

Review from American Recorder Magazine:

The York Waits Early Music Miscellany (Early Music Miscellany: settings and arrangements of Medieval and Renaissance song & dance music for instrumental performance), James Merryweather, Series Editor.

3 Songs by One of the London Waits, Jeremy Savile (1667 and 1673). Peacock Press PTYW 23 (Magnamusic), 2005, 3 & 4 voices, 4 sc. 2 pp. ea.

Saraband by One of the London Waits, Simon Ives (1600-1662), Peacock Press PTYW 17 (Magnamusic), 2005, SSATB (or other insts), 5 sc. 2 pp. ea. Plus parts transposed for Bb clarinet, viola, French horn

Four Playford Dances: Millfield, Shaking of the Sheets, Tythe Pig, Chestnut (x 2), pub. John Playford (1651-1695), arr. Tim Bayley Peacock Press PTYW 12-16 (Magnamusic), 2005, 3, 4, 5 recorders. Sc. 9 pp.

Past Three O'Clock - London, York & Oxford Waits plus The Waits' Carol Peacock Press PTYW 18-21 (Magnamusic), 2005, 2, 3, 4 recorders. Sc. 7 pp.

Dr Merryweather's Song-Booke, Ruxbury Publications, ISBN 1-904846-11-4, 2005, 1-6 recs or voices, 112pp, CD.

We have received five more wonderful arrangements of miscellaneous pieces in *The York Waits* series, edited by James Merryweather. What a pleasure to explore and to discover some more treasures for players at the intermediate and advanced-intermediate levels.

According to the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (edited by Stanley Sadie, vol. 20, pp. 154-55), the meaning of the term "waits" changed in England from the 13th century to the 17th and 18th centuries.

In the earliest times, it referred to a watchman, at the gate of a town or castle, who used a horn to announce the approach of someone wanting to be admitted. Later watchmen would announce the hours, often with a shawm, and would also watch for fire and other dangers.

By the late 15th century, the term "waits" referred to town musicians who attended to ceremonial functions of the mayor and played in the streets at night. In the 16th century, these musicians began to include singers and players of softer instruments like recorders, viols and cornetti.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the waits of many towns had their own signature tunes. Toward the end of the 18th century, however, most town groups had disbanded for financial reasons. The musicians then became members of church bands, and the waits became only a memory of the earlier times.

A member of the London Waits, Jeremy Savile was the composer of 3 *Songs* in a volume

of that name in Merryweather's York Waits series. In three or four parts, the songs are entitled: "Here's a Health," 1667 (S A⁸ B); "The Waits," 1673 (SATB); and "Had She Not Care," 1667 (A⁸ A⁸ A). Both the first and second songs are from John Playford's *Musical Companion*.

By including the words to these songs, Merryweather has made our decisions about articulation and phrasing so much more reliable. In "The Waits", since the words throughout are "fa la la la," one would expect no phrasing issues. However, it is again very helpful to have them included, as there are a few surprises with placements of a "fa" here and there. The fact that the rhythm is the same throughout the parts in "The Waits" means that an intermediate group can play with more reassurance and usually have a successful performance.

The final piece in this volume, "Had She Not Care," becomes an exercise in reading up an octave, which is a good skill for recorder players to acquire. Also, since this is a catch or round, the entire piece can be practiced in unison to work out any difficulties before it is played by the group in parts.

All three pieces are on a fold-out two-page score, one for each player and an extra one for the coach. The print is clear and sizable enough for some aging eyes. Thank you!

Saraband, by Simon Ives (1600-62), is arranged for SSATB by Peter Holman. One side of each of the two-page parts shows the score; on the other side are separate parts transposed for viola, clarinet and French horn. This gives this edition the flexibility to be used by a modern ensemble as well as the traditional recorder group.

This piece is for players who are good rhythmic readers. It may be a challenge for some groups but worth the work to get it together.

A small collection of Playford dances - ones not usually included in other editions - is in Tim Bayley's arrangements for three, four and five instruments entitled *4 Playford Dances*.

The first piece, "Millfield," is in four parts (SSAB would be one way to play it) and also includes chords so that a stringed or keyboard instrument can be added. It is a chirpy, very manageable piece, and nicely arranged.

"Shaking of the Sheets" is another four-part piece in 6/8 with chords added. It could be played on SSAB or S A⁸ A/T B - flexible enough to challenge various intermediate players and yet give a pleasing result. Our group found it useful as an exercise in articulation resulting in different affects and in developing the skill of alto reading up an octave.

In order to show the importance of including lyrics for vocal pieces. one has only to play this without any knowledge of the words - the result is a very cheerful mood. However, the words of this piece and explanation of key phrases indicate that it is about death and

dying - a different feeling altogether than what one would expect!

"Tythe Pig" (S A⁸ B) is another skillfully arranged piece. In most of the song, the parts move rhythmically together, giving a nice effect of clean movement.

The collection ends with two versions of Playford's "Chestnut" for four and five players. The four-part version requires changing octaves in some places; the five-part version does not, working smoothly and well on SAATB.

All in all, this is a good addition to the pieces available for intermediates, fun to play and sounding good for the players and the audience alike.

Merryweather, the York Waits series editor, has included good historical background of the melodies in the volume *Past Three O'clock*. One interesting fact mentioned by him is that the term "country" dance comes from the French word *contre*, meaning "opposite." He also shows photocopies of the original music and texts of signature songs from the Oxford, York and London waits.

Included is a lovely arrangement by Bayley of the Waits' or Bellman's Carol, "The Moon Shines Bright." Of the two possible settings of the Oxford Waits' song (a *cebell* or English gavotte), our group preferred the one arranged for treble and bass instrument. We liked the sound of the bass part fairly unchanged, whereas the treble part could be altered to fit the range of the alto recorder or played just as effectively on the tenor recorder.

The final volume reviewed here is *Dr. Merryweather's Song-Booke*, which includes a special CD-ROM that offers the possibility of hearing each part separately and then together. The table of contents lists the pieces in order: the composer, date, type of song (solo, part song, catch, round, instrumental, chorus song, etc.), and number of singers or players. Very helpful comments and information precede the songs themselves.

The pieces that derive from vocal works include the words - all verses! That is such fun in the delightful song "The Vicar of Bray," which tells about a Church of England clergyman who serves during the reign of many kings and queens, changing his beliefs and devotions for convenience through the years.

This volume is a great source for an ongoing ensemble that needs material both light and entertaining, yet serious. It will serve well for practice material as well as for performing.

The entire *York Waits* series is done with careful attention to original sources, presented with a good amount of historical and performance information, and the pieces chosen with care. I commend the editor and recommend the series!

Marie-Louise A. Smith has taught recorder for over 30 years. She retired in 2003 from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music's Early Music Institute, where she directed the IU Young Recorder Players. She created and directed the Summer IU Recorder Academy for gifted teenage recorder players from all over the World. In 2005,

she received the Presidential Special Honor Award from the ARS.