

Webbe Pages

by Samuel Webbe (1740-1816)

from *A Third Book of Catches Canons and Glee's* (c. 1775)

Selected, edited and arranged by Bruce Trinkley

1. Bacchus, Jove's delightful Boy
2. Belinda's sparkling Wit
3. To the festive Board
4. My Fair is Beautiful
5. The Spring
6. Surly Giles's old Cat

EDITOR'S NOTE

Webbe Pages is drawn from *A Third Collection of Canons, Catches and Glee's* by Samuel Webbe and *A Collection of Catches, Canons and Glee's*.

Samuel Webbe, the best known of the London glee composers, and author of the ever-popular "Glorious Apollo," produced nine collections of catches, canons and glee's. *A Third Collection* was published in London in 1775.

"Bacchus, Jove's delightful Boy," another fine example of a drinking song, opens with a salutation to Jove and concludes with a highly ornamented melismatic evocation of the dance.

"Belinda's sparkling Wit" is a paean to love, with Cupid depicted as a scoundrel ("blackguard") who flashes his torch ("Link") in our face. The closing section demonstrates Webbe's exceptional contrapuntal skill.

"To the festive Board" is a fine example of the multi-sectional glee. The classical allusion to Venus is typical of glee texts. The first section is a call to the banquet and the bar ("bumpers" refers to a cup or mug filled to the brim, generally with beer) and the second is a restatement of the *carpe diem* ideology so prevalent in the songs sung in the 18th Century Georgian men's clubs.

"My Fair is Beautiful" is yet another love song praising the charms of the beloved, including Prudence, Wisdom, and Music.

"The Spring" urges Aurelia to join the singer and leave the town for the joys of spring.

"Surly Giles's old Cat" is a round from Volume 31 of *A Collection of Catches, Canons and Glee's*. Commonly known as *The Warren Collection*, this was an annual publication of the best new songs written for the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club of London and was issued from 1762 until 1793. Webbe supplied his own lyrics for many of his works, this one featuring the outrageous pun on "mew-sick".

In this edition, works have been transposed into lower keys to eliminate the need for male altos in the upper voices. All original tempo and dynamic markings have been retained.

These glee's should be performed with lyrical elegance, rhythmic vitality and the joy of singing and companionship. Let them speak vibrantly from the century of George III to our own.

1. Bacchus, Jove's delightful Boy

Bacchus, Jove's delightful Boy,
Gen'rous God of Wine and Joy
Still exhilarates my Soul
With the raptures of the Bowl.

Then with feather'd feet I bound
Dancing in a festive round.
Then I feel the sparkling Wine
Transports delicate divine,

Then the sprightly Music warms,
Song delights and Beauty charms,
Debonaire and light and gay,
Thus I dance the hours away.

2. Belinda's sparkling Wit

Belinda's sparkling Wit and Eyes
united cast so fierce a light
as quickly flashes quickly dies
wounds not the heart but burns the sight.

Love is all gentleness, Love is all joy,
sweet are his looks, and soft his pace.
Her Cupid is a blackguard Boy
that runs his Link full in your Face.

3. To the festive Board

To the festive Board let's hie,
briskly there the Bumpers fly,
there the jolly Souls resort,
without control we'll sport.
A truce to care, let others grieve,
while thus we spend this cheerful eve,
with singing, dancing merry, merry Boys
and close our Feast with Venus' Joys.

4. My Fair is Beautiful

My Fair is beautiful as Love,
yet void of Pride,
gentle as is the Turtle Dove
and constant as the Tide.

Prudence in all her ways we find;
the graces round her throng.
Wisdom itself has form'd her Mind
and Music's on her Tongue.

5. The Spring

The Spring, the pleasant Spring is blown,
let us leave the smoky Town
and from the Mall and from the Ring
ev'ry one has taken wing.

Chloe, Strephon, Corydon, all are fled
and all are gone.
What is left you worth your stay?
Come Aurelia, come away!

Come Aurelia, come and see
what a Seat I have for thee,
but the feat you cannot see
tis so hid with Jessamy
so that I think you'd pause
an hour whether 'twere an House or Bow'r.

Let us there be blith and gay,
come Aurelia come away.
Come with all thy sweetest wiles
with thy graces with thy smiles
come and we will merry merry be
who shall be so blest as we!

We will frolick all the day
harming no one in our play;
no matter what the people say,
come, Aurelia, come, come away.

6. Surly Giles's old Cat

Surly Giles's old Cat was shut out of the house;
how she plagued him all night without catching
a Mouse

with her Mew-sick, sick to death surly Giles
rose in haste
and he vowed that no longer his moments he'd
waste.

So he took up a stick as he jumped out of Bed,
and he swore he would knock the old Cat in the
head.