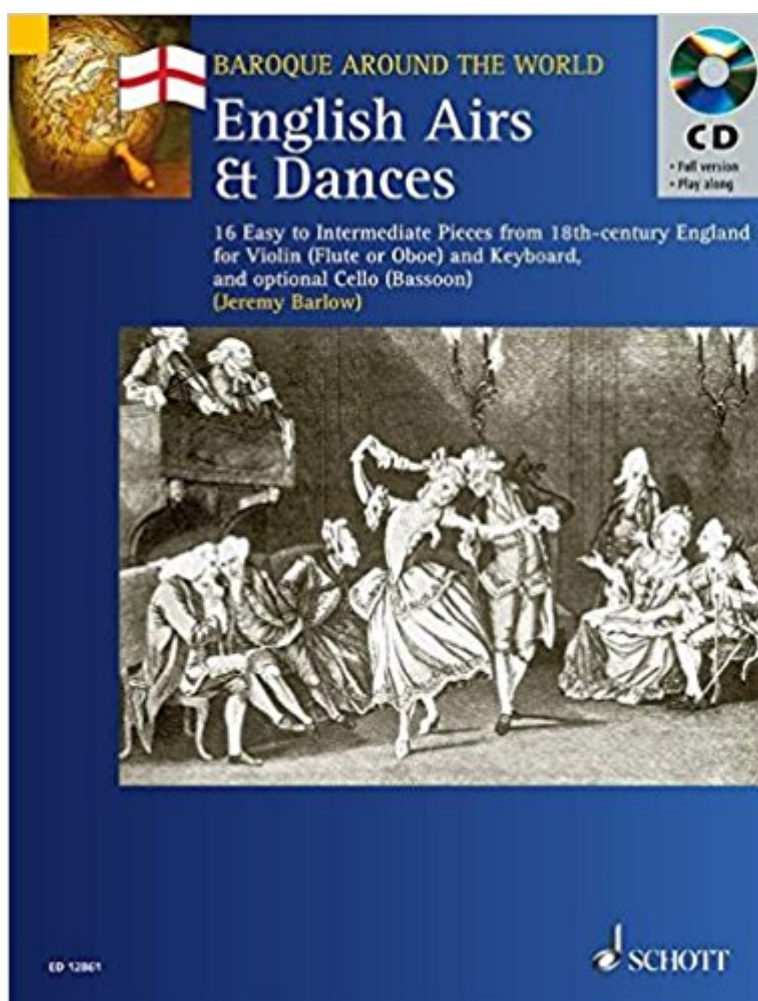


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ENGLISH AIRS AND DANCES VIOLIN AND KEYBOARD BK/CD (Baroque Around The World)



Synopsis

(Schott). The collection includes country dances, Cheshire rounds, hornpipes, and pantomime tunes, plus examples of the march, minuet, siciliana, gavotte, and jig. Featured composers include Arne, Earl of Abingdon, Hebden, Holcombe, Linley, Roseingrave, Stanley, Thackray. "This collection of early English music for violin, flute, or oboe with keyboard accompaniment has an array of styles including marches, ballads, folk tunes, and a variety of dance music. There are extensive program and performance notes for each selection that explain the texts together with historical background and interpretive detail."-- The Instrumentalist

Book Information

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A master class in playing 18th-century English musicJeremy Barlow is a superb performer and scholar of early music. He has been making excellent recordings under the name of The Broadside Band since the 1980s.Barlow and others have collaborated on a series of music books with CDs

called "Baroque Around the World." Barlow edited the volume "English Airs & Dances," playing (digital) harpsichord on the CD, accompanying violinist Sharon Lindo, flautist Jennifer Stinton, and cellist Nick Stringfellow. The book is described as "16 Easy to Intermediate Pieces for Violin (Flute or Oboe) and Keyboard, and optional Cello (Bassoon)." In fact, the lead lines of most of the tunes can be played by any instrument with a 2-octave range (D next to middle C, and up), including recorders in C, mandolin, and clarinet. Five of the tunes have high notes that may challenge beginning and amateur violinists and recorder players. Numbers 9 and 11 have high Ds, numbers 10 and 14 have high Es, and number 16, which is in the key of E-flat, has high E-flats. Most of the tunes are in the keys of C, G, and D (and relative minors), keys which are comfortable on violin, flute, and soprano and tenor recorders. The selections are lovely, interesting, and rare. Many are dance tunes from Playford and Walsh collections. There are a few sonata movements, as well. John Dowland is the only well-known composer represented. Next best-known is Thomas Arne, hardly a household name. The editing, typesetting, and layout are clear and precise (the only error I've found is the placement of the endings of number 13 in the full score). No fingerings or bowing marks are included, nor are there any instructions on interpreting the ornaments. The keyboard parts are given in standard modern layout of treble-and-bass clefs, with no figured bass. The keyboard realizations are generally quite simple and direct -- effective and entirely musical. Part books for lead instrument and cello are included. Three selections include parts for a second instrument, mostly playing lower harmonies. Two selections include notation for the octave shifts required, depending upon whether the lead instrument is violin or flute. The performances on the CDs are clear, charming, and stylish. Ornaments are played fairly simply and comprehensibly. Small, stylistically correct melodic variations are introduced. Each tune is played just once, with repeats. The CD includes complete performances of all the tunes, with violin and/or flute accompanied by harpsichord and cello, and a complete second set of tracks with harpsichord only. One might wish the second set of tracks had included the cello, so that someone playing the lead part could have the full sound of the accompaniment. Most professional players of early music tune to a lower pitch than the modern standard of A=440 when performing music of the 18th century, making it impossible for musicians whose recorders are tuned to modern pitch to play along. The recordings for this collection were made to modern pitch. Barlow and the publisher chose to leave discussions of stylistic matters such as ornamentation, variation, phrasing, and bowing for the student to seek out elsewhere. It would have been helpful to include a few suggested sources for that kind of information. A great deal of that kind of information is conveyed aurally through the recorded performances. I am a professional pianist and my work is mostly in American popular music styles. I have played recorders and

studied early music as a dedicated amateur since I was a child. I am quite used to learning music "by ear." I have thoroughly enjoyed playing the 11 selections (the ones without the highest notes) on tenor recorder along with the CD. Because I am studying the phrasing, ornamentation, and variations, I have played along only with the complete tracks, and have not yet tried playing with the solo harpsichord tracks. I find that the tempi on the recordings tend to be just brisk enough to challenge me, but not impossibly fast. I can well imagine that less-skilled players might wish for slower recordings. I recommend to them the shareware program called The Amazing Slowdowner. "English Airs & Dances" is beautifully conceived and executed. I look forward to the other volumes in the "Baroque Around the World" series. -- Hoyle Osborne

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