

Two Trios (in Full Score)

89. Canzonet: Spring-time mantleth every bough (Canzonets to Three Voices, 1593)

Thomas Morley
(c. 1557-1602)
arr. William Melton

Morley, Thomas

(born 1557 or 1558 in Norwich; died possibly in early October 1602 in London)

Morley studied with William Byrd, and served as organist and chorus master at the Norwich Cathedral from 1583 until 1587. He was awarded a B. Mus. degree from Oxford the following year, and was engaged as organist of St. Giles, Cripplegate, and later at St. Paul's Cathedral. After a short and ineffectual episode in Flanders as a spy for the government of Elizabeth I, he was made a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1592. In 1598 he was granted a music publishing monopoly while living in the parish of Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate (the same parish was home to William Shakespeare at the time). Morley's publications went far beyond his own compositions: *The Triumphes of Oriana* (1601) included madrigals from the pens of twenty-three different composers. Thurston Dart wrote that Morley's editions 'inaugurated the English madrigal school, perhaps the most splendid thirty years in the whole history of English music'. Morley was also a distinguished theorist, and his *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597) received wide circulation. Estimates of the date of his death begin at 1602 and end at 1608, when a musical elegy on Morley's passing ('Death hath deprived me of my dearest friend') was published by Thomas Weelkes.

Morley's own compositions included motets, psalms, anthems, full services, works for instrumental consort, dances for keyboard, madrigals, ballets and canzonets. 'Spring-Time Mantleth Every Bough', one of the latter, is the twenty-fourth entry in *Canzonets or Little Short Songs to Three Voyces* (1593), a collection 'imprinted at London by Thomas E[a]st, an assigné of William Byrd, dwelling in Aldersgate Street, at the signe of the black Horse' and dedicated 'to the most rare and accomplished Lady the Lady Marye Countes of Pembroke'. The three-part miniature madrigals were based on

Italian models in which, to quote Morley himself, a 'little art can be shewed, being made in strains the beginning of which is some point lightly touched, and every strain repeated except the middle'.

Text by William Melton