Music in England during the First Half of the Sixteenth Century (Concluded)

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Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 60, No. 920 (Oct. 1, 1919), pp. 534-536

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3701760>

Accessed: 28-11-2015 09:34 UTC

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Did the composer ever write anything more attractive? How many times was it played in 1918? And yet I feel sure it would give our average man no less pleasure than the 'Bee's Wedding.' It would not be difficult to make a long list of works of this kind—works that should provide three-fifths of every programme, the remaining two parts being reserved for (a) first and second performances of new music, and (b) established favourites just short of the threadbare stage.

There will be little improvement until old works come up for scrutiny as severe as that given to new ones. There is a wide difference between literature and music in this respect. In books, the survival is to the fittest: in music it is too often to the familiar, and this familiarity is frequently a matter of luck.

The average man is at heart neither an Alpha nor a Doyle. His musical education could easily be advanced to such a stage that, asked as to his re-hearing of old music, he would say something like this: 'Time is short, and the field of music is vast, with an ever-growing horizon. Clearly I have no time to hear or study any but the best. If music, like literature and art, expresses something of the spirit of those of us living now, I must on no account neglect modern music. Its composers need not only my sympathy and encouragement but my financial support as well. On all grounds, then, my first duty is to the living composer. I must keep up my acquaintance with old and middle-aged music, but only with the very best. Of course it would be infinitely easier to stick to the old than to get at the very core of the new, but, with the help of the conductors and performers, I mean to do my duty and keep abreast with the musical circulating library. I must adapt and reverse the remark of the Frenchman, and say that when I hear a new work is down for performance I realise that an old one is in danger of being superseded. As long as possible I shall persist in being an optimist in regard to new music, believing that there are at least as good fish in the musical sea as ever came out of it—and perhaps even better ones. They are merely waiting to be landed. All that is needed is a wide net, fair play, perseverance, and a ruthless throwing back of the small fry.'

FESTE.

We gladly draw attention to the appeal on page 553 on behalf of the Glastonbury School. In most ventures there comes a critical moment when failure or success seems to depend upon the grasping of an opportunity. Such a moment has arrived for the Glastonbury School in the sudden opportunity for the purchase of a site whereon to build a permanent theatre. It will be a calamity for British music-drama if the School is unable to consolidate its work by such a purchase. The appeal makes out such a strong case for support, and is so weightedly endorsed, that there is no need for us to do more than draw attention to it, and to wish it full success.

MUSIC IN ENGLAND DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

By JEFFREY PULVER.

(Concluded from August number, page 412.)

The fifth Earl of Northumberland may be taken as a specimen of that powerful class of noblemen keeping a state almost regal. And the choice is made not so much perhaps because of the proven high standard of the music made in his household, as on account of the ready source of information we possess in the 'Northumberland Household Book.' According to this valuable and interesting volume (1512), 'The Chapel of his Grace of Northumberland must have been on a par with those of the King and the Cardinal. In the year named there were permanently employed eleven gentlemen including the Master of the Children, six children, and players on the "tabrett, luyte, and rebeck." A couple of years later their numbers were increased. Following the King's example, the Earl paid his musicians extra sums of money for special work, and public holidays were not allowed to go by without some present to mark the event. At New Year the minstrels received rewards: 'Item. My Lorde usith ande accustomyth to gif yerely, when his Lordschipp is at home, to his Mynstrails that be daly in his Houshold, as his Tabret, Lute, and Rebec, upon New Yeres-day in the mornynge, when they doo play at my Lorde's chambre doure, for his Lordschipe and my Lady, xxs., viz., xiijs. iiijd. for my Lorde, and vis. viid. for my Lady, if sche be at my Lords fyndynge and not at her owen. And for playing at my Lordis Sone and heir Chaumbre doure the Lord Percy, ijs. And for playing at the Chaumbre doores of my Lords yonger sonnes my yonge Maisters, after viij the pece for every of them—xxijs. iiijd.' (Northumberland Payment Book, p. 343.) The Northumberland Household Book tells us what the minstrels received in wages: 'Every Mynstrall, if he be a Taberett, shall have iiijz.; every Luyte and Rebec, xxxiis. iiijd.; and to be payd in houshold if they have it not by patent or warrant' (p. 48). Minstrels frequently travelled with their masters when the latter paid visits; not seldom musicians went from place to place, and castle to castle, to exhibit their skill, and these the musical Earl also treated well: 'Item. My Lorde usith and accustomyth to gyfe yerely to every Erlis Mynstrellis, when they custome to come to hym yerely, iijs. iiijd. And if they come to my Lord seldome, ones in ij or iij yeres, than vjs. viijd.' On St. Nicholas eve, the Master of the Children was paid 3s. 4d.; on Christmas morning the chapel received 20s. for playing the 'Nativitie' and the 'Excelsis'; and for the 'play of the Resurrection on Easter morning, xxs.' Like the King, these noblemen employed a Master of the Revels 'for the overseeing and ordering of Playes and Interludes and dressing that is plaid in the xii Dayes of Crestenmas' (Northumberland Payment Book, p. 343). The performers in these masques were generally the Gentlemen and Children of the Chapel: 'Item. My Lorde useth to gyf yerely when his Lordship is at home, in reward to them of his Lordschipp Chappel, that doith play upon Shroftewsdays at night xs.' (Id.) Burney gives many of the entries in this book, and adds (II, p. 571): 'This magnificent nobleman dying 1527, his son, the sixth Earl, whose passion for Ann Bullen is supposed to have occasioned his disgrace at Court, seems to have been treated with great insolence and indignity by Cardinal Wolsey, who, by an extraordinary stretch of power, to which the Earl thought it prudent to submit, demanded his Choral Books for the use of his own Chapel.' Letters concerning this requisition are still preserved in the

family, in which the Earl says: 'I do perceaff my Lorde Cardinalls pleasour ys to have such Boks as was in the Chapell of my lat Lord and ffayther (wos soll Jhu pardon). To the accompylment of which, at your desyer, I am conformable, notwithstandinge I trust to be able ons to set up a Chapell off myne owne. I shall with all sped send up the Boks unto my Lords Grace, as to say iiij Antiffoners, such as I think wher not seen a gret wyll, v Gralls [Graduals], an Ordeorly [Ordinal], a Manuall, viij Prossessioners [Processionals].' Such a requisition was thoroughly characteristic of the Cardinal.

The travelling minstrels mentioned above must not be confounded with the Waits, an entirely distinct body. The latter were trained musicians, and not wandering minstrels or 'vagabonds' within the 'meaning of the Act': nor were they anything like—in work or excellence—the so-called 'waits' who make the nights at Christmastide so horrible to-day. They enjoyed privileges of their own and received official recognition (*v.* article by F. A. Borland in *Musical News*, July 31, 1915). They were properly apprenticed to masters in their calling, and each of them, under an Act of 2 Edward VI., was entitled to take two apprentices. Their work was very varied, and the accounts of their activities are enshrined in various municipal and civic archives make extremely interesting reading. In the sixteenth year of Henry VIII.'s reign a Royal Order compensated the Waits for the loss they had sustained by the discontinuance of the ceremonial observance of dedication-days of churches (Borland). In 1536-37 there was a 'Triumph ffor the conception of the Queen's Grace' (Jane Seymour, the mother of Edward VI.) at Norwich: 'Paid to the iiij Waytes for their labor blowynge upon the crosse time of the p'cession xij*d*.' By 'blowynge' I suppose is meant a performance on the Recorders. The Feast of Corpus Christi, with its procession, was celebrated in York with much splendour, and the Waits had their place in the ceremonies. In 1546, 11*s*. is ordered to be paid for a 'base shalme.' (*Ibid.*). These few references should suffice to show what part this body of instrumentalists played in the musical scheme of the period.

The instruments in vogue during the fifty years under consideration were, first, trumpets, trombones, and drums; then lutes, shalms, pipes, harps, organs, rebecs, and virginals. All these are mentioned in the various books of payments and in the annals of royal and ducal bands and chapels. About half-way through the period we meet with viols. The performers on these instruments—so far as concerns those employed at Court—were largely foreigners: Italians, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Germans; but, naturally, there was no lack of native players, as so many indications prove. It has, unfortunately, too often been the rule of the powers-that-be to employ an inordinately large number of alien musicians. This, when the result justifies the action, is not to be blamed; it is perhaps the only fault that can be found in the attitude of the Tudor sovereigns to music that they gave such great preference to foreign musicians when there was no dearth of excellent virtuosi of English birth. Viewed from the standpoint of the internationality of art, such preference cannot be condemned; but it is a habit that easily becomes a fashion, and as such is with great difficulty bounded by reason and justice.

The religious revolution that was coming could not but have affected music very much. The break with Rome would not have immediately made any great change in our music; but the versification of the Psalms in the vernacular would, and did, do so. Their editors, naturally enough, recommended their

use in preference to the 'ungodly songes and ballads'; and Anthony à Wood says of Sternhold that he versified fifty-one of the Psalms, and 'caused musical notes to be set to them, thinking thereby that the courtiers would sing them instead of their sonnets, but did not, only some few excepted.' Miles Coverdale's 'Address unto the Christian reader' in his 'Goastly Psalms and Spirituall Songes' (1538) has:

... Wolde God that our Mynstrels had none
'other thyng to play upon, neither our carters and
plowmen other thyng to whistle upon, save psalmes,
hymns, and such like godly songes. . . . And if
women at the rockes [distaffs], and spinnyng at the
wheles, had none other songes to pass their time withall,
than such as Moses' sister . . . sange before them,
they should be better occupied than with *Hey, nonny,*
nonny, Hey, trolly, lolly, and such like fantasies.

Early in the reign we find the ballads much admired. Barclay, in the fourth Eclogue (*c.* 1514), says: 'Then laude ye songes, and ballades magnifie.' Certainly the King found nothing wrong in such light secular music, for—so far as we can tell with certainty—he composed some himself. Yet later in his reign (in 1543) an Act of Parliament was passed suppressing them almost entirely. Although some few exceptions were made, Henry seemed determined that nothing should appear which could be used 'as a weapon against the Reformation' (Chappell). The Act states that:

... froward and malicious minds, intending to
subvert the true exposition of scripture, have taken
upon them by printed ballads, rhymes, etc., subtilly
and craftily to instruct his highness' people, and specially
the youth of this his realm, untruly. For reformation
whereof, his majesty considereth it most requisite to
purge his realm of all such books, ballads, rhymes, and
songs, as be pestiferous and noisome. Therefore if any
printer shall print, give, or deliver, any such, he shall
suffer, for the first time imprisonment for three months,
and forfeit for every copy 10*l*. and for the second time,
forfeit all his goods and his body be committed to
perpetual prison.

Books printed and published before 1540 were exempted.

In reviewing the composers of the period it will not be necessary at this time of day to give full biographies of the musical giants of that era; a few notes will be all that is called for in this place. Of 'the father of English Cathedral music' not much can be said to-day; moreover, Tallis's greatest activity as a creative musician was developed after the half-century under consideration. Tye, too, came to maturity when the fifty years designated had almost come to an end; he was not organist at Ely until 1541, and only achieved the Doctorate of Music in 1548. Still there can be little doubt that he enjoyed an enormous popularity in his own day; and in Sam Rowley's play, 'When you see me, you know me,' the Prince repeats what Grove thinks 'may be a genuine saying of Henry VIII.':

I oft have heard my Father merrilly speake,
In your high praise: and thus his Hignesse sayth:
'England one God, one truth, one Doctor hath
In Musicke's art, and that is Doctor Tye
Admired for skill in harmony.'

Contemporary—for our present purpose—with Tallis and Tye was Robert White, a man of quite exceptional talent who is far too little known in this country. It is as Dr. Walker justly remarks: '. . . Whyte . . . is fairly to be reckoned—even remembering that Palestrina and Lassus were contemporaries—as among the very greatest European composers of his time. No English musician deserves more

emphatically a tardy resurrection.' John Taverner is another name high in the list of English talent, and although its bearer could not hope for favourable comparison with Tye at his best, his genius was still sufficiently great to merit recognition to-day. Indeed, Foxe tells us that when imprisoned at Oxford for alleged heresy, he escaped death on account of his music. The same authority adds that 'this Taverner repented him very much that he had made songes to Popishe ditties in the tyme of his blindenes.' While speaking of narrow escapes from the stake, we may mention that of John Merbecke, whose 'premature reforming zeal,' to use Burney's words, 'nearly made a martyr of him. . . . He had, indeed, the honour of being condemned to the stake, but was pardoned.' It should be mentioned, however, that this pardon again must have been on account of his excellence as a musician, since such powerful personages as Sir Humphrey Fostfr and the Bishop of Winchester interceded for him. Then there were John Sheppard, whose three-part 'Stev'n first after Christ for Gods worde his blood spent' is described by Ambros as 'nothing less than a master-work'; the early John Dygon, who graduated as a B. Mus. in April, 1512, and whose motet 'Ad lapidis positionem' is printed by Hawkins; John Thorne of York, though late in the period, whose three-part motet 'Stella Coeli' is well worthy of notice, the conduct of the several parts being very dignified and full of vigour, the harmony excellent, and the imitation interesting (Ambros), Grove mentioning two more MSS. of his; and Edmund Turges, represented in the Fayrfax MS., and not even mentioned in Grove. Another early figure was William of Newark, Master of the boys of the Chapel; and still another was William Cornysh, whose son William was advanced enough to use the 'chord of the sharp seventh of a key, with a false fifth' (Burney).

Hugh Aston was a very eminent figure early in this half-century, and one of the most celebrated of pre-Reformation composers. A hornpipe of his, contained in the Royal MSS. App. 58 (British Museum) is, as Henry Davey remarks, 'an extraordinary piece of keyboard execution,' and its composer is claimed by this historian 'as the inventor of instrumental composition.' The Bodleian Library and that of the Music School (Oxford), Peterhouse Library (Cambridge), and the British Museum all possess specimens of his work. Robert Fayrfax was another famous writer of the period, but since I have dealt with him already in three articles contributed to *Musical News* (January 20, February 3 and 10, 1917), I shall do no more than refer the possibly interested reader to them. I think the names already mentioned will be sufficient to impress the student with the high importance of this period, to the history of English music. Nor does this list by any means complete the tale. But two minor lights might be mentioned, since they had to do with the controversies surrounding Henry's matrimonial affairs. The first is Mark Smeaton, groom of the chamber to Anne Bullen, and a musician high in Court favour. He was accused of misconduct with the Queen, and he ultimately confessed, though Anne strenuously denied it. That some understanding existed between the two can hardly be doubted when we consider some of the contemporary correspondence; but that he deserved the hanging he received, is quite open to question. The other was Thomas Abel, who instructed Queen Catherine in music. This meddlesome musician was injudicious enough to perpetrate a treatise entitled 'De non dissolvendo Henrici et Catharinae Matrimonio,' and came to an untimely end by hanging and quartering in 1540. The moral whereof is, that it was good for cobblers to stick to their lasts in the first half of the 16th century.

Before leaving the subject, I should like to draw attention to three volumes which illustrate, each in a different way, the music of the period. The books I am referring to are the MS. above mentioned (Royal MSS. 58), Rastell's 'Interlude of the four Elements' (1510), and a song-book published by Wynkyn de Worde, in London, in 1530. The first of these three contains what is the first music actually composed expressly for instruments, and not simply arranged vocal pieces. As such it is of great interest and value to the musical historian. The 'Interlude' illustrates one of the uses to which music was put secularly. It describes various natural phenomena in verses spoken by different allegorical characters. Towards the end is the direction, 'Then the dauncers without the hall sing this wyse and they within answer'; after which follows music to the text 'Tyme to pass with goodly sport, etc.'—obviously a popular song at the period. Wynkyn de Worde's publication arrived on the scene at a time when country and king were busy with religious controversy. Yet these things did not seem to affect the general public much, if such a collection of secular songs could find use and customers. In the book, of which the Bass part is in the British Museum (K.k.e.l.), 'ar conteynynd XX songes IX of IIII partes and XI of three partes.' The composers included are Cornysh, Pygot, Taverner, Fayrfax, Cowper, and Jones. There appears to be no other copy, or other part, of this work known.

The first half of the 16th century is important, therefore, for several reasons, and political and religious causes often had great effects. Church music was passing through one of its trying times, and methods were considerably changed in the fifty years under review. During the period, too, we find the King composing genial music; we see composers rising who could brave comparison with their Continental *confrères*; we notice the writing of original instrumental music, and the publication of the first book in England to consist exclusively of music. This was the critical time when music was kicking off its ancient swaddling-clothes, and was becoming the sturdy youth that reached such noble manhood at the close of the Elizabethan era.

WELSH HYMNS AND HYMN-SINGING.

By WILLIAM CHILD.

The Hymn Festivals that have been held in England during the past few years have been well worth while. They have undoubtedly improved congregational singing in the districts in which they took place by drawing attention to, and rehearsing, many new and neglected old tunes of the best type. But their indirect influence has been even greater. They have not only brought the question of popular hymnody well to the fore, and kept it there; they have reminded church-goers generally that the hymn-tune is not a part-song for the choir, but a song for the people, with the result that much of the old congregational diffidence is gone. Many organists and choirs now take a sympathetic view of the subject, so that the prospects of co-operation between the trained singers and the untrained crowd were never so bright as to-day. The Hymn Festival was an English adaptation of a peculiarly Welsh institution, but it can never flourish so vigorously as its original, because it will necessarily lack the note of frank emotion that distinguishes the Welsh gatherings. Moreover, fond as the English are of hymns, comparatively few of their favourites appeal to them on the national side. The old Welsh tunes have a good deal of the character of folk-song, and the