As early as 1667 a musical authority such as Christopher Simpson could already observe regretfully that 'This kind of Musick (the more is the pity) is now much neglected, by reason of the scarcity of Auditors that understand it: their ears being better acquainted and more delighted with light and airy Musick.' If the situation is perhaps a little better today, we have to thank for it a small band of indefatigable enthusiasts, connoisseurs and performers, not least among them the editors and authors of the music and books under review here. But if, as one might suspect, millenium fever is just around the corner, ready to sweep away interest in any old music that has limited popular appeal, there is a growing urgency in the task of establishing the beauties of this wonderful repertory in the consciousness of a wider musical public; a warm welcome, therefore, to all six of these volumes.

Pride of place has to go to the Royall Consorts of William Lawes--a major collection of music from which only excerpts have previously been published--in a new edition by David Pinto. Perhaps one should say two new editions, as separate volumes give the so-called 'new version', scored for two violins, two bass viols and two theorbs, and based principally on Lawes's autograph scorebook, and the 'old version', for two treble, one tenor and one bass viol (or perhaps violins), with continuo, which is preserved only in later sources but which, according to a note on one of the manuscripts, represents Lawes's original conception. The exact status of the 'old version' is a vexed question, but even those who diagnose a case of "editorial correctness gone mad' here can enjoy the is extra pieces in the same scoring added to the end of the 'old' volume.

The music in this collection is so exciting that I would like to write about it straight away, but Pinto's extreme recourse to two completely separate editions obviously demands comment. The editor's task is certainly not an easy one here. The reason given for the supposed resoring of the 'old' version is that 'tine Middle part could not bee performd with equall advantage to bee heard as the trebles were'; but the middle (i.e. tenor) part of this version lies low and is sometimes crudely written (in places one would be more than happy not to hear too much of it) and looks suspiciously like a botched reduction of the elegant tenor-register passages from the two bass viol parts of the 'new' version. On the other hand, the tenor part is sometimes so crude, proceeding in blatant unisons with other parts, that, Pinto suggests, only the composer would have dared to write it. Perhaps most importantly, it is surprisingly consistent in style with other pieces in the same scoring which survive in Lawes's own autograph;...
Richard Mico (also Micoe, Micho, Meco, Myco; 1590–1661) was an English composer. He was born in Taunton, Somerset, the eldest of three sons of Walter Mico. The family, originally called "Micault", had immigrated to England from France several generations earlier. The Micos were a me… read more. Richard Mico (also Micoe, Micho, Meco, Myco; 1590–1661) was an English composer. He was born in Taunton, Somerset, the eldest of three sons of Walter Mico. The family, originally called "Micault", had immigrated to England from France several generations earlier. In this volume are the complete extant consort works of a Jacobean Catholic composer, rediscovered this century, who excelled in the conservative polyphonic style of the earlier consort masters. Full contents…(PDF). Mico, Richard: Consort Music quantity. Add to basket. Ref: MB65 ISBN: 9780852498224 ISMN: 9790220211065 Categories: Collected Editions, MB: Chamber, Musica Britannica, Volume 65 By: Richard Mico. Related products. Add to basket. Mico, Richard: Consort Music. Set I for four Viols. £25.50. Add to basket. Mico, Richard: Consort Music. Set II for two, three and five Viols. £25.50.