

8 THIS SWEET AND MERRY MONTH

WILLIAM BYRD

This sweet and merry month of May,
 While nature wantons in her prime,
 And birds do sing, and beasts do play
 For pleasure of the joyful time,
 I choose the first for holiday
 And greet Eliza with a rhyme:
 O beauteous Queen of second Troy,
 Take well in worth a simple toy.

Italian Madrigals Englished (1590), viii
Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets (1611), ix

This poem has been attributed to Thomas Watson, compiler of the *Italian Madrigals Englished*, whose two purely native products were Byrd's settings for four and six voices of this obviously occasional piece. The four-part setting was later reprinted in Byrd's 1611 collection. It has been suggested that one or the other version was sung at Elvetham in 1591, when Lord Hertford entertained Queen Elizabeth, but the date of first publication suggests an earlier occasion for the actual première. Byrd demonstrates with masterly ease his complete understanding of the Italian vein, and care should be exercised to bring out the apt contrasts of mood and measure that place this musical gem so firmly in the memory. For reasons of range, alto and tenor voices have been exchanged between bars 68 and 73, so that some adjustments in timbre and weight of tone may prove necessary.

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics for the first system are: S: "This sweet and"; A: "This sweet and mer - ry, mer - ry month, and"; T: (rest); B: (rest). The second system includes four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics for the second system are: S: "mer - ry, mer - ry month of May,"; A: "mer - ry, mer - ry month of May,"; T: "And mer - ry, mer - ry,"; B: "And mer - ry, mer - ry,". The score uses a common time signature (C) and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and slurs.

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this sweet and
 and mer - ry, mer - ry month of
 mer - ry month of May,
 month of May, this

mer - ry, mer - ry month of May, of
 May, and
 this sweet and
 sweet and mer - ry, mer - ry month of

10

May, While na - -
 mer - ry, mer - ry month of May, While na - -
 mer - ry, mer - ry month of May, While na - -
 May, While

- ture wan - - tons, wan - - tons, wan - -
 - ture wan - - tons, wan - - tons, wan - - tons in
 - ture wan - - tons, wan - - tons in her
 na - - ture wan - - tons, wan - - tons,

wan - tons in her prime, her prime, And birds do sing, And birds do sing, And

And birds do sing, and birds do sing, do sing, do and birds do birds do sing, and birds do sing,

and birds do sing, and beasts do sing, do sing, and beasts do play, and beasts do play, play, and

play, play, and beasts do play, and beasts do play, do play, do play, do play, do

25

play, do play, and beasts do play, do play,
do play, and beasts do play, do play,
and beasts do play, do play, and
play, do play, and beasts do play, do

do play, do play For plea - sure,
do play, do play For plea - sure,
beasts do play For plea - sure,
play, do play For plea - sure,

30

for plea - sure of the joy - ful time, the joy - ful
for plea - sure of the joy - ful time, the joy - ful
for plea - sure of the joy - ful time, the joy - ful
for plea - sure of the joy - ful time, the joy - ful

35

time, the joy - ful time, I choose the first,
time, the joy - ful time, I
time, the joy - ful time, I choose the first, I
time, the joy - ful time, I

I choose the first for hol - i - day, for
 choose the first for hol - i - day, hol - i - day,
 choose the first, the first for hol - i - day, for hol -
 choose the first for hol - i - day, for

40

hol - - - i - day, And greet E - li -
 for hol - - - i - day, for hol - i - day,
 - i - day, for hol - i - day, And greet
 hol - i - day, for hol - i - day,

- za with a rhyme, and
 And greet E - li - za with a rhyme,
 E - li - za, E - li - za with a
 And greet E - li - za,

45

greet, and greet E - li - za, E -
 and greet, and greet E - li - za, E -
 rhyme, and greet E - li - za, E - li -
 and greet, and greet E - li - za, E -

50

- li - - - za with a rhyme, with a rhyme,
 - li - za with a rhyme,
 - - za with a rhyme, with a rhyme,
 - li - za with a rhyme,

$d = d$

with a rhyme, a rhyme: O, O
 with a rhyme, a rhyme: O, O
 with a rhyme: O, O
 with a rhyme: O, O

55 $d = d$

beau - te - ous Queen, O
 beau - te - ous Queen, O
 beau - te - ous Queen, O beau -
 beau - te - ous Queen, O beau - te - ous

60

beau - te - ous Queen of
 beau - te - ous Queen of se -
 - te - ous Queen of se - cond
 Queen of se - cond Troy,

se - cond Troy, Take well in worth,
 - cond Troy, of se - cond Troy, Take
 Troy, of se - cond Troy, Take
 of se - cond Troy, Take

take well in worth a sim - ple toy,
 well in worth, take
 well in worth, take well in worth a sim - ple toy,
 well in worth, take well in worth a

take well in worth a sim - ple toy, a
 well in worth a sim - ple toy,
 a sim - ple toy, take well in worth a
 sim - ple toy, take well in worth a sim - ple

sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy, a sim - ple
 a sim - ple
 sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy, a sim - ple
 toy, a sim - ple toy,

toy, a sim - ple toy, a sim - -
 toy, a sim - ple toy, take
 toy, take well in worth
 take well in worth a sim - ple toy, a

80

- ple a sim - ple, a sim - ple, a
 well in worth a sim - ple, a sim - ple,
 a sim - ple toy, take
 sim - ple toy, a sim - ple, a sim - ple,

sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy,
 sim - ple toy, take well in worth a
 well in worth a sim - ple toy, take well in
 a sim - ple toy, take well in worth

85

a sim - - - - ple toy. toy.
 sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy. toy.
 worth a sim - ple toy, a sim - ple toy. toy.
 a sim - ple toy, a sim - - - - ple toy. toy.