

Johann Gottfried Mente (1698 - c.1760)
Suite für die Gambe und Generalbass Leipzig
1759

Güntersberg 272

Günter and Leonore von Zadow and their Edition Güntersberg continue to shower us with previously hidden gems from the German bass viol repertoire.

Their latest temptation is a four movement suite from the north German Johann Gottfried Mente, about whom much is known, but from whom only this one solitary print survives, in the Russian State Library. It is rumoured that quite a few library collections made their way east on Red Army lorries at the end of the second world war, and we can only hope that in time more finds like this will emerge (some Hesse please...). Mente himself is an example of the changing geography of the region. Born in Rotenburg on the present border between Poland and Germany, he worked for thirty-three years as church musician in Liegnitz, then in Silesia, now in Poland. Among his lost works are collections of church odes, concertos for multiple instruments and sonatas for lute, viol, traverso, oboe etc. But the viol was Mente's instrument and his style mixes elements of the classical French school, north German *empfindsamkeit*, and echoes of character pieces from the late French clavecinistes. His viol clearly had

seven strings, since the Scherzando and Polonaise both use the bottom A to great effect.

The suite begins with a binary form Adagio *à la francese*, with a nice mixture of French and Italian in the title! It, like Marais, has florid doubles for a couple of the sequential passages, which are printed separately. The Scherzando and Menuet resemble something out of Telemann's Paris Quartets and the final Polonaise is full of local colour, drawn doubtless from the folk musicians in his immediate environment. Any player at ease with the demands of 'middle-difficulty' Marais will find Mente's music a joy to play.

It lies beautifully under the hand with many new sonorities to discover. Congratulations to Güntersberg for finding us this addition to our repertoire, which I hope to see on concert programmes before long.

Charles Medlam