

## Music Reviews

***Aires and Symphonys: Opera tunes and Lessons for viola da gamba solo London ca. 1710* Edited by Günter and Leonore von Zadow  
Edition Güntersberg G220 ISMN 979-0-50174-220-2**

The edition is based on a copy in Durham Cathedral Library. Peter Holman writes in his introduction to this publication that the collection is one of several published in London in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century catering for the English amateur market.

There are 15 arrangements of arias from Italian operas all produced in London between 1706 and 1710. They consist of vocal lines or the top part of the instrumental passages with a few added chords. Originally published in the treble clef (to be read down an octave), here that have been put into alto clef. I found them quite fun to play through. Although there are some fairly florid passages and a couple of lovely flourishes in one song, none are particularly technically demanding and even those which look quite busy on the page turn out to lie easily under the hand. I did find myself wanting to add in quite a few more chords than those given and see no reason why a player shouldn't do this. The titles give a very good guide to the speed and mood of each piece. Eg. *Gentle Sighs awhile relieve us* or for contrast *Vi farà pugnando strada*. And one or two give some helpful dynamics - I liked "Soft Staccata".

Turning to the rest of the material; this is entitled *A Suit of Lessons for the Bass Viol* and turn out to be a collection of French dances which Holman sees as two distinct sets and thinks could be by two different composers; 1. Pietro Chaboud, a Bolognese flute player and bassoonist working in the Haymarket Theatre and the only known viol player associated with the opera company; and 2. one of the English composers of the time. I certainly found that many of these dances had a distinctly English feel to them. I was interested to see that the Gavot in the first sequence and the Gavott in the second both start with an upbeat quaver instead of the usual half bar.

While not being perhaps the greatest music written for the viol the pieces are tuneful and most are reasonably straightforward. I wonder if they were composed as teaching material - in the very first almand there is a passage straight out of one of Christopher Simpson's exercises! They make a very good introduction to solo playing with different techniques, some marked ornaments and the "English" set in particular giving some useful bowing indications. Again, I found that for non-accompanied playing I wanted to add more chords. One section of a Corant ends on a first inverted chord. Whether an intention or easily overlooked misprint, as the bottom note needs to be just one line lower, a player would want to do something about this.

A publication to recommend.

Elizabeth Dodd