

Henry Lawes



Artwork by William Faithorne

Lawes was a well-known composer, singer, and teacher in seventeenth-century England and has long been acknowledged as the leading English songwriter of the period of Charles I.

It is believed * that Henry Lawes was born 5th December, 1595 in Dinton, Wiltshire and baptised 5th January, 1596. Henry was the oldest of five children (William born 1602- to become a well known composer), Elizabeth, Thomas Jnr and John) born to Thomas Lawes & Lucris Lawes nee Shepherd).

Henry Lawes was a child chorister of Salisbury Cathedral. His father was lay vicar of the cathedral. He was possibly a pupil of John Cooper (Giovanni Coperario) & entered the household of Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. His teaching career began with his appointment as music tutor to the daughters of the Earl of Bridgewater. Later he was a voice teacher to professional singers.

In 1625/1626 he obtained a position at the Chapel Royal under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke and became a member of the "King's Musick" in 1631 and held the position until the Commonwealth put a stop to church music. Henry Lawes' first work of psalm settings was published in 1638. Even during that period without music, Lawes continued his work as a composer, and the famous collection of his vocal pieces, *Ayres and Dialogues for One, Two and Three Voyces*, was published in 1653 and followed by two other books under the same title in 1655 and 1658 respectively.

Following the execution of the King in 1649, Lawes played an important part in establishing concerts in London during the 1650s, and was one of the composers of the first English opera, Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656).

On the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Lawes returned to the royal chapel, and composed an anthem for the coronation of King Charles II - [*Zadok the Priest*](#).

