

SUNDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

Unholy Rackett + Ensemble 642

Brock Imison — curtals and racketts
Simon Rickard — curtals and racketts
Jackie Newcomb — curtals and racketts
Laura Vaughan — viola da gamba
Hannah Lane — baroque triple harp
Nick Pollock — theorbo, baroque guitar

Biagio Marini	<i>Sonata 4 tromboni</i>
Bartolomé de Selma y Salaverde	<i>Vestiva hi colli passeggiato basso solo</i>
Antonio Martín y Coll	<i>Folias</i>
Giovanni Antonio Bertoli	<i>Sonata settima</i>
Giovanni Girolamo Kapsperger	<i>Bergamasca</i> <i>Tenore del Kapsperger</i> <i>Canario</i>
Giorgio Mainerio	<i>La Lavandara Gagliarda</i> <i>Caro ortolano</i>
Michael Praetorius	<i>Est is ein Ros entsprungen</i>

- INTERVAL -

Anon	<i>Vos señora, a maltratada</i>
Manuel Machado	<i>Dos estrellas le siguen</i>
Anon	<i>Não tragaís borzeguis pretos</i>
Bartolomé de Selma y Salaverde	<i>Canzon à 2 tenori</i>
Daniel Speer	<i>Sonata I 2 viole</i> <i>Sonata II 2 viole</i>
Daniel Speer	<i>Sonata II 3 fagotti</i>

Music at
McClelland
where art, music and nature come together

Unholy Rackett + Ensemble 642

Today's concert centres around the earliest ancestor of the bassoon, the curtal, today often referred to by its German name, the dulcian.

The curtal first appeared in Italy in the 1550s, a product of Italian renaissance ingenuity. By 1600, it had travelled across the Alps, and spread across the length and breadth of Europe, from Portugal to Poland, and Britain to Bohemia.

While today's modern orchestral bassoon is sometimes considered the 'clown of the orchestra', an instrument deployed only sparingly to give a special flavour to the string texture, or perhaps allowed a brief solo, the curtal was fundamental to the renaissance sound world. On any given day, an early seventeenth century European might have heard the curtal playing devotional music in church, dance music at a party, accompanying a theatre performance, or as a member of the 'town waits' - a civic wind band responsible for marking the times of day from the town hall's clock tower, or playing processional music to announce visiting dignitaries.

The bass curtal possessed excellent expressive capabilities and a large, fully chromatic compass not available to other renaissance woodwinds, such as shawms and crumhorns. For this reason it, above all other woodwinds, became an important solo voice with the emergence of the new baroque musical language which appeared in northern Italy in around the turn of the seventeenth-century.

One woodwind instrument which got left behind in the transition from renaissance to baroque musical language was the bizarre rackett. The rackett is unlike any instrument in existence today. It has a cylindrical bore folded nine times within the body of the instrument, allowing it to make much lower sounds than its diminutive size might suggest. This cylindrical bore is fitted with a relatively enormous double reed, surrounded by a wooden pirouette, which helps give the instrument its soft, buzzy tone which Michael Praetorius described in 1619 as sounding like 'blowing through a comb and tissue paper.'

The rackett was only used in the German-speaking states from around 1575 until the middle of the seventeenth century, when Germany emerged from the Thirty Years War to find that musical tastes had changed significantly, and the rackett was no longer fit for purpose.

Along with all these reedy sounds, we offer gentle music for lute, viola da gamba, and triple harp as a palate cleanser in today's programme.

We hope you enjoy this glimpse into a long-forgotten sound world.