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C O N C E R T O R G A N I S T | O R G A N T U T O R

Review: new Sweelinck edition

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
Complete Keyboard Works
ed Pieter Dirksen and Harald Vogel
Volume 1: Toccatas / Volume 4: Variations on
Songs and Dances
Breitkopf, 8741 and 8744

This new Sweelinck edition has been long awaited in some circles. A vitally important keyboard composer, Sweelinck's music is superlative, from the intellectual strength and beauty of the fantasias to the charm and warmth of the secular variation sets. Although some of this repertoire makes virtuosic demands of the player, much can also be enjoyed by those less technically advanced. Most organists play this music from either Leonhardt, Annegarn and Noske's pioneering edition (1968) or from Seiffert's revised edition (1943, currently reprinted by Dover), both of which were exemplary for their times. What marks out Dirksen and Vogel's new edition from its predecessors?

Much significance lies in the unravelling of the original notations. Sweelinck's keyboard works survive in two types of notation: staff, typical of much Dutch and English keyboard music of the time and not dissimilar to our modern notation, and letter tablature, as used by German copyists and students of Sweelinck. Dirksen and Vogel have preserved the characteristics of both notational types depending on how each individual work was transmitted, which leads to some significant differences. Firstly, semiquavers are often beamed irregularly in staff notation sources: Leonhardt and Seiffert beam regularly, which has potential implications for shaping the music. Secondly, hand distribution was indicated in staff notation sources but not in Leonhardt or Seiffert's editions. Finally, this is the first edition which preserves the difference between breves and semibreves as the metrical

unit depending on the sources (staff notation worked in breves, tablature in semibreves) and which preserves the difference between the time signatures c and c . The font and clear layout lead to comfortable reading.

All of these factors have implications for performers, and as if this were not enough to consider buying the set, the editors have added essays about performance practice issues to three of the four volumes. Volume 1 contains a thorough appraisal of fingering issues (admittedly covered in other publications in detail) and ornamentation (less commonly discussed as regards Sweelinck's works). Volumes 2 and 3 were not submitted for review, but their essay topics (instrumentation and registration respectively) will be welcomed by many performers who do not own Dirksen's excellent book which covers such topics (*The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck*, Koninklijke VNM 1997). Thorough appendices include fragments and anonymous short pieces fingered by musicians within the Sweelinck tradition (Volume 1) and incorrectly attributed works, including ironically the famous Balleth (sic) del granduca, now thought to be by Scheidt (Volume 4)! Additionally, Dirksen refers to each work by a SwWV number, as he is currently preparing an all-inclusive Sweelinck Work Catalogue.

Although investing in all four volumes is admittedly more expensive than buying the Dover edition, many players will only perform a fraction of Sweelinck's fairly substantial output and can therefore choose which of the volumes are relevant (volume 2 contains the fantasias, Volume 3 the variations on chorales and psalms). I for one will be transferring my markings into this stunning new edition. Here is an exciting arrival and one which could not (save for a possible future appearance of lost source material) be bettered.

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