

## German Lute Society, Lute-Info 3/2009

**Peter Croton:** *Remembrance of Things Past*

*Four settings of texts by William Shakespeare for voice and lute*

**Tree Edition 2009, 15 Euro**

The lute occupied a central place in the musical life of 16-18<sup>th</sup> Europe. That it might again play such an important role one day is a nice thought to be sure, but - unfortunately - hardly a realistic one. One reason for this is that most contemporary composers are not aware of the instrument; another is that the few attempts to extend the lute repertory into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have attracted the attention neither of most lutenists nor of the listening public. All the more welcome is the opportunity to report here the publication of four songs which in my opinion have the potential to become a permanent part of the lute ayre repertory. Peter Croton, well known to members of the German Lute Society as well as to a much wider public, has set texts by William Shakespeare for mezzo soprano (alto/baritone) and 10 course renaissance lute:

1. *Come away, death* (Twelfth Night, act 2, scene 4; Feste)
2. *Sigh no more, ladies* (Much ado about nothing, act 2, scene 3; Balthasar)
3. *When to the sessions of sweet silent thought* (Sonnet 30)
4. *While you here do snoring lie* (The Tempest, act 2, scene 1; Ariel)

The accompaniments are in French tablature, and each song begins – lutenists will be pleased – with an introductory passage for lute alone. Croton imposed no constraints upon himself in devising the accompaniments. Far from a mere chordal underlay, they are vigorous, demanding, and run the gamut of lute-technique (broken chords, arpeggios, melodic passages, two-part polyphony etc.), the mastery of which Croton clearly demonstrates; thus the lute is an equal partner of the voice.

The rhythms too are inventive. Meter-change, syncopation and triplets are frequent, leading now and then to a somewhat jazzy or even Latin touch. The songs, without sounding ‘popular’, retain throughout a strongly independent character.

The result is four lute songs well suited for inclusion in the concert repertory. Each invites the lutenist to indulge themselves in the accompaniment whilst the singer duets with it and the audience is treated to music both challenging and refined. What more could one want? A CD of the songs perhaps? No problem! That too is provided in the present edition. All four songs, performed by Therese Bothe (voice) and Peter Croton himself, are on a CD included in the purchase price. It goes without saying that their performance is of the highest artistic quality. Therese Bothe’s voice is a feast for the ears, Croton’s playing is lively and impeccable, and they make music admirably well together. That’s the way it’s supposed to be!

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