

Shortly before lockdown hit us, back in early February the Linarol Consort of viols travelled to beautiful Monmouthshire, to stay for four days in Treowen House, near Wonastow and record our first CD. I have recorded before at Wyastone, just the other side of Monmouth, and we were going to use that wonderful venue for our recording. In looking for accommodation for five of us (four players and the engineer), I came across Treowen and thought how wonderful it would be to use the historic house both as accommodation and as the recording venue. John Wheelock, who's family owns the house and who seems to be the man in charge, couldn't have been more welcoming, stopping his brother's numerous beautiful ancient clocks so that the ticking and chiming wouldn't appear on the CD, and handing over control of the very modern heating system to me so that I could turn it all off when we were recording, in order to achieve a wonderfully quiet ambience.

The repertoire of the CD will be the pick of the best from the manuscript I recently edited and published, Vienna National Library Ms. 18 810, which contains a wonderful selection of instrumental pieces from the beginning of the 16th century, from the Low Countries, Germany and France. It was compiled in around 1535 and includes works by Josquin, Isaac, De la Rue, Compere and many others. The first owner of it was probably Jacob Fugger, *The Rich*, a merchant of Augsburg who is possibly the richest man to have lived. This is perfect repertoire for the early 16th century viols on which we play and it has been a great joy to explore the sounds that the various combinations of sizes of these instruments can create. The instruments, lacking sound posts and with delicate bent fronts, give a quite different timbre to the more commonly known Jacobean viols, offering greater clarity and a much tighter blend.

We were fortunate to have the award-winning engineer, Adrian Hunter, as our producer and engineer. He quickly discovered the best microphone set-up and proceeded to guide us through the three days of recording sessions that followed. His final edits have just been completed, so it won't be long now before the finished CD is out into production and released.

Six months later, and in the strangest of times with totally empty diaries for musicians, we have been given the opportunity of recording a second disc. In November we will be travelling to Alpheton in Suffolk, to a new recording venue (opened just before lockdown), *Alpheton New Maltings*, with engineer David Hinitt, another very fine engineer and producer with years of experience in the early music world.

The material to be recorded will be pieces from a manuscript published in Venice in 1501 by the music publisher, Ottaviano Petrucci, entitled *Canti B*. This is the second in a series of three which were the first music prints to be produced using movable type. They were hugely successful and widely disseminated on the Italian peninsula, and yet today are relatively little known. The repertoire is a perfect fit for the Linarol

Consort, playing on our set of viols copied from the oldest surviving viol, from Venice of about 1540.

This manuscript has been the subject of a lock-down project that I have been leading with students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. From the start of the academic year I had been teaching an early music notation class with these young musicians, so when, in March, it became impossible to attend the conservatoire in person, we decided that we would continue our work by producing a new, complete edition of the manuscript, using the skills learnt in the class. Each student has “adopted” a number of pieces from the manuscript and produced high quality, cleanly type-set editions. I will collate these and the whole collection will be published through the conservatoire this year. This will not only develop the students understanding of how to edit early manuscripts, but it will give them the satisfaction of having a published edition that will be extremely useful to players in the field of early music. The CD and the edition together will form an important resource to students of consort music of the early 16th century.

Recording and producing a CD is an expensive undertaking, so we were absolutely delighted and extremely grateful to be awarded a grant from BMEMF as a contribution towards the cost of this second recording.