

Pleasant and Merry Humours

Being a choice collection of ye most pleasant and airy tunes from the British Isles. Scotch-Tunes, Welsh and Irish Ayres, North Country Frisks, Jiggs, Hornpipes and severall additional fancies by ye best masters.

Track 1

'The Division Flute containing a collection of Divisions upon several excellent grounds for the Flute, being Improving and delightful to all lovers of that instrument'

Published London John Walsh 1706

Tollets Ground

Tracks 2 - 7

'For Several Friends'

Mathew Locke 1621/22-1677

A Suite of pieces

Fantazie, Ayre, Jigg, Ayre, Courante, Sarabande

Tracks 8 & 9

**'A Collection of Welsh, English & Scotch
Airs with new Variations...'**

John Parry (c. 1710 – 1782)

Published London 1761

Lovely Nancy, Meillionen (Sir Watkin's Delight)

Tracks 10 -13

Theatre tunes from King Arthur or The British Worthy

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Trumpet Tune, Fairest Isle, Chaconne

Tracks 14 - 19

The Catch Club, or Merry Companions

A Collection of favourite Catches for three and four voices'

Published London John Walsh c. 1735

'The English Dancing Master'

Published John & Henry Playford 1651-c.1728

A boat a boat (John Jenkins 1592-1678 - The Catch Club)

The Virgin Queen, Count Tallard & The Pilgrim,

Joan Saunderson, The fit's come on me now or The Bishop of Chester's Jig

Tracks 20 - 23

'The Compleat Flute Master or

**The Whole Art of Playing on the Rechorde,
Lay'd open in such easy & plain instruction...'**

Published John Walsh London 1695

Lamentation, Baket Faggots, Over the Hills and far a way, Hyland Humour

Tracks 24 - 28

'A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes...'

Turlough O' Carolan (1670-1738)

Published Dublin 1724

Squire Wood's Lamentation on the Refusal of his Halfpence, Isabella Burke,
The Honourable Thomas Burke, John Moore, John O' Connor

Track 29

Anon c.1670

Divisions on Greensleeves

Tracks 30 - 34

'A Second Collection of thirty new and choice Country Dances...The dances perform'd at court and publick entertainments. Being a delightful and entertaining collection. Consisting of Irish, Welch & Scotch tunes'

Published London John Walsh 1732

Irish Lamentation, Down the Burn Davie,
The Lass of Levingstone, Athol Brays, Andrew Kerr

Tracks 35 - 41

'The Catch Club, or Merry Companions

A Collection of favourite Catches for three and four voices'

Published London John Walsh c. 1735

'The English Dancing Master'

Published John & Henry Playford 1651-c.1728

Hey ho, Up with Aily, Old Noll's Jig, *divisions on* 'Fy, nay, prithe John',
The Cuckoo, Wooden Shoes, A New Rant

Total playing time 64:59

Scoiall Musick

Owen Morse-Brown *recorders*

Patxi del Amo *viola da gamba*

Arngeir Hauksson *theorbo, guitar & Cittern*

Recorded in The West Barn, Bradford on Avon on 17th December 2006

Producer: Alec Boulton

Despite being an island, Britain has never really had a shortage of foreign visitors, and it is therefore not an easy task to define a true 'British' style in any musical genre. During the 17th & 18th centuries, the French followed by the Italian styles were very influential and music publishers and composers were keen to pander to the tastes of the upper classes who were clearly intent on keeping up with current trends. The amount of extant printed music that one could truly call British by truly British composers is therefore very small and often consists of melody only.

'Divisions on a ground' is one particularly English form and we begin our CD starts with one presumably by the theatre composer Thomas Tollet.

Along with his successor, Henry Purcell as composer to Charles II, Mathew Locke was one of the most important and distinctive musicians of the English baroque era. The movements we have chosen to form a suite are selected from a manuscript in the British Library containing 54 individually numbered suite movements bearing the simple title of 'For Several Friends'.

John Parry was a harpist born in Bryn Cynan, and although blind, became one of the most distinguished players of his time. It seems to me that he may have published his Welsh melodies partly out of a sense of duty to preserve the bardic tradition of his ancestors. In his publication of Ancient British Music, there is a brief history of the bards in Wales as a preface. We have found his melodies and variations to fit very well with our ensemble, and in particular to the theorbo with it's re-entrant tuning that creates a harp-like effect. I was also interested to find 'Lovely Nancy' in a recorder tutor of 1780.

As a composer whose style might be called English more than any other of the period, we thought it appropriate to include a selection of tunes by Henry Purcell and from a thoroughly British theme; King Arthur. Although written originally for bigger forces, many Purcell songs and theatre tunes can be found in other publications, particularly for the recorder. Some such tunes found their way into the numerous recorder instruction books of this period along with many Irish and Scots tunes. Interestingly, publishers were often rather shrewd in their attempts to increase sales; publishing music that on the title page sounded very enticing, but under the cover might not even fit the instrument for which it was advertised. Looking in publications for other instruments therefore proved to be a good source for traditional tunes.

The taverns and music houses heard some of the more traditional tunes that were well known and played by many. Some familiar sounds to be heard were '...a Scotch bagpiper or a blind fiddler', '...minstrels scratching over a concise piece of unintelligible discord', '...the rumbling of drums, mix'd with the intolerable squeaking of *Cat*-calls, and penny trumpets', or even '...whistling to a base-violin, two fiddlers scraping *Lilibulero*,...and an old Oliverian Trooper farting upon a trumpet'. An interesting sound to recreate! The singing of catches was also a particularly enjoyed pastime and certain clubs and societies were set up specifically for it; '...songs and catches crowned the night, and each man in his turn elevated his voice to fill our harmony with the more variety' (Quotes from Ned Ward's *The London Spy* 1701).

In music of any nation we can make a division between art music where the musician is trained according to a particular style and discipline, and folk music where the music and style is inherited and not necessarily 'composed'. In O'Carolan's case we find that he was perhaps somewhere between these two. His music and style were part of a long tradition that was in fact the art music of that nation, but was fast being overtaken by the art music of others; namely the Italian style that so affected the whole of Europe. Being written by a trained musician, his melodies are a little more

complex than so called 'traditional' ones, absorbing influences from beyond his musical heritage, and therefore do not fit so easily with this term.

The collection of Irish, Welsh & Scotch tunes were published for the harpsichord or spinet and contain many pleasant and presumably older tunes that once again fit our ensemble very well.

To finish we return to music from a collection that through eighteen editions contains over 500 'English' tunes from a mainly aural rather than written tradition. As with many of the 'traditional' tunes on this recording, the titles refer to people, places and events rather than to the music itself. These titles can be wonderfully evocative, and must contain so much hidden history of the rich musical heritage of the British Isles.

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