

**Farnicle Huggy – Interpretations of 20 late 17th and early 18th century English Country Dances
by Andrew Shaw.**

**Music edited and arranged by Rebecca King
and played by Rebecca King, Jon Berger and Jim Oakden.**

Because Andrew 'road-tests' his dance interpretations thoroughly before publishing them there is always a high level of anticipation for each new publication in the certainty that good material is shortly going to be available for all. 'Farnicle Huggy' is no exception. Both book and CD are hugely satisfying and rewarding. For the recording Andrew this time has turned to a group of American musicians so the style of playing is very different from his previous publications.

The style and format of the book, with its striking and colourful cover, is as impressive as ever. Andrew is well known for his scholarly erudition and, both live and on the page, presents his material with much supporting – and entertaining – evidence. Thus for each dance and its music we have full details of sources, facsimiles of the originals and, where appropriate, supporting material from song, playtext or other sources. Thus the whole dance collection becomes something much more than just an extension to the dance repertoire: we have fascinating insights, detailed and often humorous, into the world from which these dances emerged. Also Andrew make his customary disclaimer with regard to authenticity whilst at the same time giving instructions for the dances which achieve most impressive clarity and detail, particularly with regard to phrasing. Thus these long neglected but fascinating dances can now, once again, become part of the dancers' repertoire.

Of the dances 13 are longways – 3 triple minors – and 7 are 3-couple dances. They are all busy dances, very much to the taste of the modern dance community, and many have interesting details. The tunes all seem entirely appropriate though none, I think, is quite up to the standard of the very best which Andrew has unearthed in his collections. However, as the CD amply demonstrates, these melodies provide seemingly endless opportunities for improvisation and orchestration. The dances are published in alphabetical order, for ease of reference, and the tunes are conveniently printed on the facing pages. Both texts and notations are models of clarity. The order on the CD is, of course, much more dictated by the need to produce a sequence of tunes to suit the listener though, of course, tracks are instantly available for dance purposes. The character and style of the dances and tunes is varied and interesting. Thus 'The Highlanders Humour' is a vigorous fluid dance whose movements fully reflect the flowing semiquavers, particularly in the B music. 'Mr Lane's Magot' has a tune which, by now, is clearly recognisable as in Andrew's favourite style – driven and repetitious – and the notes provide us with the racy song which early editions published with the dance. In contrast 'The Royal Galliard' is stately and elegant requiring careful timing whilst the unusual 14-bar B music of 'Pretty Miss Larn' brings that dance to a suitable climax. The triple-time pulse of 'Mr Eaglesfield's New Hornpipe' supports an easy but satisfying sequence of figures whilst 'Farnicle Huggy' itself – with its amusing source material – is more challenging.

The CD is equally satisfying. The 3 players perform with great enthusiasm and imagination. In 'the Highlanders Humour' the performance is lively and driven by the piano with excellent fiddle ornamentations and, as the tune unfolds, increasingly swung rhythms. In contrast 'Bloomsberry Market' has a stately, expansive melody with effective piano harmonisations. 'Lilburn's Trott' has great energy and sinuous counter-melodies which are also a feature of 'The Cookow'.

Mention must be made of the range of instruments played, 13 in all. These are used most effectively and add greatly to the colour and variety of the recording. Thus the stately 'Royal Galliard' is enhanced by the recorder whilst the banjo and accordion give special flavour to 'Pretty Miss Larn'. Special mention has to be made of the clarinet. The effect of its first entry, in 'Well House' is astonishing, adding a wonderfully sultry texture to the sound. As with all the less usual instruments it is used sparingly and sensitively but, as in 'MacDonald's March', when the player is given his head the piece resembles a wild Hungarian gypsy dance: wonderful!

So here is another highly successful venture and Andrew and the whole team involved are to be thanked and congratulated. Callers dancers and musicians alike have here another wonderful resource for which we can be enormously grateful.

Book and CD are available from Andrew himself on 0161 941 2289
or Derek and Ann Appleing on 01242 692243 or Derek-Ann@folksales.freemove.co.uk.

Ian Jones