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Thomas Ravenscroft's Drinking Songs... and Rounds

Gregory Blount http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ravenscroft/ version 1.0, 2003jul29

Thomas Ravenscroft is the first known publisher of English folk music. He published 3 books of it in 1609 and 1611, a book of madrigals in 1614, and a Psalter (music to sing the Psalms to) in 1621. The folk music books are most interesting to us scurrilous types, and they contain both rounds and songs. Some of these rounds, by the way, also appear in a 1580 manuscript, called "MS KC1", or the "Lant Manuscript". Lant contains 57 rounds; 48 of them appear, mostly slightly changed, in Ravenscroft's first 3 books.



Of All the Birds is one of those subtle songs: you don't realize they're all drunk until the middle. Although this is a 4 part song, we usually cheat and sing just one line.

"Martin said to his man", on the other hand, is unadulterated, stumbling, blind drunkenness, although you might think it's a children's song:



2. I see a sheep shearing corn... And a couckold blow his horn,

3. I see a man in the Moone... Clowting of Saint Peters shoone, [fixing St. Peter' s shoe]

4. I see a hare chase a hound... Twenty mile aboue the ground,

5. I see a goose ring a hog... And a snayle that did bite a dog,

6. I see a mouse catch the cat... And the cheese to eate the rat,

[7. I saw a maid milk a bull... Every stroke a bucket-full,]

[this last verse is not in Ravenscroft, but does appear on the CD *Music from the time of Elizabeth I* by Christopher Hogwood. Presumably the performers made it up.]

Ravenscroft also has some drinking rounds. You might not think that singing rounds is possible while drunk, but we "play tested" these at Pennsic one long night, and they were a smash hit. Or at least people gave us lots of booze so we would leave.



Punk == prostitute, according to Shakespeare.



I am a thirst, what should I say, alasse I haue no money to pay, fill the pot Butler, fill, fill, for I will drinke with a good will.



Once you' re drunk, the next item of business is, of course, enamouring.

Go to Joane Glouer, and tell her I loue her, and at the mid of the Moone I will come to her.

When sending messages doesn' t work, personal pleading sometimes does:



O My loue, lou' st thou mee? then quickly come and saue him that dyes for thee.

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