

Music reviews

Dubuisson, Hotman, Young

Das Krakauer Manuskript

(The Cracow Manuscript), Vols 4, 5 & 6

Güntersberg G 364, 365 & 366

In recent years much more of the significant repertoire of suites for solo bass viol in France between about 1640 and 1700 has become available. In addition to the above names, we now have facsimiles of ready-made suites by De Machy, and dozens of pieces by Sainte Colombe from which to make our own. One of the most important sources of this repertoire is the Cracow Manuscript (now in Warsaw), whose one hundred and forty pieces have been published in five books of about thirty each by Günter and Leonore von Zadow. The first two have sixty-four pieces by Dubuisson, the last three contain equal numbers by Dubuisson, Hotman and Young. The movements of the classical suite predominate, with the odd *fantaisie*, *boutade* and *ballet* for good measure. Some dances have one or two variations, just as we find in Marais' first book of 1686.

It is not clear whether the player is expected to group the pieces into suites, but both Dubuisson and Young lay out their movements by keys in a manner pointing towards the classical suite as defined by De Machy's 1685 print. A definitive study of this period has yet to be written and so far the pieces have proved difficult to date, but it looks likely that Hotman can be viewed as 'father' of the school, with his 'children' gradually expanding the range of the instrument and length of the suites. A further indication of the date of the collection is that none of the pieces require a seventh string. It is thought that the lower A string began to become standard in the years between 1675 and 1685 and was generally accepted as the norm by 1700.

The whole collection has been available since 1995 in a neat little facsimile from Minkoff with a preface by Gordon Dodd containing useful information about concordances with other sources. But those wishing to avoid the tenor and baritone clefs, or who generally prefer a modern typeface to even very clear seventeenth century hand-writing, will be well served by Güntersberg's new print. As well as dozens of easily sight-readable movements to enjoy, these little books perfectly demonstrate the developing technique of instrument and compositional forms, providing useful background for the great classics of Marais, Forqueray and d'Hervelois in the first half of the 18th century.

The present writer hopes it is not too immodest to mention that in 2010 he recorded a CD of suites by Hotman, Dubuisson, De Machy and St.Colombe for the Cello Classics label, whereon are to be found many pieces from the Cracow manuscript.

Charles Medlam