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August Kühnel, *Sonate ô Partite ad una ô due Viole da Gamba con il Basso Continuo: Partita XI - XIV.* Edited by Günter & Leonore von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg (G165), Heidelberg, 2012.

The German composer and viol virtuoso August Kühnel (1645-1700) worked at various courts in Germany for most of his life, with brief forays to France and England. All his known music is for the viol. His collection of *Sonate ô Partite* was published in 1698, and represents an interestingly diverse range of compositions: three sonatas for 2 viols (with optional basso continuo), three partitas for 2 viols with continuo, three sonatas for solo viol and continuo, a set of variations on a Choral (also for viol and continuo), and finally the four partitas for solo viol and continuo in this volume. They bring the edition by Güntersberg (G161-G165) to completion, and although there is a good earlier edition from 1998 by George Houle, this new one will appeal because of the thoroughly practical and clear way Güntersberg do their editions, complete with a short score giving just the solo line and the figured bass, a separate solo bass viol part, a separate continuo part with figures, and a score with continuo realisation. There is a brief clear Introduction by the editors, but the original German preface is also reproduced, with an English translation. There Kühnel indicated that these four partitas can be played without continuo (that is, on viol alone). Although the music includes a few slurs and some trills, Kühnel suggested (less helpfully) that other ornaments could be left to the discretion of the performer.

Kühnel's music is inventive and thoroughly enjoyable, and he really does provide pieces for players of both intermediate and advanced technical ability. Each of these partitas follows the typical French-style suite format: an opening prelude interspersing chordal passages with running division-like sections, followed by a set of dance movements (an allemande, a corrente, a slow sarabande, and a sprightly final gigue). The opening preludes usually have some challenges, but the most difficult one in this set is undoubtedly the one in the second partita. It starts with a long sequence of hand-wrenching three-to-five part chords, before the player can relax (relatively speaking) into a more flashy division-like figuration exploiting dynamic and tessitura contrasts. The last partita has a much easier but equally effective prelude, genuinely 'warming up' the player by means of a series of scale passages, before breaking into a typical solo line with its own accompaniment - a high melody interspersed with the bass notes of the accompaniment. The other movements also show great invention, sometimes (as in the third partita) requiring quite complex chordal support within the solo line. There is no call for a 7th string, but the range is just over three octaves.

This set is a must for all who enjoy exploring the rich repertoire for solo bass: Kühnel writes well for the instrument, has plenty of melodic imagination, and although these partitas all follow the familiar pattern of the French suite, he introduces plenty of variety. If you have friend on harpsichord, organ, theorbo or continuo viol, so much the better, but the solo part is very enjoyable just on its own. Thomas Munck