

The best kind [of light music] is termed madrigal, a word for the etymology of which I can give no reason . . . [But] as for the music, it is, to men of understanding, most delightful. - Thomas Morley, 1597

WELCOME SWEET PLEASURE

by Thomas Weelkes (c. 1576-1623)



A delightful chapter in music history began in 1588, with the London publication of a vocal collection of “music from across the Alps,” *Musica Transalpina*. Aided by text translations, the collection introduced the Italian madrigal to Elizabethan England. The imported genre quickly gained immense popularity, and a group of British musicians began to write their own madrigals. These composers perfected the art of English secular part-song, and their charming works are enjoyed to this day.

Thomas Weelkes, one of the best English madrigal composers, wrote four volumes of madrigals and related works. “Welcome Sweet Pleasure,” printed in his second volume (1598), is a fine example of one of the genres related to the madrigal, the ballett.

Lively, dance-like rhythms and chordal textures characterize balletts. They consist of two short repeated musical sections, each of which concludes with a “fa-la-la” refrain. Balletts are strophic, using the same music for each poetic stanza or strophe. The more complex madrigal often employs serious texts, but the simpler ballett always uses light-hearted texts.

The typical ballett text of “Welcome Sweet Pleasure” offers a celebration of joy and a rejection of sorrow. A third stanza, not printed with the music, summarizes the philosophy: “Grief is distainful, sottish and painful, Then wait on pleasure, and lose no leisure.” Special emphasis is given to the negatives (“no delaying,” “none relievest,” and “lose no leisure”) found at the endings of the first section. The composer extends the negatives into his first refrain, which becomes a repetition of “no, no, no” instead of the traditional “fa-la-la.”

In this edition, with tempo and dynamic markings added, Weelkes’ five-part ballett (SSATB) is transposed down a whole tone and reduced to four parts. The edition retains the original soprano lines within parts I and II; occasionally the original lines are exchanged in order to avoid crossings between I and II and to keep the highest pitches in part I. Part III reproduces the original alto line. The harmonic filler of Weelkes’ tenor part has been eliminated. Part IV preserves the original bass line with some octave transposition. The cue-sized notes in part IV may be used if a lower register is more comfortable for the singers.

WELCOME SWEET PLEASURE

(Four-Part Mixed, a cappella)

THOMAS WEELKES (c. 1576-1623)
 Arranged by CRAWFORD R. THOBURN

Briskly (♩ = ca. 152)

f-p

I

1. Wel - come sweet plea - sure, my wealth and trea - sure,
 2. Sor - row con - tent thee, mirth must pre - vent** thee,

f-p

II

1. Wel - come sweet plea - sure, my wealth and trea - sure,
 2. Sor - row con - tent thee, mirth must pre - vent** thee,

f-p

III

1. Wel - come sweet plea - sure, my wealth and trea - sure,
 2. Sor - row con - tent thee, mirth must pre - vent** thee,

f-p

IV

1. Wel - come sweet plea - sure, my wealth and trea - sure,
 2. Sor - row con - tent thee, mirth must pre - vent** thee,

PIANO

f-p
 (to rehearsal only)

Sing the words of the first stanza of the entire ballet (with repeats)
 before beginning the words of the second stanza.

* Use cue sized notes if desired.

** The old meaning of this word is "to go before"

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To haste our play - ing there's no de - lay - ing.
Though much thou griev - est thou none re - liev - est.

To haste our play - ing there's no de - lay - ing.
Though much thou griev - est thou none re - liev - est.

To haste our play - ing there's no de - lay - ing.
Though much thou griev - est thou none re - liev - est.

To haste our play - ing there's no de - lay - ing.
Though much thou griev - est thou none re - liev - est.

5

9

No no no no no no no no no.

No no no no no no no no no.

No no no no no no no no.

No no no no no no no no.

9

13

mf

p

17

f

1. This mirth de - lights me, when sor - row frights me, Then sing we all, Fa la
 2. Joy come de - light me, though sor - row spite me, Then sing we all, Fa la

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 2. Joy come de - light me, though sor - row spite me, Then sing we all, Fa la

13

mf

p

17

f

1. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.
 2. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.

1. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.
 2. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.

1. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.
 2. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.

1. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.
 2. la la la. la la, Then sing we all, Fa la la la la.

1.

2.

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ff

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