

## Restoration Keyboard Music

This series of concerts is based on my researches into 17th century English keyboard music, especially that of Matthew Locke and his Restoration colleagues, Albertus Bryne and John Roberts.

### **Concert 1. "Melothesia restored". The keyboard music by Matthew Locke and his contemporaries.**

Given at the David Josefowitz Recital Hall, Royal Academy of Music on Tuesday SEP 30, 2003

Music by Matthew Locke (c.1622-77), Frescobaldi (1583-1643), Chambonnières (c.1602-72), William Gregory (*fl* 1651-87), Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), Froberger (1616-67), Albert Bryne (c.1621-c.1670)

This programme sets a selection of Matthew Locke's remarkable keyboard music within the wider context of seventeenth century keyboard playing. Although Locke confessed little admiration for foreign musical practitioners, he is clearly indebted to European influences. The un-measured prelude style which we find in the Prelude of the final C Major suite, for example, suggest a French influence, perhaps through the lutenists who came to London with the return of Charles II. Locke's rhythmic notation belies the subtle inflections and nuances of what we might call the international style which he first met as a young man visiting the Netherlands with his future regal employer. One of the greatest keyboard players of his day, Froberger, visited London before 1653 and, not surprisingly, we find his powerful personality behind several pieces in Locke's pioneering publication, *Melothesia*. As for other worthy composers of music for the harpsichord and organ, we have Locke's own testimony in his written reply to Thomas Salmon in 1672, where, in addition to Froberger, he mentions Frescobaldi and Chambonnières with the Englishmen John Bull, Orlando Gibbons, Albertus Bryne (his contemporary and organist of Westminster Abbey) and Benjamin Rogers.

Matthew Locke was the leading English composer of the mid-seventeenth century and represents the first flowerings of a truly baroque style in English music, which would be taken up by John Blow and Henry Purcell. Locke's surviving harpsichord music is in keeping with Restoration taste and eschews the more extended and complex forms of the virginalists in favour of modern court dances and popular tunes. If the harpsichord music gives us a glimpse of musical intimacy in a domestic setting, the nine extant organ pieces are ceremonial music. They are no less varied than the harpsichord pieces, particularly with regard to registration and texture, and combine the fugal idioms of earlier consort and keyboard music with the more up-to-date rhythms and gestures of French style.

Locke began his musical life as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral (Locke's initials can still be seen there, carved into the choir stalls.) He reached early maturity during the turbulent years of the Civil War. Locke visited the Low Countries in 1648 (when Prince Charles the future Charles II was there) but returned to England shortly after. During the 1650s he established a name for himself as an important composer of consort music. He also collaborated in Shirley's masque *Cupid and Death* and sang in Davenant's opera *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656.

With the return of Charles II as monarch in 1660, Locke became England's leading musical figure and fashioned a new Royal musical establishment. In addition to writing the music for Charles' coronation in 1661, Locke composed for His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornets, the King's band of twenty-four violins, the Chapel Royal and the King's private music. He passed over the old-fashioned consort style of Jenkins, at which he had excelled in the 1650s, in favour of Charles' newly acquired taste for French dances. He also worked for the London theatres establishing a reputation as the finest exponent of English opera before Purcell.

Locke left a significant body of writings from which we can see he is very much a man of his time not least in his frequent use of barbed wit and his irascible temperament is well documented. As Kenneth Long (1972) so memorably put it: 'Apart from his music, Locke goes down in English musical history as one of the most quarrelsome, acrimonious and abusive men of all time.'

The surviving keyboard music consists of suites of dances for domestic use and a smaller body of voluntaries for organ. In addition to the familiar French court dances of Almand (or Almain) in both quick and slow varieties, Corant, Saraband and Jig, we find English country dances, notably the Hornpipe and Rant. Locke appears to have coined the noun 'firk' in connection with jig-like pieces, such as the Rant ('to firk' means to dance rapidly and frisk about). The majority of Locke's keyboard music occurs in his own publication, *Melothesia* ('the setting of melody'), published in 1673: first major collection of keyboard music since Byrd and Gibbons collaborated on *Parthenia* in 1612. The harpsichord pieces are arranged by key into suites (although not named as such) and each suite is strongly characterised, its constituent parts having been chosen to reflect particular affects and moods. The D Minor suite is a composite work with the first three movements by William Gregory (*fl.* 1651-87) and a concluding Hornpipe by Locke. Gregory was a viol player and singer in Charles II's Private Musick and a colleague of Locke. He was an acknowledged teacher in London and among the musicians who followed Cromwell's body to the grave.

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## **Concert 2. "The Life of Bryan". The Keyboard music of Albert Bryan and John Roberts.**

Given at the David Josefowitz Recital Hall, Royal Academy of Music on Tuesday JAN 6, 2004 at 6pm

### Programme

Music by Albert Bryne (*ca.* 1621–71), John Roberts (*fl.* 1650–80), John Ravenscroft (*d.c.* 1708), Matthew Locke (*c.* 1622–77), Richard Gibbs (*fl.* 1622–44), Gerhard Diessener (*fl.* 1660–84) and John Moss (*fl.* 1662–84)

Tonight's concert follows on from the first concert in this series which was devoted to the keyboard music of Matthew Locke and his contemporaries. Alongside Locke's pieces, there

survives a considerable and sophisticated body of Restoration keyboard music. This concert explores some of the figures who helped to forge that musical style and who stand out for their originality and historical importance, namely; John Roberts (fl.1650–80), Albert Bryne (ca.1621–71) and John Moss (fl.1662–84). With Locke, their music displays an indigenous style whose idiom remained largely unchanged by Blow and Purcell in the next generation. Despite a large body of music having survived, Restoration keyboard music is now largely unknown and the current view is unsympathetic towards the musical climate and values which produced it.

Albert Bryne was a pupil of John Tomkins (brother of Thomas), whom he succeeded as organist of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1638 at the age of seventeen. After the Great Fire of London, he moved to Westminster Abbey in 1666, remaining there only until 1668 when he was succeeded by John Blow, thence returning to St.Paul's. He was included in the list of principal London teachers "for the Organ or Virginal" during the Commonwealth and mentioned as "Mr. Albertus Brian, that famously velvet fingered Organist" (Batchiler, *The Virgin's Pattern*, 1661) and "an excellent musitian" (Wood). Albert Bryne wrote a small number of services and anthems, though his importance rests mainly on his keyboard music, some suites and one organ piece, which was a strong influence on his contemporaries and subsequent generations. The opening four pieces are typical settings of the dances found in domestic keyboard manuscripts and *Musicks Hand-maide*. The texture is predominantly in three parts: two parts in the left hand producing sonority; the right hand carrying the melody alone.

Unlike Bryne, the details of John Roberts' life remain obscure. Indeed until the recent discovery that he was employed as a vicar choral at Lincoln in the 1660s, nothing at all was known about his career. Playford's reference to a "Roberts" teaching the harpsichord in London (*Musicall Banquet*, 1651) may refer to the composer of the Suite in E minor published two decades later in *Melothesia* (1673). Roberts' keyboard writing is amongst the most accomplished and fluent to be found during the Commonwealth and Restoration periods and closely resembles contemporary European composers. He uses slurs to indicate the over-holding of harmonies (following French practice) and frequently writes varied repeats (*doubles*) as in the two Corants of this suite which include written-out doubles and rely heavily on the *brisé* or broken chord style. The Prelude is a model of its kind and like Locke's examples (also in *Melothesia*) the guesture and sensitivity to dissonant harmony is strangely reminiscent of Froberger. To conclude the suite in tonight's performance, I will improvise a Jig based on the notes and harmonies of Robert's Almain but adapted to the compound rhythms of a 12/8 gigue.

The lovely anonymous Ground in B minor comes from a manuscript of mainly English Music. Like the grounds of Blow, Purcell and Croft it seems to follow vocal models and could be an arrangement of a song. The right hand melody takes up the agogic rests of the opening ground and weaves in and out of the repeated harmony to hypnotic effect. The key of B minor is particularly unusual at this time although the modulation to its relative major, D major, is beautifully timed and more typical of the English composers.

John Ravenscroft's Voluntary in E minor is the first of a set of organ pieces added to a manuscript associated with John Harris, brother of the organ builder, Renatus Harris and is a rare example in Restoration organ music of a double fugue with chromatic subjects falling and rising through a fourth. Ravenscroft studied with Corelli in Rome and published two sets of trio sonatas

closely following his style. The Voluntary in E minor, however, is closely indebted to the Capriccio style of Froberger and Kerll and the chromatic toccatas of Frescobaldi which Blow, for example, is known to have copied and ornamented. The key and contrapuntal treatment are also unusual and can be found in earlier lute music, such as Dowland's "Forlorn Hope Fancy" and the many chromatic keyboard fantasias of Sweelinck, Bull, Scheidt, Merula and others.

Bryne's keyboard suites are notable for their four movement scheme, meticulous notation of *notes inégale* and the inclusion of the Jig-Almain as the fourth movement. The Suite in A minor is a fine example with many extraordinary features of its own. The Almain and Saraband are remarkably close to the sound world of Chambonnières while the highly syncopated Corant is more rhythmically complex than a contemporary French player would have entertained. The final Jig-Almain is written in simple duple time and imitative, like those of Froberger and the north German players. I play this piece in duple-time although a compound time performance may also be implied by the term "Jig" in its title.

Locke's Voluntary in A minor is an early example of the single movement organ piece which was so popular in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has a bipartite structure in which the second part is livelier than the first and has a distinctive new theme. These two sections became separate movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> century organ voluntary. Bryne's Voluntary in A Minor is in one continuous movement with three contrapuntal sections or *points*, and features bold sequences and demisemiquaver flourishes towards the end.

Richard Gibbs was organist of Norwich Cathedral from 1622 until services were disrupted by the civil wars in the early 1640s. He returned to Norwich as organist of Christ Church in 1663. The Almain and Corant are attributed to him alongside music by Roberts, Locke and Blow. In texture and contrapuntal interest, they are closely related to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century pavan and galliard.

The second Almain and Corant are attributed to Locke and Blow respectively but could be by either or both! They represent the later fully developed English style. The almain uses the full compass of the instrument and daring turns of harmony and rhythm while the corant exploits contrast of textures and the rhythmic and metrical instability inherent in the dance.

The German keyboard player, Gerhard Diessener, settled in England in the 1670s after working in Kassel and possibly France. He gave concerts in his house in Great Russell Street, London and taught the daughter of Sir Harbottle Grimston of Gorhambury, near St Albans. Diessener has the distinction of having advertised an intention to publish the first keyboard book devoted to a single composer (himself) in 1684. He called his work the *Kitharapaideia* but no copy has survived. His Almain was published in *Melothesia* and is typical of the harmonically enterprising style of Locke. Diessener's Ground is a modest but charming example of the fixed bass variation technique beloved of bass viol players and violinists of the period.

The bass viol player, John Moss, led a colourful career as a music teacher before he became a member of the King's Private Musick in 1678 upon the death of John Jenkins. His single surviving keyboard suite serves to remind us of the close affinity between viol playing and keyboard music. That this suite was published in Locke's *Melothesia* and prefigures Purcell's keyboard suite in F to a remarkable degree, further underlines Moss's importance to his

contemporaries. His *Almain* could be mistaken for the work of an early 18<sup>th</sup> century composer: the modulations are handled with unusual ease and the characteristic *inéga*le rhythm is written throughout in alternating dotted semiquavers and demisemiquavers.

John Blow was one of the first choristers in the Chapel Royal after the Restoration of Charles II. He succeeded Albert Bryne at Westminster Abbey in 1668 (and later at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1687) and became composer to the king on Pelham Humphrey's death in 1674. A large body of Blow's keyboard music for organ and harpsichord has survived and this reveals a remarkable personality. The *Ground in G minor* (also called *chaconne* in some sources) nicely exemplifies his quixotic style. Like Locke, Blow was much influenced by the continental players in London, the Italian keyboardists (Sebenico and Draghi) and especially the violinists such as Matteis. John Evelyn (1674) tells us that Matteis "seem'd to be *spiritato*'d & plaied such ravishing things on a ground as astonish'd us all": a description which fits the spirit of Blow's *ground* perfectly.

Finally a word about the Restoration instrumentarium. Few 17<sup>th</sup> century English harpsichords survive and although many instruments were imported, a few English makers flourished. The virginals were by far the most popular domestic keyboard instrument in Britain in the period between the Civil War and the Restoration. In stark contrast to the Puritan strictures in public life, music-making flourished at home as never before and virginals remained popular in Britain long after they ceased to be produced on mainland Europe. Harpsichords and spinets were more popular in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and gradually replaced the virginals as domestic instruments of choice. The organ pieces would have been performed liturgically on the larger instruments of the Smith and Dallam type or on a small chest or table organ such as Thomas Mace describes. The Claviorganum (an organ and harpsichord combined in one instrument) was also known in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Keyboard instruments were tuned in meantone temperament.

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### **Concert 3. "The English Orpheus". Keyboard music by John Blow, Giovanni Battista Draghi and Henry Purcell.**

Given at the David Josefowitz Recital Hall, Royal Academy of Music on Tuesday JUN 21, 2004 at 7pm

#### Programme

Tocatta in A major BWV Anh.178 minor (Giovanni Battista Draghi) ; and Suite in A minor (Henry Purcell); Suite in B Trumpet Tune - The Virtuous Wife (Purcell); Voluntary in D minor (Blow); Voluntary in G major (Purcell); Suite in G major (Blow); Overture - The Virtuous Wife, Ground in D minor - Crown the altar, Trumpet Tune and Chorus - The Indian Queen (Purcell); Dr. Blow's Chaconne in Faut (Blow)

Harpsichord after Ruckers (1624) by MacKinnon & Waitzman

Italian Organ inscribed MICHAEL' ANGELUS SANARICS CRITALIENSIS,  
1763 Single manual, C-E short octave, C,D,E,F,G,A-c  
chromatic, 45 notes. 7 ranks, Musette (drone) and Birdsong

The Toccata in A major Bwv Anh.178 is attributed to Purcell in 3 of its 5 surviving sources all of which have English provenance. It has been attributed in recent times to J. S. Bach and, as such, found its way into the first complete edition of Bach's music. Recently Pieter Dirksen has convincingly argued for the authorship of the north German organist, Reincken. The connection between German keyboard music and John Blow is well documented through autograph manuscripts which preserve his arrangements of music by Froberger, Strungck and J. C. F. Fischer. Published collections of continental toccatas (for example by Frescobaldi and Georg Muffat) were also known in London. The A major Toccata is a fine multi sectional work with three fuges in contrasting metres.

Purcell's magnificent A minor suite is one of the finest in the posthumous collection of eight suites published by his widow in 1696. Its sophisticated rhythmic and harmonic language conceals its indebtedness to the Albertus Bryne's suite in the same key (see previous concert) and, side-by-side, these two suites show remarkable similarities. The concluding Jigg comes from a recently discovered autograph MS (1995) and is an uncannily Bachian model of a Canarie-style gigue.

The Italian keyboard player and composer, Giovanni Battista Draghi (c1640–1708) was resident in England from 1660s. Charles II' brought Draghi to London as part of abortive scheme to establish Italian opera in England and he flourished at a time when interest in native talent was on the wane. Musical fashion looked to France for inspiration and Draghi's keyboard music clearly reflects this.

Samuel Pepys heard him sing and play on 12 February 1667 and wrote:

'Signor Baptista ...is the poet as well as the musician; ...[he] did sing the whole [act of an opera] from the words without any music prikt, and played all along upon the harpsicon most admirably, and the composition most excellent....He pretends not to voice, though it be good, but not excellent.'

His keyboard talents were more favourably reviewed. John Evelyn called him 'that excellent & stupendous Artist' (18 Jan 1685) and thought him one of the best harpsichordists in Europe.

In 1673 Draghi was made first organist at the queen's Catholic chapel in Somerset House over the head of the unfortunate but vituperative Englishman, Matthew Locke. We can imagine Locke's annoyance at this ignominy! England, however, continued to look after its 'famed Italian masters'. Draghi remained a prominent organist during Purcell and Blow's time and was awarded an annual pension by William III in 1698, confirmed by Queen Anne in 1702.

Draghi's unusual choice of B minor for his suite is typical of some French players and challenges the older methods of meantone tuning in a way which highlights particular pitches. His subtle palette of harmonies and expressive gestures (the E# in the Tombeau, for example) lend a melancholic and deeply felt atmosphere. The prelude is un-measured in the first few bars and the Rondeau is a charming gavotte-like evocation of French court dancing.

John Blow (1649–1708) was still a teenager when Draghi arrived in London. At the age of 19 Blow became organist of Westminster Abbey in succession to Albertus Bryne (3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1668). Six years later, on the death of Pelham Humphrey he became vocal composer to the King's 'private musick' (1674) and succeeded Christopher Gibbons as organist of the Chapel Royal in 1676. Blow left a considerably larger body of organ and harpsichord music than Purcell from which we can appreciate his sophisticated and cosmopolitan tastes in keyboard style. Perhaps through his contact with Draghi and other continentals such as the organ builder Bernard Smith, who was organist of St. Margaret's Westminster, Blow was able to become acquainted with Italian and German keyboard music, especially that of Frescobaldi and Froberger.

Henry Purcell (1659–95) was Blow's junior by 10 years and a chorister in the chapel Royal under Captain Henry Cooke and the John Blow himself from 1674. In 1673 Purcell was an unpaid assistant to the King's keyboard instrument tuner, John Hingston and from 1674 to 1678 trusted with the tuning of the Westminster Abbey organ. Towards the end of 1679 Purcell assumed Blow's position as organist of Westminster Abbey. Blow became master of the Children at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1687 and resumed his post Westminster Abbey following Purcell's tragically early death in 1695. Interestingly, Blow went into partnership with the organ builder/player Smith as King's keyboard tuners upon Purcell's death.

Along with Draghi and Blow, Purcell took part in a trial of organs in the Temple Church which became popularly known as the "battle of the organs". Draghi championed an instrument by Renuart Harris which Blow and his pupil Purcell demonstrated the virtues of an instrument by Bernard Smith.

Organs were often built for private houses and these instruments would have been just a well suited to the secular harpsichord music of the time, such as this orchestral air from the incidental music to *The Virtuous Wife*. Blow's Voluntary in D minor is a complex fantasia upon several themes; the opening falling chromatic scale with dotted countersubject, a insistent quaver figure featuring repeated notes, a rising scale with written out mordent and a dactylic motive similar to the one Bach uses towards the end of his organ fugue in F major, BWV 540. Purcell's celebrated Voluntary in G major is in two sections; the first slow moving chords interrupted by right hand ornamentation (which I play using the detuned Voce Umana stop in the manner of the South German Elevation pieces), the second lively, Italianate and fugal.

Blow's harpsichord suite is my own selection of four pieces in G major. The Prelude is a curious amalgam of styles but beautifully exploited to generate sonority in the instrument. The opening *brisé* textures give way a continuo-style chordal writing similar to the Fischer pieces Blow copied out and passages in Weckmann and Reincken's music. The Hunting Almain is an 'up-beat' example of this dance and features repeated notes and crisp appoggiaturas to suggest the pastoral, out-of-doors life suggested in the title. Judging by the surviving sources, it was a

popular piece. The Corant is rhythmically complex and reminds me of Rameau's *L'Agaçente*, from the *Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts* "the annoying one"! The lovely saraband has four strains of music rather than the usual two. The resulting "double" binary form is a conceit which turns a simple dance into a variation set, as if on a ground, or repeated chord sequence.

Evidence of Purcell's connection with foreign keyboard music is less tangible than in the case of Blow except that he knew the organ maker Bernard Smith. Purcell's attitude to foreign music is clear from his preface to his *Sonatas of III Parts for two violins and bass*, published in 1683, which states that

"he has faithfully endeavour'd a just imitation of the most fam'd Italian Masters; principally, to bring the seriousness and gravity of that sort of Musick into vogue, and reputation among our Country-men, whose humor, 'tis time now, should begin to loath the levity, and balladry of our neighbours" [ie. The French]

Transcriptions of Purcell's instrumental theatre music are well represented in the manuscript sources of his music. I conclude this concert with a suite of such pieces by Purcell, ending with Blow's magnificent and virtuoso Chaconne in F major. This extended set of variations is, as far as I am aware, an original keyboard piece but it suggests the full sonority of the opera orchestra such as Lully would have demanded in Paris. Listen out for the extreme contrasts of rhythm and harmony and the triplet hunting calls which appear about two-thirds of the way through – a device popular with the French *Clavecinistes*, such as Dandrieu a decade or so later.

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