

# "Tudor Music." By David Wulstan

John Morehen

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Morehen, John (1995) ""Tudor Music." By David Wulstan," *Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 8: No. 1, Article 9. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199508.01.09

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## Book Reviews

David Wulstan. *Tudor Music*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986. 378p. Originally published in England in 1985.

The reader should not be deluded into believing that this is a conventional history of English 16th-century music. By its author's own admission it is a personal account of English music of the "Tudor" period, a label here conveniently taken to embrace the period 1485-1625. The book clearly reflects its author's conviction that while many facets of Tudor music are already adequately covered in print, some elements, such as the musical sources, have been significantly under-represented. The book as a whole, moreover, stands as something of an indulgence, since the author comments at very considerable length on certain favored topics (e.g. embellishment and pitch) while allowing others of equal interest to languish. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in this procedure provided that potential purchasers are not deceived by the title into believing that the book provides a balanced coverage of a supremely rich period in England's musical heritage.

Readers of this journal are likely to be particularly interested in Wulstan's discussions of vocal pitch, a controversial area to which Wulstan (through his past writings)<sup>1</sup> is no stranger. While Wulstan's treatment is much less overwhelming than Ellis's,<sup>2</sup> it is by no means for the weak-hearted. The only surprising outcome is that a weighing of the evidence of pitch standards in England during the late 16th and early 17th centuries largely confirms the empirical views of Edmund Fellowes of half a century ago, even though Fellowes, unlike Wulstan, did not recognize or understand the *chiavette* convention (a phenomenon first highlighted by Arthur Mendel in a series of articles in *Musical Quarterly* in 1948).

One aspect of Wulstan's discussion of *chiavette* to which exception has been taken, however, is the suggestion (p. 203) that the downward transpo-

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. David Wulstan, "The Problem of Pitch in Sixteenth-Century English Vocal Music." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 93 (1966/67): 97-112.

<sup>2</sup> Anybody who has labored through the extensive researches of Alexander J. Ellis (1880) will almost certainly have felt that they were wallowing in a mass of conflicting evidence.

sition of a fourth or fifth required by the *chiavete* clefs must be counter-balanced by the traditional upward transposition of a minor third, producing an uncommonly high register for many works. One could argue against such an upward compensation on the grounds that almost without exception *chiavette* clefs are found not in liturgical sources in England but only in secular sources. That such a transposition works so well in Wulstan's own performances, despite its apparent lack of authority, remains one of the mysteries of the *chiavette* controversy. Despite the cries of horror provoked by the publication of Peter Le Huray's edition of Weelkes's Evening Service "For Trebles" (1963), the "treble" theory—that a "treble" was a boy's voice of high range, taking it frequently as high as  $b^b$ —is now very widely accepted. Few will argue with Wulstan's proposals here.

The book is amply illustrated by over 160 musical examples—many of considerable length or complexity—33 figures, and many transcriptions from contemporary treatises. Since the musical examples are well-chosen and informative it is most unfortunate that they are mostly transposed into key-signatures ranging from three to five flats, a process which, while perhaps approximating the true sounding pitch of the time, necessitates various editorial *accoutrements* such as dotted-accidentals and "ricochets"; while these features will be familiar to those acquainted with editorial methods pioneered at Magdalen College, Oxford, they will be meaningless to the majority of readers. The situation is not helped by the fact that dotted-accidentals are used as editorial additions in some examples (e.g. ex. 62), whereas accidentals above the staff serve this function elsewhere (e.g. ex. 61). And while I am in sympathy with the author's decision that the book "should be brought to a close with music" (ex. 166), I cannot be alone in wondering what this particular example is, since it is not referenced in the text.

David Wulstan is a skilled and experienced choral director, and it is hardly surprising that one of the most useful chapters for the performer is the one dealing with Elizabethan and Jacobean church music (Ch. 12). It offers extensive coverage of Orlando Gibbons, whose anthems Wulstan has edited in their entirety as volumes 3 and 21 of *Early English Church Music* (1964 and 1978 respectively), although the account of Weelkes's church music might profitably have lain greater emphasis on the fact that many of his so-called "anthems" (including such well-known works as *Hosanna to the Son of David*, *Alleluia! I Heard a Voice*, *Gloria in Excelsis*, *Sing My Soul to God*) were undoubtedly written for domestic rather than liturgical consumption. Wulstan is justified in proposing that many of Gibbons's verse anthems originally had accompaniment for viols, though few readers are likely to concur with the suggestion that the Second Service ever had such an accompaniment: while literally dozens of "consort anthems" survive with accom-

paniment for viols, not a single Service setting survives with such a scoring, nor is there any evidence that consort anthems with viol accompaniment were ever performed liturgically. Interestingly, Wulstan passes up the opportunity (pp. 114 and 336) to retract his earlier view that the reconstructed opening verse section of *Almighty God, which by Thy Son* began with the organ.<sup>3</sup>

Although this book contains no Bibliography as such, its thirteen-page list of "References" could have partly served this purpose were it not so hopelessly shambolic. Entries appear out of alphabetical sequence, book and journal titles are incorrectly cited, page numbers are inconsistently shown, publication details are erratic, to say nothing of the legion of obvious misprints and other blatant typographical aberrations. Many works are cited as "Facs. publications," but no information other than the date of the reprint is shown, and I cannot see that anything is achieved by the obstinate determination to omit the year of publication of articles in journals. Since these thirteen pages are a citation of References and not a true Bibliography, it might be considered "off-piste" to comment on omissions, but I find it strange that none of the extensive writings of Peter Le Huray qualifies for inclusion.

Since the book is a reissue it is unfortunate that the large number of inaccuracies in the original printing were not corrected. These typographical errors run right through the book. While I could not begin here to draw attention to the complete range of errors, I would say that they cover a misspelling of the name of one of the scholars thanked in the Acknowledgments, inconsistencies in citation, misdatings of early printed editions, etc.

While *Tudor Music* is hugely informative on a wide spectrum of issues, readers would be unwise to take every assertion at face value. Pearls of wisdom are certainly here for the finding, but so also is a good deal of what must be regarded as opinion rather than fact.

JOHN MOREHEN

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<sup>3</sup> See *Early English Church Music* 3.