

**Carl Friedrich Abel
Pembroke Collection
30 Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Basso
Ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow;
Güntersberg G343/G344/G345/G346 (4 volumes)**

This is not to be confused with the 'Second Pembroke Collection' which is a much more important body of work, and of interest to players at more advanced levels. This material was published a little while ago by Güntersberg, and reviewed in

depth by Peter Holman in 2014 (VdGS Journal, volume 8). The present offering represents, if you like, a lightweight prequel to that collection.

The four volumes include the 30 sonatas included in the 'Music Book' assembled a few years earlier (for teaching purposes) for Abel's pupil Elizabeth Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. The thirty sonatas offer a progressive series of mostly two-movement sonatas, which take the player from a fairly simple level up to material comparable with the familiar 'Six Easy Sonatas' which were published for accomplished amateurs.

Performance materials are generously packaged to Güntersberg's usual high standards. Written introduction and editorial comment (in German and English) are included in all four volumes. Each volume includes a playing score with an alto-clef part (sometimes visiting bass-clef) and unfigured bass line, while the principal playing score has the solo part in treble clef, reflecting Abel's original practice, and also opening these sonatas up to treble viol players (or flautists or violinists), and making life easier for an accompanist creating a harmonised realisation on the fly. I think it questionable whether anyone would want to take these pieces as far as concert performance with a realised keyboard or theorbo accompaniment: the bass-line provided was surely intended for the teacher to play along with his pupil. For the first couple of volumes, the melodic material is of a harmonic simplicity that means the bass line is frankly tedious to play; the teacher accompanying his pupil should be a patient one!

For the pupil, there is no such objection. The true delight of this collection of sonatas is that, thanks to Abel's genius for melody, even the very easiest of them is engaging to play, and the sonatas, by being so cleverly crafted to 'fall under the fingers' are absolutely tuneful enough to be fit for inclusion as a lightweight element in a concert programme.

Thoroughly recommended!

Piers Snell