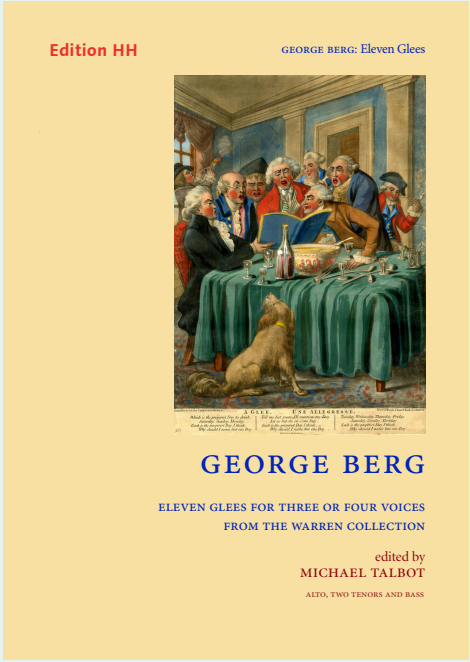
GEORGE BERG

ELEVEN GLEES for three or four voices
edited by Michael Talbot



George Berg (1730–1775)
Eleven Glees for three or four voices
HH666.FSC
xxi/41 pages

Born in 1730 to humble parents living in London, where his German-born father was a staymaker, George Berg was a favourite pupil of the eminent musical pedagogue John Christopher Pepusch, from whom he imbibed a love of the so-called 'ancient' music, both secular and sacred, and a liking for experiment – both in music and in chemistry, which was his cherished weekend pursuit.

Glees represent a kind of transitional stage between the madrigals for unaccompanied voices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the part-songs composed from the nineteenth century onwards. They are for closely packed unaccompanied voices, generally all-male (a typical combination is two tenors plus bass), and they can be sung either by solo voices or chorally. Typically, they are polystrophic, each stanza of the chosen poem being set to different music. They may be either serious or light-hearted in tone. The eleven three-part and four-part glees by Berg published from 1764 to 1774, the year before his death, in the annually issued volumes of the Warren Collection (named after their compiler, the Catch Club's secretary Thomas Warren) are fine, sensitive music that expresses the diversity the genre is capable of encompassing. Four of them reveal Berg's great enthusiasm for Italian music (he visited Italy in 1760–62) by having Italian texts.

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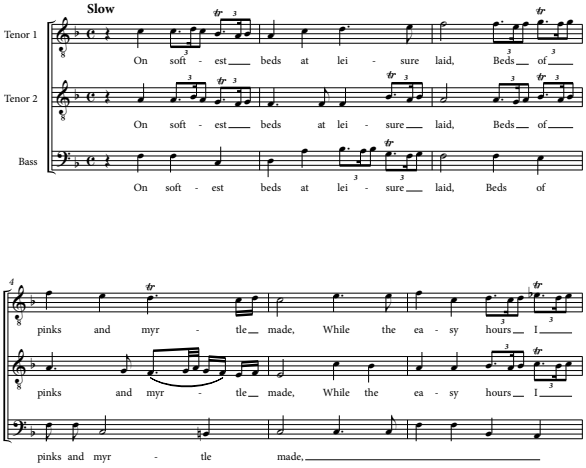
THREE OR FOUR VOICES

GEORGE BERG

ELEVEN GLEES for three or four voices
edited by Michael Talbot

GLEE 1
On softest beds at leisure laid

GEORGE BERG
(1730–1775)

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