Hand in Hand with Fairy Grace

from Shakespeare’s ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’

Benjamin Cooke (1734-1793)
I am delighted and flattered to have been asked to make this edition of Hand in Hand with Fairy Grace for performance in July 2005 by Collegium Musicum of London. The edition has been prepared from the autograph manuscript of the work dated ‘30 September 1777, Dorset Court’ (ms. Gb-Lcm 820.01), which is to be found in volume 13 of Dr Cooke’s Collection in the library of the Royal College of Music, London.

Benjamin Cooke was a distinguished musical figure in 18th-century London. He was not only the director of The Academy of Ancient Music - a role in which he kept alive a scholarly and practical interest in the music of earlier times - but he was also the Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey and the organist of St Martin’s-in-the-Fields. Cooke was a fine composer of sacred and orchestral music, a well known teacher and a writer on the subject of music theory, but it was as the prolific composer of small-scale popular, secular choral music like Hand in Hand that he was best known in his day. Such pieces (glees, catches and canons) became the staple musical diet of the many clubs and societies that sprang up all over the kingdom during the 18th century, and not just in those dedicated to music. In these surroundings conviviality was guaranteed by the singing of simple vocal forms and the profusion of this music in print, provided by very many 18th-century British composers, is testament to a widespread musical literacy amongst the population at large.

Hand in Hand is a text from the last scene of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In the late 18th century performances of Shakespeare often made use of glee settings for his song texts despite the critical voices occasionally raised against the practice, in particular where song texts that Shakespeare allocated to a single character were set as a glee to be sung by an ensemble. However, Cooke’s Hand in Hand was not written for the theatre, although he did occasionally compose music for the London stage and he also had a limited personal involvement (with the Abbey choristers) in providing music for the Drury Lane theatre. In fact Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream was rarely staged in the 18th century. It received only 10 known performances in London during the period between the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and 1800. The last of these performances was on 18 July 1777 at the Haymarket theatre and some months before Cooke wrote Hand in Hand.

It is most likely that Cooke composed this music for his own domestic consumption, to be performed at the regular Sunday evening music parties held in his own home. These events were principally for the Cooke family’s entertainment, with an ‘open house’ atmosphere that welcomed visiting musicians, professional and amateur alike. The diary of the young provincial lawyer-musician John Marsh (1752-1828) conveys a delightful impression of attending such evenings in the 1780s:

Mr Gore the singer introduced me to one of the sons of Dr Cook, organist at Westminster Abbey, who invited me to spend the evening at his father’s in Dorset Court, Westminster, who had generally on Sunday evenings a kind of Concerto Spirituale with his sons, daughters & other musical people […] led by Mr R. Cook in which I now took part & staid ‘till 10 in the course of w’ch time some of the D’rs glee[s] were performed.

Cooke’s setting of Hand in Hand did not appear in print until after the composer’s death, from which time onwards it quickly acquired considerable popularity. Sir Henry Rowley Bishop (1786-1855) orchestrated the closing ‘Trip away’ section for use in his own setting of incidental music for A Midsummer Night’s Dream.
*Night's Dream* in the early 19th century\(^5\) and, as the British Library catalogue shows, versions of Cooke’s *Hand in Hand* were still being produced right up to the advent of the 20th century.

The early, posthumously printed copies of Cooke’s *Hand in Hand* vary considerably from his autograph, containing substantial editorial changes: extra voice parts, keyboard accompaniments and changes to the text. Even so, they remained the sources for all later editions of the work. As far as I can tell, the original version for unaccompanied five-part chorus with three-part semi chorus has never been widely available - or performed - since the time when Cooke was still alive.

**Editorial commentary**

All material placed within square brackets is editorial, except as follows:
- the alto and tenor clefs have been modernised.
- dynamic instructions *soft, loud* have been modernised.
- the term *solo* replaces *soli* throughout.
- the instruction *single* has been omitted where it occurred: b. 81, soprano; b. 84, all voices.

David Johnson gives the following definition of *Glee*.

A type of unaccompanied part-song, typically for male voices though often including female voices, which flourished in England from about 1750 until World War I. The word is derived from the Old English *gleo*, meaning ‘mirth’ or ‘entertainment’. […]The main inspiration behind the 18th-century glee was the English madrigal of 1590–1630, which was being rediscovered and performed at the time by bodies such as the Academy of Ancient Music.[…] The glee borrowed many characteristics from the earlier madrigal: a tendency to divide the text into small sections and to give each one a different emotional colouring, irrespective of the poem’s metrical structure; the inclusion of short homophonic passages where one or more voices temporarily drop out of the ensemble to give a semi-chorus effect; imitative counterpoint and close canon.\(^6\)

**Andrew Pink**, London, 31 May 2005


Hand in Hand with Fairy Grace

Benjamin Cooke (1734-1793)

Soprano

Bass

Hand in hand with Fairy grace will we sing and bless this place,

with Fairy grace will we sing and bless this place,

will we sing and bless this place,

will we sing and bless this place,

will we sing and bless this place,

Hand in hand, hand in hand, hand in hand, hand in hand.

Hand in hand, hand in hand, hand in hand, hand in hand.

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Now until the break of day, thro' this house each Fairy stray,

Now until the break of day, thro' this house each Fairy stray,

the break of day, thro' this house each Fairy stray,

now until the break of day, thro' this house each Fairy stray,

now until the break of day, thro' this house each Fairy stray,

thro' this house each Fairy stray, thro' the house each Fairy stray.

thro' this house each Fairy stray, thro' the house each Fairy stray.

thro' this house each Fairy stray, thro' the house each Fairy stray.

To the best Bride's Bed will we, which by us shall bless-ed be,
and the Issue there create ever shall be

and the Issue there create ever shall be fortunate, and the Issue

and the Issue there create ever shall be fortunate, and the Issue

there create ever shall be fortunate, and the Issue

there create ever shall be fortunate, and the Issue

there create ever shall be fortunate, So shall all those

there create ever shall be fortunate, So shall all those

there create ever shall be fortunate.

couples three ever true in loving be and the blots of nature’s hand,
couples three Soli ever true in loving be and the blots of nature’s hand,
shall not in their issue stand

shall not in their issue stand

Mole, Hare-Lip nor Scar nor mark prodigious, nor mark prodigious.

Mole, Hare-Lip nor Scar nor mark prodigious, nor mark prodigious.

Mole, Hare-Lip nor Scar nor mark prodigious, nor mark prodigious.

shall up on their Children be,

shall up on their Children be,
No, never, never shall, No, never shall upon their Children be, shall upon their

Children be, never shall, Children shall be, never shall upon their Children

be with this field, Dew consecrate. Every Fairy take his

be with this field, Dew consecrate. Every Fairy take his

gait and each several Chamber bless with sweet peace ever ver.

gait thro' this Palace with sweet peace.
shall it safely rest, and the owner of it blest, blest,

safe ly rest, blest, blest, and the owner of it

safe ly rest blest, blest,

blest, and the owner of it blest, ev'ry Fairy take his gait, and each

blest, and the owner of it blest.

take his gait, and each

blest, and the owner of it blest, ev'ry Fairy take his gait

several Chamber bless, thro' this Palace with sweet peace ever

several Chamber bless, thro' this Palace with sweet peace ever

throu' this Palace with sweet peace ever

shall it safely rest, and the owner of it blest, and the

shall it safely rest, and the owner of it blest, and the

shall it safely rest, and the owner of it blest, and the
ow-ner of it blest, and the ow-ner of it blest.

ow-ner of it blest, and the ow-ner of it blest, blest, blest.

Trip a-way, trip a-way,

make no stay.
Trip a-way, trip a-way, make no stay.

Trip a-way, trip a-way. Trip a-way, trip a-way. Trip a-way, trip a-way, make no stay.
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stay, make no stay. Meet we all by break of Day,

meet no - stay. Meet we all by break of

H

by break of
Day. Trip a-way, trip a-way, trip a-way.

Day. Trip a-way, trip a-way, make no stay.

Day. Trip a-way, trip a-way, trip a-way, trip a-way.

Day. Trip a-way, trip a-way, trip a-way, trip a-way.

Trip a-way, make no stay.
make no stay, make no stay, make no stay,
way, trip a-way, make no stay, make no stay, make no stay,
way, trip a-way, trip a-way,
make no stay. Meet we all by break of day, meet we all by break of Day. Trip away, trip away.

way, make no stay. Meet we way, make no stay. Meet we way, make no stay. Meet we way, make no stay. Meet we

all by break of Day. Trip away, trip away.