
Johann Michael Nicolai
Sonata 14: Triosonate G-Moll
for violin, viola da gamba and basso continuo.
Edition Güntersberg G327

It's beginning to seem as if Edition Güntersberg is the only publisher printing music for viols these days. And they seem to have a knack for finding unpublished works by known and unknown composers, and uncovering manuscripts that show us important 'new' works by these composers.

This is just such a case. I only know Nicolai from the Dovehouse edition of two sonatas for three bass viols, issued many years ago, but which I have enjoyed playing on several occasions. These have also been published in a new edition by Güntersberg. The present sonata comes from the same library – Durham Cathedral – but is this time a trio sonata for violin, viol and continuo.

Nicolai lived in the middle of the seventeenth century in Germany, more precisely Thuringia, where he was born, then in North Germany, and

finally he played on the court orchestra in Stuttgart. He published several collections of works, both instrumental and vocal, but this is a manuscript.

It's a typical *stylus phantasticus* piece, with a sequence of short movements processing without pause. The viol part performs now a continuo function, now as second melodic line and as soloist – this means it has a wide range, from the low G string, up to a note or two above the top fret of the top string.

The viol part is not especially demanding technically, though there's plenty of jumping around and some quick runs. It's an attractive and effective piece, well worth investigating.

All the qualities that we have come to expect from Edition Güntersberg are present – clear text, excellent printing & informative introduction. There is a full score and four parts: violin, viola da gamba, basso continuo, and a further full score, including a continuo realisation.

Richard Boothby