

## Music reviews

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**Anonym 1674**

**The Berlin Gamba Book**

**Ed. Marcellus Jany and Leonore von Zadow**

**Güntersberg G334**

A manuscript collection of 267 pieces for solo bass viol from Germany, France, England, Sweden and Poland was bought at a sale in Berlin in the 1880s by the Paris Conservatoire Library and is now lodged in the Bibliothèque Nationale as ms F-Pn Rés.1111. It can be viewed or downloaded as part of their Gallica series. The calf leather binding with the date 1674 and the initials 'IBR' point to an owner of some means, but probably not aristocratic due to the lack of crest or coat-of-arms. The inclusion of Swedish dances and Polish *serras* might suggest perhaps some prosperous merchant in Rostock, Danzig or Königsberg, though a strong contingent of English pieces might also indicate somewhere further west like Hamburg or Lübeck. The 35 harmonised Lutheran chorales and the fact that the manuscript ended up in Berlin strongly imply the protestant north.

Except for a suite by Du Buisson, most of the pieces are anon, but connoisseurs of the period will recognise works by Hotman, Du Buisson, Stoffken, Hume, Farrant, Ford and Jenkins from other collections. Editors Marcellus Jany and Leonore von Zadow have selected 43 pieces from the original 267, avoiding those in *scordatura*, and those which look as if they might be ensemble pieces. Most were notated in French tablature, all are now in staff notation using the familiar bass and alto clefs. None requires a seventh string and only a handful have notes above the frets, thus making them ideal for domestic music-making. Complete three and four movement French suites are interspersed with Lutheran chorales next to character pieces with names like *Mercurius* and *Trumpeten*. Ornamented repeats are described as 'variation', 'proportion' or (new to me) 'clausula'.

A few of the pieces are puzzling, others quite amateurish. Do they lack another part? Are they inaccurately copied? Is the compiler himself perhaps trying his hand at composition? In two dances almost certainly by Hotman and one definitely by Du Buisson, there are cadential accidentals clearly missing, but present in other sources. Editorial suggestions in brackets would be helpful, even if mistakes become obvious after repeated play-throughs.

Included are seven penitential psalms, each preceded by a ritornello, which may have served in some form of domestic devotions. The psalms have enough double-stops to work as solos, but the ritornellos look like bass parts. The layman would almost certainly appreciate some advice, but the edition offers no clues or performance practice suggestions. These niggles aside, this is another extremely worth-while publication from Güntersberg, giving us some new pieces to wonder about, and complementing our knowledge of seventeenth century repertoire and sources.

*Charles Medlam*