Leading Notes

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NATIONAL EARLY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

A PROFILE OF HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

The conductor of The Sixteen talks to Poppy Holden

We met by the flower-seller outside the church of St Mary-le-Bow on Cheapside. He is early, and is standing amongst the buckets of chrysanthemums. I had suggested he might sit on a nearby bench if he caught an early train, as his bad back has kept us from meeting till now. He must be anxious not to be missed. He is dressed casually and unassumingly, with a beige leather jacket processed to look beat-up.

Our conversations on the phone have been friendly, and he has expertly established who I am, and whom I know of his acquaintance (though he was sure I'd sung with him, which I never have). I try to send out friendly vibes as we go to eat. The setting-up of my tape recorder, which can sometimes cause panic in an interviewee, goes calmly enough. Unfortunately most of the tape is useless, as the restaurant is in a noisy cellar and a wild, thunderous roaring is all that can be heard.

The main impression I get of Harry Christophers is that he cares. I ask him how he copes with jet lag as he travels to Japan and Australia, and naturally I expect him to tell me his personal patent remedy. Instead of talking about himself, though, he outlines the needs of his ensemble and how he encourages them to rest, sensibly giving them a day off when they arrive in a distant land, and rehearsing very little for the first concert, as a full rehearsal would make them too tired.

If they're sluggish, he finds some feeling within himself to galvanize the performance. He finds one hazard of these emotional injections is that if singers are inspired with too much fervour, they tend to go sharp, and if carried away with the sadness of a phrase ('si est dolor'), the pitch can become woefully flat. He offers no remedy for this. He finds repeating pieces they often perform (for example, the works of Sheppard) is difficult, because the music goes stale, and he strives to find a way of making them different every time.

Being a singer himself must help him to understand the needs of his singers, and he knows how to get the best from them. When we talk of his Eton Choirbook recordings, for which he has won a *Gramophone* award, he says that, although he envies Peter Phillips and his Tallis Scholars for the wonderful acoustic they have found in Salle, he is happy to have found a similar place, a safe home for the Sixteen, in Orford on the Suffolk coast. There they can work in peace. It is still an unspoilt fishing village, and the natives are friendly. The acoustic of the church is quite good enough for their needs, and the singers can relax and take their ease, which produces excellent results (my word, not his – he's far too modest to talk of his own success).

Chistophers draws from the same pool of singers as Peter Phillips. I've been listening to Phillips' and Christophers' recordings of 'Spem in Alium', since I sang at that time with the Tallis Scholars and am keen to know how another group sings the work. The performances have fourteen singers in common, including the founder members and resident musicologists of both groups, Sally Dunkley and Francis Steele. Also shared are Tessa Bonner, Caroline Trevor and Nicolas Robertson. Each of these singers imparts a distinctive sound to any group they sing with.

In spite of this, both the 'Spem' and 'Gaude Gloriosa' are very different in style: for all the awkwardness of the piece (forty different parts, with the top trebles sitting high all the time, so they can soon become tired by repetition), the Christophers 'Spem' swings easily to its climaxes, each of which is thrilling and joyous.

Performed by the Tallis Scholars, the work sounds much more difficult – the girls on top are barely hanging on to their high B-flats, voices sounding dried-out with effort; the inception of the 'præter in te' section is surprisingly violent although it only means 'save in thou': the Lord's anger does not appear in the text for several bars. The easy rhythm of the Sixteen is here replaced by something more agitated. And yet, and yet...there is a sense of direct contact with the spirit of Tallis – whatever that is, to quote Prince Charles; or maybe with God, which, for all the comfortably rhythmic swing of the Sixteen, or maybe because of it, I don't hear in the other performance. And this is odd, because Phillips' conducting style is very reticent – he doesn't tell the singers what he wants, or even give them a hint, but just lets them go to it.

Again, differences can be found between the two groups' performances of the Tallis 'Gaude Gloriosa': Peter Phillips' version is bright, reedy, tight: plain and scary on the high notes of 'cui angelicae'. Christophers' is mellow, spacious, tender, committed. His 'cui angelicae' sounds easier, more laid-back. The performance is exciting and accessible.

Yet somehow, for me, I feel the Tallis Scholars' performance is truer to the music, for all that there seems to be no attempt at characterization or any charge of emotion in the modern sense. Maybe Peter Phillips'

approach is a sort of Japanese Zen approach: get the best, most intelligent and well-educated singers available, with the cleanest vocal style, tell them nothing about how you want the performance to go, start them off and lo! the composer speaks through their innocent mouths.

Interestingly, Christophers says the modern Japanese are particularly susceptible to the emotive performances he engenders – they aren't usually provided with programme notes, or translations, so if a piece can't communicate emotionally they are not likely to enjoy it.

In Germany, though, the Germans can understand precisely what the music is all about, since Christophers uses a language coach, Nicole Kidman, to tutor the singers, and he has been congratulated by German audiences on the wonderful clarity of the Sixteen's German diction.

Whether you think Christophers' interpretation is the best in the field or not (I still can't decide), English church music is only a part of his repertoire; as a singer he grew up with huge success within the English choral tradition – he was head chorister at Canterbury Cathedral, a music scholar at King's School, Canterbury, and an Academical Clerk (reading classics and music) at Magdalen, Oxford. He sang until 1986 in the choir at Westminster Abbey, when he gave up singing altogether in favour of his conducting career.

He expanded his horizons by singing for Kent Opera, Glyndebourne, and English Music Theatre, his repertoire ranging from Purcell to Britten and Minoru Miki. (Not knowing this composer, I looked him up in Grove – he's a Japanese, born in 1930, and has written many works for his own delightfully named 'Ensemble Nipponia', which uses Japanese instruments, though he has also written pieces in the European style. 'An Actor's Revenge', in which Christophers performed, is no doubt one of these.)

Christophers formed the Sixteen from Oxford and Cambridge choral scholars in 1977, and has won prizes for his performances of English church music (the discography lists fourteen or so recordings of this repertoire), but his musical interests and abilities don't stop at that. He's recorded with the Sixteen works by Poulenc, Barber, Del Tredici, Maxwell Davies, Purcell and Bach. Of Handel, they have done all the Chandos anthems, plus 'Messiah', 'Dixit Dominus' and 'Alexander's Feast'. His 'Messiah' won a Grand Prix du Disque, and Alexander's Feast received the Deutsches Schauplatten. He takes the choir regularly to Aix-en-Provence, where they sing Mozart and Strauss. They appeared as a chorus of monks in Harrison Birtwistle's opera 'Gawain' at the Royal Opera House last May, and won the Evening Standard Opera award in 1991 for outstanding operatic achievement.

When there is musicological work to be done, Christophers farms it out to experts, collaborating regularly with his singers Francis Steele and Sally Dunkley. He is also working with John Milsom on the four-disc Eton Choirbook project, and Ivan Moody on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brazilian music, which the choir and orchestra performed on tour in Brazil last June.

He frequently works apart from the Sixteen, as an orchestral conductor, touring Finland and Ireland, and conducting the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. His ability to get musicians to do things his way by the use of kindly intelligence appears in a story he tells of two very old viola players in the RTE orchestra who couldn't let go of their anciently ingrained habits: a lovely phrase was habitually wrecked by their pasting a meaningless vibrato on to it. He encouraged and coaxed them to think through the phrase, as a result of which the vibrato just disappeared. So much more effective than telling them to stop doing it!

He used this method, also to good effect, with the BBC Singers – with whom he used to sing. The chorus-master offered him the chance to conduct a concert of Schütz and Schein. The well-known bass, David Thomas (also a King's School man), rang Christophers the following day to express his astonishment – he had been enjoying listening to the performance on his radio, and could not believe it when the announcer gave the name of the choir. 'You can't tell that kind of singer to stop wobbling – I just showed them the structure of the piece, and the line was revealed.'

Christophers is full of bright marketing ideas – one possibility is to add value to his future recordings of liturgical music by including in the CD booklet a scented strip like the ones you find promoting aftershave in magazines, to put the listener in the mood with a sniff of incense (it's been done – remember ENO's 'Love of Three Oranges'?); or to provide a suitable pack of joss-sticks with each purchase.

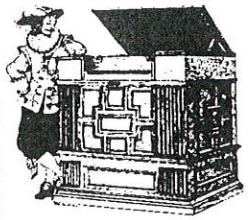
His latest project, the one he told me about first as it was obviously uppermost in his mind, is a production of Purcell's 'The Fairy Queen' to be given first in Glasgow's Tramway Theatre and then in the Teatro Monumental in Madrid, where the Sixteen Choir and Orchestra gave Haydn's 'The Creation' for the first time last March.

This performance should be well worth going to see – the renowned Alison Chitty is the designer, and Di Trevis of the National Theatre is directing. She has many good ideas about how to smooth the path between music and drama (as she should, being married to the National Theatre's musical director, the composer Dominic Muldowney). 'She has a lovely way of having everyone on the stage, singers and orchestra, like leaves on the trees, and when it's time for music, the actors make a single gesture (he does an

"over to you" flip of the hand) – it works beautifully!' Singers who move well are essential.

Ever since David Freeman's Opera Factory appeared on the scene, a slow but steady stream of talented singers has appeared who can move well, act well and look good (even in the nude, as in Janet Street-Porter's brilliantly staged TV 'Vampyr' over Christmas). I'm sure it shouldn't be hard for Christophers to find the right people.

Let's hope that Christophers' 'Fairy Queen' will receive the same treatment as 'The Vampyr', and appear on all our television screens next Christmas – and that the Radio Times will print scratch 'n sniff cards to accompany it. ❦



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GOODBYE, COLUMBUS!

BRUNO TURNER

A few last crumbs from the table of quincentennial celebration, observed by Bruno Turner, well known as an editor, writer and broadcaster as well as for his performances and recordings as director of Pro Cantione Antiqua.

There certainly was a lot of confusion in 1492 and plenty more in 1992. Columbus thought he had found Xipangu and was quite unaware of his destiny as the perpetrator of one of the world's great mistakes. Now we've had a year of celebration and recrimination, most of both being the result of the hype or suppression of facts.

The party's over. Bye, bye, Columbus, 1992 and all that. But whatever happened to Quetzalcoatl? The plumed serpent probably never sailed east at all; it was actually his fairskinned bearded high priest who was expelled about AD 950 and, as Moctezuma II found out to his cost in 1519, Hernán Cortés was no returning god. It was Franciscan missionaries who soon put it around the Aztec population that Quetzalcoatl was none other than St Thomas the Apostle.

When the Blessed Virgin, in December 1531, called out to a trudging peasant, 'Juanito' (note the friendly diminutive), 'Juanito, my dear, please tell everyone to build me a church on this hill and dedicate it to the Blessed Virgin Mary of Coatlaxopeuh', she did not allow for Bishop Zumárraga (Mexico's first) having not a word of Nahuatl. The Bishop insisted that the great shrine that would be built should be called Guadelupe; obviously the humble Juan Diego (*né* Cuauhtlaohuac, by the way) had got it wrong. Besides, the BVM would surely have spoken Castilian.

Misunderstandings and cross-cultural exchanges of the sinister kind abounded. These set me to thinking of Arawak and Aztec eating habits which remind me of another morsel from history's dustbin, one that might be noted by early music groups attempting authenticity when on remote tours.

Hernán Cortés always took with him a group of shawm, sackbut and dulcian players. The dreadful conditions of his expedition to Honduras, lasting eighteen months in 1524–6, go so tough that the soldiers, fed up with all and incompetent players ('no better than foxes or howling jackals'), eventually copied the natives and ate their musical compatriots. Only the shawm (*chirimía*) player, Bartolomé de Medrano, lived to tell the tale. Eventually back in Spain at Toledo Cathedral in 1544, he had already told the story to the Bishop of Honduras, who wrote it up. Bartolomé claimed to have eaten the brains of the expedition's Sevillian sackbut player Montesinos, the intestines of Bernardo Caldera and certain parts of Caldera's cousin.

It is not entirely surprising that the Blessed Virgin's help was needed in the process of Hispanicizing the new domains and generally calming things down. The apparition in 1531 was well timed. Four hundred years later, a minor discovery confirmed how the Aztec mother of the gods, Tonantzin, had soon been well and truly replaced in the Nahuatl tongue by the Christian's Virgin.

In 1931, Padre Octaviano Valdés, recently returned from Rome with his theology doctorate, went back to his Mexican home town and there heard from his uncle that some nearby Indians had an old music manuscript. Father Valdés went to the village of Cacalomacan (10,000 feet above sea level!) and bought what has become known as the Valdés Codex. This volume, 31 cm × 22 cm, bound in parchment, consists of 139 folios of paper (some of it identified as from mid-sixteenth-century Madrid) with only a little damage to the exterior leaves. It contains copies of four Palestrina masses, another one misattributed to him and actually by Pierre Colin, others by Esquivel and Alonso Lobo, a variety of anonymous liturgical pieces and a few attributed but not always correctly. There is a date scribbled in the top outer corner of fol. 87, '1599 Años', but it simply refers to the original date of publication of the Palestrina mass copied on that page. The various hands of the several scribes vary in quality and accuracy from quite good to very bad. The whole compilation may have belonged to the Monastery of Toluca (capital of Mexico State) and was probably copied in the second or third decade of the seventeenth century (not earlier as has sometimes been suggested). It may have been one of several companion collections of varied and useful polyphony. Certainly it shocked Fr Valdés to learn from the Indians that they had just finished using a similar music book as kindling for fires.

When Valdés came to study his find, he discovered two exceptional pieces which had not Latin but Nahuatl texts. This Aztec language, which survives still in many dialects among the pure-bred hill 'Indians' of central Mexico, was the tongue which the Spanish missionaries had to learn and to transliterate in the wake of the conquistadores. It was the job of the Dominican and Franciscan friars to preach to the natives, to convert and to educate them; they found

music so effective and the natives so naturally talented that from the earliest written records of New Spain we are constantly reminded of the musical skills and adaptability of the Aztec Indians.

Valdés went on to become a Canon of Mexico City Cathedral and the Codex remained in his possession. Facsimiles and a bad transcription of the two 'Aztec' pieces were published in 1934 and, some twenty years and more later, Robert Stevenson gave the best descriptions and at least partial translations from the Nahuatl in his various books and articles on music in New Spain and Peru.

The problem for those who might wish to study and perform these still unique survivals of 'native tongue' polyphony is that Stevenson's short score and textless versions in *Music in Mexico, A Historical Survey* (New York, 1952) are certain to result in quite arbitrary and inevitably wrong underlay. His later transcriptions in *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory* (Berkeley, 1968) are the ones to use but there are still inaccuracies in words and music, and room for revision. It has to be regretted that the Hilliard Ensemble's stylish renderings in a recent CD anthology are based on Stevenson's 1952 versions and are unacceptably far from the originals; in the villancico-style *Dios itlaço* the *copla* (verse) is omitted entirely. A very vivacious performance by the Uruguayan choir De Profundis has just come out on the Swiss label Perspective Records (PER 9201), but they follow Stevenson's 1968 versions right down to leaving final chords inexplicably minor. Other recordings no doubt exist, but I feel impelled to set things back on course, as it were, by publishing photographs of the original pages and an accompanying clarification of the Nahuatl texts.

A few words more are needed to correct the constant misattribution of these simple and unsophisticated pieces to Hernando Franco, the Spanish musician who came from Extremadura via Guatemala to become choirmaster at Mexico City Cathedral from 1575 until his death in 1585. Robert Stevenson, long ago, corrected this assumption. Indeed, we have no need even to accept that these pieces were written by a native pupil who took his master's name, common though that practice was. You can see the name – hernā don fran^{co} – at the top of fol. 122 associated with the gauche five-part piece. It cannot be assumed that the following two pages are of music by the same person. Besides, there are some major misattributions (even of Palestrina's name) in this manuscript.

The Spanish-trained expatriate and skilled composer Hernando Franco was certainly not entitled 'Don'. The son of a local Aztec chief (*cacique*) would have such a courtesy after christianization in faith, in name and in education. But does the manuscript really say 'don'? I'm not so sure. Most Latin Americans now add 'El Indio' to his name.

Whoever the author was and whatever we think of the mixed charms and gaucheries of the music, we have here a pair of concert fillers worth reviving from time to time. Let's get a good edition made.

The Valdés Codex: Nahuatl prayer and villancico

I Fols. 121^{v}–22

Sancta maria e ynilhuicac cihuapille tinatzin dios yn titotenpantlatocantzin. Mahuel te huatzin topan ximotlatolti yn titlatlaconhuanimen.
Mahuel te hautzin...

Holy Mary, Heavenly Queen, Mother of God, thou art our Advocate. Speak well for us who are sinners.

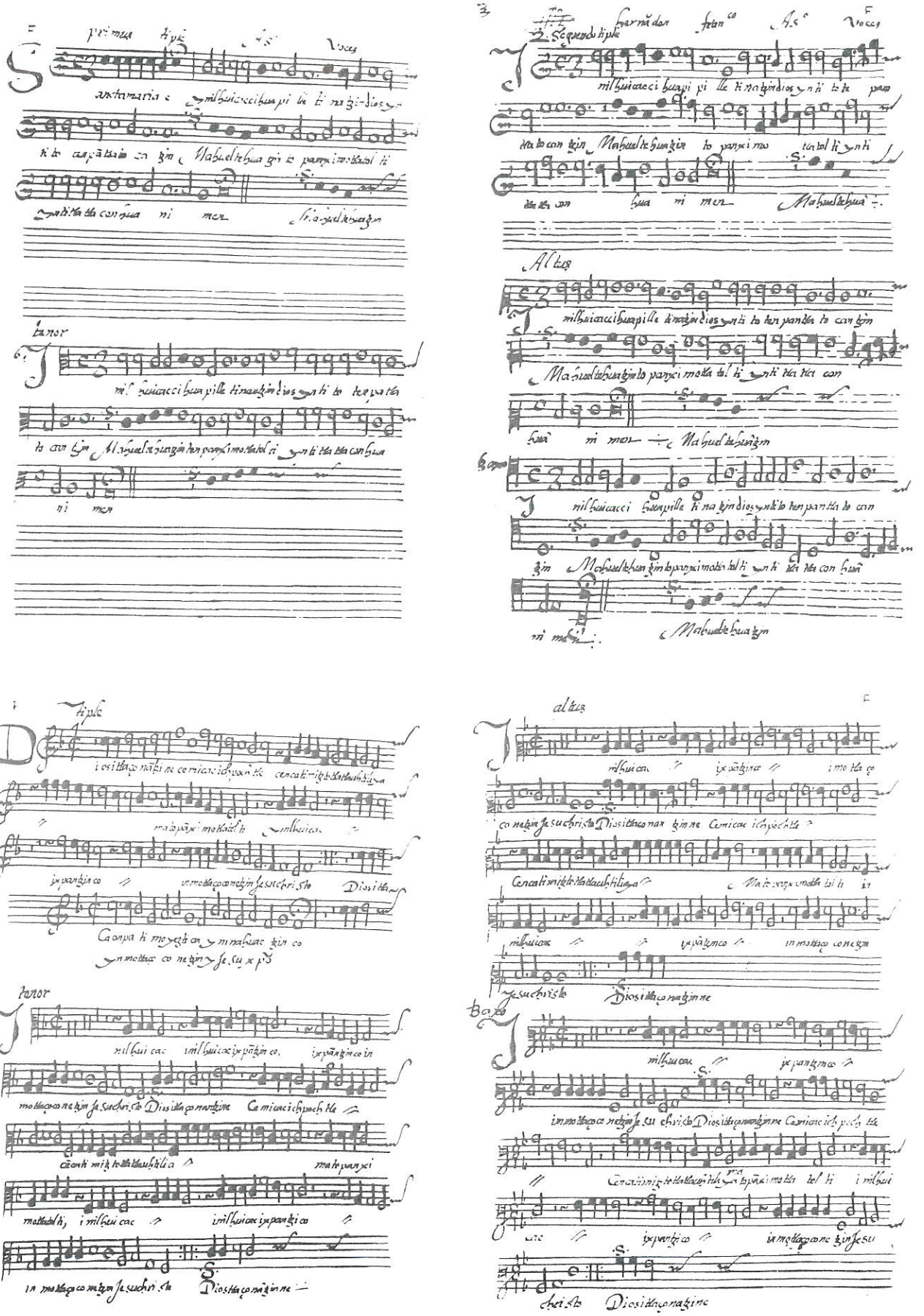
II Fols. 122^{v}–23

Dios itlaço nantzine cemicac ichpochtle cenca timitztotlatlautiliya ma topan ximotlatolti: yn ilhuicac ixpantzinco in motlaço conetzin Jesu Christo.
Ca onpa timoyeztica yn inahuactzinco yn motlaço conetzin Jesu Christo.
Dios itlaço...

O Lady, precious Mother of God, ever Virgin: O, how much we pray to thee to intercede for us. Thou art in the presence of thy loving Son, Jesus Christ.
(*Copla, tiple*) For thou art there beside Him, thou art in the presence of thy loving Son, Jesus Christ.
(*Responsión*) O Lady, precious Mother of God...

Stevenson quite rightly draws attention to the 'Indian words' being spelled out as transliterations and therefore to be pronounced according to Spanish of the time. Modern Mexican Spanish (rather than 'high' Castilian) will do as a model. The translations given above represent a conflation of what I think best represents the literal meaning based on the differing versions given by Stevenson in *Music in Mexico* (not complete) and in *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*, together with texts given to me by Professor Roberto Rivera y Rivera. Prof. Rivera kindly let me see his transcriptions and it is to his generosity that we have the photographs of the four pages from the Valdés Codex reproduced here.

I would like to invite transcriptions from the readers of *Leading Notes*. If you have no time, then make it an exercise for a student. The Sancta Maria contains undoubted errors that need correction but there are some crude progressions, consecutives and an exam-failing incompetence that may have to be left. My own opinion is that the villancico *Dios itlaço* might well be by someone else more competent than the Aztec 'Don'.



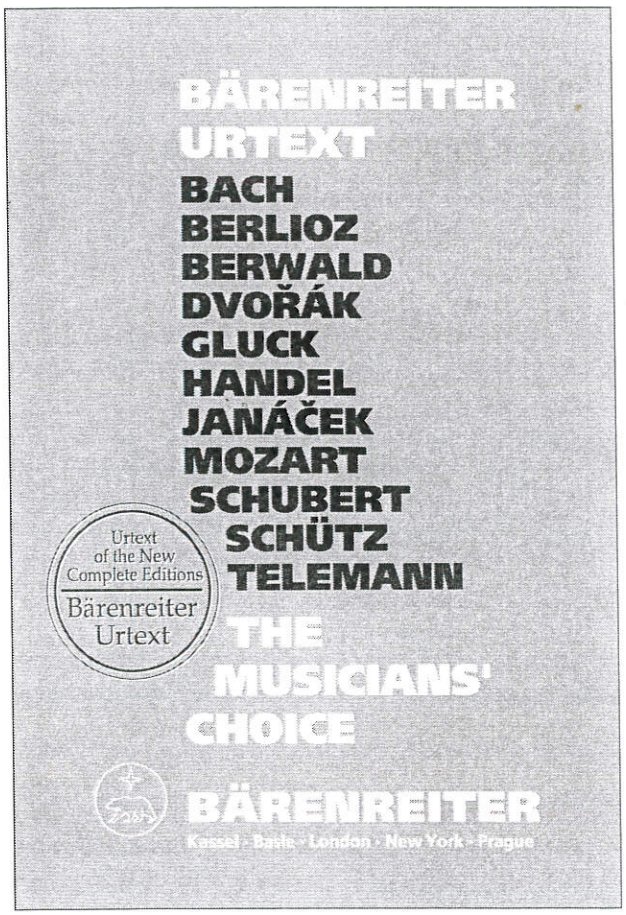
A LETTER FROM PRAGUE

MICHAELA FREEMANOVÁ

The first ten years of the Czech Early Music Society are examined by Dr Michaela Freemanová, one of the Executives of the original Committee of the Early Music Society. She has contributed articles to the Czech Early Music news and to the international monthly Music News from Prague, and was one of the founders of the Czechoslovak Lute Society and Journal.

In the autumn of 1982 the Czech Music Society (Společnost pro Starou Hudbu) held a conference in the south Bohemian town of Cesky Krumlov to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Haydn's birth. On 29 October there was a small notice in the conference programme: 'During the evening concert the Early Music Society will be founded'.

There were few people to witness this event – those who took part in the conference, the representatives of the Czech Music Society and some guests – among them most of the members of the first committee of the Early Music Society. The committee consisted of leading Czechoslovakian musicians and music historians. The harpsichordist Zuzana Růžičková was the first President. There were several working groups inside the Society. The interpretation and early music teaching were in the hands of the leader of the Prague Madrigal Singers, Miroslav Venhoda. Dr Jiří Sehnal, the head of the music department of the Moravian museum in Brno, cared for the organology research group. The Early Music Society publications were dealt with by the musicologists Dr Zdeňka Pilková and Dr Milan Poštolka. The historical research was supported by Dr Jaromír Černý (now the head of the musicology department of Charles University in Prague) and Dr Pavol Polák (member of the Slovakian Academy of Sciences). The secretarial duties were undertaken by Dr Julius Hůlek (now the head of the music department of the National Library in Prague). The number of Society members grew very quickly. In September 1983 there were 200 members, in October 300, in December 665, in January 1984 860 – among them historians, professional and non-professional musicians and music lovers from all walks of life, including scientists, medical doctors, mathematicians, workers in various trades, and students. From the late 1970s, strong support came from the Oxford University Press quarterly *Early Music*, which reported news of Prague early music enthusiasts and sent large quantities of the journal to Professor Venhoda, Dr Černý, Milan Munclinger and others. In 1977 the names of Czech musicians were included for the first time in the *Register of Early Music* (published at that time by OUP, and now of course by NEMA).



The Society's main aim was to care for the early music treasures of the Bohemian and Slovakian lands – and from the very beginning there was also a strong interest in historically informed performance. Among other activities the Society organized two research projects: *Exodus* and *Early Music Studios*. Both of these brought to life many a newly discovered composition. They also helped in the formation of new groups, to become in the future the leading early music ensembles in Czechoslovakia – such as *Duodena Cantitans* (based in Prague), the south Bohemian *Dyškanti*, and the most successful Czechoslovakian early music group, *Musica Antiqua Praha* (founded in 1982, some of the members doubled in the unique early jazz group, *The Original Prague Syncopated Orchestra*). The *Studios* also became the place to meet foreign guests – among them Hopkinson Smith and James Griffett. A catalogue of the Bohemian and Moravian historical organs was also organized, together with annual organ research trips, courses in harpsichord playing and historical dance, concerts, music trips and

Christmas parties for children.

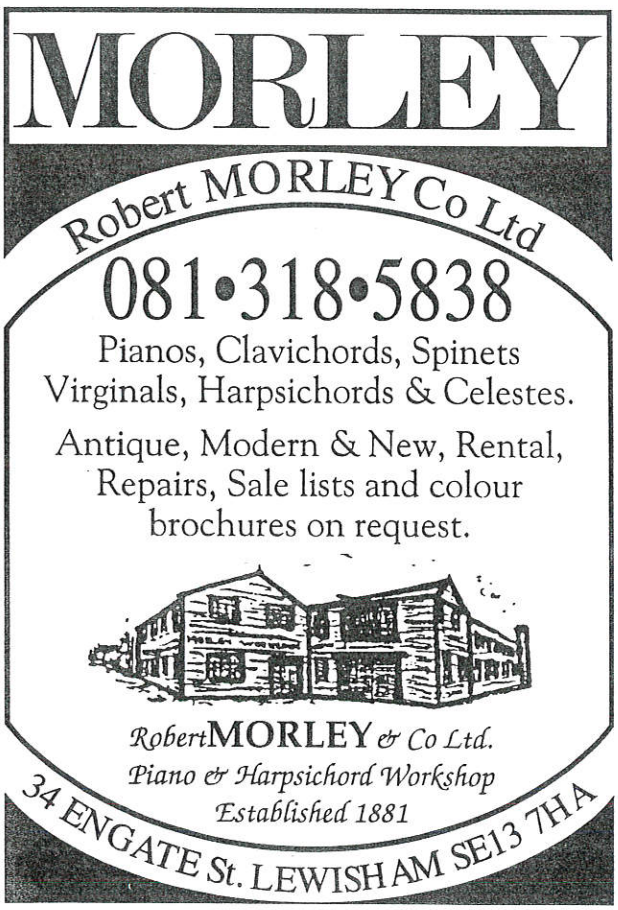
Many things were forgotten during the years after the 1989 revolution. Even in Czechoslovakia people hardly realize how many times the Early Music Society had to fight against the previous régime. As President, Zuzana Růžičková had to defend the idea of the Society's affiliation with the Leipzig- (East Germany!) based International Bach Society, and with NEMA. The Society had also to justify many activities arranged by the Church Music Society and also several interdisciplinary conferences on Renaissance and Baroque culture in Bohemian lands held between 1983 and 1987. It also took part in the preparation of some of the Prague Spring Festival annual musicological conferences (such as the Bach celebration in 1985) and organized the one-and-only Czechoslovakian conference to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the première of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Despite the sceptical voices of some members, Miroslav Venhoda very early on started organizing the first Early Music Summer School in Czechoslovakia. Right from the beginning in 1985 it took around 200–300 course-members and always had foreign tutors. It took place first in the Moravian town of Kroměříž, famous for its music collections. Later, because of political reasons (early music, associated with church and feudal backgrounds, was not sought after anywhere in Czechoslovakia) it moved to the Moravian border town of Valtice. What was the situation of a Czechoslovak musician in these years who wanted to dedicate himself to historically informed early music performance? And what was the situation of early music teaching? No music colleges paid any attention to the authenticity of early music performance (and nothing has actually changed recently, except in Brno). There were almost no modern foreign editions of early music available, and again the situation has not changed much even now. The old publishing houses are deep in recession, the new ones (Editio Simile Ludentes, ArtThon, etc.) are having a difficult, even if promising, start. Music published in the series *Musica Antiqua Bohemica* and *Musica Viva Historica Thesaurus*, early Slovakian music published by Opus in Bratislava, and others, was sometimes sold out, sometimes outdated; reprints were scarce, facsimiles almost non-existent and editors struggled against the lack of publishers' interest. The same applies to the availability of recorded music – up to now there is, apart from Chandos, no foreign early music available, and very little has been done in local early music publishing. There are still available the outdated recordings of early Czech and Slovak music, but the record companies pay little attention to the new trends and demands; some of them are very reluctant to buy foreign records because they want to support home production, which still almost does not exist.

There were several exhibitions for the amateur historical musical instrument builders organized by the Early Music Society in Prague and Brno. The exhibits showed skilful makers but also a complete lack of professional training and production. For many reasons, including economic ones, it was literally impossible to buy a good copy of an early musical instrument locally. No woodwinds, except the Markneukirchen, Aulos and sometimes Moeck recorders (never the full range of any type or family); no harpsichords, except Lindholms or Ammers. Baroque and Classical flutes, horns, trumpets, bassoons or fortepianos were (and unfortunately still are) completely out of the question. The amateur makers were turning derelict pianos into harpsichords, experimenting with the acoustical and textural qualities of paper, giant hogweed, potato bags, fibreglass and yoghurt pots to make organ pipes, crumhorns, cornets and reeds. It was and is not easy to find an original instrument in a playing condition. Gambas, lutes and sometimes harpsichords were the only field where any progress in building was achieved (but not without problems and errors).

In 1983 an American viol player and musical instrument maker, Nancy Newbold Brien, came to Prague with Eric Moulder to see and measure some of the rare Renaissance woodwind instruments in the Museum of Czech Music. Very soon she realized the

needs of the local musicians and it was probably then that she decided to bring Eric Moulder back with Jane Julier to teach instrument making in Prague. In 1986 she started dealings with the Early Music Society; but it was, sadly, only after her death in 1987, and after quite a struggle against the Communist bureaucracy in the next two years, that the first course took place. Initiated and organized by David Freeman (who moved at that time to Czechoslovakia) and generously supported by the British Council, it took place in a private workshop of the Prague furniture restorer, Jan Dejmal, just weeks before the start of the 1989 revolution. The first tutors were Barbara Stanley (Renaissance flute) and Alec Loretto (Renaissance recorder). The next two were dedicated to interpretation, with Catherine Mackintosh (violin) and Nancy Hadden (Renaissance flute); Michael Plant came to teach viol making. After them came Alison Bury (violin), Dick Earle (both Baroque oboe making and playing), Richard Boothby (viola da gamba and Baroque 'cello), Brian Wright (lute), Douglas Hollick (harpsichord voicing), David van Edwards (lute making), Lynda Sayce (lute continuo) and, above all, Poppy Holden and her van of wonders, much appreciated by everyone able to use the instruments, recordings, scores, books and tools donated by British musicians. There were also some loans of instruments from Germany and France.



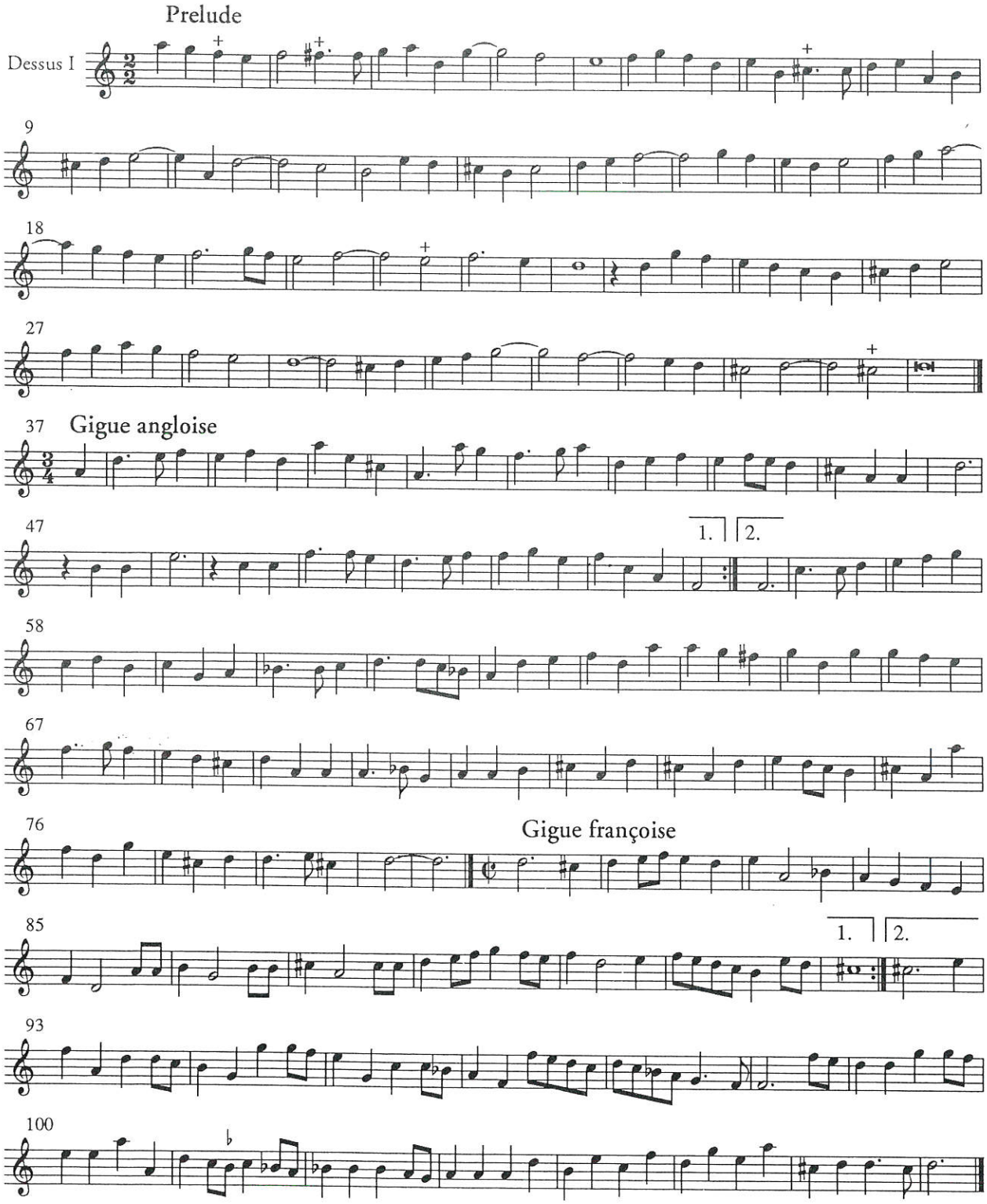
At the same time, new courses were started in Brno at the musicological department of the Masaryk University and at the Janáček Academy of Music, led and organized by German tutors – the Baroque flute player Andreas Kröper and the pupil of harpsichordist Stanislav Heller, Barbara Willy. The Czechoslovakian Viola da Gamba and Lute Society and the Society of Makers of Reproduction Historical Instruments were also formed. The Valtice Summer School had more and more foreign tutors from England, America, Austria, Germany and Poland. Slowly an idea crept into my mind, the founding of a music festival dedicated entirely to historically informed early music performance.

To celebrate the Mozart anniversary, the first Czechoslovakian International Early Music Festival was held in October 1991 in the most beautiful historical places of Prague's Lesser Town. There were mainly Czech and Slovak groups (it is a pleasure to see how the number of them is growing so quickly in quantity and in quality), but also German, French and British performers – The Classical Flute Quartet, Musica Antiqua of London and Douglas Hollick. The second Festival in October 1992 was dedicated to the Age of Discoveries and to the European Baroque (UNESCO and Central European Initiative projects), with guests from Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, France, Israel, The Netherlands, United States and again British players – Fretwork and Circa 1500, with solo performances by Nancy Hadden, Richard Burnett, Poppy Holden and Brian Wright. The third one, if there will be money enough, which depends on the sponsors as it is a voluntary project, is to be dedicated to the Baroque (to coincide with the Monteverdi anniversary). Again the British performers are to play an important role. British performers also take part in a summer Baroque Opera Festival, organized in Valtice (orginally in connection with the Summer School, but now independently arranged by Daniell Špička).

With great nostalgia, one counts the losses of the Society. Today, Miroslav Venhoda is dead, and also another member of the first Society's committee, the excellent flute player and dedicated organizer of early music concerts, Milan Munclinger. The new economic and political situation of the country is not always favourable for cultural activities. The *Zpravodaj SSH* (equivalent to *Early Music News*) has had to be closed down because of lack of money. Also the future might, from the economic point of view, be an uneasy one. However, even in these times of hardship, it is music which is able to show, even to the most tortured soul, that there is not just hell but also heaven. It is worth serving this wonderful art in the best way possible – including the work of the Early Music Society.

H 545

Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Suite in d minor



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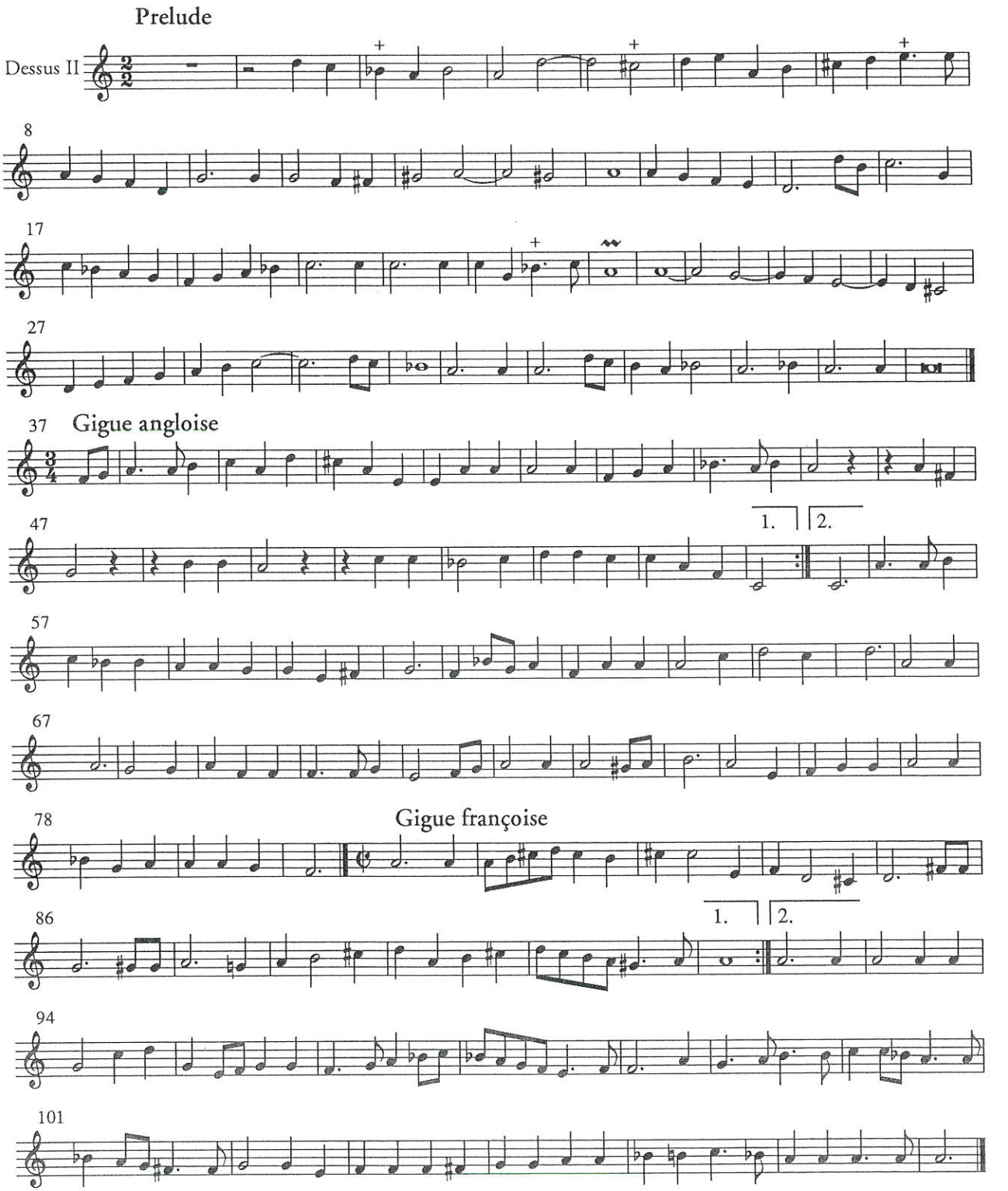

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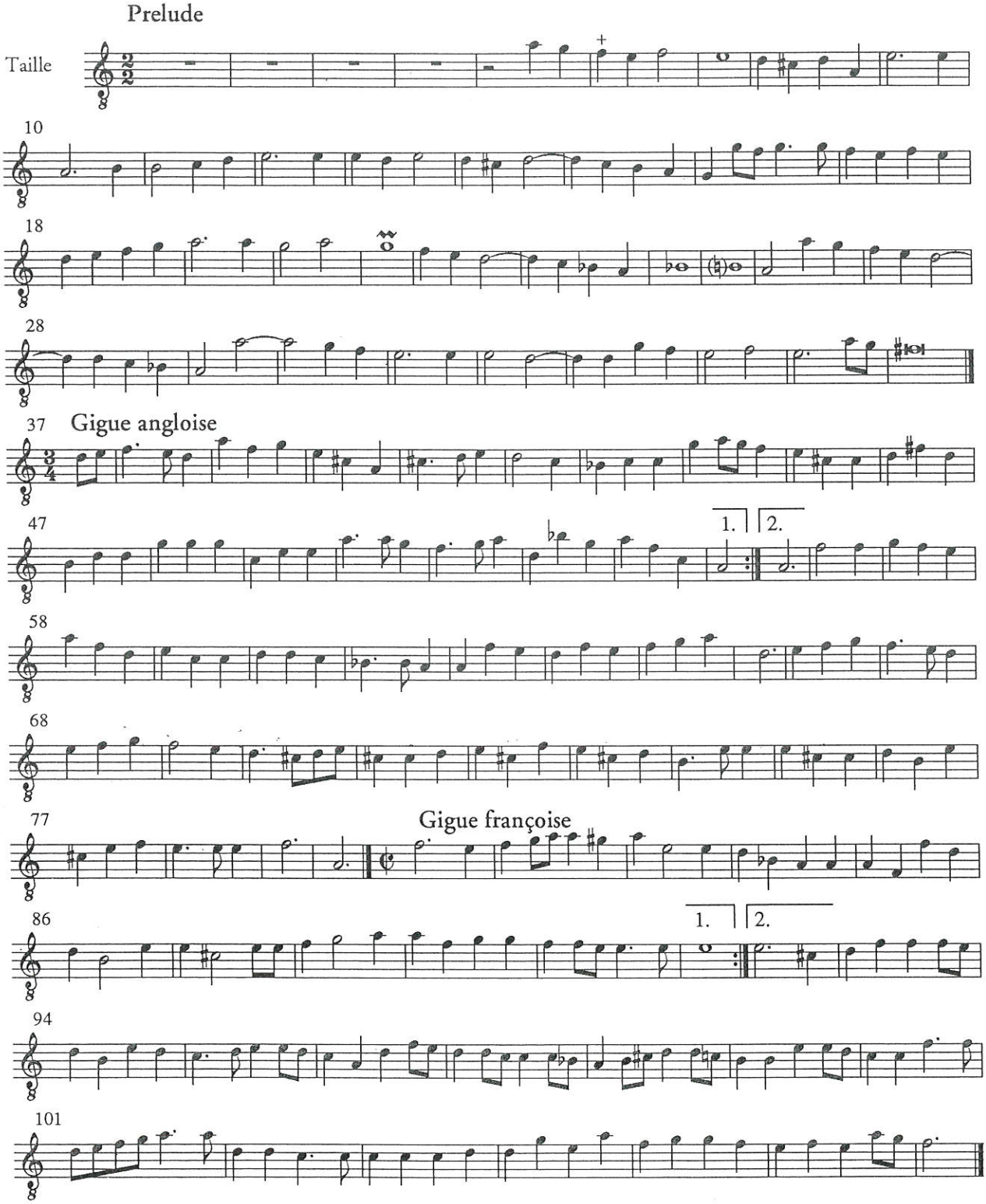
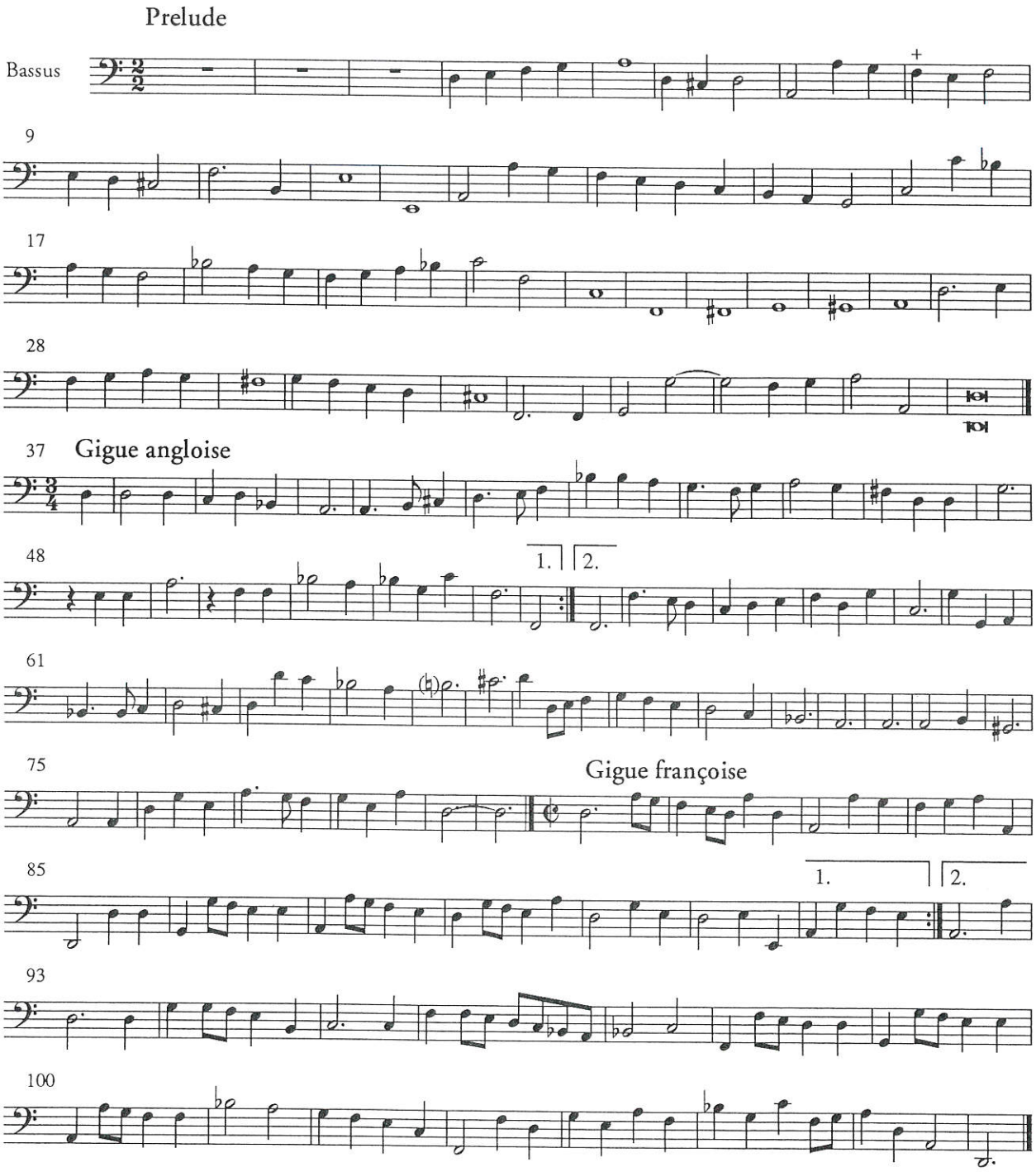


Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Suite in d minor



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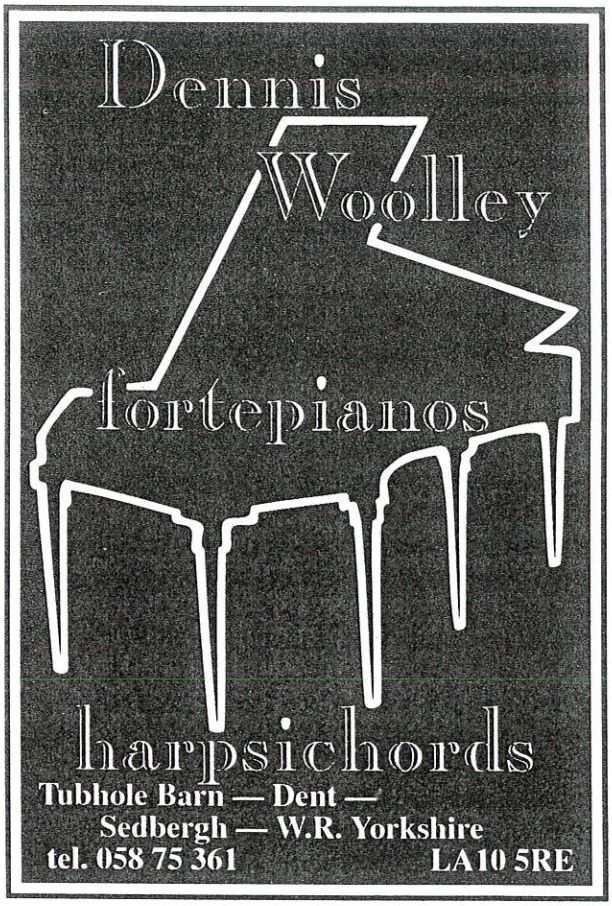

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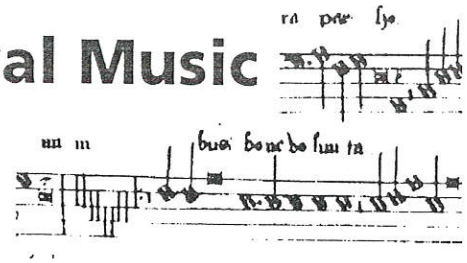

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FINDING MUSIC

CLIFFORD BARTLETT

Clifford Bartlett, music publisher, editor and reviewer, discusses some of the difficulties in preparing editions of early music.

Easy access to a wide repertory often depends on whether a member of your ensemble has access to and knows how to use the resources of a good music library. Despite the availability of excellent and cheap publications from some of the major publishers as well as from the smaller ones relating specifically to the early-music market, the curious performer will want to search wider. Many of the books I review each month in *Early Music News* discuss music that it is not possible to find in even good public libraries or see on the shelves of Blackwell's (Oxford) or Brian Jordan's (Cambridge). Initials like DTÖ and CMM, BG and NMA are used freely – sensibly, since the full names are mouthfuls and waste half a line of type. This article is directed towards readers who find them as meaningless as I find SAT, NCC, DFE, IT and DT (for an explanation, ask a school-teacher).

The idea of a 'complete works' of a composer goes back as far as Machaut. A quarter-millenium later, the *Magnum opus musicum*, the complete motets of Lassus assembled by his sons, covered one large facet of his works. The generally accepted 'first' is Samuel Arnold's edition of Handel, pretty complete except for the operas. It is not of very great value now, though in a few cases it has items not published elsewhere or represents lost sources, and the full figuring of the basses is useful for the keyboard player. The first scholarly 'complete works' is the Bach Gesellschaft (BG), begun on the hundredth anniversary of Bach's death and completed by the end of the nineteenth century. Handel was covered by the private initiative of Friedrich Chrysander: some of the volumes were engraved in a shed in his garden. The leading German publisher, Breitkopf und Härtel, issued *Werke* of a variety of composers: Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Palestrina and, in the 1920s, Brahms. (Except for Palestrina, these are available as miniature scores from E. F. Kalmus, with selections reproduced in cheap and handsome larger formats from Dover.) For the modern performer, their main virtue (apart from economy) is the absence of the interpretative editorial additions that, for those of my generation, disfigured most of the editions that we encountered in our youth. Attempts at Lassus, Haydn and Wagner editions were less successful.

Nationalism was a strong impetus behind these editions, and it is not surprising that German publishers and scholars managed to give the impression that the classical line in music history ran from Bach and Handel through Mozart and Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann to Brahms and Wagner. This was reinforced by three extensive series of national anthologies, *Denkmäler der Tonkunst im Österreich* (DTÖ), *Denkmäler der deutsch Tonkunst* (DDT) and *Denkmäler der Tonkunst im Bayern* (DTB), many of which contained extensive introductions as well as good editions of a vast range of early music (DTÖ even running into the nineteenth century with editions of waltzes.) Some other countries tried to imitate, but nothing with the Germanic scale and panache appeared elsewhere until after the Second World War. Since then, the international growth in musicology (rather, I suspect, than the increased interest in historical performance) has led to a large number of new Collected Works and Denkmäler (there is no convenient English term). More than anyone else, Hitler was probably the unintentional cause, thanks to the profound influence of exiled Jewish musicologists on American musicology.

There is more to producing a good edition of a composer than finding his manuscripts and printing them. In the case of Bach, for instance, for some works both score and parts survive: those who think of music as something to study will give the former priority, but performers are concerned about what Bach's players had in front of them. When no autograph survives, a study of all available manuscripts is necessary, and there are various methods of evaluating them (mostly derived from the sophisticated skills developed to edit the Latin and Greek classics). And there is no guarantee that the autograph represents the final state of the work. I have, for instance, just been editing another Handel opera, *Tamerlano*. The autograph (available in a Garland facsimile) is a fascinating document, showing how Handel could completely rewrite a work in response to a change in singers. But a few weeks before the performance, he had another score copied, and the autograph does not show the final revisions: in fact, it is only from the libretto that we know that the duet before the final chorus was omitted. For a variety of reasons, most of the old collected editions need replacing; the firm most often involved with the new editions being Bärenreiter. Sadly, the speed of issue (and sometimes, with dramatic works, the quality of their performing editions) is not as good as their scores.

With post-war series such as Musica Britannica (MB), Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae (CMM), Monumentos de la Música Española (MME) and A-R's Recent Researches, large repertories have been opened up. There are two problems of performing from them: access to the editions themselves and producing performance material. Both are linked with the question of copyright. For a start: the law itself is unclear. What constitutes an edition? What aspect of copyright law applies? Fifty years from the death of the last surviving editor, or 25 years from the year of printing (the length of the graphic right)? If the editor has added anything (e.g. a keyboard reduction, hairpins, etc.), that makes the fifty-years-from-death rule apply. But what if you cut out the realization? One publisher confirmed for me that they understood the 25-year rule would then be applicable. But there is no case law to show what the law really is. Publishers themselves, however, do seem to be happy to use the texts established by copyright editions as the basis for their own re-set editions: in principle, resetting is no different from photocopying or writing out by hand or photocopying, so I think we can assume that publishers are unlikely to prosecute for the photocopying of an Urtext edition more than 25 years old. There is, however, always a risk!

For more recent editions, there is no such let-out. From my experience, some publishers are not interested in dealing with letters asking permission to photocopy a single page for a concert in Puddletown-under-Wychwood: they might, however, be more concerned if the same piece were performed by the King's Singers on a video recording that would have world-wide circulation. Writing as a publisher, I suspect (though don't quote me!) that most publishers would be annoyed to find performers photocopying substantial parts of volumes and works for which they issue performing materials, but not concerned about copies of a single-page score of *L'homme armé* from a volume of 200 pages. [The solution is to increase the amount payable for performances of editions by the PRS so that the publisher gets a reasonable fee from such performances; I tried that when I was at the BBC back in the 1970s, with no luck, and the PRS are even less likely to respond now.]

Many of these scholarly editions, however, are out of copyright. The problem is to locate them. It is essential to build up a friendly relationship with a good music library. The libraries of universities with thriving musical faculties are more likely to have a good range of music than public libraries (though there are excellent collections at Westminster, Birmingham and elsewhere). Access, however, may be restricted (London University Library at Senate House makes a charge), and borrowing is restricted or not permitted. Furthermore, some libraries are more rigorous in preventing photocopying than the law demands – the 25-year graphic right is a closely kept secret and normally the fifty-year rule is applied whether relevant or not. There is a large collection of such editions available for loan through the national lending system. Libraries may make a charge for this, but if you know what you want, this is very useful.

Finding what you want is difficult without access to a library to browse. The first step is *The New Grove*, which often (once you get used to reading its abbreviations) can tell you precisely what volume a piece is in. Sadly, virtually no library except the BBC catalogues individual items within volumes, and its published catalogues are (except for orchestral music) very out of date. It is a sad fact that, despite the potential conveniences of computerized and central cataloguing, librarians still think in terms of bibliographical entities rather than individual compositions, and our national library is no more thorough than libraries elsewhere. So a library may well own, without realizing it, Boismortier's *Actéon* (buried in vol. 3 of the Collected Works of Rameau), Mouton's motet 'Gaude Barbara' (in vol. 6 of Morales *Opera omnia*, which is otherwise known as vol. 21 of MME – some series have complicated double numberings!) or Solage's 'En l'amoureux vergier' (in CMM 53/1).

For some areas, there are helpful bibliographies. Viol players, for instance, have the invaluable indexes that Gordon Dodd has compiled for the Viola da Gamba Society which list exhaustively both original sources and modern editions. Bruce Haynes is continually updating his *Music for Oboe, 1659–1800* (Fallen Leaf Press). Those interested in sixteenth-century instrumental music are lucky in the exhaustive references to editions published before the early 1960s in Howard Mayer Brown's *Instrumental Music Printed before 1600* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), probably the best bibliography I know.

But don't be be too dependent on libraries. It amazes me that many players who are prepared to spend vast sums on instruments become mean when it comes to buying music to play on them. Musica Britannica volumes are thought expensive, yet the £55 for the score of the Lawes Fantasy Suites is less than the cost of a set of good strings for one viol. Some recent publications are expensive (Bärenreiter's new *Acis and Galatea*, for instance, is over £100 – though, if your time is valuable, it is cheaper to spend your money on that rather than get the Kalmus reprint and waste hours correcting it). But many volumes from the past are still in print at quite reasonable prices. Few shops stock them, but they can be ordered from the original publishers or reprint firms.

Some performers prefer to play from reproductions of original sources, whether from published facsimiles or from specially-ordered photocopies. There is much to commend this; but there are problems, both musicological (the need to collate various sources, difficul-

ties with the notation) and technical (the quality of prints from microfilm is variable). For repertory earlier than about 1700 it is wise to consult a decent modern edition as well, if there is one. I will write further on this topic in a future article, unless Monteverdi on the saxophone proves more interesting.

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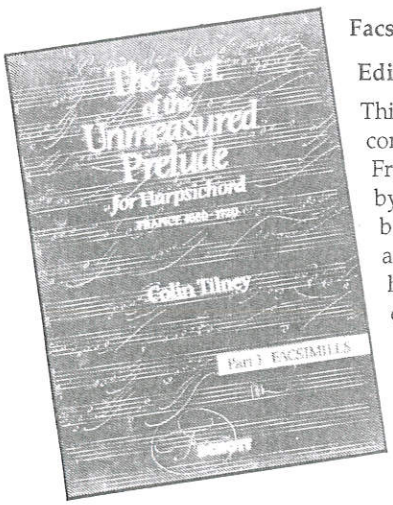
France 1660 - 1720



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THE ART OF THE UNMEASURED PRELUDE FOR HARPSICHORD: FRANCE 1660–1720

CHRISTOPHER KITE

Christopher Kite is well known as a performer and editor of early keyboard music, and his recorded repertory ranges from Dufay to Chopin with performances on clavichord, organ, harpsichord and fortepiano. He is head of music studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, and chairman of the Early Music Centre.

Such wonderful but puzzling music! What are we to do, suddenly confronted with pieces without any time-signature written entirely in whole-notes, the page covered with a bewildering variety of swirling lines? It is as if on opening a book we find, instead of the expected typescript, a text in the sort of hand usually reserved for personal signatures. Well, there is one consolation: most people 300 hundred years ago had no idea either. Publishers outside France omitted the preludes in their reprints or referred buyers to local French musicians for guidance. Pity the poor confused Scotsman William Dundars, who purchased Nicolas Lebègue's 'Les Pièces de Clavessin' (1677) and complained that the preludes were incomprehensible. Lebègue, who had already adopted a more familiar style of notation in the hope of making things clearer and more practical, could only offer the following additional advice: 'play the notes one after the other; the 'petit cercle' which runs from the bass to the treble means that you hold all the notes within it in order to fill out the harmony; if you come to a chord with "tenües" or "cercles" after it, hold it while the other hand moves'. I suspect Dundars was none the wiser. Maybe it is impossible to translate the act of improvisation into a printed text. If only we could find some parallels...

Fortunately help is nearer to hand than we might have thought. The great German composer Froberger was in Paris in 1652, and his style of improvisation and free performance made a lasting impression on Louis Couperin (uncle of François le Grand). Louis Couperin, then in his mid-twenties – he died when he was only 35 – was the originator and greatest exponent of the art of unmeasured preluding in France. Colin Tilney's new edition of all the significant works in this genre contains 38 pieces by named composers (L. Couperin, Lebègue, Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, d'Anglebert, Clérambault, Marchand, Gaspard le Roux, Rameau and Siret) of which no less than sixteen are by Louis Couperin. More than that, his preludes are a far cry from Lebègue's excessively pragmatic definition: 'A prelude is nothing but a preparation for playing pieces in a certain key, for trying out the instrument before you play the pieces and for exploring the key you wish to use'. On the contrary, Louis Couperin's preludes can – and perhaps should – stand alone, fearlessly occupying the musical high ground alongside those by Bach, Chopin and Debussy. This is particularly true of the extended tripartite preludes which have a central section in measured notation marked 'Changement de mouvement' (a grand design which no later composer sought to emulate). One of these is the piece in A minor (Tilney no. 6) headed 'à l'imitation de Mr. Froberger'.

Louis Couperin absorbed many aspects of Froberger's style – his unpredictable imaginative fantasy, bold and irrational modulations, powerful dissonances and rich imitative textures. But in this work he deliberately goes even further. The opening flourish is an elaborated version of the beginning of Froberger's Toccata 1 of 1649, leading to a direct quotation from the 'Plainte faite à Londres pour passer la Melancholie'. (Froberger was robbed on the channel ferry and arrived in London penniless and unrecognized. His command of English was poor, and his true identity was only discovered when, brooding upon his misfortune, he forgot to continue to pump air to the organ for Christopher Gibbons in the middle of a performance!) So we have here a perfect opportunity to compare the different notational systems; the two manuscript copies (a printed edition was never prepared) of the Louis Couperin, Ex. (a) Bauyn with its superior and more exuberant calligraphy and Ex. (b) Parville (neither source is autograph) with Froberger as printed Ex. (c) in the Heugel modern edition; Ex. (d) presents Colin Tilney's modern transcription. This is more immediately instructive than any amount of purely written comment or explanation. The problem is, however, do we have any real idea how to play Froberger's *measured* notation? We know that toccatas are meant to be played freely irrespective of the notation – Froberger studied with Frescobaldi, so perhaps we can apply some of Frescobaldi's own instructions in the preface to 'Il primo (secondo) libro di toccate etc.' of 1637. The other style of piece on which the prelude was modelled, the grave and noble tombeau-allemande, is usually headed by Froberger 'se jouer lentement à la discrétion', and in one instance he adds

'sans observer aucune mesure'. This is the famous 'Tombeau fait à Paris sur la mort de Monsieur Blancrocher', the lutenist who died from falling headlong down a flight of stairs whilst drunk at a party (there's a lesson for us all there!). Interestingly enough, Louis Couperin also wrote a tombeau for his friend Blancrocher which he chose to present in measured notation, though there can be no doubt about the freedom intended for its effective realization. In fact, the reverse becomes true: once one is familiar with the interpretation of unmeasured notation the process of making order out of apparent chaos is easier than throwing off the shackles of time-signatures, bar-lines and misleadingly proportional note-values, which are designed to suggest articulation, phrasing and the classification of ideas (e.g. melodic vs. harmonic material) rather than to have any direct bearing on actual speed of performance. Measured notation poses more questions than it answers, and is if anything more alienating and more treacherous than the vivid mobility of unmeasured.

After all this we still seem to be as much in the dark as ever. Where else can we turn for help? Where else indeed but to that central figure of the French claveciniste tradition, the arch-systematizer Jean Henry d'Anglebert. Many players seem to think that d'Anglebert invented ornaments, having toiled over their meticulously detailed profusion in his 'Pièces de Clavecin'. This is a misapprehension, but he did certainly codify contemporary practice – with of course some important developments of his own – and arrive at the most complex and elaborately comprehensive system of stenographic signs ever devised (the later North German tradition not excepted). So it is both characteristic and fortunate that it is to him that we should ultimately turn for enlightenment on the art of unmeasured preluding. There are four preludes by d'Anglebert: the three well-known ones exist both in his autograph and in the version he prepared for the printed edition of 1689. Here he presented the music in a much more accessible way for general dissemination. Kenneth Gilbert in his edition of d'Anglebert included the manuscript versions in an appendix. Colin Tilney does something much more useful still. First of all, he too provides us with a facsimile of the autograph; but he also prints a modern setting of the manuscript together with the text as it appeared in the original printed edition. These are interleaved on facing pages, so that a direct note-by-note comparison is immediately available. These three preludes are fine works, musically well able to rub shoulders with those of Louis Couperin, and they must form a starting point for anyone who is seriously interested in penetrating the superficial obscurity of this unique style.

A proper study of unmeasured preludes takes us further than this, however. It soon becomes clear that they contain a mine of information on performance that is not – and cannot – be conveyed by a measured system of notation. In other words, the study of these preludes is indispensable for a true realization of the subtleties of French Baroque harpsichord style in general. The oblique layout on the page gives us the clearest possible indication of the actual order and timing of notes in performance – in fact simultaneous vertical alignment is sufficiently rare to warrant a special sign! Myriad ways of arpeggiating chords are conveyed with unrivalled graphic clarity; ornamentation unfolds before our eyes ('tremblements', 'coulés', 'pincés' and above all the elusive and varied 'ports de voix', always a touchstone of stylistic understanding and refined musicianship); the articulation and resolution of suspensions, suggestions for rhythmic 'inégalité', and so on. A return to the previously reassuring measured notation of the dance movements now brings with it a feeling of impoverishment, but we possess a new and enhanced awareness of how to liberate sound and texture from the printed page, and how to realize those quintessential but untranslatable requirements of French Baroque style – 'cadence' and 'mouvement'.

François Couperin sounded the death-knell of the unmeasured prelude in 1716, when he decided to present the eight preludes in his 'L'Art de toucher le Clavecin' in measured notation because it would be easier both to teach and to learn. (The last noteworthy example of an unmeasured prelude is by Nicholas Siret in 1719 – Rameau's single essay in this form actually dates from as early as 1706, where it opens his 'Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin' leading directly into what Tilney describes as a 'vacuous little gigue'.) This did not prevent him, however, from specifically indicating which preludes should be regarded as 'mesuré', and so by inference which should not. And elsewhere in this treatise he set forth with characteristic candour the particular problem faced by any non-French – let alone non-contemporary – performer: 'We write differently from the way we play, which is why foreigners play our music less well than we play theirs'. To be fair, this was for him a matter of regret; the challenge for us, almost three centuries later, is to prove him wrong!

The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord
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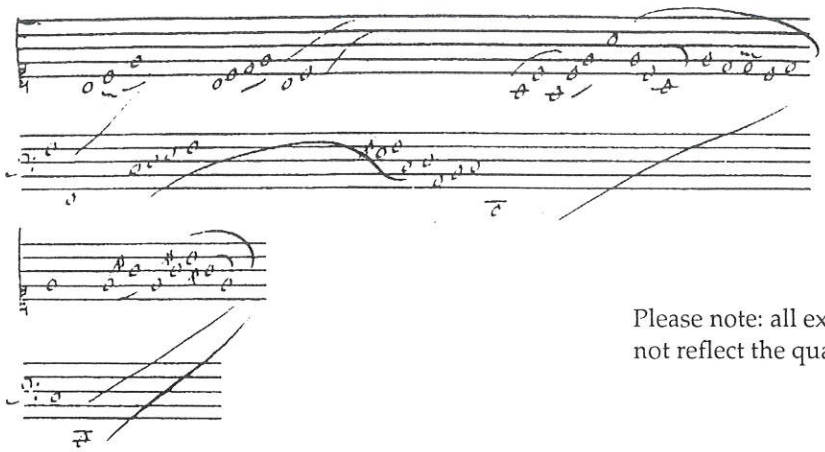

Example (a): Passage from MS Bauyn

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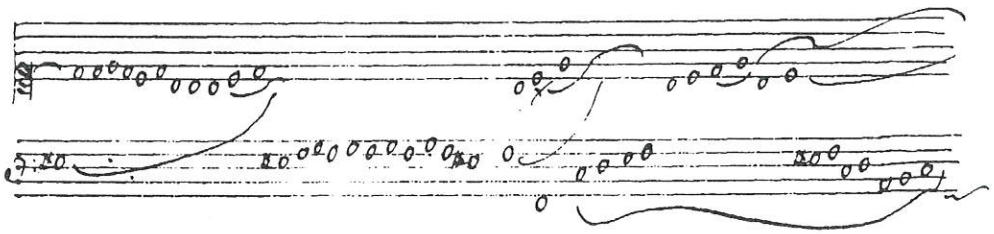
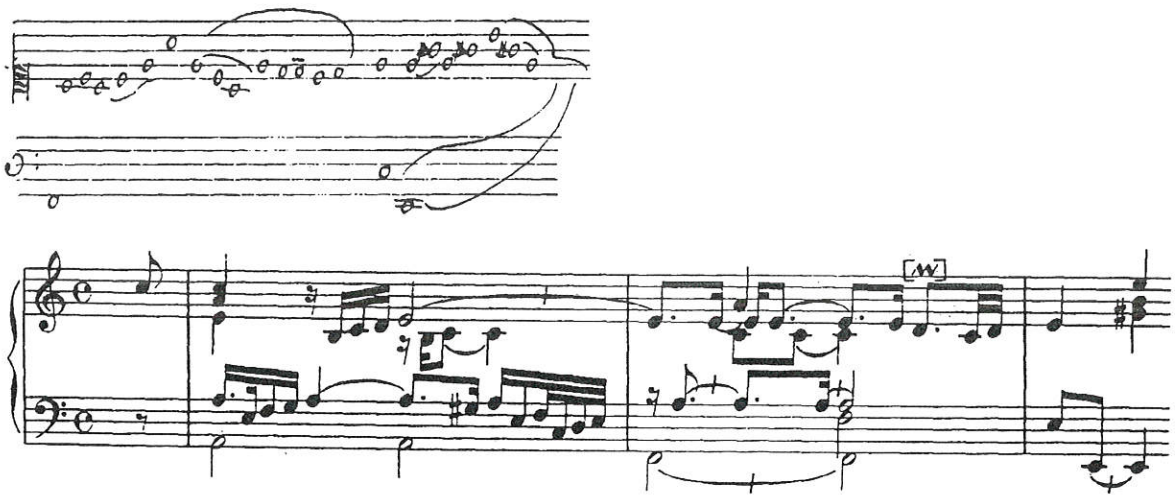
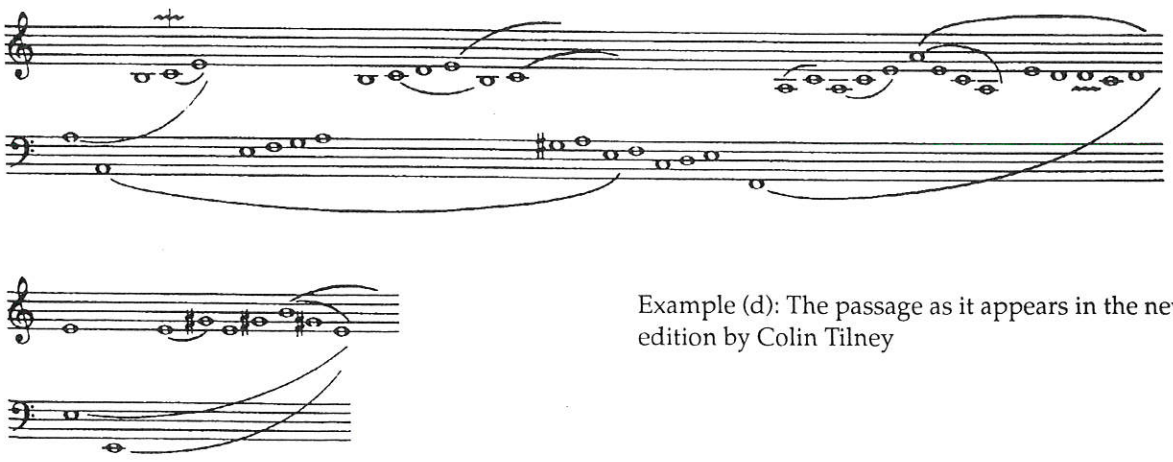


Example (b): The same passage from MS Parville



Example (c): The passage made 'measured' (Heugel edition)



Example (d): The passage as it appears in the new edition by Colin Tilney

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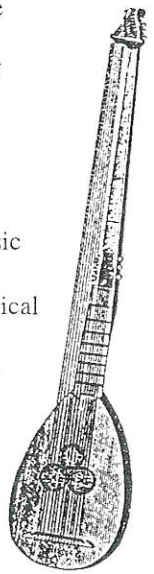

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