CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL PROGRAM OF THE MADRIGALS, GLEES, AND SONGS GIVEN AT THE SECOND ANNUAL MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649271597

Critical and Historical Program of the Madrigals, Glees, and Songs given at the second annual musical entertainment by Various

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

VARIOUS

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL PROGRAM OF THE MADRIGALS, GLEES, AND SONGS GIVEN AT THE SECOND ANNUAL MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

Trieste

NEW SHAKSPERE SOCIETY.

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL PROGRAM

OF THE

Madrigals, Glees, and Songs

GIVEN AT

The Second Annual Musical Entertainment

AT

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON,

ON

FRIDAY, 9TH MAY, 1884, AT 8 P.M.

REVISED EDITION.

PUBLISHT FOR

The New Shakspere Society

BY N. TRÜBNER & CO., 57, 59, LUDGATE HILL,
LONDON, 1884.

CONTENTS.

FIRST PERIOD. EARLY CONTRAPUNTAL.

TO MIDDLE OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

THE vocal pieces which are included in this program are arranged not in strict chronological order, but so as to illustrate, to some extent, the artistic development of the different schools of music. As illustrations, however, they cannot all be considered typical and complete. Shakspere music forms but a small part of music in general, the great composers having usually been satisfied with texts of inferior literary value. English musicians, indeed, have not neglected the capabilities of our best poetry; but then English music is not a very important element in European art. Our composers have seldom exercised much influence abroad; while they, on the other hand, have often been indebted to continental masters. It is true that in the Tudor times England produced a native and original school of music, but this school does not present many peculiarly English features. Distinctions of national style could not become marked until a more advanced period in the history of composition had been reached.

At the Renascence almost every species of art had already acquired elaborate technical resources, and was capable of expressing the energetic thought and vivid feeling of that creative time. Music alone was in a backward state. It did not possess the material means of raising itself to the level of other arts. The form of the scale was still unsettled; few appropriate and connected successions of chords had been discovered; key-relationship and modulation were only half understood; and instrumental accompaniment was in its infancy. In part-music the treatment of the voices was

contrapuntal: *i. e.* each part was of equal importance in producing the general effect, but was not always of a melodious character if taken separately. The absence of marked accent and definite phrase often causes the rhythm of the old contrapuntists to appear vague to modern ears. *Imitation* was the chief structural principle, and was worked out in many species of fugue and canon, the different voices taking up the same theme one after the other, in different parts of the scale, so that the latter portion of the theme often formed a harmony to the beginning. The forms of composition were comparatively few and rudimentary, Church music being usually founded on the pattern of the motet, poetic on that of the madrigal. Extended pieces, whether solo or concerted, vocal or instrumental, were as yet unthought of.

The graphic means then at the musician's disposal were very defective. Till the middle of the seventeenth century, barring was not usual in English music, and the text often did not show even where accidental flats, naturals, and sharps were to be used. All these the singer had to supply mentally according to traditional rules. Indications of speed, loudness, phrasing, style, and expression, were likewise absent.

These difficulties have not prevented modern musicians from appreciating the esthetic value of the early school, its sustained style of grandeur and pathos, its liturgical solemnity. Sacred themes engrossed the best talents of a large number of English composers; and as the Church was then the only school of technical music, its style pervaded other branches of the art, where subjects of purely poetic interest were dealt with. Many of the cathedral services and anthems of Tallis, Farrant, Byrd, Bull, and Orlando Gibbons are still kept alive by their merits; while only a few of the songs and madrigals of Ward, Wilbye, and Weelkes are now sung, except for their historical value.

But while the learned musicians had been laboring at heavy counterpoint, the natural, untrained genius of the people gave rise to an endless number of gay dance-tunes and expressive songs. Something of this gift of melodious invention appears in the works of Dowland, Ford, and Morley. But the union between

the popular and the technical elements was hardly accomplished till the eighteenth century, when every available form of dance tune was eagerly caught up by composers, and worked into the Suite, from which sprang the great designs of later instrumental music.

1. MADRIGAL. In blacke mourne I. *Passionate Pilgrim*, xvi. b. By THOMAS WEELKES.

The date of this composer's birth and that of his death are unknown. In 1600 he was organist of Winchester College, and in 1608 organist of Chichester Cathedral. In 1597 he published three sets of madrigals, of which the second begins our program. The words are taken from the *Passionate Pilgrim*, a collection of poems published by one Iaggard, with Shakspere's name as author; though most of them, including nos. 1, 17, and 18 in the present program, were by other writers.

Weelkes composed two more sets of madrigals between 1597 and 1608.

This madrigal is a good example of the style, being full of ingenious contrapuntal imitation. The omission of the Third in several chords, and the use of the triad of E♭ in the key of F, are noteworthy.

The derivation of the word *madrigal* has been much disputed. Passing by the conjectures of unscientific writers, it will be enough to quote the opinion of Diez (diits). He gives an earlier form of the word as *mandriale*, and considers that it is 'not improbably' descended from Latin *mandra*, a flock, or a shepherd's song.

2. SONG. It was a lover and his lasse. *As You Like It*, V. iii. By THOMAS MORLEY; born about 1550, died 1604.

In 1591 he was organist of S. Paul's Cathedral, and in 1592 Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. His compositions were more melodious than those of most of his predecessors, and many of his madrigals and 'ballets' have obtained lasting popularity. This song, no. 2, was printed in 'The first book of ayres or little songs to play on the lute,' 1600. A copy in MS. of at least as early a date is preserved in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh.

3. HARMONIZED AYRE. **Full fadom five.** *Tempest*, I. ii.
By ROBERT JOHNSON.
Arranged for three voices by Dr. John Wilson.

Robert Johnson, in 1573-4, was a retainer in the household of Sir Thomas Kytson of Hengrave Hall, Suffolk. He afterwards moved to London, and became a composer for the theatres. In 1611 he was in the service of Prince Henry, eldest son of James I., at an annual salary of £40. In 1612 he composed music for *The Tempest*, from which we take 'Full fathom five,' afterwards arranged for three voices by Dr. John Wilson (born 1597, died 1673).

A special interest attaches to the first three pieces in our program, as they were all composed in Shakspere's life-time. Dr. Burney, indeed, does not attribute the melody of 'Full fathom five' to Robert Johnson, but considers the whole to be the composition of Dr. Wilson. But in Wilson's work, 'Cheerful Ayres or Ballads, first composed for single voice, and since set for three voices,' it is printed under Johnson's name. Wilson's statement that 'some few of these ayres were originally composed by those whose names are affixed to them, but are here placed as being new set by the author of this work,' appears to mean that he did not invent the melody, but only harmonized one already existing. The use of the word *set* in this sense is peculiar, and may easily have misled Burney. See Roffe's 'Handbook of Shakspere Music.'

SECOND PERIOD. LATE CONTRAPUNTAL.

FROM MIDDLE OF SEVENTEENTH TO MIDDLE OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE influence of the Puritans, though unfavorable, was not fatal to English music. The quires were dispersed, the training of singers and players interrupted, cathedral scores lost, and organs destroyed; yet private cultivation did not cease, and there was no break in the history of composition. Many who had been brought up in the traditions of the early school, were able to resume the

exercise of their art on the fall of the Commonwealth. Among these were Henry Lawes, Christopher Gibbons, William Child, John Jenkins, and Benjamin Rogers, whose lives extended through the greater part of the seventeenth century. But with Charles II a new taste came in, which transformed first the style of performance and then that of composition. Evelyn thus describes the service at the Chapel Royal on Dec. 21, 1663:—

'One of his Majesty's Chaplains preached; after which, instead of the ancient, grave, and solemn wind-music accompanying the organ, was introduced a concert of twenty-four violins between every pause, after the French fantastical, light way, better suiting a tavern or play house than a church. This was the *first* time of change, and now we no more heard the cornet which gave life to the organ; that instrument quite left off in which the English were so skilful!'

Of the older composers Henry Lawes was the most successful in adopting the new style. But he, like the rest, had soon to give place to the rising talent of Pelham Humfrey, Michael Wise, and John Blow, choristers in the Chapel Royal. Humfrey was sent by the King to study in Italy and France. On his return he brought an important element into English music, viz. declamatory power. The forcible expression of the words, the careful observance of quantity and stress, and the discovery of dramatic effects in progressions and modulations, fascinated and absorbed this fresh and vigorous school. Their productive time was destined soon to end, for Humfrey died in 1674, and Purcell, who imitated and excelled him, died in 1695. Each showed, even in a short career, remarkable creative powers, attended of course with some defects as regards continuity and design, since these qualities are usually absent at the beginning of a new aera in music, and only reappear when the style arrives at maturity. This stage the English school did not reach in the later contrapuntal period. Purcell left no equal, and the prospects of native music were not improved by the introduction of Italian opera, and the advent of Hændel. This composer almost fills up the musical history of England till the middle of the eighteenth century. In his oratorios the contrapuntal style received its highest development, the most artificial devices of imitation being used with admirable effect in many styles, epic, lyric, and