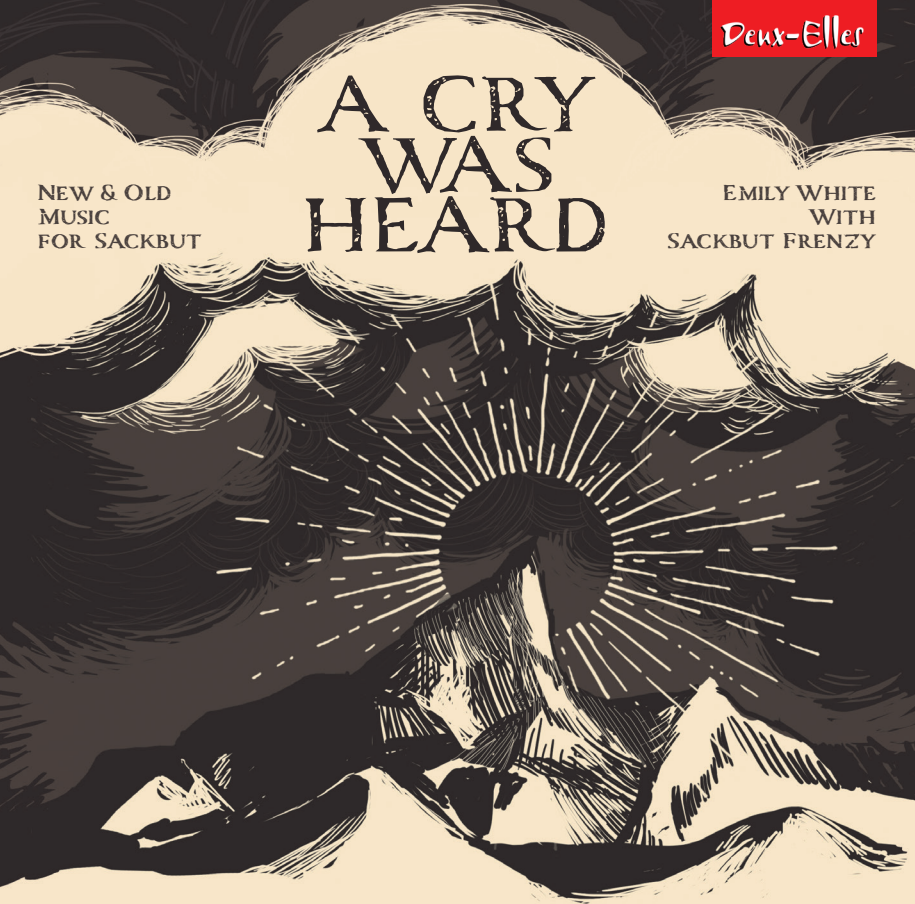


Deux-Elles

A CRY WAS HEARD

NEW & OLD
MUSIC
FOR SACKBUT

EMILY WHITE
WITH
SACKBUT FRENZY



SACKBUT FRENZY

Sackbut Frenzy was formed by Emily White to enable her to bring the chamber music she tours throughout the world back to her home community in Gloucestershire, performing new and historical chamber music for the sackbut and its friends.

The first concert was given in 2011 and almost every year since, violins, voices, harpsichords, violas, organs and of course a frenzy of sackbuts have filled St Martin's Church, North Nibley with music and audiences.



DEUX-ELLES: I'm intrigued by your title, *A Cry Was Heard*. Can you tell us about the concept?

EMILY WHITE: In 2021, I put on a concert to raise money for musicians in distress during the pandemic, with the title and repertoire that form the backbone of this album. *A Cry Was Heard* fits for many reasons. The incredible piece, 'Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehöret' (From the Mountain Heights A Cry Was Heard) by Schütz has a cry of devastation from the biblical matriarch, Rachel, on the deaths of her children. The blade-like quality of the alto sackbut taking the role of the second voice laments alongside the beautiful countertenor voice, and this text serves as title for the whole programme. Schütz is known for setting sacred texts using trombones, so we chose sackbuts and violas for the parts Schütz marked 'instrument', enjoying their melancholy depth in contrast to the alto voice lines. There are other cries in the disc: of lost love in the desperate aria by Strozzi, 'Che si può fare?', found love in Grandi 'O quam tu pulchra es' and yearning in McCarthy 'O'r Galons' that pushes the sackbut sound to expressive extremes.

There is the cry of loss in setting the words of my late husband Brian Nisbet's poems, both in Kenny's 'Haiku' and in 'Spring in an Unreal World', my own composition. The final sonata by Castello is a cry of joy. Most of all what makes the title fit so succinctly is that the sackbut itself is being heard – in all of its voices.

DE: It's a remarkable sound, like and unlike a modern trombone. Could you tell us more about the differences between the two instruments?

EW: One of the earliest depictions of a trombone is in Rome dating from around 1493. The name for the instrument was trombone in Italy, posauene in Germany, and in some places such as France and England the name sackbut was also used. Nowadays sackbut is a term often used to describe the historical trombone from that time up to the baroque era. The sackbut has a much narrower bore than a modern trombone, and the metal is hand-hammered, which means that a lot of the vibrations are lost in the metal, giving it a quieter and more supple sound that makes it perfect for chamber music with other instruments. ▶

DE: In some ways, this disc feels like a manifesto on the expressive power of the sackbut.

EW: It absolutely is. The world is full of people saying, 'Please don't be so loud, don't be so quiet, don't be too expressive,' and brass players in particular are often made to feel as though they are holding a weapon rather than an artistic voice. I don't think people need to be afraid of us, and making this disc has been a joyous opportunity to put this faith into practice. The sackbut is nimble and dramatic, passionate and delicate, and doesn't need to be kept inside the confines of discretion. I believe in the unfettered sackbut.

DE: And unfettered it is, from the very first piece! You almost sound like a mad 17th-century saxophonist in the Palestrina. Is your part there composed or improvised?

EW: Some of each - Giovanni Bassano made a very well-known divisions piece on this secular motet, and I improvise over the scaffolding of Bassano's ideas, as Guy sings the text on the alto line. We on sackbuts are often expected to leave such artistic

freedom to higher lines, with the assumption that a tenor instrument will disrupt and interfere with the musical line. It has been rewarding to put this track on the disc and to feel liberated to experiment.

DE: Your improvising blends old and new elements in a way that sets the stage for the three newly composed pieces that follow. Peter McCarthy's piece, 'O'r Galons', really blew me away. It's almost like a Berio Sequenza, and I wasn't even sure whether you were playing sackbut or modern trombone.

EW: Peter McCarthy wrote 'O'r Galons' for me, specifically asking for sackbut. It could be played on trombone, and technically it would be easier because the reaches, the extremes he's asking for really push the sackbut. On those low pedals, the bell is shaking like anything. I really like it being on sackbut and that you get the lamenting in it that so suits the instrument. Modern instruments do so well making things even. As an early musician I'm looking for the uneven, the beauty of the unevenness. Pushing the instrument to deliver this was looking at the edge of



what the sackbut does. The piece is declamatory but there is also a singing, dying fall all the way through, and these little glissandi he's put in have such pathos. The sackbut yearns readily, and this piece yearns! The title means 'From the Heart' in Welsh. As I was born in Wales where my Mum was 3rd horn in the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, I was especially touched to have a piece written for me with this title.

DE: Kenny's 'Haiku' was also intimately tailored to you and your family, wasn't it?

EW: Yes. 'Haiku' was written by John Kenny as a gift to Brian, on what we knew would be his final birthday. Five composers set his poems for an ensemble I had booked to hide in the house and then surprise him with music. He first heard this piece on his birthday in the front room, when he was ▶

pushed into the room with his eyes shut and then all the music came to life around him. I love the text very much - it's such a clever haiku, published in Brian's book, *Now You Know*, and John Kenny as a trombonist of international acclaim writes so subtly for the instrument.

DE: Brian's poetry also plays a starring role in your own composition, 'Spring in an Unreal World'.

EW: That's right. Brian wrote this poem when we first met, knowing that death was coming— we just didn't know when. It was an unreal world to imagine that you could start a new romance at that point in your life. So it's like a love song, but also a triumph of the unrealistic. This piece has baroque elements in its form, with ostinato bass and melody going from consonance and dissonance— a similar construction to the Strozzi piece. The gamba part



implies inevitability, like a mechanical wooden clock clunking away underneath. Over the top float Brian's wonderful elegiac words in spoken form and then played by the sackbut. One of the great skills of a sackbut player in the past and present is to imitate the voice, so I put that at the heart of this piece.

DE: The sackbut as singer really comes across in 'O quam tu pulchra es' as well - originally a song by Grandi. Do you imagine that you're singing the text through your instrument here as well?

EW: Absolutely. The text for this is from the Song of Songs and is longing, loving and sensuous. The words really run through your head as you play it!

DE: Tell us about some of the pieces where you use more ornamentation.

EW: 'Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa' is an anonymous secular text set by Frescobaldi. As it was common practice to take well known tunes and improvise decorated versions of them, the violin

and sackbut are invited to be part of this practice. From documents such as letters about auditions for instrumentalists coming work in San Marco in Venice commenting on the quality of their improvised ornamentation, we know they tested them on that, just as much as on playing composed music. Bojan is improvising a violin part around the vocal line, and I get a verse to join in the fun towards the end— especially enjoying the use of five- and seven-note patterns that suit the slide so well.

In Strozzi's lament, my part is actually written out, but Strozzi makes it sound like improvising because she's playing around with her theme. She is such a brilliant composer, getting right to the heart of the music in just two composed lines. The vocal line played by the sackbut is singing over and over, 'What can I do? What can I say? What can I do?', in that circular way young love does after being rejected for the first time. As it gets more desperate she adds fast notes, just as one might improvise it. Bojan's violin part, on the other hand, is completely unwritten; he was making everything up as he heard it in the session. ▶

DE: The harpsichord solos are beautiful because they're much more than a palate cleanser. They're an integral part of the soundscape of the disc. I know you've known Robin Bigwood for a long time. Did you ask him to play 'Amarilli mia bella', or did he choose it himself?

EW: I invited him to choose his own solos, having described our programme and the title. This concept of English music being somehow held in and modest, and Italians being full of extreme expression of feeling is a modern idea. When I was describing the program to Robin, I asked for something that is part of that: Italian or English, from the heart. His answer was Phillips because he's English and took his English music-making across Europe. He loved and took a lot of Italy into his soul. There's a lot of very open-hearted expressive feeling in his writing, and when Robin plays you can really hear all that.

DE: This programme pushes a lot of different boundaries: the technical limits of the sackbut, its subordinate role within a larger

group, the national stereotypes reining English music in. Where does your final piece fit in, the Castello Sonata?

EW: The Castello Sonata is special because unusually it specifies trombone to play the tenor line and is one of the pieces that is definitely originally written for trombone in the 17th century. Most of it is composed—he wrote a lot of very florid passages, although we also improvise cadentially, and passing notes as we repeat the dancing motif towards the end. We know little about Castello, except that he was publishing in Venice and died in the plague, but his extraordinary instrumental sonatas are full of drama and passion, and in this one there is an uplifting dance. It is telling that the trombone was considered an equal partner in virtuosity and expression to instruments such as the violin. It felt good to end the disc with the sackbut expressing such joy!

DE: And a joyful confirmation of your vision of the sackbut as a powerful virtuosic and creative voice. Thank you, Emily. ■



1: IO SON FERITO

Io son ferito, ah! lasso! e chi mi diede
accusar pur vorrei, ma non ho prova;
e senz' indizio al mal non si da fede:
ne getta sangue la mia piaga nuova.
Io spasm' e moro; il colpo non si vede.
La mia nemica armata si ritrova.
Che fia tornar a lei crudel partito,
che sol m'abbia a sanar chi m'ha ferito.

*I am wounded, alas! And she who did it to me
I would accuse but have no proof;
yet without evidence no one will believe in my woe,
nor does my fresh wound pour out blood.
I suffer and die; the wound is invisible,
my foe has weapons —
how cruel a task will it be to return to her,
for only she that wounded me is able to heal me.*
Anon

3: HAIKU

And all shall be one
Snow falls on ice in the stream
On me too it falls
Brian Nisbet

4: SPRING IN AN UNREAL WORLD

She comes to me in the morning,
Like a verdant surprise of birdsong
Vibrant as frost,
Scattering vanilla and chamomile.
Singing spontaneous rhapsodies
A celebration of living things
A euphony
An energy
In this unreal world

She comes to me in the evening
Like the serenity of mountains
Calm as a caress
Lingering over a quality malt
Exploring an uncertain intimacy
Of things half said, and things unsayable
In the silence
In the stillness
Of this unreal world
Brian Nisbet

10: AUF DEM GEBIRGE

Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehört,
viel Klagens, Weinens und Heulens; Rahel
beweinte ihre Kinder und wollte sich nicht
trösten lassen, denn es war aus mit ihnen.

*From the mountains a cry was heard, weeping,
wailing and howling; Rachel mourned her
children and would not be comforted,
because they were no more.*

Matthew 2:18

Translations by Emily White

SACKBUT FRENZY

Emily White - *director, tenor and alto sackbut*

Guy James - *voice*

Robin Bigwood - *harpsichord*

Kate Bennett Wadsworth - *gamba*

Bojan Čičić - *violin and viola*

Theresa Caudle - *viola*

Elinor Chambers - *spoken voice and sackbut*

Peter Thornton - *sackbut*

Adam Crighton - *bass sackbut*

Producer - *Adrian Hunter*

Sound and editing - *Matthew Wadsworth*

Cover art: *Katie Johnston*

Booklet photos: *Robin Bigwood*

Cover and booklet design: *Tim A'Court*

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With thanks to Alan Gotto for the use
of his harpsichord

Emily White is professor of sackbut and trombone at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, sackbut and trombone tutor at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and trombone teacher at Wells Cathedral School. She enjoys both contemporary and early music and works in both fields. She is a member of The English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble (ECSE) whose fourteen discs include two Gramophone Award winners, a Diapason D'Or and Classic FM disc of the Month. She plays trombone and violin with In Echo and appears on their fêted debut disc *Music in a Cold Climate*. Emily is in the trio *Pandoras Box* who have taken their improvisatory trio across UK, Europe and to the USA and plays in the Italian ensemble *Il Giardino Armonico* and appeared on the disc *La Morte della Ragione*, winner of Diapason d'Or de l'Année 2019. She freelances with groups such as *Alte Musik Berlin*, *B'Rock* and *Les Talens Lyrique*. Emily studied trombone with Alan Hutt at Wells Cathedral School, then went on to study trombone at The Royal Academy of Music, where Sue Addison taught her sackbut, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and violin at Trinity Laban.

Robin Bigwood is one of the UK's most versatile keyboardists. He plays harpsichord and organ with *La Serenissima*, *Feinstein Ensemble* and *Passacaglia*, and has worked with many of the country's leading historically-informed ensembles and chamber orchestras, including *London Baroque*, *Florilegium* and *Scottish Ensemble*. He teaches harpsichord, continuo and fortepiano at *Royal Birmingham Conservatoire*. Alongside his work in the historical performance world, Robin has produced and engineered dozens of classical (and a few big-band, jazz and electronic) albums, for individual artists, ensembles and major publishers. He writes for the recording industry magazine *Sound on Sound*, contributing technique articles and reviewing cutting edge (and sometimes delightfully weird) electronic musical instruments. In 2018 he founded the band *Art of Moog*, which plays the music of J S Bach on synthesizers.

www.robinbigwood.co.uk

Guy James is a freelance musician and the founding first countertenor of *The Gesualdo Six*. He specialises in renaissance polyphony and performs both as a soloist and, alongside his work with *The Gesualdo* ▶

Six, also works with a range of choirs and consorts such as the Gabrieli Consort, Polyphony, and the Italian ensemble Odhecaton. Born in Dursley in Gloucestershire, Guy went on to read Natural Sciences with a speciality in Organic Chemistry for Drug Discovery at St. John's College Cambridge while holding a choral scholarship at Trinity College under Stephen Layton. Guy now lives in Cambridge and enjoys spending his spare time watching or playing cricket.

Adam Crighton was originally from Aberdeen and is now based in London, having studied bass trombone and bass sackbut at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Since graduating, Adam has enjoyed playing in many different musical genres, from orchestral work with The Orchestra of The Royal Opera House, Birmingham Royal Ballet, and the BBC Concert Orchestra, among others, to various shows in London's West End and at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, to period recording and performing



projects with Il Giardino Armonico, The English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble and His Majesty's Sagbutts & Cornetts. Adam can also be heard on multiple film and trailer soundtracks.

Elinor Chambers is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, actor, conductor and composer. She studied trombone and sackbut at Guildhall where she achieved a First Class Degree and was awarded the Concert Recital Diploma; and then did an acting degree at LAMDA. Whilst still studying she played alongside the worked with Devon Baroque, Orchestra for the Restoration and Shakespeare's Globe. She plays with the ensemble Sacred Bones, chamber group Quintetta and has a folk band called The Mistakings. She also works as an actor, playing the lead in shows such as 'The Red Side of the Moon' at Iris Theatre, 'Far Our' at the Omnibus, and 'my lover was a salmon in the climate apocalypse' at the Pleasance, Edinburgh.

Peter Thornton is an in-demand period brass player based in London. A founding member of award-winning ensemble Sacred Bones, he has performed and recorded with many groups such

as The English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble, His Majesty's Sagbutts & Cornetts, Illyria Consort, The Academy Baroque Orchestra, Instruments of Time and Truth, and Picchi and the Semi-Crotchets amongst many others. He currently composes and plays guitar for the Dandelion Jazz Orchestra, and has appeared with the London Jazz Orchestra, Rooty Ma Toot Big Band and The Brass Funkeys.

Bojan Čičić is the leader of The Academy of Ancient Music and Florilegium. He has been invited as a music director and a soloist with the Academy of Ancient Music, Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Washington Bach Consort and Phion Orchestra in the Netherlands. He is Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal College of Music, director of his own group the Illyria Consort and his recording of J.S. Bach's Concerto for Two Violins with Rachel Podger was named the best available recording of the work by BBC Music Magazine. His recording of Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli's Sonate da camera Nos. 1-6 achieved great critical acclaim and was chosen as one of Presto Classical's "Presto Recordings of the Year" for 2017. His recent release Adriatic Voyage also won Presto Recording of the Year Award in 2021. ▶



Theresa Caudle has had a long and successful career in the early music world, both as a string player (baroque violin, viola and viola d'amore) and cornettist, becoming leader of The London Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble and The English

Concert in the 1970s. She continues to play with many leading period instrument ensembles including The London Handel Orchestra (of which she is a founder member), The Sixteen and The Monteverdi String Band. She leads The Hanover

Band and directs her own ensemble, Canzona, as well as appearing as guest director with many other ensembles, both professional and amateur. Theresa is Artistic Director of the Baroque Week summer school.

Kate Bennett Wadsworth is a cellist and gambist devoted to historical performance of all periods, with a special research interest in 19th-century performing practice. She has appeared as a soloist with Arion Baroque Orchestra, Les Goûts Réunis Luxembourg, Les Bostonades, and Norwich Baroque, and as a chamber musician and continuo cellist with period ensembles across Europe and North America. Kate studied modern cello with Laurence Lesser at the New England Conservatory, baroque cello with Jaap ter Linden at the Royal Dutch Conservatory in The Hague, and 19th-century performance practice with Clive Brown at the University of Leeds, after completing a bachelor's degree in Scandinavian studies at Harvard College. She is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and co-artistic director of Norwich Baroque.

INSTRUMENTS

Robin Bigwood: virginals by Alan Gotto 2008, after Giovanni Antonio Baffo, Venice, c.1570 (Victoria & Albert museum 'Queen Elizabeth's Virginals'); harpsichord by Alan Gotto 2004, after Anon, Florence, later 17th century (Hogwood Collection)

Theresa Caudle: viola by Paul Denley, Bishops Waltham 1985, after models by the brothers Amati.

Bojan Čičić: violin by Rowland Ross 2001; viola by Jan Pawlikowski

Kate Bennett Wadsworth: viola da gamba by Hermann Bächle 1997

Emily White, Elinor Chambers and Peter Thornton: tenor sackbut by Egger 1998, 2018, 2017 after Sebastian Hainlein, Nuremberg 1632 (Historical Museum, Frankfurt); alto sackbut by Egger 1998 After Hieronimus Starck, Nuremberg 1670 (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg)

Adam Crighton: bass sackbut by Egger 2013, in F, after Ehe, Nuremberg 1612 ■

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|-----------|--|------|
| 1 | Io son ferito, ahi lasso <i>by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina c.1525 - 1594</i> | 5:46 |
| 2 | O'r Galons <i>by Peter McCarthy 2018</i> | 5:17 |
| 3 | Haiku <i>by John Kenny 2015 Text by Brian Nisbet</i> | 1:17 |
| 4 | Spring in an Unreal World <i>by Emily White 2011 Text by Brian Nisbet</i> | 2:58 |
| 5 | O quam tu pulchra es <i>by Alessandro Grandi 1586 - 1630</i> | 3:35 |
| 6 | Fantasia <i>by Peter Phillips c.1560 - 1628</i> | 3:07 |
| 7 | Che si può fare? <i>By Barbara Strozzi 1619 - 1677</i> | 3:52 |
| 8 | Amarilli mia bella <i>by Peter Phillips c.1560 - 1628</i> | 3:43 |
| 9 | Se l'aura spira tutta vezzosa <i>by Girolamo Frescobaldi 1583 - 1643</i> | 4:05 |
| 10 | Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehöret <i>by Heinrich Schütz 1585 - 1672</i> | 5:12 |
| 11 | Sonata Quinta from Sonate Concertate, libro secondo <i>by Dario Castello c.1590-c.1630</i> | 5:29 |

Total playing time: 44:25