

Thomas Morley (b. 1557 or 1558, Norwich, England; d. 1602, London)

Thomas Morley was a composer, theorist, editor, and organist and is considered by many to have been the foremost composer of the English Madrigal School. A pupil of William Byrd, Morley dedicated his theoretical work *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597)—the most celebrated English treatise of the Renaissance—to his master. Morley was appointed Master of Choristers at Norwich Cathedral in 1583. He received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oxford University in 1588, became organist of St. Paul's Cathedral the following year, and was appointed Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1592. In 1598, Queen Elizabeth granted him exclusive license to print and sell music in England.



Morley's principal contribution to music history was in the form of the madrigal, publishing 11 collections of madrigals during his lifetime. His work displays a wide range of emotional color, form, and technique. Many of his madrigals are light, fast, and highly singable. His *Canzonets for Five and Six Voices*, however, reveal sad as well as cheerful moods, representing his mature style. A few of his most popular madrigals are "Aprill Is in My Mistris Face," "My Bonny Lasse Shee Smyleth," "Now Is the Month of Maying," and "Sing We and Chant it." In 1601, Morley edited the *Triumphs of Oriana*, a collection of 25 madrigals by 23 composers compiled to honor Queen Elizabeth I—sometimes referred to in poetry as "Orianna."

In addition to his madrigals, Morley wrote ballets; music for the liturgy of the Church of England, including service and psalm settings and motets; keyboard music, some of which has been preserved in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*; music for lute; and music for consorts of instruments favored in England at the time. Morley once lived in the same parish as Shakespeare, and a connection between the two has long been speculated, although never verified. Morley set "It Was a Lover and His Lass" from *As You Like It*, further fueling speculation that the two men knew each other.

In 1602, Morley resigned from the Chapel Royal, dying soon thereafter at age forty-six. Thomas Weelkes paid tribute to him in a madrigal, with text by John Davies: "Death hath deprived me of my dearest friend."

This composer's works in St. Martin's Chamber Choir's repertoire:

Burial Service

Lirum lirum

Now is the month of Maying

Sing we and chant it