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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

FRCO Study Notes:

Orlando Gibbons *A Fancy in Gamut Flatt*

1. General style

As is often the case with this repertoire, looks can be deceptive! Although the notes appear straight forward on paper, delivering a stylish and subtle performance is demanding. There are various performance practice issues to contend with (see paragraph 2). Several points of imitation are worked through in stately figuration before greater momentum is introduced in the second half, with livelier themes.

2. Technical and musical challenges

Ornamenting this repertoire is a very controversial and complicated topic. Various views are currently held on this matter. They range from the suggestion that a single stroke is a "division" (ornamental pattern around the pattern) and a double stroke a more basic trill (starting on main or upper notes, depending on context) to the notion that little if any distinction is necessarily implied by different signs! For an up-to-date and thought provoking discussion, read Desmond Hunter's article in 'Early Music', February 2002.

3. Practice tips

Before learning notes, it would be a worthwhile idea to identify and mark each imitative point so as to ensure absolute consistency in your touch and articulation. Each idea needs a subtly different character, without resorting to anachronistic slurs or mannered touch. This will require you to work on a responsive mechanical action (maybe a chamber or a box organ)? if you are to realise the expressive potential of the piece. Many players find that it helps to put words to each new point of imitation

(it might be an idea to pencil these in to start with, however eccentric this might seem)! If you think of the text as sung by a good choir (with new syllables for each note, i.e. no melismas), you should achieve a clear yet singing touch which might otherwise prove elusive.

Whatever approach you take regarding ornamentation, build the ornaments into your practice early on in the learning process: this will help them to sound organic and natural.

4. Tempo suggestion

In the 1620s, Thomas Tomkins' experiments to measure tempi through pendulum movements led to a suggested "metronome mark" of minim = about 76 / 78. This would seem an appropriate starting point for deciding on your final tempo.

5. Registration

If you get the chance to hear or play one of the Early English Organ Project instruments currently touring the UK, you will discover a contemporary view about the feel and general sound of earlier English instruments (even though Gibbons was writing a generation later). For reasons beyond the scope of these notes, there are many factors about the English organ of this time which remain uncertain to us. This *Fancy* was composed with a "single organ" in mind (i.e. a small organ of one manual, comprising a diapason chorus up to 2' and flutes 8' & 4', to use the modern pitch numbers: there would be no mixtures or reeds). On modern instruments, ensure that the sound is fairly gentle and singing in quality.

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