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Pieces for the Bass Viol Lesson for beginners, intermediate and advanced players, in three volumes, edited by Richard Sutcliffe and Leonore von Zadow-Riechling Edition Güntersberg (G221-223)

The current year seems to have been a productive one so far at Edition Güntersberg, with more than one new title appearing every month since January. An interesting offering in the 2012 crop is *Pieces for the Bass Viol Lesson*, a compilation of nearly 60 pieces for students almost entirely drawn from the viol repertoire. The selection is deliberately eclectic, spanning the three and a half centuries between Diego Ortiz's 1553 *Trattado de Glosas* and Joseph Reinagle's *Twelve Progressive Duets* (c.1805), and including music from Austria, England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The stated ambition of giving students exposure to the broadest possible range of repertoires, so they may develop personal preferences and delve further into favourite areas, is supported by a good bibliography at the back of each volume pointing the reader to existing fac-simile and modern editions, not least those by the Viola da Gamba Society.

These progressive volumes aspire to help students who would otherwise find themselves either buying large collections by individual composers only to find later that most of the music will not meet their technical or musical requirements, or using poor quality photocopies or hand-written transcriptions. The gradual element of the collection is generally well judged: Volume I features works requiring only first and half positions, and making only the most modest demands on the student's bowing technique, while volume II contains pieces that employ bigger leaps (sometimes across six strings), uncomplicated *bariolage*, some chords and double-stops, more subtle bow distribution and elementary shifting within the fret-board. Volume III includes extended passages featuring large leaps, swift division, idiomatic sham polyphony, intricate ornamentation and a range of up to e'', a ninth above the first open string. Perhaps the only instance of a misplaced work is the anonymous *Divisions on an Italian Ground* from the so-called Newberry Simpson manuscript (US-Cn, CASE 6A.143), a delightful work appearing halfway through volume II, when pieces of a comparable standard seem to appear towards the middle of volume I.

The editorial process is exemplary, with non-original accidentals, bar-lines, slurs and figured basses clearly identified, and the generous spacing of staves and fac-simile examples make the layout appealing. But what sets this publication apart from other comparable volumes is the deliberate emphasis on musicianship rather than merely technical progression. The vast majority of pieces can be played on two bass viols tuned *ffeff*, and the bass lines and second viol parts are resourcefully crafted so they are of a standard similar to the first viol part. This makes it possible for the student to always learn both parts, thus getting to know the work from every possible angle. Volume I opens with a number of vocal pieces complete with their lyrics (ostensibly so one's singing can inform the playing), and an invitation to use transposition to explore fingering patterns across the instrument. Some of these opening works are canonic, and the teacher is explicitly encouraged to employ this tool to make the musical material appropriate to students of different abilities through the use of ostinatos (Zoltán Kodály presumably smiling from high above). Students are also urged to try their hand at playing and singing at the same time, a distinguished trend in the history of the viol documented by – among others – Samuel Pepys, who spent 'A great while at my Viall and voice, learning to sing *Fly boy, fly boy*' on 18 February 1660.

To sum up, this is a very intelligent anthology that Richard Sutcliffe and Leonore von Zadow-Riechling must be congratulated on. Their set does not (and does not want to) replace a good teacher, but it certainly is a modern and well-thought pedagogical tool that remains true to the principles that might have informed the process of learning to play viols in the Golden Age of our instrument, without wallpapering the process with anachronistic notions borrowed from Victorian approaches to teaching and learning. The authors say in their preface that 'if these works please the public we will be happy to provide more'. I certainly hope so.

Patxi del Amo