My Ladye Nevells Booke* is a collection of 42 keyboard pieces by the greatest English composer of his day, William Byrd. It includes dances, variations, contrapuntal fancies and battle-pieces, and was compiled seemingly from the composer's manuscripts for Lady Nevell, half-sister of Francis Bacon and third wife of Sir Henry Nevell of Billingbere, who was her second husband. The volume, dated 1591 and handsomely bound, was acquired by the British Library in 2006. It constitutes a significant monument to Byrd's achievement as a composer for the virginals.

William  
**BYRD**  
(c. 1540–1623)

**My Ladye Nevells Booke**  
(1591)

**CD 1**

1-23 Nos. 1–15 78:01

**CD 2**

1-15 Nos. 16–30 76:04

**CD 3**

1-12 Nos. 31–42 70:46

A full track list and details of the harpsichords by Keith Hill used on this recording will be found on page 2 of the booklet

**Elizabeth Farr, Harpsichord**

Recorded at Ploger Hall, Manchester, Michigan, USA, August 2006

Producer: Wolfgang Rübsam • Booklet notes: Elizabeth Farr

Cover image: Painting by Keith Hill on a harpsichord soundboard, 1978 (photo by Keith Hill)