



Seventeenth-Century  
English Keyboard Music

Benjamin Cosyn

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Volume One

Orhan Memed

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*To my parents*

## Preface

It would have been incorrect to have entitled this thesis 'The keyboard music of Benjamin Cosyn'. While it is a central purpose of this study to present an edition of his keyboard music, Cosyn's activities as collector and copyist in relation to his elders and contemporaries are of almost equal significance as his rôle as a composer. These details can be taken together in order to recognize and to assess the contribution of Cosyn to English keyboard music of the seventeenth century.

Musical examples within the text are few. In most instances, reference is given to relevant pieces (and bars within pieces) in the edition of Cosyn's music in the second volume of this work. This allows a particular example to be placed in a wider context within a piece or group of pieces. The Helmholtz system is used for the identification of pitches:  $c^1$  is middle c;  $c$  is the octave lower;  $c^2$  is the octave above middle c.

Specific manuscript sources (in addition to particular libraries and collections) of primary importance in this discussion are given their own siglum which is made clear in the List of Abbreviations. Reference to secondary sources is presented in an abbreviated form (author, keywords of title, page number); a complete entry is found in the Bibliography.

Foliation of manuscripts is represented as follows: f. 13 (the recto side of folio thirteen); f. 24<sup>v</sup> (the verso side of folio twenty-four). A reference to a whole leaf is made clear in each particular instance.

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Since the writing of this thesis for a D.Phil at the University of Oxford, the first volume of *The Oxford History of English Music* by John Caldwell has been published. This work, as it relates to music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, provides new material on the prevailing trends and influences as well as a discussion of both major and minor composers of the period. In particular, the chapters entitled *Instrumental Music, 1575-1625: Musical Life and Thought* (pp. 460-502) and *Charles I, the Commonwealth, and the Restoration* (pp. 503-560) place Cosyn in an even wider context than this thesis could hope to provide.

## Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals who have provided assistance and support throughout the course of this research. In the first instance, it has been an honour to receive support from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in the form of an Overseas Research Student award held for two years. Likewise, a Scholarship for Overseas Students from the University of Oxford provided funding for the first three years of this undertaking. The Faculty of Music, Oxford, along with the Tutorial Board, Magdalen College, and the Committee for Graduate Studies generously granted scholarships and bursaries that allowed travel to Paris to examine manuscript sources. I am grateful to the members of staff at various libraries and archive collections who have made the task of research enjoyable and who have helped out with various lines of enquiry. Permission has been kindly granted by the British Library, Bibliothèque Nationale, and Guildhall Library to reproduce manuscripts in their collections. The map of the City of London (p. 26), compiled by Cecil Humphrey-Smith, F.S.A., appears by kind permission of the Trustees of the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, publishers of the series of parish maps of England, Scotland and Wales.

The help and support from my supervisor, Professor John Harper, has been significant; I am particularly grateful for the interest and enthusiasm that he has shown in my work. Dr John Caldwell and Professor Brian Trowell have offered friendly advice along the way in matters of musicological concern. In addition, I have received invaluable assistance—and encouragement—from Anthony Smith. Some mention must also go to the many friends and colleagues who have helped out in the last four years: the efforts of Anthony Mann, Karen Doherty, Jane Harley, and Tim and Lorena Yip on my behalf have been particularly appreciated.

But it is has been the love and support of my family that has meant the most to me during the period of this project. The unfailing support from my mother, father and sister, Selina, has made this task possible, and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

## List of Abbreviations

### Archives

G.L.R.O.      London, Greater London Record Office

P.R.O.        London, Public Record Office

### Manuscript Sources

Add MSS     London, British Library, Additional MSS

*Ch Ch 1113*   Oxford, Christ Church MS 1113

*Ch Ch 44*     Oxford, Christ Church MS 44

*CVB*           *Cosyn Virginal Book* (London, British Library,  
Royal Music MS 23.1.4)

*Drexel 5611*   New York City, New York Public Library  
Drexel MS 5611

*Forster*       *William Forster's Virginal Book*, (London,  
British Library, Royal Music MS 24.d.3)

*FVB*           *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* (Cambridge,  
Fitzwilliam Museum MS 32 G 29)

*Rés. 1185*     Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Réserve 1185

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Seventeenth-Century English  
Keyboard Music—Benjamin Cosyn

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# I

## Biography

### Introduction

The search for details of Benjamin Cosyn's life has proved to be problematic. In the first instance, the conspicuous paucity of surviving records of the seventeenth century, particularly between 1640 and 1660, has made the task more difficult. These conditions have necessitated a search for Cosyn in a wide range of sources and archive collections. It is the purpose of this chapter to present—more or less chronologically—such details on the biography of the composer that have been uncovered. The account of his life in London from the 1620s to the time of his death thirty years later also provides a basis for a later discussion which addresses the place and significance of Cosyn as a keyboard composer within the framework of music-making and composition in seventeenth-century England.

There is no record of the composer before 1620. While it is tempting to suppose that Benjamin could have been the son of the sixteenth-century composer John Cosyn (*d.* 1608/9), there is no evidence to confirm this relationship.<sup>1</sup> An effort to establish a possible date and place of birth for Benjamin Cosyn has likewise been unsuccessful. It is left, instead, to an examination of the few surviving details that can be gathered on the composer's biography—notably his tenure as organist at two institutions—to provide a general period of time in which Cosyn lived and worked.

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<sup>1</sup> John Hawkins (1719-89) provides one of the earliest assessments of Benjamin Cosyn: 'a famous composer of lesson for the harpsichord, and probably an excellent performer on that instrument'. It is in his description of Cosyn that the relation to John Cosyn is first suggested. See Hawkins, *History of the Science and Practice of Music*, vol. iii, p. 422.

## Dulwich College

Two years after the completion of a substantial manuscript of keyboard music, Benjamin Cosyn entered into the first of two appointments he held as organist at a free grammar school. Dulwich College was an established institution when Cosyn was employed in 1622. A number of sources contribute to an understanding of Cosyn's position and activities at Dulwich: the history of its foundation and early years; entries in diaries, account books and register books; and details revealed from the statutes of the college.

Edward Alleyn (1566-1626)—actor, theatrical manager, and Master of the Royal Game of Bears, Bulls and Mastiff Dogs to Charles I—conceived the idea of a charitable institution in Dulwich as early as 1604. He began to acquire land around Dulwich manor, and by 1613 the erection of a chapel, schoolhouse and twelve almshouses had commenced. Although the building of the college was completed in 1616, the delay in obtaining necessary licences and Privy Seal from the king meant that the college was not formally opened until September 1619. During this time, Alleyn sought advice on the rules and orders for the government of the institution and looked to other similar foundations as models for his new college. There is evidence that on at least one occasion Alleyn visited the grammar school and hospital of the Charterhouse. An entry in his diary reads:

29 Oct 1617 —my wife: mr austein: mr young, and myself,  
went to see Suttons Hospitall [Charterhouse]: water [sc., the  
cost of a hired boat]. £0 1s 0d<sup>2</sup>

The Charterhouse was by then in its sixth year since foundation, and was functioning as a 'hospital' for poor people and as a school for young scholars. That Alleyn opened his college two years later with an identical arrangement affirms the importance of the example set by Charterhouse and other

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<sup>2</sup> Dulwich College MS IX, f. 2 (Edward Alleyn's diary), transcribed incompletely in Warner, *Catalogue*, pp. 165-195.

schools in the area. Advice was sought from other schools; a draft of the proposed statutes for Dulwich—relating to the maintenance, education and management of the college—was submitted to Dr Nicholas Love, Warden of Winchester School, for evaluation.<sup>3</sup>

It was not until September 1626—seven years after the opening of the college and after Cosyn's appointment and departure—that Alleyn determined the final contents of the statutes for the college. It is, therefore, more difficult to establish the precise arrangement of the college before this date. None the less, the statutes give, in many cases, the only evidence of Alleyn's likely intentions at the school's foundation, and provide important clues to the duties of Cosyn's position as organist. The statutes prescribe that the college staff was to consist of a master, warden and four fellows to oversee twelve almsfolk—six men and six women—and, more particularly, twelve poor scholars. Each fellow had an additional duty as schoolmaster, preacher, usher or organist. The statutes required that 'every of [one] them teach the said twelve poor Schollers of the said Schoole, in good and sound learning, wryting, reading, grammar, musique and good manners'.<sup>4</sup> Alleyn was more precise as to the manner of teaching, and determined that the tuition should take place

according to the rules and precepts of the grammar allowed in England, and such other books as were commanded by publique authoritye and usually taught in the free grammar scholes of Westminster and St. Paules.<sup>5</sup>

With reference to music, the statutes stipulate that the music master of the college

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<sup>3</sup> *Victoria History of Surrey*, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> See Blanch, *Dulwich College*, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> A transcription of the 1627 statutes appears in Young, *History of Dulwich College*. See vol.i, pp. 65-89, (p. 79).

teach and instruct in song and musique freely...[and]...that such schollers shall come into the musique schole or roome every forenoone at half and hower past nyne of the clock, and every afternoone at half an hower past three, and at play daies at one of the clock in the afternoon, and there contynue in learning their song and musique.<sup>6</sup>

The conditions for the tuition of music were clearly set out. They were far more extensive than at Westminster School, for example, where music was to be taught only twice a week for an hour.<sup>7</sup> The music master at Dulwich was expected to reside in the music school and to contribute to the general supervision of the scholars.

Benjamin Cosyn became the fourth fellow and organist of Dulwich on 28 September 1622; Thomas Hopkins, his predecessor and the first organist of the college, had departed less than a month before. Details of the endowment of the college in 1620 reveal the salary of the organist to be £10 a year and it is likely that Cosyn received comparable earnings two years later. The figure certainly represents a competitive wage for an organist and music teacher at the time; the salaries of organists in the parish churches of London ranged from six to twelve pounds a year.<sup>8</sup>

A comparison of the statutes with the register and account books from the school's foundation suggests that additions and emendations to the arrangements of personnel were made in the early years of the college. The precise qualifications for the position of organist at the time of Cosyn's appointment, therefore, are not known. By 1626, Edward Alleyn had added to the statutes an additional music master and four 'chaunters to be singinge men of the chappel', necessarily changing the

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 78-79.

<sup>7</sup> Watson, *The English Grammar School*, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> See Dawe, *Organists*, p. 2.