

# THE VIOL No 27, Summer 2012

**Kremsierer Gambensonate *Sonatina in d eines unbekanntes Meisters für Viola da Gamba und Basso continuo, Kremsier nach 1680* Edition Guntersberg ISMN 979-0-50174-214-1**

This sonatina is not for the faint-hearted! Nevertheless, do read on. Although the manuscript is anonymous and undated it has been attributed in the past either to August Kertzinger or Heinrich Biber. The editors of this publication state that it is much more virtuosic than anything written by Kertzinger and suggest that Biber is a much more likely candidate both on circumstantial evidence and also on stylistic grounds, though in the absence of hard facts have to leave it as supposition.

The Sonatina consists of an introduction in a very free-style manner with many changes of marking from presto to adagio and back again. In the space of 62 bars it seems to explore as many different styles of solo viol playing as possible from chordal and arpeggiated passages; running semi and demi-semiquavers, strings of leaps of 10ths, repeated notes and a lovely sequence of flowing slurred demi-semiquavers. This is followed by a set of dances; Allemande, Courente; Sarabande and Giges 1 and 2. The Allemande, Courente and Sarabande are relatively straightforward but each is followed by a virtuosic variation. To give an idea of the style, they reminded me very much of variations 18 and 20 of the Marais Folies in Book 2. After the first few notes the Giges are chordal throughout, exploring the full range of richness of tone built up by successive 2, 3 4, 5 and 6 note chords.

The question to ask of any challenging piece - is it worth the work? I would say yes to this one - though perhaps not for a concert next week! The dances are attractive, and the introduction and dance variations give plenty of interest and challenges to anyone wanting to extend their technique and explore the range of their instrument.

The publication provides the solo part, a basso continuo part and a score with both the solo and figured but un-realised basso continuo part. In a way the piece almost doesn't need a keyboard. The harmony is all there in the solo part - either in the chords or built up through the arpeggios. Perhaps one enjoyable way to explore this would be two viol players taking turns with the solo and continuo parts.

*Elizabeth Dodd*