

Saturday 14th July, 2018. Rachel Mason

Another beautiful day in Sunny Somerset, and Rachel joined us from Bristol. We began with a piece which had no descant parts, Thomas Ravenscroft's *Mercury's song*. In the absence of words, Rachel guided us carefully through the phrasing, and was impressed with the performance we gave.

We followed this with another piece for the lower instruments, Giovanni Coperario's *Fantasia number 14*. Apparently, Giovanni was actually an Englishman, John Cooper, who followed the trend of the time to embrace all things Italian, changing his name to something a bit more exotic, although he never left these shores. His *Fantasia 14* is one of 96 which he wrote and was interesting to play. Where are the other 95?

We then turned to a Spanish piece (and some excellent Spanish pronunciation from some members), this being Juan Vasquez's *Villancio Zagaleja de la verde* (translated as Shepherd's and peasants!). This is a folk song which is more commonly played at Christmas, but that didn't seem to bother Rachel or the assembled masses. So – Rachel's challenge for this month (after the unbarred challenge last month) – play all 4 parts on 4 different instruments. It was surprising how many basses appeared out of the woodwork, how many could play a treble as if it was a bass, and how competent people were with their least favoured instruments. There were tricky rhythms to contend with, but the final run through was very satisfying, and showed that none of the branch need to stay on just one instrument. I have to add here that this would not have been possible a few years ago – the standard of playing in the branch has risen amazingly.

We then began looking at *Bristolian Rhapsody*, by Michael Graham, which was intelligently scored for recorders, albeit that the 2 low bass parts were not that interesting as they are ad libs. It was written especially for Bristol Branch's recent 75 year anniversary.

Tea was provided by Vivienne and Barbara and featured delicious cake!

After tea, we continued with the *Bristolian Rhapsody*, eventually giving a good performance, before moving on to Arthur Sullivan's *The Lost Chord*, originally written for his sick brother. Preceding this Di and Julia read the associated poem – another interesting touch. The final new piece was Susato's *Basse danse*, arranged by Ann Marshall. Rachel encouraged us, after the initial sight reading, to change instruments, Gwynneth even playing a drum, and the addition of 2 sopraninos. We ended the afternoon with another play through of the original piece, *Mercury's song*, and thoroughly enjoyed Rachel's conducting. Rachel also said what a lovely branch we were to conduct, and how well we listened to her, and how well we responded to her ideas.

We look forward to welcoming you again next year, Rachel.