The trio sonata in Restoration England (1660-1714)


Abstract

After the Restoration, English musical life underwent a considerable change. Although a great deal of early seventeenth-century music, such as fantasia suites, remained in circulation both inside and outside the court, a new instrumental genre from Italy gained immense popularity. The Italian trio sonata eventually came to occupy a prominent position in English musical life and, when at the turn of the century the prints of Corelli's music arrived, it almost swept away any kind of English instrumental music. However, when and how the sonata was introduced into England is still not fully understood.

The main aim of this dissertation is to understand how the sonata was introduced and received in England and to understand its influence on English sonata composers during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Thus, this dissertation first considers the background to the introduction of trio sonatas and the seventeenth-century English music collections containing them in an attempt to assess their currency and dissemination in English musical circles. The remainder of this dissertation primarily deals with English trio sonatas written either abroad or in England. Musical examples are given to illustrate their musical style and to demonstrate how they are influenced by the Italian sonata. Physical evidence of manuscripts is cited to offer a chronology of English trio sonatas. The last part of the study focuses on Corelli's music and his influence on English music, which continued throughout the eighteenth century, in order to understand the importance of its contribution to music-making in England.