

difficulties, or offer compliments. Perhaps these pieces will also inspire others to write music to play themselves and with friends.

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### Gottfried Finger: Suite No. 7 Arranged for two bass viols, one of which is superseded by a treble viol, and basso continuo

ed. Günther and Leonore von Zadow, continuo figures added by Dankwart von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg (G341), 2019. First edition. ISMN 979-0-50174-341-84. Score and three parts, €17.00.

The title on the cover of this new release immediately intrigued me; it says in German that the suite is “for two bass viols, one of which is relieved by a treble viol.” I simply had to know more. Opening the music and peering at the title page I learned that the piece is an arrangement, and here the publisher had included an English translation. The phrase that had grabbed me, “von denen eine von einer Diskantgamba abgelöst wird,” was here rendered into English that further piqued my curiosity: “one of which is *superseded* by a treble viol.” What could this even mean?

As a name, Gottfried Finger (1655–1730) is somewhat more familiar than his music, probably best known to recorder players for the many sonatas he wrote for the instrument. The Moravian composer came to London in 1687 to join the Catholic chapel of James II, but did not follow the king when he went into exile the next year. Finger’s name comes up in conjunction with the contest held in London in 1701 to promote English-language opera. Four composers competed for the public’s favor to see who could write the best setting of William Congreve’s *Judgement of Paris*. John Welden beat out John Eccles and Daniel Purcell, and Finger, embarrassed at his fourth-place result, fled the country, returning to Germany. He had actually been rather successful in London as a freelance composer of theater music and instrumental chamber music for publication, but seems to have been happy not to return. In 1720 he moved to Mannheim, where he held the position of Konzertmeister and spent the final decade of his life.

Finger was almost certainly a virtuoso gamba player, as evidenced by his solos, duos, and trios for the instrument, unpublished in his lifetime but preserved in manuscripts in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and at Sünching Castle near Regensburg. He took a special interest in the baryton. The Sünching manuscript, in Finger’s own hand and datable to about 1670, contains nineteen sonatas, two intradas, and

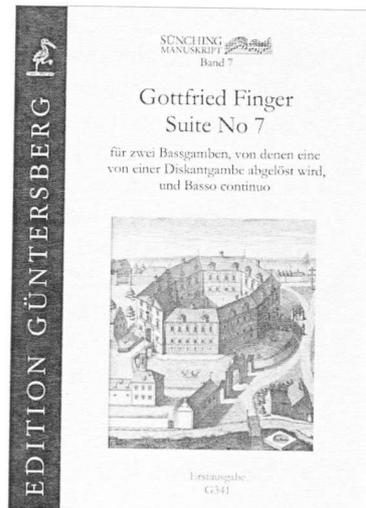
five suites for two viols—Güntersberg has recently published editions of six of the pieces for two viols—as well as seven suites for viola da gamba and baryton. The present edition is an arrangement of the last of the suites for this unusual combination.

Finger’s baryton was not the Classical instrument, employed in approximately two hundred works by Haydn for his patron, Prince Nikolaus of Esterházy, but

an earlier, even more exotic version championed by Walter Rowe, an English composer and viol player active in Germany. Because no Baroque baryton survives, present scholars only partially understand its workings. From descriptions and surviving music we can deduce that it had a third set of strings, absent in the later form of the instrument, which has six ordinary strings, tuned like a bass viol, with a second set of sympathetic wire strings running closer to the belly of instrument and accessible to the player’s left thumb for plucking at the back of the neck. Details about the Baroque baryton’s third set of strings—for example, location, tuning, method of access—remain a mystery.

The manuscript baryton part of the present suite is written on a two-staff system, described in the editor’s detailed introduction, which also includes some facsimile examples of the notation: the upper line in alto clef and the lower part in bass clef. The upper part, with its many chords, employs a scordatura technique, written for an instrument tuned to a C minor chord (G, c, e-flat, g, c’, e-flat’), but notated to be fingered as if in the normal bass viol tuning. The lower staff, which provides a bass line to the piece, is written a minor sixth higher than it needs to sound, indicating that this staff also functions as sort of tablature; the sympathetic diapason strings can be tuned to a scale in any key, and players need not learn different positions for the notes. In the original instrumentation, the bowed strings of the baryton would have functioned as the upper treble voice, while the bass would have been played pizzicato throughout by the player’s left thumb. Then, partway through the fourth movement Passacaglia the bowed baryton part has a seven-measure rest, after which a “violet,” notated in treble clef, takes over for the remainder of the piece, all without interruption of the pizzicato bass line in the left hand. This “violet” was likely the third set of strings on the baryton. Otherwise, how would the player continue the left-hand pizzicato while changing instruments?

This edition offers an excellent opportunity to discover part of a repertoire that would otherwise be inaccessible. At



this point we would not know how to construct a Baroque baryton, let alone play one. The arrangement is intended for three players. The player on what is Viola da Gamba 1 in this edition must switch to treble viol in the middle of the piece, while it would make sense to pluck the bass line. The bass part provided in the edition has editorial figures, which could be realized on a lute or keyboard, though presumably would not have been possible had this part been played by a single thumb. The music itself is rustically attractive, acerbic in the manner of Biber, without being combatively virtuosic. As arranged, the two upper parts are equal musically and in terms of technical difficulty, assuming that one of the players is comfortable changing from bass to treble viol partway through the piece. The edition lives up to Güntersberg's superb reputation. It is well worth a try.

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