Graham Strahle. *An Early Music Dictionary: Musical Terms from British Sources, 1500-1740*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xl, 469, two columns.

This book is a handsome production: tastefully designed and bound, printed on fine cream paper using elegant typefaces, the text "hung" from a top-of-the-page rule, with generous margins. As a reference and research tool it is precisely what it says it is, namely an exhaustive compilation of musical terms inclusively defined, derived from dictionaries, musical treatises, manuals, and commentaries produced in English between 1500 and 1740. The *terminus post quem* was established by the date at which *A Dictionary of Medieval Musical Terms* leaves off, and the closing date corresponds to the publication of Grassineau's *A Musical Dictionary*, which is the first independently researched and encyclopedic musical dictionary to appear in England, hence a watershed achievement marking the end of a previous era. Strahle's massive exercise in reading and filing serves a number of potentially useful scholarly functions in regrouping under hundreds of headings a chronological sequence of definitions of musical terms as they were understood by specialists and lexicographers during the period under consideration.

In Strahle's generous introduction, he describes the many kinds of sources he consulted -- some 250 in all -- among which are 52 early dictionaries, often bilingual, which, in their definitions, range from the reliable to the fanciful, the quaint, and the mendacious. Frankly, I think Florio was having us on in naming as instruments the "cazzolata" (p. 55) and the "cacapensiére" (p. 40) which no doubt resemble the donga and the swinette respectively -- the latter plucked by the teeth. But I am ready to be corrected. The introduction describes not only the variety of sources, their limitations and intended audiences, but also the several categories of terms: musical instruments, forms and genres, performance terms and markings, theory, social customs relating to music, elements of baroque style, jargon, Latinisms, and antiquarian words.

The instructional value of this compilation is at least twofold: not only does it furnish usages by period, but the progression of definitions shows how terms altered and fell from use. It suggests how inhorn terms were often replaced by more familiar words; how ancient theory gave way to pragmatic analysis; how, after 1700, Italian performance terms, tempo and expression markings drove out the familiar English nomenclature; and how Enlightenment rationalism wrestled against the esoteric, yet introduced neologisms of its own.

There are caveats for the unwary user, however. First, the lexicographers were conservative, derivative, and antiquarian. They were fond of the old, the arcane, the foreign, and did not bother with such work-a-day words as "lesson" and "shake" which, as Strahle points out (p. xxii), did not show up in dictionaries before 1737. Hence the words defined may not be the current words for the concepts defined. Moreover, only the diligent and well-prepared will be able to extract a conceptual history of music by using this reference work. Nevertheless, there is much to be learned

from the likes of Thomas Morley, John Dowland, John Playford, Christopher Simpson, Alexander Malcolm, and Roger North, as well as Pierre Brossard and the author of the *Explicator* (1724), usually taken to be Pepusch — all of whom are copiously cited. In a typical entry are to be found cross-listings to related terms, dates and abbreviated source citations, exact, old-spelling entries with all their errors and orthographical anomalies included, occasional editorial notices in brackets, all handled with a great deal of care, the work concluding with nine pages of bibliographical sources and secondary materials. In relation to its specific terms of reference, this book is all that it promises to be.

So why should one hesitate? One should not, unless one feels overwhelmed by the kind of compulsive thoroughness that replicates a great deal of redundant material (these early dictionary writers copied unabashedly from each other), unless one is the kind to be baffled by having shawns repeatedly classified as psalteries, or unless one is looking for an authoritative study of the meaning of period terminology, for this work proffers no critical mediation of any kind. But away with these groundless quibbles. For the dilettante this book will reveal that the “hemiope” was an ancient three-holed flute, the name of which means “I strike, or seize,” and the “scarabillare” is Italian for “to squeake as a bagge-pipe.” It is good to know that “orgy” in 1538 meant “ceremonies or songes, pertayning to infernall goddes, or to Bacchus” which is what it still means today, and that the epithet “maid marrion” still made sense in 1730 as “a Boy dressed in a Girl’s Habit, having his Head gaily trimmed, who dances with the Morris-Dancers.” Meanwhile diligent scholars will make more methodological use of this trove, and will find a wealth of instruction in a format, judged by its own terms, difficult to fault. Indeed, to the extent that musicologists work at home, “Strahle” — as this work will no doubt be called — will become a household name. Felicitations are due for having brought this grand endeavour to completion.

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