

# KNOW YOUR CLASSICS

THIS series of articles, written for "The Listener" by BESSIE POLLARD, is designed to help the student and the interested listener towards a more complete appreciation of good music. Each article deals in outline with one accepted masterpiece and illustrates its main themes.

## (3) The Four-Part Fantasias for Strings (Henry Purcell)

THE FANTASIA, a composition based on a popular song, a street-cry, or similar theme, dates from about the middle of the 16th Century. Its English counter-part, the Fancy, was a contrapuntal form with fugal entries, close imitation and, as an old formula of the time puts it—"chromatic notes, with bindings and inter-mixtures of discords."

Charles I had esteemed, commissioned, and taken part in the performance of the Fancy, but Charles II disliked the form, so we are not surprised to learn that Purcell's Four-part Fancies, written between June 10 and August 31, 1680, had to wait for publication and performance until the year 1927. They contain, in the main, music to enjoy in quiet surroundings, when one is in a reflective mood; they are scored, possibly not for viols, but for a full range of violins, including the now obsolete tenor violin. The general arrangement of each is very similar, consisting of alternating slow and quick movements, a semi-fugal start with one theme only, or sometimes two together; some are purely polyphonic, while others are homophonic, employing very original harmony.

Space does not permit quoting themes from all the nine Four-part Fancies, so I have chosen some of the most representative.

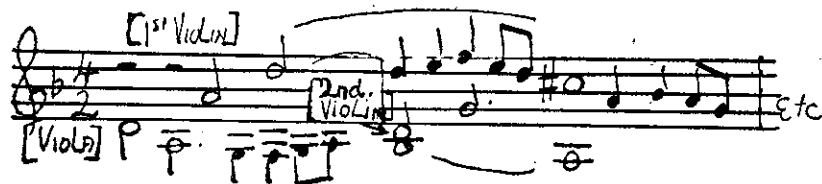
No. 2, written on June 11, 1680, with its ten-bar phrases, is typical of Purcell's preference for "irregular patterns and free phrasing." This viola theme is heard after a ten-bar introduction—



No. 4, composed on June 19, is constructed on two themes presented simultaneously—



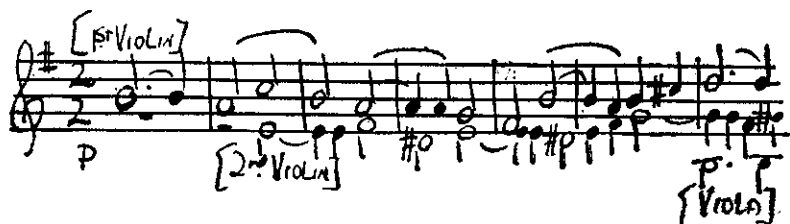
No. 5, which bears the date June 22, has a theme presented in inversion with itself—



No. 6, written on June 23, shows, after a ten-bar introduction, a remarkably venturesome piece of figuration to begin the quicker section—



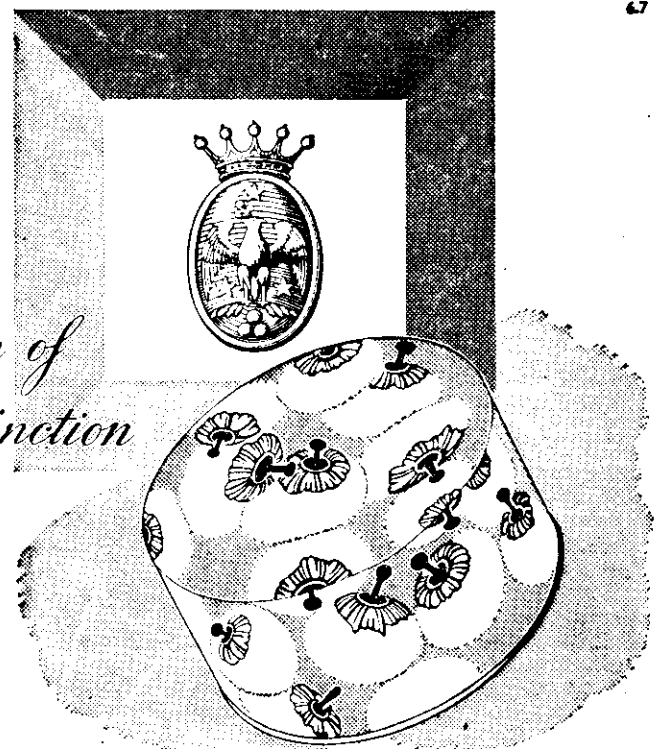
The ninth Fancy, written on August 31, makes one wish that Purcell had braved his monarch's disapproval, and "been truer to himself than to his time." It is constructed upon this theme, presented in inversion with itself, and in canon—



PURCELL'S FOUR-PART FANTASIAS FOR STRINGS will be heard from Station 2YC on FRIDAY, JULY 30, at 9.0 p.m.

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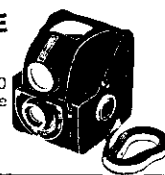
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