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# **Pastime with Good Company: The Songs of Henry VIII and His Daughter Elizabeth I**

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University of Southern Mississippi

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*"Music is a key to the Tudor age."* – Peter Ackroyd (2012, p. 169)

*"Pastime with good company / I love, and shall until I die  
Grudge who will, but none deny / So God be pleased, thus live will I.  
For my pastance: Hunt, sing, and dance  
All goodly sport / For my comfort  
Who shall me let?"* – Henry VIII (British Library, MS 31922)

## **Introduction**

The lyrics of King Henry VIII's most famous song "Pastime with Good Company" perfectly reflect the king's personality as someone who enjoys the pleasures of the Tudor court – namely hunting, singing, and dancing – with his favored companions. This song would prove to be one of Henry's most popular compositions during his life (Weir, 2001), although the entirety of his musical work has not been preserved. Both Henry and his daughter Elizabeth would become very musical monarchs; their love of music would influence the types of entertainment at court and the royals' policies on religious worship. Their musical pastimes would become the spark that ignited the development of sacred and secular music in the sixteenth century.

## *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to document the surviving musical compositions of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. The repositories in London containing each monarch's remaining body of musical work were examined and the compositions themselves were studied. Research was conducted to give further details about each document and its history within the Tudor monarchs' lives.

## *Research Questions*

R1: What repositories in London contain musical compositions of Henry VIII?

R2: What repositories in London contain musical compositions of Elizabeth I?

## *Importance of the Study*

While the musical compositions of these monarchs may not have left a lasting impression on music as a whole, many were performed during the reign of each sovereign and contributed to popular music during their respective time. Each ruler's musical works help paint a more detailed picture of both the lives and hobbies of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. The monarchs' personal feelings towards music shaped music history; by being ever-present at court, secular music went through many changes in the sixteenth century including a marked increase in popularity and variations in vocal polyphony. Sacred music history was also changed as each monarch's love of music prevented them from removing its beauty from church services.

## **Literature Review**

### *Lack of Formal Research*

Almost no formal research regarding Henry VIII or Elizabeth I's music exists in several subject areas including music and history. Elizabeth's letters are examined in several articles, but her ability as a poet and lyricist is not as commonly studied. The few

books or articles that discuss Henry's works either simply mention the compositions or are descriptive in nature. Many other existing articles only consider the lyrics of Henry's works and very few sources examine the music itself. Those authors who choose to comment on the musical works of Henry VIII generally dismiss him as a plagiarist and lackluster musician without providing supporting evidence for his supposed lack of musical skill.

### *Henry VIII*



*Figure 1.* Henry VIII Holbein Portrait  
Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, U.K.  
(photo by Courtney Clark, 2014)

### *Education*

Little is known about Henry's early education (Loades, 2007), probably because no parent in the sixteenth century would consider the "educational development of a child worth recording in detail" (Smith, 1971, p. 93). As the second son of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York (Cameron, 2009; Cannon & Hargreaves, 2009), Henry VIII was not raised to be the future king. Henry, then Duke of York, was given an education in classics and theology while his brother Arthur was groomed for the throne (Loades, 2007). As children, Arthur and Henry most likely shared a tutor (Siemens, 2009a; Weir, 2001), possibly for more generalized education. When Arthur died unexpectedly of consumption at the age of fifteen (Ackroyd, 2012; Cannon, 2009), ten-year-old Henry was suddenly the heir to the throne (Cannon &

Hargreaves, 2009). Contemporary sources state that Henry may have been destined to be the Archbishop of Canterbury and his education suggests he was at the very least destined for the church (Weir, 2001). As a young man, Henry would often challenge priests after church services when he disagreed with their perception of the hidden meanings in the Scriptures (Williams, 1971).

By the time Henry gained the throne, he had familiarized himself with Italian and mastered English, French, and Latin. In adulthood, Henry studied Greek and acquired some Spanish – possibly from his Spanish wife, Catherine of Aragon – but never attained fluency in either (Weir, 2001). Henry was also taught social pastimes royalty would need including jousting (Ackroyd, 2012; Cannon & Hargreaves, 2009; Loades, 2007, Weir, 2001), hawking, archery (Ackroyd, 2012), hunting, riding, and tennis (Weir, 2001). In addition to his love for music, Henry had talent and passion for cartography, astronomy, mechanics, architecture, weaponry, science, and mathematics (Weir, 2001). His early education led to King Henry VIII being one of the most educated kings England had yet seen, especially in theology and the Bible (Ackroyd, 2012; Loades, 2007; Weir, 2001).

### *Musical Talents*

Henry VIII "took an early delight in music" (Ackroyd, 2012, p. 2) and presumably was educated in musical performance or theory. Henry VII gave his son Henry a lute in 1498 (Weir, 2001), but no details about the younger Henry's musical education remain. Henry VIII was a great patron of the arts and was said to enjoy music of all kinds, from sacred plainchant and polyphony to secular love songs, dances and masques, instrumental music, and lewd drinking songs (Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971).

Henry had a great aptitude for music (Cameron, 2009; Kennedy, Kennedy, & Rutherford-Johnson, 2012a) and could play many instruments; it is documented that he could play the cornett, regal (Weir, 2001), flute, virginals (Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971), recorder (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971) lute (Ackroyd, 2012; Milsom, 2011; Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971), harp (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001),

and organ (Williams, 1971). Henry was intrigued by novel instruments (Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971) and had a fair amount of knowledge about their construction (Williams, 1971). He was an able singer (Ackroyd, 2012; Milsom, 2011; Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971) with a high voice and the ability to read music on sight (Weir, 2001), which was a common skill for the nobility but not one professionals such as minstrels or other itinerant musicians possessed (Stevens, 1979). Henry composed several pieces in his lifetime including masses (Ackroyd, 2012; Siemens, 2009a; Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971), masques (Siemens, 2009a), and motets (Ackroyd, 2012; Kennedy, Kennedy, & Rutherford-Johnson, 2012a; Siemens, 2009a; Weir, 2001). His skill would not rival that of a professional musician, but Henry is still considered one of the best amateur composers in England during the Tudor era (Siemens, 2009a; Stevens, 1979; Wulstan, 1986). As a young king, Henry “took childish pleasure in the more violent forms of dancing” (Hackett, 1945, p. 43) and was considered a capable dancer (Hackett, 1945; Loades, 2007). His daughter Elizabeth would inherit his affection for dance, music, language, and religion.

#### *Elizabeth I*



Figure 2. Princess Elizabeth at 12,  
Detail of The Family of Henry VIII (c. 1545)  
Hampton Court Palace, U.K.  
(photo by Courtney Clark, 2014)

Elizabeth's father Henry VIII obviously had a passion for music-making, but her mother Anne Boleyn was

also musical (Burton, 1958; Starkey & Sweasey, 2013). Anne was said by her contemporaries to have a lovely singing voice and is documented as playing lute, clavichord, flute, virginals, rebec, and harp (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001). She was also a talented dancer (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001) like her husband Henry (Hackett, 1945; Loades, 2007); their daughter Elizabeth would later inherit her parents' skill (Weir, 1998). Anne composed songs of her own and wrote an entire masque, but none of her works survive (Weir, 2001).

#### *Education*

High-born girls in the sixteenth century were often taught only the skills they would need to make a good wife and hostess, typically needlework, music, dancing, and social languages such as French, Spanish, or Italian (Singman, 1995). History, mathematics, the classics, and other forms of formal learning were uncommon among young women (Singman, 1995), but Elizabeth was brought up to be “an erudite example of her sex and an ornament to the house of Tudor” (Weir, 1996, p. 10). The young Elizabeth was educated by her governess Kat Ashley in languages, dancing, history, geography, and riding and would later share lessons with her brother and Henry's heir Prince Edward, who later became Edward IV (Weir, 1996, p. 10).

The Princess Elizabeth excelled in languages (Ackroyd, 2012; Singman, 1995; Weir, 1996; Weir, 2001), showing early mastery of Greek and Latin (Ackroyd, 2012; Chamberlin, 1922; Doran, 2003; Johnson, 1974; Singman, 1995; Weir, 1996) and studying Flemish (Ackroyd, 2012), Italian (Ackroyd, 2012; Chamberlin, 1922; Doran, 2003; Frye, 2006; Harrison, 1968; Johnson, 1974; Weir, 1996), French (Ackroyd, 2012; Chamberlin, 1922; Doran, 2003; Frye, 2006; Harrison, 1968; Johnson, 1974; Weir, 1996). While her spoken command of French might have been passable, her written French was created with “a royal disregard for the normal usages of grammar” (Harrison, 1968, p. xi). Spanish, and some Welsh (Ackroyd, 2012; Doran, 2003; Weir, 1996). A contemporary recorded Elizabeth as saying by the time she had ascended the throne of England, she knew a total of six languages better than her native English (Chamberlin, 1922). Her ability for languages and writing was deeply embedded in her genes; her

father Henry was fluent in three languages (Weir, 2001) and his mother and Elizabeth's namesake Elizabeth of York was a lyricist (Siemens, 2009a). Elizabeth's ability in language led her to become a great writer, orator, and poet (Birch & Hooper, 2012; Frye, 2006; Harrison, 1968), and would in turn make her a skilled lyricist.

### *Musical Talents*

Women in the late Tudor era were expected to play an instrument or sing (Butler, 2012; Mortimer, 2014), so Elizabeth received instruction in music from childhood (Chamberlin, 1922; Milsom, 2011; Weir, 1996). Music was Elizabeth's "greatest pleasure and passion" (Chamberlin, 1922; Milsom, 2011; Weir, 1996) and her contemporaries described her as a skilled musician (Chamberlin, 1922). She gained proficiency on lute and virginals from a young age (Doran, 2003; Weir, 2001) and continued to play the virginals throughout her life because she found the practice calming (Mortimer, 2014; Thurley, 2003; Whitelock, 2014). Her skill on the virginals was so legendary that historians once believed the instrument's name stemmed from Elizabeth's nickname "the Virgin Queen," but the instrument was known as such because it is commonly played by young women (Williams, 1968). The term "virginals" was commonly used many years prior to Elizabeth's birth in the fifteenth century (Kennedy, Kennedy, & Rutherford-Johnson, 2012b; Williams, 1968). Elizabeth's virginals were passed down from her mother Anne; the instrument is emblazoned with Boleyn crests and can be seen at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (Weir, 1998). Elizabeth is also documented as playing lyre and orpharion, a large instrument resembling the cittern (Johnson, 1974; Mortimer, 2014; Whitelock, 2014).

Singing and music-making were part of Elizabeth's morning routine, usually practiced between the Queen's breakfast and lunch (Weir, 1998). Even though noblewomen were generally expected to play privately or in intimate gatherings (Butler, 2012; Mortimer, 2014), Elizabeth treated Scottish envoy Sir James Melville and Lady Stafford to one of her many sessions on the virginals at Whitehall Palace (Whitelock, 2014; Williams, 1968). Thurley (2003) also recounts this event but says the location is Hampton Court Palace. Elizabeth's singing voice was

admired by leading Tudor composers Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, and she composed and performed her own music (Burton, 1958; Butler, 2012; Johnson, 1974; Williams, 1968; Weir, 1998).

Like her mother and father, Elizabeth was a skilled dancer (Burton, 1958; Whitelock, 2014; Williams, 1968; Weir, 1998). In her youth, she preferred routines with complicated maneuvers that would force unskilled dancers to vacate the dance floor (Weir, 1998). As part of her morning exercise Elizabeth would perform the galliard – a rigorous dance with several jumps (Whitelock, 2014.). Elizabeth would insert additional steps into social dances to make them even more difficult, and she created and performed ballets in her spare time (Burton, 1958; Johnson, 1974; Weir, 1998). Even in her old age, Elizabeth would occasionally dance a pavane in public or more complicated steps when secluded in her private apartments (Whitelock, 2014; Williams, 1968).

### *Music in Tudor Society*

The popularity of secular music rose exponentially in the sixteenth century. This era is considered the beginning of chamber music, and royals employed more musicians in their households than ever before (Milsom, 2011; Weir, 2001). Elizabeth upheld her father's tradition of a musical court and had more musicians in the royal employ at the time of her death than had been at court after the death of Queen Mary I (Johnson, 1974). Both Henry and Elizabeth employed over sixty musicians (Burton, 1958; Weir, 2001; Williams, 1968; Williams, 1971), and Elizabeth spent £1,574 or more per year on music for herself and her court (Williams, 1968). Under Elizabeth, "England was acknowledged as the most musical nation on earth" (Burton, 1958, p. 196).

The Tudor era brought about many changes in both secular music and musical performances. Polyphony was first used in secular music other than carols during the reign of Henry VIII, which served as the precursor to the madrigal (Hughes & Abraham, 1960; Stevens, 1979). The madrigal was introduced during Elizabeth's reign and was different from other forms of secular polyphony because phrases were often repeated and multiple melodic figures would overlap within the song (Burton, 1958; Stevens, 1979).

Performances by professional musicians were only accessible to the court and the wealthy during Henry VIII's reign, but Elizabeth created a free concert series for all citizens of London (Weir, 1998).

Printed music was still rare in England, with the collection *XX Songes* being the only book of polyphony printed before the Reformation (Hughes & Abraham, 1960; Milsom, 1997). Only the book containing the bass parts survives, so no complete printed collection of music from the first half of the sixteenth century is available. Because of the lack of printed music, handwritten loose pages and bound manuscripts were still commonly used (Milsom, 1997).

Changes in religion brought about changes in sacred music. Henry VIII grew up surrounded by polyphonic church music (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013), and early in his reign he would attend three to five masses per day (Hackett, 1945). Henry allowed composers for the newly formed Church of England to keep sacred music in the Latin polyphonic style preferred by Catholics, but his son Edward VI tried to change the style to an unadorned English form reminiscent of earlier plainchant (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013). The purpose of these songs was to allow the listener to clearly hear the words; religious reformers argued that polyphony's complexity obscured the words and therefore their meaning (Johnson, 1974; Starkey & Sweasey, 2013). If Elizabeth had not gained the throne, Protestant England may not have readopted sacred polyphony (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013). Elizabeth "saved English music... from Puritan destruction" (Johnson, 1974, p. 204) when she passed laws to protect church choirs and have the lyrics put into English so that churchgoers might understand them (Johnson, 1974).

## Methodology

The first stage of the research process involved finding history and library resources related to both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I to determine their surviving body of work. Several works identify Henry's contributions in the Henry VIII Manuscript, and many mention another extant sacred work entitled "Quam pulchra es." Documentation of Elizabeth's musical compositions is far more uncommon, and many scholars note her musical hobby but state that none

of her compositions survive. The researcher found Elizabeth's song by chance, then found confirmation that the page is her only surviving set of lyrics.

All of Henry VIII's extant musical works are housed in the British Library in two manuscripts commonly called the Baldwin Manuscript and the Henry VIII Manuscript. Elizabeth's sole surviving song is located in the Caird Library archives at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Both of these sites were visited to collect data on the pieces of music and their accommodations.

Research on the documents' creation, provenance, and content was conducted on location in their repositories, via the Internet, and in libraries located in the United Kingdom and United States. Articles and other nonfiction materials from a variety of disciplines were examined, covering history, English literature, religion, and music. Internet resources used include the repositories' web sites, YouTube for access to documentaries, and scholarly databases including EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale, and Web of Science. Additional research was conducted via libraries and the Internet to obtain information on the historical background of Tudor music, Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I. The results of the data collection and research are presented in the qualitative forms of description and content analysis.

## Results

*R1: What repositories in London contain musical compositions of Henry VIII?*

*British Library: Baldwin Manuscript*

Henry VIII's only surviving sacred musical work is "Quam pulchra es," (Kennedy, Kennedy, & Rutherford-Johnson, 2012a; Weir, 2001) a three-part motet (Weir, 2001) written for men's voices (Stevens, 1979.). Composed in 1530, this piece is still regularly performed in England (Siemens, 2009a; Williams, 1971). The song is one of 203 motets located in *The Baldwin Collection of Motets, etc.* (BL R.M. 24 d 2) at the British Library. Numerous artists composed the collection of music, but the scores were handwritten by notable sixteenth-century scribe John Baldwin of Windsor (Bray, 1974; British Library Baldwin Manuscript BL R.M.24.d.2). The layout of each score implies this collection of music was meant to be sung,

probably by Baldwin himself as he transposed the vocal range of all the compositions to include a voice in the tenor register (Bray, 1974).

The book measures roughly eleven by eight inches and was compiled in sections by John Baldwin. It appears the tome was bound with blank sheets, and Baldwin gradually filled the pages with music (Bray, 1974). Henry's motet is in a section compiled during 1586 to 1591, so the piece is by no means a contemporary copy. Some historians believe that "Quam pulchra es," along with the following fourteen songs, were copied by Baldwin to fill remaining book pages, as these pieces have no discernible theme like the other sections of the manuscript (Bray, 1974). The three pieces immediately following "Quam pulchra es" are part-songs, which were also popular during Henry VIII's reign (Bray, 1974).

The manuscript was given on loan in 1911 to the British Library (then a part of the British Museum) by King George IV as a part of what is known as the King's Library (British Library, *Royal Music Library Manuscripts*). The King's Library is housed in a glass structure rising through the center of the main room at the British Library and can only be accessed by library staff (Mehmet, 2014). The Royal Music Library Manuscripts include over 4500 pieces of music that have creation dates ranging from circa 1560 to 1927. Queen Elizabeth II permanently gave the collection to the British Museum on November 27, 1957 (British Library, *Royal Music Library Manuscripts*).

The manuscript is unavailable to the general public for viewing and must be requested by scholars who require the manuscript for research. There are no digitized pages on the British Library web site, so this resource is practically unavailable to the community. Facsimiles are available through the British Library.

#### *British Library: Henry VIII Manuscript*

The vast majority of Henry VIII's surviving musical compositions are housed in a manuscript at the British Library formally titled in their catalogue as *Songs, ballads, and instrumental pieces, composed early in the reign of Henry VIII., and many of them by the King himself*. This manuscript is commonly called the Henry VIII Manuscript or referred to by its shelf mark, BL Add. MS 31922. The collection holds over

thirty songs believed to have been composed by Henry yet not written in his own hand. The pages were written in the hands of five scribes (Siemens, 2009b), one of them most likely a gentleman of Henry's court (Weir, 2001). Each piece includes musical notations and the vocal pieces include the words to be sung. Some vocal pieces, like "Pastime with Good Company," have multiple verses written below the score, and some songs only have one line of text (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript*, c. 1550).

The manuscript measures 12 by 8.25 inches (Siemens, 2009b; Stevens, 1979) and was originally bound in leather and wood covers measuring 13 by 8.25 inches. The covers were once held together with clasps which are now lost (Siemens, 2009b). The music is printed on vellum (Siemens, 2009b; Stevens, 1979) and the collection has a modern leather binding using boards covered in dark red leather. The manuscript was acquired by the British Library (then the British Museum) with its original binding, but was rebound in its current housing about 1950 (Siemens, 2009b). The first letters in many of the songs or verses are decorated in colors of red, gold, or blue (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript*, c. 1550), mimicking the feel of an illuminated manuscript from earlier centuries.

The manuscript was created between 1522 and 1523 and was most likely intended for members of Henry's court (Helms, 2009). While Siemens claims Henry VIII probably never came into contact with the manuscript (Siemens, 1997), other scholars believe the collection may have been intended to educate royal children. The music may have been used as an introductory text on composition or as a pattern book for all forms of popular secular music (Helms, 2009).

The Henry VIII Manuscript is important to our understanding of early Tudor period music because it is one of the three remaining large songbooks from the era, the other two being the Fayrfax Manuscript and the Ritson Manuscript (Siemens, 1997; Siemens, 2009b; Stevens, 1979). In addition to the pieces by the king, seven composers' vocal works and instrumental songs are featured. Twenty-six of the instrumental pieces and twenty-two vocal scores

have unidentified composers (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript* BL MS 31922), making roughly one-third of the manuscript anonymous. The lyrics of the vocal pieces within the manuscript suggest that it was intended for a courtly audience (Siemens, 1997; Stevens, 1979; Wulstan, 1986), yet the bound volume's size would be inconveniently small for more than a few performers to use simultaneously (Stevens, 1979).

Siemens asserts Henry VIII was never in possession of the manuscript, nor was it commissioned by him (Siemens, 1997) while Helms (2009) believes that Henry possibly ordered the collection's creation so it could serve as an educational tool for the royal children. Scholars can agree that the Henry VIII Manuscript was in the possession of Sir Henry Guildford, the Comptroller of the Household during Henry's reign (Stevens, 1979; Weir, 2001). It is through Guildford that the manuscript was believed to have traveled to Benenden in Kent. Around 1770, the manuscript was in the possession of Stephen Fuller (Stevens, 1979) and Dr. Thomas Fuller (Bookplate, *Henry VIII Manuscript*). The manuscript passed to Archibald Montgomery, Earl of Eglinton in the eighteenth century (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript* BL MS 31922) and then to Eglinton's son-in-law Sir Charles Lamb of Essex (Siemens, 2009a; Stevens, 1979) in the nineteenth century.

Again, this manuscript is unavailable for viewing by members of the British Library without supporting information that the requestor is a scholar seeking the manuscript for research purposes. The vast majority of the manuscript is not digitized for viewing online, but a high-resolution image of "Pastime with Good Company" is available in black and white on the British Library web site (British Library, *Songs Written by Henry VIII*). A lower resolution full-color photo of the same piece is also available. Facsimiles of other pieces can be obtained through the British Library, and many articles or books about the manuscript also contain photos of selected songs.

*Henry's Compositions in the Henry VIII Manuscript*  
Henry VIII's contributions to the Henry VIII Manuscript were composed very early in his reign (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Stevens, 1979; Weir, 2001), around 1510 to 1515 (Stevens, 1979). The

time was a turbulent one for the young King Henry, whose greatest desire was to start a war with France in order to regain the lands and glory once held by his idol King Henry V. When the council refused to let Henry create a war, the king secluded himself from court as much as possible. He presumably wrote many of the songs contained in the Henry VIII Manuscript during his time in quiet solitude (Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Weir, 2001).

Henry VIII wrote thirty-four compositions contained in the manuscript, making him by far the most featured musician (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript* BL MS 31922; Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Stevens, 1979). Siemens (2009a) only attributes 33 of the pieces to Henry. Attributed to Henry are nineteen songs for three- or four-part voices (British Library, *Henry VIII Manuscript* BL MS 31922). Alison Weir attributes 20 vocal pieces to Henry VIII (Weir, 2001) but the British Library only counts 19, although only eighteen vocal compositions bear the king's name, and fifteen instrumental pieces (*Henry VIII Manuscript*). Weir (2001) only attributes 13 instrumental pieces to Henry, but 15 are inscribed with his name. Thirty-three songs are inscribed with "the kynge H. viij" (Helms, 2009, p. 122) centered on the first page, though one of the songs attributed to Henry does not have this inscription (*Henry VIII Manuscript*). Three of the nineteen vocal pieces ("Hey troly loly loly, my loue is lusty plesant and demure," "Who so that wyll all feattes optayne," and "Thow that men do call it dotage") are notated in the British Library catalogue as "[by the King?]" because their attribution to Henry is still unsure regardless of inscription.

Some scholars doubt that the pieces contained in the Henry VIII Manuscript were written by the king himself, especially because many of Henry's songs borrowed heavily from other composers (Stevens, 1979; Wulstan, 1986). Appropriating tunes from other composers was common practice during the period, and Henry frequently reused passages from existing songs (Stevens, 1979). The voice parts of the famous "Pastime with Good Company" are believed to be written by Henry because of minor errors in the part-writing that a professional musician of the time would not have made (Dr. David Skinner, in Starkey & Sweasey, 2013; Stevens, 1979). The melody of the

piece is taken from the French song “De mon triste et desplaisir” (Wulstan, 1986) and is very similar to another of Henry’s compositions in the manuscript called “Though sum saith that yough rulyth me” (Stevens, 1979). The song was vastly popular in the early sixteenth century and was first recorded in the Ritson Manuscript in 1510 (Siemens, 2009a; Weir, 2001). “Pastime with Good Company” was so fashionable in the early sixteenth century that the text was used as the basis of a sermon by John Longland, the Lord High Almoner (Weir, 2001).

### *Misattributed and Lost Works*

Contemporary sources record Henry VIII writing two masses in five parts but neither of these works survives (Weir, 2001; Williams, 1971). Henry has had several pieces attributed to him that were later believed to have been written by another composer. One such piece is the motet “O Lord the Maker of All Things” which is often credited to Henry (Siemens, 2009; Williams, 1971) but is also considered by some researchers to be the work of William Mundy (Kennedy, Kennedy, & Rutherford-Johnson, 2012a; Weir, 2001). *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* definitively states this piece is by Mundy, while Weir attributes the motet to either Mundy or John Shepherd. The English folk song “Greensleeves” is also commonly attributed to Henry; it is usually posited that he wrote the song for his second wife Anne Boleyn (Weir, 2001). The song is written in an Italian style called *passamezzo antico* that would not have reached England during Henry’s lifetime. The piece is believed to have been composed during the reign of Elizabeth I, long after Henry’s death (Barlow, 2001a; Barlow, 2001b; Weir, 2001).

### *R2: What repositories in London contain musical compositions of Elizabeth I?*

*National Maritime Museum: Queen Elizabeth’s Song*  
 Queen Elizabeth I has many surviving verses or poems, but only one that can be described as a song. The one-page document has no musical notations whatsoever so the tune is lost to history (Figure 3). Elizabeth’s sole extant song can only be considered music because of an inscribed heading on the manuscript that reads “A song made by her majesty and sung before her at her coming from Whitehall to Paul’s through Fleet Street in Anno Domini 1588.

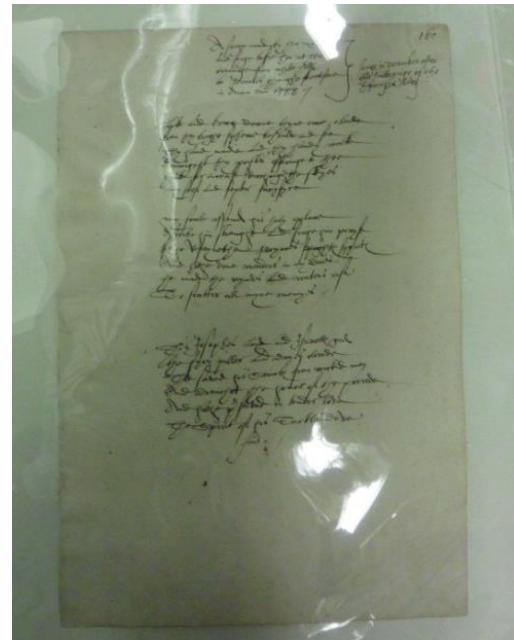


Figure 3. “Queen Elizabeth’s Song” National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (photo by Courtney Clark, 2014)

Sung in December after the scattering of the Spanish navy” (Marcus, Mueller, & Rose, 2000, p. 410). A “tremendous act of national thanksgiving” (Jenkins, 1958, p. 287) large enough to rival the queen’s coronation some thirty years prior (Ackroyd, 2012) takes place on 24 November 1588 (Jenkins, 1958; Johnson, 1974) to commemorate the Armada’s defeat. This event is also mentioned in Ackroyd (2012) as happening on 26 November.

Elizabeth also traveled to St. Paul’s Cathedral via Fleet Street (Jenkins, 1958) on this procession but her original location was Somerset House (Jenkins, 1958; Johnson, 1974), about a mile further up the Thames. These events are all likely the same celebration. Other sources cite the song as a psalm that was performed before the queen as a speech instead of music (Frye, 2006). The delay between the overthrow of the Armada and the song’s creation and performance could stem from Elizabeth’s seclusion and period of mourning for her lifelong friend and rumored lover Robert Dudley, who died weeks after news of the navy’s defeat spread across England (Whitelock, 2014).

*Elizabeth’s song opens with thanks to the Lord:*  
*Look and bow down Thine ear, O Lord.*  
*From Thy bright sphere behold and see*

*Thy handmaid and Thy handiwork,  
Amongst Thy priests, offering to Thee  
Zeal for incense, reaching the skies;  
Myself and scepter, sacrifice.*  
(Marcus, Mueller, & Rose, 2000)

The text of the song is filled with Biblical references, and Elizabeth gives credit for the Armada's defeat to God. The opening line closely resembles the opening line of Psalm 86, which reads "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy" (*Holy Bible*, Psalms 86:1) In the final stanzas, she likens the defeat of the Armada to the events in Exodus where God delivered the Israelites from the Pharaoh and into the Promised Land (Marcus, Mueller, & Rose, 2000). The final couplet "And hath preserved in tender love / The spirit of his turtle dove" (Marcus, Mueller, & Rose, 2000) alludes to a Bible verse in the Song of Solomon about a beloved person – "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land" (*Holy Bible*, Song of Solomon 2:12). These lines show Elizabeth's knowledge of theology, her deeply religious nature, and her vanity for thinking she is God's instrument.

An exact date for the creation of the page is unknown, but the National Maritime Museum asserts the document was generated around the time of the Armada's defeat in 1588 (Royal Museums Greenwich, 2008). In the seventeenth century, Elizabeth's song was bound with other papers in a tome belonging to antiques collector Sir Henry Spelman. The pages in the book were numbered, and the song still bears the number 160 in its upper right corner from its time in Spelman's book. The book was taken apart and sold at auction by Sotheby's in March 1936. Prior to the sale the volume was in the possession of Major Q. E. Gurney of Norfolk (Marcus, Mueller, & Rose, 2000). The single page was then acquired by the National Maritime Museum (National Maritime Museum's Archive, "Queen Elizabeth's Song" SNG/4), located in the London district of Greenwich. The piece is the oldest document in their music collection (Royal Museums Greenwich, 2008).

"Queen Elizabeth's Song" is currently housed in what the National Maritime Museum terms a story box – a collection of items related to a specific subject assembled for use during events or group visits to the facility. Both the song page and a typewritten transcription are located in the box for the Spanish Armada. Although it is also related to the Armada, a letter dated 11 October 1588 regarding an expedition to Spain is housed in the adjacent "Pirates" story box. The letter is signed by Elizabeth's spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham and her primary councilor William Cecil, Baron Burghley. Elizabeth's song is also available online via the Royal Museums Greenwich archive catalogue. A high-resolution digital image is available for the user to examine, with a zoom feature to hone in on areas of interest within the document (National Maritime Museum's Archive, "Queen Elizabeth's Song" SNG/4). The transcription is not available online through the catalogue and must be viewed in person at the National Maritime Museum.

#### *Lost Compositions*

In 1578, Elizabeth reportedly published "two little anthems or things in metre of Her Majesty."<sup>1</sup> Neither of these compositions has been found. Some Tudor-era music has been discovered as repurposed material used for the lining of boxes or book bindings,<sup>2</sup> so there is a small chance these pieces may be accidentally recovered in the future.

#### **Conclusion**

As one of the three surviving major songbooks from the Tudor period, the Henry VIII Manuscript is of vital importance to early music history. The Baldwin Manuscript grants access to a work written by a famous sixteenth-century scribe and to music by several popular composers of the Tudor era. These manuscripts should be digitized in their entirety by the British Library to give greater access to scholars and other researchers. Undergraduates or students in secondary school would not be able to access either manuscript at the British Library because of the restrictions in place upon viewing the items. Facsimiles are available for some items, but to provide open access to all of the scores inside would be ideal.

<sup>1</sup> Williams, 1968, p. 246

<sup>2</sup> Milsom, 1997, p. 238

There is always the possibility – albeit a small one – that some of Henry VIII’s or Elizabeth I’s lost musical compositions will be recovered. In the event of such a discovery, the pieces would need to be authenticated and then examined by musicologists for similar compositional styles. Because Elizabeth’s song has no score, comparisons for musical authentication would not be possible.

Once many popular songs from the Tudor era have been digitized, music theorists should analyze Henry’s compositions for similarities among other composers’ works. Discovering how much of his material is borrowed will give a more accurate picture of the king as a composer. These data may also help definitively prove if Henry wrote all of the items attributed to him in the Henry VIII Manuscript as well as settle the debate about contested pieces like “O Lord the Maker of All Things.” Quantitative analysis of the chords in Henry’s compositions may shed more light upon his abilities as a composer.

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