

VdGSA News

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Sainte-Colombe, *Pour la Basse*, pieces for viola da gamba solo from the manuscript M.3 of the Bibliothèque municipale of Tournus

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg, G231, ISMN 979-0-50174-231-8, 2013. Score, €39.80.

François Couperin, *Les Goûts-réünis*, 12th and 13th Concert, for two bass viols

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg, G224, ISMN 979-0-50174-224-0, 2013. Two scores, €13.80.

The town of Tournus, France, as revealed on its municipal website, has a population of about 6,000 and looks like a lovely place to visit. It is tucked into the east of the wine country of Burgundy, and has the superb Romanesque Abbey of St. Philibert and a municipal library where the sensational discovery of a large collection of solo pieces by Sainte-Colombe was made. The title page of the manuscript reads simply “*Pour la basse*” with no mention of the composer, but there can be no doubt of its authenticity. The facsimile edition, Edition Minkoff, FS 145, has been available since 1998, and Edition Güntersberg now provides a useful and carefully edited modern transcription of the 153 Sainte-Colombe pieces.

In spite of thorough record-keeping by French bureaucrats, there are still many mysteries about the elusive violist-composer. His name and musical background are uncertain, but he was probably Jean Sainte-Colombe from Paris. Most viol players will already know the *Concerts à deux violes esgales du Sieur de Sainte-Colombe*, published in a modern edition by Paul Hooreman in 1973. Unlike that collection, the Tournus manuscript is for solo viol, but the pieces have all the hallmarks of Sainte-Colombe’s style: the prominent use of the seventh, low A string, which he is thought to have introduced; free rhythms, with either too few or too many notes per measure; the so-called “lost notes,” chains of eighth notes barred like chicken scratches as a way to convey the embellishment of torrents of scales or bowed trills. The use of modern software notation necessitated changing the scratches to small-sized eighth notes, as was done in the 1973 edition.

The editors have done a good job of checking sources, and regularizing as much as possible this highly irregular and personal kind of music. Their changes are helpful and clear. The facsimile has many clef changes, and includes much use of baritone clef (F clef on the middle line). The present edition uses the standard alto and bass clefs, more comfortable for modern players. This is certainly a useful and approachable source for anyone interested in the French viol before Marais.

EDITION GÜNTERSBERG

Sainte-Colombe Pour la Basse

Die Stücke für Viola da Gamba solo
in der Bibliothéque municipale von Tournon



G231

When playing the highly embellished music of Couperin, you sometimes feel you are playing *only* ornaments, and not actual notes. Confronted by the fistfuls of chords in the *Pièces de violes avec la basse chiffrée*, the two suites that Couperin published in 1728, most players are severely challenged. The Güntersberg Edition of the two *Concerts* is more approachable, and a welcome addition to the bass viol duet repertoire.

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There are some composers who write specifically and well for a particular instrument. An obvious example is Marais. Though he wrote for other instruments, it is difficult to detach his music from the world of the viol. As such an important composer of music for the harpsichord, François Couperin is in a similar category. However, his collection of suites, *Les Goûts-réunis, ou Nouveaux Concerts*, from 1724, contains a number of pieces in French and Italian style that were designed to be played by a chamber ensemble, mostly an unspecified treble melody instrument with basso continuo. In the 12th Concert he includes this advice: “à deux Violes, ou autres instruments à L’unisson,” and in the 13th, “à 2 instruments à L’unisson.” The range of the 13th is entirely bass viol range, and it makes a perfect fit to include these two Concerts in the current edition.

EDITION GÜNTERSBERG

François Couperin

Les Goûts-réunis
Zwölftes und dreizehntes Konzert
für zwei Gamben

Paris 1724



G224

The editors have regularized clefs for modern viol players and corrected some rhythmic inaccuracies in the original. The preface includes an interesting discussion of white-note notation, which crops up in other pieces for viol, as in some slow movements by Forqueray. It is a peculiarity of pieces in 3/2: smooth, supple, and legato, but never slurred. In the modern notation of the edition, the white notes are filled in.