

Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1958), 12–13 (from Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames* [c. 1441]).

"Music high and music low," above, refers to loud (dance and outdoor) and soft (court and chamber) music, respectively. The terms listed two lines later have to do with singers' techniques of applying accidentals and of sighsinging. The gist is that the new music is far more consonant and euphonious than the old, a view shared by all the leading writers of the day, including Johannes Tinctoris (1436–1511), whose twelve treatises comprise our richest source of information on the theory and practice of fifteenth-century music. A composer of no small attainments himself, Tinctoris was also a remarkably astute appraiser of the works of others, and the judgments he expressed in his prefaces, of which extracts are given below, hold up very well today.

At present the horizons of music have been so wonderfully extended that it seems a new art, if I may put it so, whose fount and origin is reputed to be among the English, with Dunstable at their head.

Charles Edmond Henri Coussemaker, *Scriptorum de mediis aevi nota series*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1864–76), IV, 154 (from Tinctoris, *Proportionale musice* [1476]). Trans. R. T.

In addition, it is a matter of great surprise that there is no composition written over forty years ago which is thought by the learned to be worthy of performance. At this very time, whether owing to the virtue of some heavenly influence or to a zeal for hard work, there flourish, in addition to many singers who perform most beautifully, an infinite number of composers such as Johannes Ockeghem [d. 1497], Johannes Régis [d. 1485], Antoine Busnois [d. 1492], Firmin [or Philippe] Caron, and Guillaume Faugues, who glory in having had as teachers in this divine art the recently departed John Dunstable, Gilles Binchois, and Guillaume Du Fay. Almost all the works of those men exhale such sweetness that, in my opinion, they should be considered most worthy, not only of men and heroes, but even of the immortal gods. Certainly I never listen to them or study them without coming away refreshed and wiser. Just as Virgil took Homer as his model in his divine *Aeneid*, so, by Hercules, do I use these as models for my own small productions; I have, in particular, openly imitated their admirable style of composition with regard to the placement of consonances.

Johannes Tinctoris, *Libro de arte contrapuncti* [1477], trans. Albert Seay (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1961), 14–15.

## 22

### Music at Church and State Festivities in the Early Renaissance

The dedication of the Florence Cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, whose dome by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) is one of the enduring monuments of Renaissance architecture, was a ceremony important enough for Pope Eugenius IV to officiate in

person. Even if we allow for the stupefaction to which our witness confesses, I am impressed by the account below, in which music plays a central role, is awesome indeed. The music performed at the Elevation that so moved its auditors was most likely the grand motet "Nuper rosarium flores," one of Du Fay's most imposing compositions, which is known to have been written for the occasion.

When these decorations had thus been completely set out, and uncommonly well, lo, the day arrived—the most solemn and most honored of all days instituted by the Roman Church, the day of the angelic Annunciation. [25 March 1436, according to Florentine usage the first day of the year] which the Pope a few days earlier, as we said above, had established as an opportune time for the consecration. Along with the fragrant pontifical rose, they bound that most precious altar in wondrous manner with gifts most worthy.

First there was a great line of trumpeters, lutenists, and flutists, each carrying his instrument, trumpet, lute, flute, in his hands, and each dressed in red clothing. Meanwhile, everywhere there was singing with so many and such various voices, such harmonies exalted even to heaven, that truly it was to the listener like angelic and divine melodies; the voices filled the listeners' ears with such a wondrous sweetness that they seemed to become stupefied, almost as men were fabled to become upon hearing the singing of the sirens. I could believe without impiety that even in Heaven, yearly on this most solemn day that marks the beginning of human salvation, the angels sing thus, the more ardently to give themselves up to the celebration of this festive day with sweet singing. And then, when they made their customary pauses in singing, so joyous and sweet was the reverberation that mental stupor, now calmed by the cessation of those sweet symphonies, seemed as if to regather strength from the wonderful sounds.

But at the Elevation of the Most Sacred Host, the whole space of the church was filled with such choruses of harmony and such a concord of divers instruments that it seemed (not without reason) as though the symphonies and songs of the angels and of divine Paradise had been sent forth from the heavens to whisper in our ears an unbelievable celestial sweetness. Wherefore at that moment I was so possessed by ecstasy that I seemed to enjoy the life of the Blessed here on earth; whether it happened so to others present I know not, but concerning myself I can bear witness.

Giannozzo Manetti, in Guillaume Du Fay, *Opera omnia*, ed. Heinrich Besseler, II (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1966), xxvii.

The court of the dukes of Burgundy was a place where English and Continental musicians met. Although the two greatest fifteenth-century musicians of all—Du Fay and Ockeghem—are not believed ever to have been in the court's actual employ, their music was very well known there, to judge from the Burgundian songbooks and choirbooks that survive. An idea of the setting in which these composers worked and in which their music was heard is given by contemporary accounts of the great Banquet of the Oath of the Pheasant, held in Lille on 17 February 1454, at which Philip the Good of Burgundy swore the Knights of the Golden Fleece to a crusade against the Turks, who the year before had captured Constantinople, the seat of Eastern Christendom. The rondeau "Je ne vis oncques le pareille" ("I have never seen the like"), mentioned below, is variously attributed in the sources to Du Fay and to Binchois. Since the latter was actually attached to the court at the time of the banquet, perhaps he has the better claim. Another account of the festivities (the *Mémoires* of Olivier de la Marche) tells of

the climax: a giant led in an elephant on whose back was a little castle, from which a woman dressed in mourning sang a lament for Constantinople, perhaps one of four composed by Dufay.

In the grand and spacious hall hung with tapestries there were three tables. On one stood a church with a chiming bell and four singers who sang and played the organ when their turn came. On another was pastry in which twenty-eight living persons played on divers instruments, each in turn.

First the church bell sounded, and after the bell had ceased ringing, three little choir-boys and a tenor sang a very sweet song. What it was I cannot say, but as for me it seemed a pleasant grace before dining. After those in the church had carried out their task, a shepherd played on a bagpipe in the most novel fashion.

Then, without the slightest pause, a horse came trotting backwards through the entranceway, and on this horse were seated two trumpet players. They played a fanfare on their instruments, as the horse was led up and down through the banquet hall. After this, the organ players in the church began to play most sweetly, and when these had finished, from the pastry there came the sound of a cornet, played in a most unusual way. Then those in the church began again, with a little song which they executed very well and very sweetly. And after this were played, from the pastry, a lute and a sweet pipe, with yet another instrument in harmony, a thing that was good to hear.

After the church musicians and the pastry musicians had played four times each in turn, there entered a stag, wondrously large and fine, and on it was mounted a boy of twelve. And on his entry this boy began to sing the treble part of a song, most loud and clear, and the stag sang the tenor, with no one else visible except the child and the artificial stag. And the song they sang was called "Je ne vis oncques le parrelle." After this interlude with the white stag, the singers in the church took up a motet, and afterwards, from the pastry, a lutenist accompanied two good singers. Thus the church and the pastry between them kept things going at all times.

Later, from the pastry, we heard a *chasse* [a song like a round, generally about hunting] that imitated the barking of little dogs and the sounding of trumpets, just as if we were in a forest. And with that *chasse*, the entertainments of the pastry and the church were completed.

Jeanne Marx, *Les Musiciens de la cour de Bourgogne au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Sarasbourg: Heitz & Co., 1937), 38-41 (from Mathieu d'Escouchy, *Chronique*). Trans. R. T.

## 23

### The Triumph of Emperor Maximilian

Political historians may look back on Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) as a terribly negligent and wasteful ruler, but he is remembered fondly by historians of the arts: for "Kaiser Max" was one of the most passionate art patrons in all history. His lust for self-aggrandizement and his lifelong obsession with the perpetuation of his memory caused him to commission literally thousands of works from the artists, poets, and architects of his time. More than anyone, Maximilian is responsible for putting the

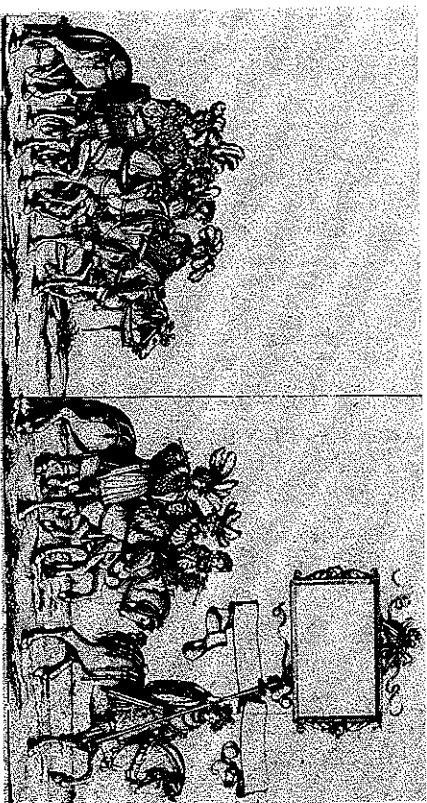
German-speaking countries at last on the musical map. Not only did he maintain a huge musical establishment at which the best indigenous talent found employment, but he lured one of the best-known Flemish superstars, Heinrich Isaac (see p. 84), to his court from Italy. In 1512 Maximilian planned the ultimate commemoration of himself: a series of woodcuts that would depict the glories of his court in triumphant procession. The text was dictated by the Emperor himself, while the woodcuts, of which 137 were completed, were the work of perhaps the two greatest masters of the medium that ever lived: Hans Burgkmair and Albrecht Dürer. Six woodcuts and captions were devoted to music. The organist Paul Hofhaimer (1459-1537), the senior court musician by title, is given a cart to himself in the procession. Isaac's conspicuous absence is explained by the fact that by 1512 he was no longer in personal residence at the court, although he continued to draw a salary from the lavish Kaiser until his death in 1517. The musical woodcuts in *The Triumph of Maximilian* are a very valuable document about musical life in the early sixteenth century. Among other things, they give modern performers of early music welcome hints as to the appropriate grouping of instruments into "consorts."

What is written in this book was personally dictated by Emperor Maximilian in 1512 to me, Max Treitzsaurwein, His Imperial Majesty's secretary. The following tells how Emperor Maximilian's triumph is to be made, arranged and depicted:

#### Fifers and Drummers

[Here] shall be depicted Anthony of Dornstätt, the fifer, on horseback, carrying his verse inscription, and he shall be distinguished in his dress from the other fifers; he shall carry his file case and wear a long sword, and his verse shall read thus:

I, Anthony of Dornstätt, have played my file  
For Maximilian, great in strife,  
In many lands on countless journeys,  
In battles fierce and knightly tourneys,  
At grave times or in holiday,  
And so in this Triumph with honor I play.



purpose and beautifully decorated with paintings. The ladies of Mantua and Ferrara were highly competent, and vied with each other not only in regard to the timbre and training of their voices but also in the design of exquisite passages of embellishment delivered at opportune points, but not in excess. Furthermore, they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing; now slow, breaking off with sometimes a gentle sigh, now singing long passages legato or detached, now *grappi*, now leaps, now with long trills, now with short, and again with sweet running passages sung softly, to which sometimes one heard an echo answer unexpectedly. They accompanied the music and the sentiment with appropriate facial expressions, glances, and gestures, with no awkward movements of the mouth or hand or body that might not express the feeling of the song. They made the words clear in such a way that one could hear even the last syllable of every word, which was never interrupted or suppressed by passages and other embellishment. They used many other particular devices that will be known to persons more experienced than I. And under these favorable circumstances the abovementioned musicians made every effort to win fame and the favor of the Princes their patrons, who were their principal support.

Carol MacClintock (trans.), *Hercule Bottrigieri: Il Desiderio and Vincenzo Giustiniani: Discorso sopra la musica*, Musicological Studies and Documents, IX (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1962), 49-53, 69-70. Reprinted by permission of Dr. Armen Carapetyan, Director of the American Institute of Musicology.

## 41

## Music and Dancing as Social Graces

The group of readings that follows will show how art music was cultivated in the sixteenth century not only in noble courts and churches, but also in bourgeois households as a social pastime, a development made possible by the music printing and publishing business (see p. 75). The scene below is a model singing session as given in a Flemish etiquette book of around 1540. The music books in Master Jacob's cupboard would have come from the presses of Tytman Susato of Antwerp, the leading music publisher of Flanders, who printed most of the works of the two composers named, Nicholas Gombert (c. 1480-1556) and Johannes Lupi (d. 1539), along with those of their contemporaries and the ever-popular Josquin. The main problem the singers have is in getting started. That is because each has his own part book and does not see his companions' music. Also notice that a man sings the highest part. The falsetto voice was widely cultivated at the time, and remained fashionable until the eighteenth century.

MASTER JACOB: And now, should we not sing us a little song? Willeken, would you go get my books?  
WILLEKEN: What books d'you want, Sir?  
MASTER JACOB: The books in four and three parts.  
WILLEKEN: Where d'you keep 'em, Sir?  
MASTER JACOB: You will find them on the sideboard.

WILLEKEN: I'll go get 'em, Sir.  
(*The company drink their wine*)

MASTER JACOB: Now where's that Willeken got to?

WILLEKEN: I can't find 'em, Sir!

MASTER JACOB: You go look for them, Antoni, and pick us out something pretty.

ANTONI: Right, Sir. Would you like to hear a song in four parts?

MASTER JACOB: It's all the same to me. Sing what you like.

ANTONI: Dierick, here's the soprano. It's not too high for you? The children

can help you out.

ROMBOUT: Give me the bass part.

ANTONI: I'll do the tenor.

DIERICK: Who'll sing alto?

YSAIAS: I, I'll sing it!

DIERICK: Who begins? Is it you, Ysaias?

YSAIAS: No, not I. I've a four-beat rest.

ANTONI: And I one of six.

YSAIAS: Well then, you come in after me!

ANTONI: So it seems. It's up to you then, Rombout!

ROMBOUT: Yes, I've only a quarter-note rest. But we'd better get the pitch.

DIERICK: What note do you begin on, Ysaias?

YSAIAS: I start on E.

DIERICK: And I on C.

ANTONI: That makes a sixth. And you, Rombout?

ROMBOUT: I begin on F.

MASTER JACOB: Thomas and Felix, you children sing along with Dierick!

FELIX: Yes, father.

MASTER JACOB: Have you studied this song?

FELIX: Yes, father.

MASTER JACOB: And you, have you learned it?

THOMAS: No, father, but we'll be able to do it all right.

ROMBOUT: Steven's not singing with us?

DAME CATELYNE: No, he's too young yet, but he'll begin soon to learn, and his sister also. Now, Steven and Cecily, you go eat.

(*The company sing the song*)

MASTER JACOB: Now, that's what I call a pretty song. Who made it up?

ROMBOUT: I think it's Gombert.

MASTER JACOB: Who's he?

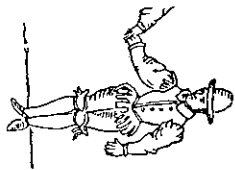
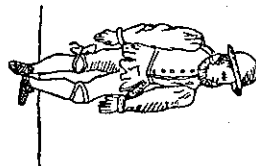
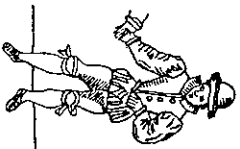
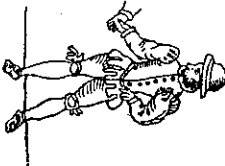
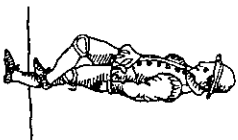
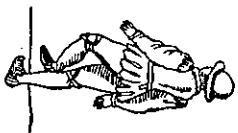
ROMBOUT: He's singing master to the Emperor [Charles V].

MASTER JACOB: Well, that's really a pretty song. And who made up the other one?

DIERICK: Johannes Lupi, the singing master at Cambrai.

MASTER JACOB: That's pretty, too. And now, Ysaias, I drink to your health.

Roger Wangermée, *Flemish Music*, trans. Robert Birch Wolf (New York: F. Praeger, 1968), 134.

*Pieds joints**Pieds joints, oblique droit**Pieds joints, oblique gauche**Pieds largis, oblique droit**Pieds largis, oblique gauche**Pieds largis**Pied croisé droit**Pied croisé gauche**Révérence*

Illustrations from Arbeau's *Orchésographie*. Showing the various attitudes and courtly gestures described in the text.

The best-known dance treatise of the Renaissance is the *Orchésographie*, the work of a retired astronomer named Jehan Tabourot, who wrote under the pseudonym Thoinot Arbeau, an anagram of his real name. Although first published in 1589, it gives a wealth of information not only on the dances of its time, but even on those of the fifteenth century. Below we give extracts from the introductory dialogue, where a lively impression is conveyed of the place and importance of dancing in Renaissance "society."

CARROL: I come to pay you my respects, Monsieur Arbeau. You do not remember me, for it is six or seven years since I left this town of Langres to go to Paris and thence to Orleans. I am an old pupil of yours, to whom you taught computation.

ARBEAU: Indeed at first glance I failed to recognize you because you have grown up since then, and I feel sure that you have also broadened your mind by manliness and learning. What do you think of the study of law? I pursued it in bygone days myself.

CARROL: I find it a noble art and necessary in the conduct of affairs, but I regret that while in Orleans I neglected to learn fine manners, an art with which many scholars enriched themselves as adjunct to their studies. For, on my return I have found myself in society, where, to put it briefly, I was tongue-tied and awkward, and regarded as little more than a block of wood.

ARBEAU: You took consolation in the fact that the learned professors excused this shortcoming in recognition of the learning you had acquired.

CARROL: That is so, but I should like to have acquired other skills during the hours between my serious studies, which would have rendered my company welcome to all.

ARBEAU: This will be an easy thing by reading French books in order to sharpen your wit and by learning fencing, dancing, and tennis that you may be an agreeable companion alike to ladies and gentlemen.

CARROL: I much enjoyed fencing and tennis, and this placed me upon friendly terms with young men. But, without knowledge of dancing, I could not please the damsels, upon whom, it seems to me, the entire reputation of an eligible young man depends.

ARBEAU: You are quite right, as naturally the male and female seek one another and nothing does more to stimulate a man to acts of courtesy, honor, and generosity than love. And if you desire to marry you must realize that a mistress is won by the good temper and grace displayed while dancing, because ladies do not like to be present at fencing or tennis, lest a splintered sword or a blow from a tennis ball cause them injury. And there is more to it than this, for dancing is practiced to reveal whether lovers are in good health and sound of limb, after which they are permitted to kiss their mistresses in order that they may touch and savor one another, thus to ascertain if they are shapely or emit an unpleasant odor as of bad meat. Therefore, from this standpoint, quite apart from the many other advantages to be derived from dancing, it becomes an essential to a well-ordered society.

CAPRIOL: You fill me with a longing to learn to dance and I regret that I have not devoted many idle moments to it, for one can take honest pleasure without becoming tainted by vice or evil habits.

ARBEAU: You can quickly regain the time you have wasted, especially as you are a musician and dancing depends on music, one of the seven liberal arts, and its modulations.

CAPRIOL: Then I beg of you to teach me about these things, Monsieur Arbeau, because I know you are a musician, and in your youth won a reputation for good dancing and dexterity in a thousand sprightly steps.

ARBEAU: The noun "dance" comes from the verb "to dance," which in Latin is called *saltare*. To dance is to jump, to hop, to skip, to sway, to stamp, to uprise, and to employ the feet, hands, and body in certain rhythmic movements. These consist of leaping, bending the body, straddling, limping, flexing the knees, rising upon the toes, twitching the feet, with variations of these, and further postures. Dancing, or saltation, is both a pleasant and a profitable art which confers and preserves health; proper to youth, agreeable to the old, and suitable to all, provided fitness of time and place are observed and it is not abused. I mention time and place because it would bring contempt upon one who became overzealous like the tavern haunters.

CAPRIOL: Since dancing is an art, it must therefore belong to one of the seven liberal arts. ARBEAU: As I have already told you, it depends on music and its modulations. Without this rhythmic quality dancing would be dull and confused inasmuch as the movements of the limbs must follow the rhythm of the music, for the foot must not tell of one thing and the music of another. But, most of the authorities hold that dancing is a kind of mute rhetoric by which the orator, without uttering a word, can make himself understood by his movements and persuade the spectators that he is gallant and worthy to be acclaimed, admired, and loved. Are you not of the opinion that this is the dancer's own language, expressed by his feet and in a convincing manner? Does he not plead tacitly with his mistress, who marks the seemliness and grace of his dancing, "Love me, desire me?" And when miming is added, she has the power to stir his emotions, now to anger, now to pity and commiseration, now to hate, now to love.

CAPRIOL: Do not tantalize me by delaying any longer to grant my request to learn how the movements of the dance are performed, in order that I may master them and not be reproached for having the heart of a pig and the head of an ass. ARBEAU: To please you I will tell you what I know, although it would ill become me, at my present age of sixty-nine, to practice the subject matter.

Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesographie*, trans. Mary Stewart Evans (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), 11-18. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

What follows next is an Elizabethan sales puff, a kind of jacket blurb for a music book expressly aimed at the amateur, the *Psalmes, sonets, & songs of sadness and piete* (1588) by William Byrd, whom we have already seen to have been an astute musical businessman (see p. 78). He certainly hit the mark this time: the book went through two printings and was followed by two sequels, *Songs of sundrie natures* (1589) and

*Psalmes, songs and sonnets* (1611). The latter two publications, incidentally, enclose between their dates the brief period when England went crazy over the Italian madrigal—home music-making at its most exalted—and produced the torrent of imitations that still constitute the best known, if in some ways the least characteristic, specimens of English music of the period.

Reasons briefly set down by the author, to perswade every one to learne to sing.

*First* it is a knowledge easily taught, and quickly learned where there is a good Master, and an apt Scoller.

2. The exercise of singing is delightfull to Nature & good to preserve the health of Man.

3. It doth strengthen all the parts of the breast, & doth open the pipes.

4. It is a singular good remedie for a strutting & stammering in the speech.

5. It is the best meanes to procure a perfect pronounciation & to make a good Orator.

6. It is the onely way to know where Nature hath bestowed the benefit of a good voyce: which gift is so rare, as there is not one among a thousand, that hath it: and in many, that excellent gift is lost, because they want Art to expresse Nature.

7. There is not any Musicke of Instruments whatsoever, comparable to that which is made of the voyces of Men, where the voyces are good, and the same well sorted and ordered.

8. The better the voyce is, the meeter it is to honor and serve God therewith: and the voyce of man is chiefly to be employed to that end.

*Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.*

Since singing is so good a thing  
I wish all men would learne to sing.

William Byrd, *Psalmes, sonets & songs* . . . (London, 1588), frontispiece.

Byrd might have added the avoidance of social embarrassment to his list, for it is the chief matter treated in the opening dialogue from Thomas Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction* of 1597. This passage, reminiscent of the dialogue on the merits of dancing from Arbeau's *Orchesographie* given above, has often been cited as evidence of the universality of musical skill and training in Elizabethan England. Actually, though, here the ever-eclectic Morley has again paraphrased an earlier writer, this time Quintilian (who in turn was citing Cicero—see p. 10).

ΠΟΛΥΜΑΘΗΣ: Stay, brother Philomathes, what haste? Whither go you so fast?

ΦΙΛΟΜΑΘΗΣ: To seek out an old friend of mine.

ΠΟΛ.: But before you go I pray you repeat some of the discourses which you had yesternight at Master Sophobulus his banquet, for commonly he is not without both wise and learned guests.

ΦΙΛ.: It is true indeed, and yesternight there were a number of excellent scholars, both gentlemen and others, but all the "propos" which then was discoursed upon was music.

POL.: I trust you were contented to suffer others to speak of that matter.

PHIL.: I would that had been the worst, for I was compelled to discover mine own ignorance and confess that I know nothing at all in it.

POL.: How so?

PHIL.:

Among the rest of the guests, by chance master Aphron came thither also, who, falling to discourse of music, was in an argument so quickly taken up and hotly pursued by Endoxus and Calerigus, two kinsmen of Sophobulus, as in his own art he was overthrown; but he still sticking in his opinion, the two gentlemen requested me to examine his reasons and confute them; but I refusing and pretending ignorance, the whole company condemned me of discourtesy, being fully persuaded that I had been as skillful in that art as they took me to be learned in others. But supper being ended and music books (according to the custom) being brought to the table, the mistress of the house presented me with a part earnestly requesting me to sing; but when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder; yea, some whispered to others demanding how I was brought up, so that upon shame of mine ignorance I go now to seek out mine old friend Master Gnorinus, to make myself his scholar. Farewell, for I sit upon thorns till I be gone, therefore I will make haste.

Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practicall Musike* (London, 1597), 1-2, abridged. Spelling and punctuation modernized.

Finally, Sonnet CXXXVII by Shakespeare, whose delightful scene of flirtation at the keyboard gives us a better glimpse of music in Elizabethan society than many a weighty sociological tome. In Shakespeare's time the virginals—little pentagonal spinets of varying size, often piled one atop another—were fast replacing the lute as the domestic solo instrument par excellence. Its chief repertoire consisted of sets of variations on popular songs meant to please bourgeois tastes and composed by all the foremost musicians of the time, Byrd and Bull being most prolific in this genre.

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st,  
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds  
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st  
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,  
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,  
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,  
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!  
To be so tickl'd, they would change their state  
And situation with those dancing chips,  
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,  
Making dead wood more bless'd than living lips.  
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,  
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

## 42

## Renaissance Instrumentalists

We get our first descriptions of virtuoso instrumentalists in a recently discovered treatise of c. 1480 by Tinctoris (see p. 68). Although undoubtedly virtuosos existed from the beginning of time, it was only with the Renaissance that their accomplishments began to be valued as truly artistic ones. Their names began to be celebrated and their spontaneous inspiration admired. In Tinctoris's descriptions of outstanding performances he himself had witnessed on plucked and bowed string instruments, two things stand out. First, instrumentalists were preeminently improvisers, and second, instrumentalists' repertoire consisted in the main of arrangements and embellishments of vocal pieces. Indeed, much of the written-down instrumental music that began to appear, chiefly in Italy, around the turn of the fifteenth century was exactly the kind of piece Tinctoris here describes: florid, freewheeling virtuosic flights over a famous dance tune or over the tenor part of a popular chanson.

*The lute commonly called lute, and the various instruments derived from it.* The lute is made of wood in the shape of a tortoise-shell, with a hole roughly in the center, and a long neck over which the strings are stretched from just below the hole up to the top of the neck. The player holds the instrument with his left hand, at the same time making the notes by pressure of his fingers, while the strings are struck by the right hand either with the fingers or with a plectrum. The plectrum elicits the notes from the strings.

The [ancient] lyre is described as having seven strings tuned by tones and semitones [i.e., to a scale], analogously to the seven planets, or in honor of the seven Pleiades. But since seven strings differing by tones and semitones do not suffice for every composition, an arrangement of five, sometimes six, principal strings was later adopted, first, I think, by the Germans. According to this, the two middle strings are tuned to a major third and the rest in fourths, thereby making the lute completely perfect. And further, to provide a stronger sound, an additional string may be conjoined to any string and tuned to the octave. The strings are generally of ram's gut, but there is also the German invention by which another set of brass strings, tuned very deeply, is added. By this the sound is rendered not only stronger, but also much sweeter.

Some instruments of the lute family, by reason of the size and number of their strings, are perfectly suitable for rendering all four parts of a composition, or even more if the player has sufficient skill. We use the lute at feasts, dances, and entertainment public and private, and in this many Germans are exceedingly accomplished and renowned. Thus some will take the treble part of any piece you care to give them and improvise marvelously upon it with such taste that the performance cannot be rivaled. Among such, Pietro Bono, lutenist to Ercole, Duke of Ferrara [see p. 84] is in my opinion preeminent. Furthermore, others will do what is much more difficult; namely to play a composition alone, and most skillfully, in not only two parts, but even in three or four: for example, Orbus the German, or Henri who was recently in the service of Charles [the Bold], Duke of Burgundy.