BIRMINGHAM



Birmingham - Thomas Greatorex

C176





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British. Library Ref: A.1230.r. Hymn Tune Index No. 4445, music attributed to Thomas Greatrix by Harrison, in 1784, this being it's first known printing. This setting © 2009 Shelwin Music, Oxford, UK.

The tune 'Birmingham' is taken from 'Sacred Harmony' by Rev. Ralph Harrison, 1784, who was the minister of Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester. Born in Wingfield near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, Greatorex as a youngster studied with Benjamin Cooke, organist of Westminster Abbey. For four years he was organist of Carlisle Cathedral and from there went to live and work in Italy, returning to London in 1788. He was soon in much demand as a music teacher and succeeded Joah Bates as conductor of the Concerts of Ancient Music. He also directed music festivals at Birmingham, York and Derby. In 1819 he succeeded George Ebenezer Williams as organist of Westminster Abbey. [Wikipedia].

Thomas's Marriage Allegation and Will are both signed "Thomas Greatorex". In the areas around Sheffield, this tune is simply called 'Greatorex', although the harmonies have become a little different over time, mainly as a result of aural tradition. It has been reduced to air and bass lines in most cases where it is still remembered.

This arrangement by Edwin Macadam is based on Greatorex's original harmonies as far as possible, and takes account of previous editions by Ray Ellison and Jean Seymour, to whom many thanks, as also Jane Waltho. Originally set to Isaac Watts setting of Psalm 118 v. 24. "This is the day the Lord hath made."