

## Music reviews

**Georg Philipp Telemann**  
**Zwölf Fantasien für Viola da Gamba**  
(Twelve Fantasies for Solo Bass Viol)  
**Güntersberg G281**

They finally turned up! Baroness Eleonore von Grothaus from Ledenburg near Osnabruck had acquired a copy of Telemann's Fantasies for bass viol sometime in the late eighteenth century, and the French musicologist François-Pierre Guy found them for us some two hundred and fifty years later in her library. So now we have complete sets of solo fantasies for violin (albeit a manuscript copy of the lost print), flute, harpsichord and, at last, bass viol in an edition by Thomas Frisch at Güntersberg. The set is dedicated to Pierre Chaunell (1703-1789), whose Huguenot father had moved to Hamburg in about 1685 after Louis XIV repealed the Edict of Nantes, which had up till then guaranteed religious freedom in France. France's loss was Germany's gain with thousands of entrepreneurial businessmen and skilled craftsman settling in Berlin and elsewhere in protestant North Germany.

Publishing a set of fantasies for solo bass viol in 1735 was an uncertain business. Manuscript suites without basso continuo, with De Machy's *Pieces de Violle* of 1685 the only print, were extremely common up until Marais' *Livre Premier* in 1686, which may indeed originally have been intended as unaccompanied suites. Thereafter solos, now mostly called sonatas, were only included in publications by Schenk and Kühnel alongside the more usual pieces with figured bass. So it is anybody's guess why, after an interval of some thirty years, Telemann decided to test the market again. In August 1735 it was announced that he would publish two fantasies every two weeks, accompanied by a 'German Moral Cantata', and the process was complete by January 1736.

Of the twelve pieces, ten are in three movements, the other two have just two, and no key is duplicated. Fugues sit next to *galanteries*, sarabande and gigue next to Polish folk music. There's a bit of everything here but, on playing through the set, I found only two, possibly three, which I thought might work in a concert. But as an interesting set of pieces which the player could work on and enjoy at home (presumably the intended function), they make a useful addition to the repertoire.

Telemann was clearly absolutely conversant with the technique and ethos of the viol. Indeed some of his best music can be found in the trio sonatas for violin, viol and bc, written during his stay in Eisenach between 1708 and 1712. One even quotes 'Es ist vollbracht' from the John Passion! (Did Bach drop in for some chamber music from nearby Weimar?) It looks very much as if there was either a good local player around, or that Telemann himself included the viol among his many other accomplishments. Or was the great Ernst Christian Hesse back home on a visit to the town where he grew up?

The original prints a fantasy a page. Güntersberg spreads each out over two pages, so that they can be performed or played through without any tiresome page turns. As ever, the print is easy on the eye.

One wonders what else is going to turn up in German libraries? Both Hesse and Hertel composed, as did their sons. Would somebody soon please find some of their music, so that we can fill in the gaps in the history of the viol in Germany?

*Charles Medlam*

**Michael East**  
**'Eight Fancies' of five parts,**  
**transposed for low viol consort**  
**PRB Productions - PRB No. vco88**

This set of music, originally published in 1610, has been edited for low viol consort (2 tenors, tenor/bass, 2 basses) and is the five part collection more recently published, amongst others, in its original clefs by the VdGS. In the VdGS edition the editor has suggested that the Latin titles, *Desperavi, Peccavi, Vidi, Penitet, Credidi, Vixi, Triumphavi, Amavi* could be taken to follow the progress of personal salvation: 'I despaired, I sinned, I saw, I repented, I believed, I conquered, I triumphed, I loved'.

In this transposed edition for low viols, the editor has taken the pitch down by a fifth so that the tenor instruments 'flourish in the sweetest part of their range' as the two top lines. He feels that in the original scoring the two trebles on the upper voices 'can become wearying' with a 'constant assertion of high a'. He finishes the Preface by saying:

We have found this transposition to result in playing experiences which are richly exhilarating, while giving the 'meane' of the viol family a welcome chance to shine.

A barless version of the parts is also available.

In playing through some of these pieces with friends we found that the Bass 2 part would be better suited to a seven-string bass since the low C on that instrument occurs regularly in these pieces. A six-string bass playing this part would certainly need to tune the low D string down to a C with all the collateral damage which that entails.

If the group playing from this edition comprised a lot of low instruments then this publication would be a useful addition to their library. However, I feel it is unfair to Michael East, as well as treble players, to suggest that the treble lines are 'wearying'. I suppose that if your first experience of Michael East fantasies was through this edition, then you may feel that this is the right pitch for them. We did wonder why PRB had not transposed in *chiavette* fashion, down a fourth, but soon realised that this would mean the tenor parts would have to be taken by players confident in playing above the frets.

On the plus side, the music is clearly set out with helpful bar numbers every five bars. There are some cues for players who are resting at the opening as