

# The Viol No 22, Spring 2011

**Johann Gottlieb Graun (1702/3-1771) Concerto in C major for viola da gamba, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Graun WV A:XIII:2. Edition Güntersberg G166 Score and parts 29.80 Euros.**

This is the first edition of a concerto from that cultural cornucopia of the mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century Berlin court of Frederick the Great, and is a good addition to the sparse supply of concertos for gamba. Graun, a sometime violin pupil of Pisendel and Tartini, was highly regarded by his contemporaries, his compositions being judged 'superb', 'splendid' and 'unusually fiery'. The discipline of his orchestra emphasised precision, unified bowing and expressive playing.

Almost certainly written for the virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse, described in 1766 as 'the greatest gambist in Europe', the concerto's constant use of double thirds and sixths moving in parallel, often adorned with trills, will certainly impose technical demands on the performer (although the introduction claims not as many as some of his concertos). The concerto is written in the *galant* style using the sudden dynamic contrasts and dramatic silences we associate with C.P.E. Bach. Performance with string quartet and harpsichord would be quite suitable, with the two violins frequently in unison as was customary. An extended first movement (with cadenza moment) is followed by an andante arietta accompanied by muted strings sometimes pizzicato, and a lively presto in 6/8.

This is a fine edition, as we have come to expect from Edition Güntersberg, with thoughtful page turns in the parts, full critical notes, and introduction by Michael O'Loghlin. The score and bass parts are fully figured, and the solo gamba part has the tutti bass sections sketched in to enable the soloist to play along, as was likely.

*Judy Tarling*