

Georg Friedrich Händel, *Sonata G-Moll für 2 Violen da Gamba oder andere Streichinstrumente (Violinen, Violen, Violoncelli) und Basso continuo HWV 393*, ed. Peter Holman, G 130 Heidelberg: Edition Güntersberg, 2007

Before receiving the review copy of Handel's Sonata in G (HWV 393) I had been looking at James Oswald's *Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (Edinburgh, [c.1740]) for violin, bass viol or German flute, with a thorough bass for harpsichord. The bass viol is included on the title page as one of the possible instruments for playing the melody, and is not there to double the bass line. The player simply reads from the treble clef, and transposes down an octave, rather like playing a gigantic treble viol. It is this performance practice which opens up countless opportunities for gamba players to expand their repertoire, and concerns us with the Handel Sonata under review.

Handel's Sonata in G (HWV 393) survives in a single manuscript source, and was written for two treble instruments with an unfigured bass. In his introduction, Peter Holman argues convincingly that violins were intended for the two upper parts, because the notes go down to the g below middle c, below the range of the flute, treble recorder, and oboe. Separate parts for two violins are included in his edition. However, as Holman points out, citing examples from Bach and Handel, there was a tradition of playing solo parts on the viola da gamba, transposing down an octave. In his edition he provides alternative parts for two gambas reading from the alto clef, and even for two cellos reading from the tenor clef. There is only one page turn, with three bars' rest to negotiate it. The unfigured bass part could be played on a third gamba or cello.

Holman provides a score with the top two voices in the alto clef, and a "realised" part for a harpsichord. I like his accompaniment. It is uncluttered and unfussy, provides all the necessary harmony, and is fairly low-

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lying, so that it would work well accompanying violins, viols, or cellos. It seems unlikely that a chordal instrument was not intended, because there are places where the texture would otherwise be too sparse. Editorial interventions are conveniently given as footnotes.

Handel's Sonata is predictably fine music, here presented in a good, accurate edition, with an interesting and informative introduction in German and in English. As a reviewer, one looks for mistakes, but all I can find is the omission of a definite article in the first sentence of the introduction.

Stewart McCoy