

Music Notes for October 12th

Prelude: William Byrd: *The Earle of Salisbury's Pavan*

Introit: John Goss: *Praise my Soul, the King of Heaven*

Anthem: Ralph Vaughan Williams: *O, How Amiable are Thy Dwellings*

Offertory: Anthony Holborne: *The Queen's Galliard*

Postlude: John Dowland: *Pavane Lachrimae*

Two British eras form the theme for today's music. The organ music comes from the Elizabethan period of ornate and beautifully crafted keyboard works, usually for harpsichord or a similar plucked string keyboard called the spinet, but all perfectly playable on the organ. Byrd and Holborne both wrote numerous dances and dedicated them to various noblemen and woman as well as royalty, possibly in an effort to promote them in print. Imagine, if you will, a music store with a sales pitch that you could play at home the very same Pavane or Galliard that the Queen dances to! John Dowland's music is of an entirely different sphere, exquisite in its form and the ease in which the ornamentation flows. His music is nearly always melancholy in character, critique of which led him to write a piece called *Semper Dowland, semper dolens* (always Dowland, always doleful). But the wistfulness of the *Lachrimae* (the melody of which he also used as the famous consort song *Flow, my teares*) is less personal and is part of the aesthetic of the period. The four descending notes that open the piece form perhaps the most quoted motive in English music of the period, and modern composers including Britten have used the *Lachrimae* as a source of inspiration.

The vocal music comes from the Romantic period. John Goss served as organist at the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London, teaching Sir Arthur Sullivan and others. His hymn *Praise my Soul, the King of Heaven* forms a paraphrase of Psalm 103, and is a favorite of many, including Queen Elizabeth II, who requested that it be played as the processional at her wedding as well as at her coronation. The benediction response is a setting of a folk melody called *The Ash Grove* with new words by Westendorf, written for the first vernacular hymnal for the Catholic church after Vatican II.

The anthem is by Ralph Vaughan Williams, prominent English composer of music in nearly every genre, but notably choral and vocal. The text draws from Psalms 84 and 90, the first of which includes the same verses that Brahms used for a popular movement from *Ein deutsches Requiem*. (In the Lutheran Bible, this is *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*, though English-speaking choirs frequently sing it in translation). Here, unlike the Brahms setting, which is very peaceful, the text is given a heroic treatment with full organ accompaniment and a chorale on "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" at the end.

Thomas Dawkins, organist/choir director