

The Fallibroome Collection and A Fallibroome Garden ed. Nicolas M. Broadbridge

The Fallibroome Books are six little volumes of dances from eighteenth-century sources, compiled by Bernard Bentley between 1962 and 1980. Many social dance callers possess them as a standard source book containing all the dances. So why bother to buy this new volume, edited by Nicolas Broadbridge, as this review will urge you to do? Nicolas writes in his introduction: 'The purpose of this new edition is to present in one volume all the dances ... together with the twelve dances he composed to a set of Contretänze by Beethoven, published in 1990 under the title of A Fallibroome Garden. Bernard stated his wish to have included the original texts but regretted being unable to do so; this we have now done in facsimile form.'

This volume goes far beyond just bringing all the dances together to help callers like me, who are forever scrabbling through the little books to find a dance. It has been exquisitely produced on high quality paper, and is a comfortable size to handle. I am reviewing it from hospital recovering from a broken hip, and just handling it and looking at it has cheered me up immensely. Every page is beautifully set, and the cover picture of the Manor House, Fallibroome (Bernard's home), is delightful.

As a caller, it is a real boon having facsimiles of the originals to compare with Bernard's interpretations, and as a musician, it is a great help to have chord symbols, which were absent in the original books.

Apart from the separate Fallibroome Garden dances composed by Bernard, all the dances are usefully presented in alphabetical order. At the end of the book, the contents of each original volume are listed. There are also two indices, one of dances by formation, and one a general index, which includes original volume number, formation, time signature, tune key and number of bars.

This book is worth every penny, even if you already own the old books, and I hope it also finds a new audience. There is currently great interest in old tune collections among a wide variety of folk musicians, and they will find plenty to enjoy here, including tunes in 3/2 time, the old English triple time hornpipe. And there are some lively, fun dances here for ceilidhs, particularly for dancers with some experience, who can cope with duple minor longways. 'The Physical Snob' slip jig, is a real romp for three couples. I recently introduced it to some relatively new dancers and they loved it. Of course, there are some more complex and demanding dances too.

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