

The Viol, Winter 2010-11, No 21

**Rameau *Les Surprises de l'amour (L'Enlèvement d'Adonis and La Lyre enchantée)* arranged by Hesse for two bass viols, edited by Jonathan Dunford
Edition Güntersberg G168 & G169**

Between 1767 and 1769 Jean-Baptiste Forqueray (1699-1782) sent Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia (1744-97) a substantial amount of the latest French music from Paris, in particular works of 'the great Rameau'. This came about because Friedrich Wilhelm's secretary, M. de Espérandieu, had heard Forqueray play at a concert given by the Prince de Conti on Isle-Adam in 1766, and had greatly admired Forqueray's playing of 'certain separate pieces of music and a romance by Rameau and [music of] other great composers'. Indeed in setting up this 'rapport', Espérandieu had visited Forqueray's house and seen the famous viol of the late Regent, which Forqueray's father had left him. With Espérandieu's letter dated 26 October 1767, Forqueray was sent a tobacco box decorated with a portrait of the prince and encrusted with diamonds; the letter discusses sending more music, notably two marches of the French and Swiss guards. Five letters from

Forqueray to the Prince are preserved amongst the Prince's papers in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. In Forqueray's first letter he gives wonderfully detailed information on viol playing but he also adds 'I am making available for Your Royal Highness lots of music for the Viol as many Duos as Trios, Sonates and a large number of unaccompanied pieces which are proper for the instrument... I intend to send regularly to Your Royal Highness a collection of unaccompanied pieces'. In later letters he refers to sending operas hot off the press from the Opéra Comique.

Friedrich Wilhelm was a passionate viol player, who from 1766 (and possibly as early as 1763) employed the great German virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse (1716-72) at his *Kapelle* in Potsdam. Between 1741 and 1763 Hesse had worked for Friedrich the Great, uncle of Friedrich Wilhelm, and inspired the important late corpus of bass viol music by Berlin composers such as Johann Gottlieb Graun (1702/3-71), Christoph Schaffrath (1709-63) and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-88). Writing in 1766, Hiller relates how 'the skill, attractiveness and fire in performance which our Mr Hesse enjoys to such a high degree make him, in our time, irrefutably the greatest viol player in Europe'. In his employment as Friedrich Wilhelm's viol teacher, Hesse arranged a staggering number of operas for one or two viols, with and without bass to play with the Prince. We learn from Thouret's catalogue of 1895, that Hesse arranged 72 French operas, almost all in their entirety; and we know from Forqueray's letters that at least some of these operas came via him.

Through Jonathan Dunford's excellent new editions, some of Hesse's duo arrangements of Rameau are finally freely available. He offers one copy of the duets using their original clefs, that is to say the standard Berlin use of the treble clef to be read down an octave and bass; he also gives a second copy substituting the alto clef used today for the transposing treble clef—however transposing the treble clef down an octave on the bass is child's play for anyone who plays the treble viol. In addition an optional harpsichord part is provided by Dankwart von Zadow. Many of the original opera scores of these duo arrangements were available in the Prince's library; it seems probable that on occasion a harpsichordist would join in the music making using the full score and indeed there are copies of violin parts too for an even fuller ensemble—but the viol duo of Friedrich Wilhelm and Hesse remained at the centre. Von Zadow has gone back to Rameau's original score and adds thematic material that Hesse was unable to incorporate into his viol duet; he also restores Rameau's rich harmonic palette where Hesse has simplified it. Usefully he has figured the bass.

The manuscript of the duos is in Hesse's idiosyncratic and rather chunky hand. Perhaps due to the extraordinary volume of copying Hesse undertook for the Prince, he developed a shorthand figured treble. This suits the French love of parallel thirds and sixths, which one finds, for example, in the trios of Couperin and Marais. Thus Hesse writes a 3 or 6 followed by a succession of dots for the length of time the melodic line can be interpreted in parallel 3rds or 6ths, either above or below the melody as appropriate. Whilst 3rds and 6ths are the most common he uses figures from 2 to 7. Dunford notates the figured treble in small print, giving players the option of omitting it. Through his father (a pupil of both Marais and Forqueray) and the Francophile court of Darmstadt, where he was raised, Hesse was thoroughly immersed in the *goût français*: he uses Marais' fingering markings complete with dots to indicate which string was to be used and the *barré* sign with a dot either side of the figure, and Marais' x for a *battement* and the wavy horizontal and vertical vibrato signs. And whilst the bass part is entitled Basse/Violoncelle, its use of low A's indicates the original use of a seven-string viol, which we know from Graun's music is what Hesse used—in contrast to most German players.

When Hesse left Berlin in either 1771 or '72, probably due to ill health, Friedrich Wilhelm appears to have switched his allegiance to his other instrument, the 'cello. In 1773 Hesse was replaced by the Parisian virtuoso cellist, Jean-Pierre Duport (1741-1818), as the Prince's private teacher. As a 'cellist Friedrich Wilhelm was to become the inspiration for Mozart's Prussian quartets with their elaborate 'cello parts and the dedicatee of Beethoven's op. V 'cello sonatas. But violists can be grateful for the curious turn of events which has provided a raft of unusual duos consisting of much dramatic and beautiful music.

Lucy Robinson