

The Cracow Manuscript for Viola da Gamba solo, Volumes 1 and 2 (ca. 1655): Dubuisson

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow, Edition Güntersberg (G362 and G363), 2020. ISMN 979-0-50174-362-9 and 979-0-50174-363-6. Each volume, €13.80.

Though known to experts since before the First World War, the music of the Cracow Manuscript was not previously available in a modern edition. Reviewed here are the first two installments in Güntersberg's five-volume edition of the complete manuscript. (Minkoff published a facsimile of this manuscript in 1995, edited by Gordon Dodd, which includes concordances to other sources.) The original manuscript (PL-Wtm R221, kept in the Biblioteka, Muzeum i Archiwum Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Muzycznego im. Stanisława Moniuszki, held by the University Library in Krakow prior to 1945) was compiled between 1650 and 1660. The complete manuscript consists of works by Dubuisson, Nicolas Hotman, and William Young. These two volumes from Güntersberg contain sixty-four of the ninety-one movements by Dubuisson included in the manuscript.

The editors have modernized the accidental usage as well as the clefs, so we are not encumbered by trying to read in baritone or mezzo soprano clef.

Very little is known about Dubuisson (b. Picardie, 1622/3; d. Paris 1680/81)—not even his first name—aside from the fact that he is the only French viol player-composer known between Nicolas Hotman and Hotman's likely student Sainte-Colombe. More information about him and his works can be found in Stuart Cheney's 1988 thesis *Dubuisson: A Study of His Music for Solo Bass Viol*, available through the University of North Texas (<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc500315/m1/1/>).

This edition keeps the movements in their original order, loosely grouped into dance suites sharing a common key, with numbering added for convenience. Since these pieces are for solo viol they make good fare for whiling away the hours during the current pandemic. The collection includes, in roughly equal numbers, preludes, allemandes, sarabandes, and courantes in addition to several giges, a couple of fantaisies and ballets, and one gavotte. The movements contain a pleasant amount of compositional variety and are very enjoyable to play through. The level of difficulty is comparable to Marais's easier pieces.

The D-minor Fantaisie [17] is probably my favorite movement from the two volumes. It opens with a series of double stops and chords, incorporating descending suspensions and rising passing tones juicy enough to remind anyone why they picked up the gamba in the first place. Another movement making a particularly strong impression is the G-minor Sarabande [39]. In addition to some crunchy dissonances, its B section opens with an angelic leap in tessitura, reminiscent of Marais. Throughout the collection are many charming movements, but also points that feel a bit empty due to the lack of an accompanying bass line. Nevertheless, much of the collection feels perfectly complete. The Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Sarabande grave, Gigue & Variation [7-12], taken together, make a compelling suite, which would be an interesting and worthy addition to a concert program. The Sarabande grave, in particular, stands out as one of the most satisfying movements from the whole collection.

Günter and Leonore von Zadow indicate in the introduction that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they decided to expedite the release of this series to provide viol players with more solo music during this time of isolation. I enjoyed the solitary experience of exploring it, and I think others will, too. Some movements may seem a bit plain, but perhaps they are simply crying out for embellishment. There are certainly some tasty morsels that will please discerning palates. These volumes would also serve as a wonderful resource for teachers seeking appropriate repertoire for the student looking to dip a toe into French solo viol music for the first time.

Stephen Moran
Arlington, Virginia