

69. Intrada zu vier Stimmen

Moritz Landgrave of Hessen
(1572-1632)
arr. William Melton

Hesse, Moritz, Landgrave of

(born 25 May 1572 in Kassel; died 15 March 1632 in Eschwege)

The son of Wilhelm IV, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, and Sabine of Württemberg, Moritz assumed rule at his father's death in 1592. Though raised in the Lutheran faith, he converted to Calvinism in 1605, and thereafter ceased to benefit from the uneasy truce the Peace of Augsburg had brokered between Catholics and Lutherans fifty years before. This led to bitter discord with the Holy Roman Emperor, but also within his own extended family. Moritz was thus isolated at the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618, and he saw much of what he had built during his rule destroyed by the conflict. In 1627 he abdicated in favour of his son Wilhelm V (the fourth of eighteen children by two marriages), and lived his remaining years in retirement in Eschwege.

The unsuccessful politician was nonetheless a man of great culture, master of many languages, well versed in science and philosophy, a trained singer, skilled instrumentalist and a composer.* As testified by Paul-Heinz Leifhelm, 'He possessed an extensive music library that included music of almost every composer of his time from Germany, the Low Countries, England, France and Italy'. Particular influences on his work were that of Orlando di Lasso and Georg Otto, longtime Kapellmeister in Kassel and the Landgrave's composition teacher. Moritz produced motets and larger sacred works, psalm settings and madrigals. He also composed dances and other instrumental music (notably the collection *Paduanen, Galliarden und Intraden für allerley Instrumente*), including the *Intrada* for Four Voices which takes its inspiration from the newer Venetian antiphonal style.

Still, as scholar Christiane Engelbrecht noted, 'The greatest achievements that Landgrave Moritz accomplished in the musical sphere lay primarily

in his generous patronage'. In 1598 he founded Collegium Mauritanum, a school for the training of the sons of court nobles but also for choirboys (Heinrich Schütz was among the latter), and soon afterwards Moritz built the very first court theatre in Germany. He saw the Kassel Orchestra greatly expanded (thirty-six musicians by 1600), and received dedications from Hans Leo Hassler, John Dowland, Michael Praetorius, and Heinrich Schütz (he had given Schütz financial support that enabled his studies with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice). Dowland enthused in a letter to Sir Robert Cecil, '[...] I went to the Landgrave of Hessen, who gave me the greatest welcome that might be for one of my quality. He sent a ring into England to my wife valued at twenty pounds sterling, and gave me a great standing cup with a cover gilt full of dollars, with great many offers for my service'. The arts, especially music, were the sole consolation in the life of the unhappy ruler, who subsequent generations honoured with the title 'Moritz, the Learned'.

Text by William Melton

*Centuries later the Landgraves of Hesse would produce another gifted composer. Alexander Friedrich (1863-1945), blind from childhood, studied with a remarkable list of teachers that included Anton Urspruch, Joseph Joachim, Felix Weingartner, Otto Dessoff, Heinrich von Herzogenberg, Max Bruch, Felix Draeseke, Louis Vierne and Gabriel Fauré. Alexander Friedrich composed well-regarded Lieder and chamber music, including a Trio for Piano, Horn and Clarinet, Op. 3, Four Canons for Two Soprani, Two Horns and Piano, Op. 5, and a Quintet for Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello and Horn, Op. 25.