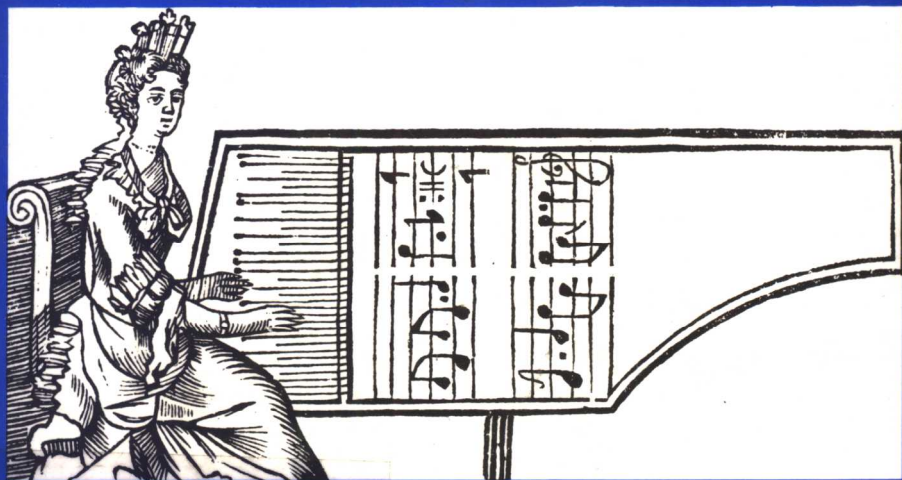


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# British Harpsichord Music

VOLUME 2 History



.2, History

*John Harley*

# British Harpsichord Music

Volume 2 History

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藏书章

John Harley

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## ≈ PREFACE ≈

It is twenty years since the appearance of the English-language edition of Willi Apel's *The history of keyboard music to 1700*, which placed the first two centuries of British keyboard music in a European context, and John Caldwell's *English keyboard music before the nineteenth century*. Both remain highly serviceable, and there are things of interest still to be found in older books like Charles van den Borren's *The sources of keyboard music in England*, written eighty years ago. The present book therefore seeks to complement rather than replace existing studies.<sup>1</sup>

Volume 1 listed sources of British harpsichord music. This second volume sets out to describe historical developments to which the music in the sources can be related. Byrd is the only composer who, on account of his commanding position in the history of British keyboard music, is given a chapter to himself. But while limitations of space mean that only some of the music of some of the composers represented in Volume 1 can be discussed, a series of appendices lists all the composers in approximate date order, and each appendix is linked to a particular chapter. It is thus possible to determine the composers who were working at a given time, and the framework into which the work of any composer fits.

Also for reasons of space, biographical information has been largely omitted, since it is available (when it is available at all) in standard sources like *The new Grove*. Only brief musical examples have been included to illustrate specific points, and I have assumed that the reader will consult the modern editions of music listed in Volume 1, even if the original sources are less easily accessible. Similarly, although developments in British music generally are mentioned briefly where they cast a light on some particular aspect of harpsichord music, I have on the whole left it to the reader to consult wider-ranging histories of British music and make the necessary connections.

Some restrictions are caused by factors other than space. The sources of British harpsichord music before the instrument's twentieth-century revival span a period from about 1530 to 1790, after which the harpsichord gave way almost entirely to the pianoforte. Describing the evolution of harpsichord music during the first half of this period is like trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. The reason has been outlined in the introduction to Volume 1. Even in the second half of the period, from which so much more material survives, it is not always easy to discover what one needs to know. There nevertheless remains much more to be learned from the surviving sources and related historical documents. Since, in a wide-ranging book of this sort, it is clearly impossible to investigate everything, a few (but

<sup>1</sup> Several unpublished dissertations (listed in the bibliography) expand on various topics which have been touched on only briefly in the following pages.

## PREFACE

only a few) of the areas which future research needs to tackle are noted at various points.

### Terminology

The different members of the harpsichord family, and their relationship to the music discussed in this book, are considered in Chapter 7. Until then it will be convenient to refer to all of them by the generic name *harpsichord*, except in quotations or, occasionally, where it is necessary to refer to a particular variety of harpsichord.

It may be helpful to remember that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries harpsichords of all kinds were called *virginals* in Britain. This term was not reserved for the smaller variety with an oblong or polygonal plan, to which it is often applied nowadays. *Harpsichord* was introduced in the late sixteenth century. The additional term *spinet* was used to describe a compact instrument introduced in the seventeenth century, though it was and still is applied to other kinds of harpsichord as well.

The difficulty of defining *harpsichord music* was explained in the preface to Volume 1. Where possible in the following pages music written for performance in church is distinguished from music to be played in the home or concert room, though the distinction is not always easy to draw and there is a range of music that might suit either purpose. Church music is clearly for the organ, although organists almost certainly practised it on other instruments; and secular music is likely to have been played very often on a harpsichord of one sort or another, though – depending on the period under discussion – performance on the clavichord, regals, chamber organ, claviorgan or pianoforte cannot be ruled out.

The identification of music for the harpsichord often depends as much on a sense of the sound implicit in it as on features peculiar to writing for the instrument. I have not felt it necessary to reiterate this on every page, nor to repeat at every opportunity that some pieces (e.g. voluntaries) might be equally suitable for performance in church or in the home.

### Spelling

The spelling of composers' names is normalized, and usually follows that in Grove, 1980.

As far as possible quotations have been taken from the original sources, but modern letter forms have been used (e.g. *v* rather than *u* to represent the fricative consonant, and *s* rather than the long *f*). Where the source is a modernized text the fact should be clear from the reference to it in the notes and bibliography.

## PREFACE

When a piece of music occurs in two or more sources they may spell its title in different ways. I have normalized spellings in tables, etc., but in the text I have usually preferred to retain the spelling given in one important source, however idiosyncratic it may be.

The spelling of musical terms varies not only between sources, but within a single source. An essay could be written on this (see Appendix H). As a rule, therefore, spelling has been normalized where a term does not form part of a title, e.g. *dump* ('dompe' or 'dumpe' in the sources), and *fantasia* ('fansye' or 'fantasi'). *Pavan* replaces 'pavyn', 'pavin', 'pavian', 'paven' and 'pavana'; and *galliard* replaces 'galyard', 'galyarde', 'galiarda', 'galliarde' and 'galiardo'. But in some cases the use throughout of a single normalized spelling would mean too much of a departure from the practice of a given period. *Almain* is used for the 'alman', 'almain' or 'almaine' of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; but *allemande* has been adopted for these and other spellings ('almand', 'allemanda' or 'allemende') when they occur in sources of the later seventeenth century and the eighteenth century.

### Pitch notation

When a musical note needs to be identified by the octave in which it occurs, its name is given in *italic* and its pitch is indicated by the Helmholtz system, but using superscript or subscript numerals instead of dashes (Ex. 1). Where the octave is not important the name of the note is given in Roman.

Ex. 1

Pitch notation



### Musica Britannica references

Where it is helpful to identify a piece by its number in the *Musica Britannica* edition of any composer under discussion, the number is preceded by the letters 'MB'. Thus, in the chapter on Byrd, an untitled ground in C is referred to as MB 43.

## PREFACE

### Manuscripts

For convenience each of the following manuscripts is usually referred to by the name of a place or an owner; in a few cases manuscripts have become so well known by their titles that these have been italicized:

Priscilla Bunbury's book (formerly owned by the late Mr. Roger Lancelyn Green; microfilm in the Cheshire Record Office).

Lady Jeane Campbell's book (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 9449).

Benjamin Cosyn's book (London, British Library, *R. M. 23.1.4*).

Anne Cromwell's book (Huntingdon, Cromwell Museum, 46.78-748).

Anne Dawson's book (Manchester, Henry Watson Music Library, *BRm 710.5 Cr71*).

*The Dublin virginal book* (Dublin, Trinity College, *D.3.30/i*).

Elizabeth Edgeworth's book (Brussels, Conservatoire Royale de Musique, 15418).

*The Fitzwilliam virginal book* (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, *Mu 168*).

Will Forster's book (London, British Library, *R. M. 24.d.3*).

Clement Matchett's book (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 9448).

*The Mulliner book* (London, British Library, *Additional 30513*).

*My Ladye Nevells booke* (owned by the Marquess of Abergavenny).

Elizabeth Rogers' book (London, British Library, *Additional 10337*).

The Robertsbridge fragment (London, British Library, *Additional 28550*).

William Tisdale's book (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, *Mu 782*).

Details of manuscripts and their locations are given in Volume 1, pp. 34-87. The location of a manuscript is not usually mentioned in Volume 2 when it forms part of one of the following well known series:

London, British Library: *Additional*; *Egerton*; *Harleian*; *Royal*; *Royal Appendix*; *Royal Music (R. M.)*.

New York Public Library: *Drexel*.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: *Réserve*.

### Amendments to Volume One

I could not have written this volume without having compiled the material published in the first volume. On the other hand, my use of that material has revealed a number of errors and omissions which are rectified in Appendix K.

### Dates of publication

The further use of undated printed material has impressed on me the need for even greater caution than I had supposed in accepting the probable dates of publication given in catalogues.

An example will make the point. Thomas Ebdon's *Six sonata's for the harpsichord, piano forte and organ* were originally dated '[1780?]' by the British Library, a date repeated in Grove, 1980. In the current British Library catalogue this has been changed to '[1765?]', the date given in Volume 1 of this book. Neither date can be correct, for the following reasons: (1) it is most unlikely that the title-page's reference to the pianoforte antedates the publication in 1766 of Johann Christian Bach's *Six sonates pour le clavecin ou le piano forte* (see p. 119, note 8); (2) the subscribers included 'Mr. Wainwright', described as the organist at Manchester, who must be either John Wainwright, appointed to Manchester Collegiate Church in 1767, or Robert Wainwright, who succeeded him in 1768; (3) the title-page carries a dedication to Spencer Cowper, who died in 1774. Thus the actual date of publication must be between 1767 and 1774.

The warning on page 99 of Volume 1 is repeated: never believe that two publications are different simply because they are given different dates in catalogues. It is certain that most catalogues, including the one in this book, list a great many 'ghost' editions. An enormous task is waiting to be done in dating printed music from newspaper advertisements, publishers' lists included in volumes of music, diaries, letters, etc.

### Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to my daughter Jane, who solved problems of word processing and printing, and my son Jonathan, who drove me all over Great Britain to look at sources.

To the people listed in Volume 1, I must add Dr Andrew Ashbee; Mrs Margaret Cranmer (Rowe Library); Lord De L'Isle; Mr Oliver Neighbour; Mr J. A. Parkinson; and the staff of the Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone. Janet Clayton has again suggested improvements in expression and clarity, and Mr Alan Ward's comments on the parts of the book which deal with the history of words have been most helpful.

John Harley



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# PART ONE

3  
of

## THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY BEFORE BYRD

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For table of composers see Appendix A

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Much of the extant British keyboard music written before about 1570 was for liturgical use, and intended for performance on the organ. Almost the whole of the remainder consists of transcriptions of vocal and instrumental music that are just as suited – or unsuited – to one kind of keyboard instrument as another. It is nevertheless possible to identify a handful of pieces that seem originally to have been written for a keyboard instrument, and with the sound of the harpsichord in mind.

The earliest British manuscripts to include keyboard music are *Royal Appendix 56* and *Royal Appendix 58* (both c.1530),<sup>1</sup> the second of which contains two pieces almost certainly for the harpsichord. A Bible from Evesham Abbey, in which John Alcestur inserted his amateurish compositions (c.1540), includes one 'For the Virginallus' and another 'For the Regalles the Virginallus and the Dulcemers'.<sup>2</sup> The many organ pieces and transcriptions of vocal and string music in the *Mulliner book* (c.1550-75) are preceded by two arrangements of song tunes and a set of variations that may also have been composed for the harpsichord. Further sources are *Additional 60577*, a manuscript volume of Latin and English verse and prose to which someone – possibly William Way<sup>3</sup> – added keyboard music about 1560, including a few dances in the harpsichord idiom; and Public Record Office *E 36/170*, containing a metrical psalm (after 1560?) with a keyboard accompaniment suitable for domestic performance. The greatest number of early pieces likely to have been conceived for the harpsichord occurs in the *Dublin virginal book*, compiled about 1570. No other known source of British harpsichord music was written before *My Ladye Nevells booke* of 1591. This is the first to be dated by its scribe, and consists entirely of pieces composed by William Byrd over some twenty years.

<sup>1</sup> The provenance of the much earlier Robertsbridge fragment (c.1325-50) is unknown. (See Volume 1, pp. 3 and 23.) The date of *Royal Appendix 58*, and of the related manuscript *Royal Appendix 56*, is derived from their association with the court of Henry VIII, but cannot be established precisely. (See Volume 1, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> The sound of the regals is produced by beating reeds, activated by bellows placed behind the keyboard where the jacks and strings would be on the virginals. The term *regals* seems to have been applied also to small pipe organs.

<sup>3</sup> Blezzard, 1981; *The Winchester anthology*, 1981, pp. 41-47.

## THE 16TH CENTURY BEFORE BYRD

It is not surprising that when the earliest music for the harpsichord can be distinguished from organ music it shares many of the latter's characteristics. Differences existed in the touch and technique required in playing the two instruments, as the Italian Girolamo Diruta emphasized later in the century,<sup>4</sup> but they had a common keyboard layout and both provided the opportunity for technical display. Some of the organ music collected by Mulliner demands considerable dexterity, for example in playing rows of thirds and sixths.<sup>5</sup> A measure of this virtuosity is needed to play Hugh Aston's hornpipe, which makes highly effective use of the harpsichord's timbre.

### Harpsichord music and organ music

Organ and harpsichord music drew on a common vocabulary. An important difference between them was however the habitual use in organ music of plain chant *cantus firmi*. A *cantus firmus* might appear in notes of equal value or in a decorated form, but it was the principal determinant of length and harmonic progress. As a result there was an emphasis on linearity, and means were developed of extending the melodic lines in other parts.

The organ compositions of John Redford (d.1547) display a variety of such procedures. For example, the *cantus firmus* may be accompanied by a single unbroken line embellishing notes concordant with the chant, or by two broken lines made up of repeated figures. Again, it may become part of a contrapuntal structure based partly on imitation and partly on melodic transformation and development. Although comparable methods of extension are found in harpsichord music, the strong harmonic tendencies of the tunes and grounds on which it is based make more frequently for short sections and for extension by repetition and variation.

It is nevertheless easy to see the relationship of compositions for both instruments to the art of improvisation. Organists of the early sixteenth century were trained to improvise descants on plain chant melodies.<sup>6</sup> The origin of the fantasia, considered later in this chapter, may lie partly in improvisation on the organ. The evidence implicit in the sources is that harpsichordists (who are likely often to have been organists) also improvised a great deal, probably drawing on a body of memorized passages and phrases which they could string together, as well as on the inspiration of the moment. Secular keyboard music in the sources so far mentioned falls into three non-

<sup>4</sup> Diruta, 1593, f. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> English organists of an earlier generation did not impress Nicolò Sagudino, the Venetian ambassador's secretary, who reported from London in 1515 that 'two musicians... in the King's service, played the organ, but very badly; they kept bad time, their touch was feeble, and their execution not very good'. But he was telling Alvisè Foscari about the success of his own performance. (Brown, R., 1867, pp. 246-249.)

<sup>6</sup> Apel, 1972, p. 45 et seq.; Caldwell, 1973, pp. 14-15.

exclusive categories: (1) transcriptions of vocal and instrumental music, (2) pieces in dance style, and (3) variations on popular tunes and harmonic or melodic grounds. All include tunes and harmonic patterns on which a competent performer might have improvised endlessly.<sup>7</sup>

### Arrangements, dances and grounds c.1530

*Royal Appendix 58* contains ten pieces written on two staves for keyboard performance, and most of them are evident adaptations of music for other media.<sup>8</sup>

The first, *La bell fyne*, is a reduction of a three part song.<sup>9</sup> An associated manuscript, *Royal Appendix 56*, also includes songs written on two staves, some of which occur in their original form, in the same order, in *Royal Appendix 58*.<sup>10</sup>

The last six of the ten keyboard pieces in *Royal Appendix 58* appear to have had instrumental originals, and to have been transcribed with the omission of at least one part.<sup>11</sup> Versions of *A galyard* (f. 49<sup>v</sup>) and *The kings pavyn* were in fact printed in part books on the Continent.<sup>12</sup> A concordance for *The kyngs ma[s]ke* is found in a Spanish manuscript.<sup>13</sup> The keyboard versions of *The kings pavyn* and *The crocke*<sup>14</sup> are quite unidiomatic, though the second half of the latter, which demands agility in playing successions of chords and stretching tenths, suggests how transcriptions may have contributed to the development of keyboard technique. *The empororse pavyn*, *The kyngs ma[s]ke* and two galliards are more suited to the keyboard. They

<sup>7</sup> The number of people who could read music was probably small, and it is likely that 'extempore playing on instruments... held sway to a very large extent within the court circle'. (Stevens, 1961, pp. 284 and 274). There is an obvious comparison between harpsichord music of the sort described above, and twentieth-century jazz piano music based on harmonic patterns derived largely from the blues and popular songs. The modal basis of *A hornepype* (in *Royal Appendix 58*), with a frequently flattened E, is reminiscent of the blues. The harmonic pattern of *The short mesure off my lady wynkfylds rownde* (in the same source) is constructed, like that of the blues, from the alternation of the tonic chord and only two other chords.

<sup>8</sup> See Holman, 1993, Chapter 3, on the court repertoire of which these pieces formed a part.

<sup>9</sup> The bass alone, on f. 39<sup>v</sup>, faces the keyboard version.

<sup>10</sup> For example, the four-part *A solis ortus cardine* written on two staves in *Royal Appendix 56* (f. 21<sup>v</sup>) is related to the separate parts, written consecutively, in *Royal Appendix 58* (ff. 31<sup>v</sup>-32).

<sup>11</sup> Reconstructed by Holman, 1983; Thomas and Gingell, 1987; Thomas, 1989.

<sup>12</sup> The first by Paulus and Bartholomeus Hessen in *Viel feiner lieblicher Stucklein, spanischer, welscher, englischer, frantzösischer Composition und Tentz* (Breslau, 1555), and the second in Jean d'Estree's *Tiers livre de danseries* (Paris, 1559).

<sup>13</sup> *Codex Lerma* at the Instituut voor Musiekwetenschap, Utrecht. (Thomas, 1989.)

<sup>14</sup> See Volume 1, p. 24.



## THE 16TH CENTURY BEFORE BYRD

adhere strictly to three parts, but the notes are better spaced and lie more easily under the hands.

*The short measure off my lady wynkfylds rownde* (i.e. round dance) is also well suited to the harpsichord. But the fact that the notes given to the left hand, which outline the harmony, are written as two parts suggests that the piece may in fact be a section (the short measure) of one originally for viols or other instruments. It makes few demands on the performer, but its design is interesting. The overall pattern is *A A B B A A B B*. The harmonic scheme of *A* is related to the *folia*, one of the common grounds associated with Renaissance dances, and *B* alternates between dominant and tonic.

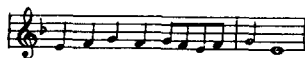
None of these pieces depends for effective performance on the special sonority of the harpsichord, and they could just as well be played on a domestic organ, the regals or a clavichord. Two further pieces – *A hornepype* and *My lady careys dompe* – on the other hand demand the harpsichord's bite. Both are in a style that could easily have originated in improvisation.

*A hornepype*, by Hugh Aston, bears the only ascription to a composer. This energetic piece is considerably the longest, and the most adventurous, in the collection. It is constructed throughout on the simplest of ground basses: the alternation of G and F in the tenor. Aston nevertheless shows remarkable powers in developing his material to produce an extended and integrated composition.

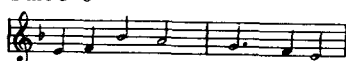
Ex. 2

(a) Aston: *A hornepype* (Royal Appendix 58, f. 40<sup>v</sup>)

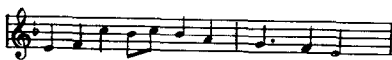
Bars 1-2



Bars 5-6



Bars 9-10



(b) Blitheman: *Eterne rerum conditor* (Mulliner book, f. 55<sup>v</sup>)

Bars 1-6

