

THE
CONTEMPORARIES OF PURCELL

HARPSICHORD PIECES

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

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JOHN BLOW.

(VOL I.)

THE most important of Purcell's contemporaries, Dr. John Blow, has been to some extent overshadowed by that great master. But certain anthems and a song or two have kept their place in the esteem of musicians, and the "crudities" which Burney censured are such as are welcomed by modern composers, and regarded as evidences of originality. Burney, it must be remembered, wrote under the spell of the Handel domination, which for so many years made it impossible to revive public interest in the older English composers.

Blow was born in 1648 and died in 1708, so that his life enclosed, as it were, the short career of Purcell. Blow held various posts, and was from 1669 Organist of Westminster Abbey, and it is said that he either resigned or was dismissed from this office to make room for Purcell, after whose death he was re-appointed. The evidences for this are very obscure, and the point must be considered doubtful.

In the collection of Blow's pieces, we can trace the development of the suite-form. From the pavan and galliard of the Elizabethan composers, which were closely associated with each other, the dance-movements were grouped together, three of them being apparently considered as essential, the "allemande" or "almand," the "courante" or "corant," and the "saraband" (often styled "sarabrand"). These nearly always appear, and in that order. When other movements occur, they are grouped round these without any very definite plan, except that a "ground" (the English equivalent

of the "passacaglia" or "chaconne") generally appears either at the beginning or end of a suite.

The sources of the following pieces are given in their own places. It is a great pity that the late Ernst Pauer, who included a number of pieces by Blow in his "Old English Composers for the Virginals and Harpsichord," gave no sources for the pieces he included, so that in many cases the authenticity of many of these must be considered doubtful.

So large a quantity of Blow's harpsichord compositions have come to light, that it has seemed better not to reprint those given by Pauer, even the few for which good MS. authority has been found elsewhere.

The second part of Playford's "Musick's Handmaid" (1689) contains his first-printed harpsichord pieces, and others are in "A Choice Collection of Ayres for the Harpsichord or Spinett with very Plain and Easie Directions for Young Beginners" (1700). The "Young Beginners" must have been fairly proficient, according to our modern ideas, for the pieces are by no means easy to play. The execution of the graces on the modern piano-forte is of course one of the chief difficulties, and it has been thought well to translate all the signs for ornaments given in the collection just mentioned, and elsewhere, into their modern equivalents. The interpretations of these have not been very strictly carried out, as some of the signs, for instance that for the "shake," seem to be used indifferently for

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a long shake and a mere trill. So that players who feel that the ornaments make the music too "fussy" on the pianoforte may be recommended to modify or omit them, as an ornament which is not ornamental is obviously worse than useless. The principal graces are as follows:—

other half, but if it be a note with a point to it, you are to hold all the note plain, and Shake only the point."

It should perhaps be explained that the ornament formerly indicated by a slanting stroke before the note is here represented by the small note usually employed for the appoggiatura. In music of a later date than this the appoggiatura should be executed according to the rules laid down by Türk and others, and the small note should usurp half the value of the large note to which it is attached, or if that be a dotted note, two-thirds of the value is to be taken by the auxiliary note; but this is not always the case in the present edition, where the ornamental note is often to be given the slighter value which modern English and German editors have been accustomed to give to the appoggiatura in the classics.

The image displays seven musical examples of ornaments on a five-line staff. Each example is labeled above it:

- Shake.**: A single note followed by a series of sixteenth notes.
- Beat.**: A single note followed by a series of eighth notes.
- Plane note & Shake.**: A single note followed by a series of sixteenth notes.
- Forefall.**: A single note followed by a series of eighth notes.
- Backfall.**: A single note followed by a series of sixteenth notes.
- Slur.**: A single note followed by a series of eighth notes.
- Battery.**: A single note followed by a series of sixteenth notes, with a "(sic)" written below the staff.

The verbal explanation of the "Plane Note and Shake" is of especial interest, since it throws light on the proper execution of the appoggiatura, on which so many modern editors and executants have been misled:—

"For a Plane note and Shake if it be a note without a poynt you are to hold half the quantity of it plain, and upon the note above that which is mark'd and Shake the

Many of the pieces here given are in MSS. in the British Museum, and the library of Christ Church, Oxford, contains some MSS. of pieces not to be found elsewhere. For permission to insert these latter the Editor's thanks are due to the College authorities, without whose sanction these pieces must not be reprinted.