Harpsichord & fortepiano

Vol. 13, No. 2 Spring, 2009

Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

THOMAS MORLEY'S KEYBOARD MUSIC

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Thomas Morley was a pupil of William Byrd and clearly learnt much from him about the composition of sacred and secular vocal works. No doubt too he also learnt much about the composition of keyboard music, for he became known as an organist in Norwich and at St. Paul's Cathedral quite early in life. In his early thirties he began to be very productive, and his collected compositions appeared in print within the last ten years of his relatively short life, between 1593 and 1602. These consisted of masterly collections of pieces of secular music for voices for between two and six parts, a set of Ayres for voice and lute (1600), which, sadly, does not survive complete, and *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a collection of madrigals in honour of Queen Elizabeth I which Morley edited and contributed to with two items of his own. In addition to his music Morley also wrote one of the finest musical tutors to be published up to his time, and the first in English - *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practical) Musicke* (1597). This was dedicated to Byrd, and shows the vast knowledge Morley had acquired of sixteenth-century European music.

Morley's keyboard music does not survive in any great quantity, and some of it has not received very high acclaim from commentators. There is, apparently, no organ music as such, although one or two of the surviving pieces do in fact sound very pleasant on the instrument. Thirteen works were assembled by Thurston Dart, and issued in two volumes in 1959. The pieces comprise five pavans, four galliards, an alman, a fantasia and two sets of variations. They survive mostly in two famous manuscripts - the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. MS 32.g.9. Music MS 168), which was compiled between 1609 and 1619, and the *William Forster Virginal Book* (British Library, Royal Music Library MS 24.d.3) which is dated 31 January 1624. Further items are in another manuscript at the Fitzwilliam Museum (MS 52.d.25) which was owned by John Bull in the early years of the seventeenth century.

Morley's own views on keyboard music can be gauged from the discussion of titles and forms in his tutor. The pavan and galliard are described there as follows: the pavan is

> a kind of staid music ordained for grave dancing and most commonly made of three strains, whereof every strain is played or sung twice; a strain they make to contain eight, twelve, or sixteen semibreves as they list, yet fewer than eight I have not seen in any Pavan. In this you may not so muchinsist in following the point as in a Fantasy, but it shall be enough to touch it once and so away to some close....
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> After every Pavan we usually set a Gaillard (that is a kind of music made out of the other), causing it to go by a measure which the learned call *'trochaicam rationem'*, consisting of a long and short stroke successively, for it as the foot *trochaeus* consisteth of one syllable or two times and another of one time so it is the first of these two strokes double to the latter, the first being in time of a semibreve and the latter of a minim. This is a lighter and more stirring kind of dancing than the Pavan, consisting of the same number of strains;...

Points of imitation were not treated so strictly or extensively in pavans as in fantasies, and one brief imitative treatment would lead quite quickly to a close, i.e. cadence, to end the section. Other dances described more briefly include the alman, branle, volte and courante.

The Pavan and Galliard in F (*Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* 169 and 170) evidently remained well known and liked for some years after Morley's death. Both pieces were arranged by Philip Rosseter for a mixed consort and published in a set of lessons in 1609. There is a possibility that the Pavan, at least, may have been based on, or arranged from, a vocal original of some kind. The Pavan has varied repeats for its first two sections, while the third section lacks

this feature. The theme for the curious third section tends to spoil the character of the music a little by being based, apparently, on a liturgical theme presented in regular notes as the melody. The Gaillard has three sections, all with varied repeats, and manipulates a triple time version of the Pavan theme as its basis (see Ex. 1). The main sections and varied repeats in these pieces can, of course, be elaborated farther in performance. This may be the case especially with the galliard, which, as Morley said, is a "lighter" and "more stirring" kind of dance. Pieces such as these call for delicate nimble playing that corresponds to the light texture of so many of the composer's canzonets and madrigals.

The very long *Quadro Pavan* relies a little too much on facile echoes and repetitions between the two hands, especially in the varied repeat of the third section. The piece is unusual in having four sections with repeats, and its length and dignity often recall the music of Byrd.

The *Passymeasures Pavan* is a more concise movement with some very attractive delicate touches in its melody. These tend to recall the scene of the dance, and conjure up graceful elegant images with such rhythms as in Ex 1b.

Morley's A Minor Pavan and Galliard (FWVB153-4) both have thematic recollections of music by John Dowland, while their overall mood and technique are very much in Dowland's manner (*semper dolens*). The Pavan, in fact, survives in an arrangement for lute solo by Francis Cutting. Did Morley come across much of Dowland's music before his death? The *Lachrimae* in any case were not published until 1604. The start of Morley's Pavan is shown in Ex. 2.

The close imitations at the start are also found in a characteristic way at the start of the second section, and in both the varied repeats. The third section begins with a relaxation of the tension and momentum gained early in the movement, until a very unusual point is reached with rests and an unexpected chord progression (see Ex. 3). There is a distinct poignancy in this passage, and at the comparable point in the varied repeat, which perhaps suggests that Morley may have written these pieces as a memorial tribute to a fellow musician. If so, when was it written, and for whom?

The companion Galliard adjusts the theme of the Pavan for the production of a delightfully jolly piece. The dancing rhythms in triple time switch to duple time near the end of the first section which closes with some emphatic cross-rhythms in 6/8 metre. The 6/8 cross-rhythms become a little more prominent in the second section and later. The jubilant character of the music recalls many of the composer's light ballets and canzonets, especially in its highly attractive melody (see Ex. 4). The two movements together exploit a great range of emotion, from the sad and reflective to the exuberant and spirited.

The Galliard in G again shows Morley in an exuberant frame of mind, especially in terms of the construction of scale passages, and, more broadly, in its overall form. There are six sections, each one with a varied repeat. Furthermore, sections 1 - 3 are themselves given varied repeats in sections 4 - 6. In the last three sections the left hand takesits fair share of very active scale passages. The grandiose chordal opening of section 3 is a splendid gesture, enhanced on its varied repeat and with its further reappearance twice in section 6.

The D Minor Pavan and Galliard is music by Morley that was "sett by Mr Heyborne". The original instrumentation is not known and has not apparently survived; it may have been for a consort of from four to six instruments. Ferdinand Richardson, alias Mr. Heyborne/ Heaburn (c. 1558-1618) was a pupil of Tallis, and is represented in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. He was also the dedicatee of Farnaby's set of Canzonets that appeared in 1598. Both these D minor pieces are of an extrovert character in this setting (the Pavan more so that the Galliard), but they do not share any common thematic material. The Galliard seems to start with a minor key reference to the Walsingham theme of John Bull's grand set of variations which opens the Fitzwilliam book, and which was also treated by Byrd in a similar, very beautiful piece (FWVB68).

The brief Alman in C is an elegant movement, although technically quite demanding in terms of fluent finger work. This modest piece belies the extravagant style and dance movement that Morley mentioned in his tutor in connection with this type of dance.

The D Minor Fantasia may have been based on a vocal original, or an instrumental original, as Thurston Dart suggested and illustrated, and its techniques are very Italianate. As its stylistic manner comes very close to samples in organ music by the Gabrielis, Merulo, Mayone and Trabaci, the movement might well be played on the organ. On certain instruments it sounds very good with quiet 8′, 4′ and 2′ stops on a single manual.

Two sets of variations on well-known themes survive from Morley's pen: "Nancy" and "Go from my window". Both these works were noticed by Charles van den Borren, who offered a charming description of their

content. The song "Nancy" tells of the heroic adventures of a London juvenile, who, after displaying exemplary courage in Türkey, ends up marrying the king's daughter. Morley's variations become successively more animated and reveal a fascinating mixture of English and Italian musical techniques. The virtuosic element is at times very strong and emphatic.

"Go from my window" is a set of seven variations on the well-known song which concerns a lover pleading for entry to the beloved's home and being rebuffed with ridicule and derision. As has been noticed, Morley's set of variations has a good deal in common with another set attributed to John Munday in the Fitzwilliam Book (c.f. FWVB 9 and 42). The latter has eight variations rather than seven, and the true identity of the composer has not quite been established. It would be fascinating to know the sources of the copies that Francis Tregian used for his manuscript: Did he notice he was copying the same piece (more or less) twice over? Morley's variations become progressively more elaborate and virtuosic as the work proceeds. Semiquaver patters are introduced gradually and predominate in variations 6 and 7, first in the right hand and then in the left.

It is intriguing to notice the way in which the composition of keyboard variations has so many similarities in Morley's work in the sixteenth century with Mozart's at the end of the eighteenth. Both composers start their sets very simply and introduce greater activity with stronger technical demands on the performer as their sets of variations proceed. There are various sets for piano where Mozart adopted this method. Many of his sets were based on popular tunes of the day, as were those of the Elizabethan period. It may well be that the teaching and encouragement of improvisation had a good deal to do with the way in which pieces involving variations were extemporized and composed.

Morley's keyboard music does not represent a very large body of work in its surviving state, and possibly he may not be the only composer of all that has been attributed to him. He, like others, made copies of music by earlier and contemporary composers, and, in his preparatory work for his tutor, he probably did this more than most. His life was relatively short, and his illustrious teacher William Byrd outlived him by many years as an active composer. Morley did not match him with as prolific a production for the keyboard and did not match the older composer's inspirational achievement, but Morley's work survives now as a small body of very varied and fascinating pieces that still provide great pleasure in practice and performance.

Ex. 1