

***Mr Falle's Solos:***

Pieces for Viola da Gamba solo from  
Manuscript A27 of the Durham Cathedral Library.  
Ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow, 2020  
Edition Güntersberg G367

Edition Güntersberg are well-known for their wonderful collection of immaculately presented modern editions of early music, which includes a rich repertoire for viols. One of their great strengths is providing detailed textual and contextual information with each edition. For this new publication, in particular, the background information is both helpful and important. Philip Falle (1656-1742) was a clergyman in Jersey and later in Durham who gathered a significant library, including a store of chamber music. His music collection passed to Durham Cathedral Library in 1730, and includes manuscript copies that Falle compiled for his own use. Manuscript A27 is a substantial volume of music for viol, most requiring basso continuo but also including some solo pieces. Although the music was copied accurately, usually indicating title and composer, it is not always possible to identify the provenance of some pieces.

The present edition contains a selection of the pieces for solo bass viol, arranged (as in the original manuscript) by key. Some of Falle's chosen pieces are known from other sources and publications, going back as far as to Christopher Simpson's *The Division Viol* of 1665. Falle also included a solo

## Music reviews

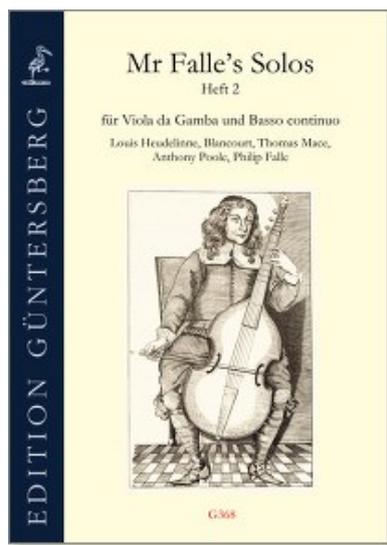
Prelude by Godfrey Finger which we know from the recent complete edition. But most of this volume presents music which was not published at the time and has not appeared in a modern edition – in effect unseen repertoire, by composers we know from other works (Marais, Dubuisson), or by composers who have remained obscure (such as the lutenist François Dufaut, or Frederick William Stepkin or Steffkins – not to be confused with Dietrich Steffkens). There are also some anonymous pieces not found elsewhere.

Viol players will find this volume interesting for two reasons. First, it gives an unusual insight into what an enthusiastic amateur viol player chose to copy out as his favourite pieces from amongst the music he could get hold of in the years 1700-1730. We note a significant proportion of French music, but also observe that he did not include anything requiring the low seventh string. Falle was clearly keen on the music of Saint-Colombe le fils, which survives thanks to this manuscript. The more demanding suites by this elusive composer are not included here because they already exist in a

modern edition (1998), but we now get some additional pieces that may constitute another suite in F major – less distinctive than the ones we know from the 1998 edition, but worth having.

For those looking for really important new repertoire, however, the highlight is probably a suite by Dubuisson for which once again the only source is Falle's manuscript. Unlike some of the music by this composer already available in the Dove House editions of the 1990s, this new suite is of exceptional quality and thematic coherence. It is in the darker key of E minor, particularly effective on the viol, and its four movements might best be described as a dialogue between two different voices, at times separated across a wide tessitura, then merging in chordal writing which lies well on the instrument and presents rich musical interest. Edition Güntersberg have once again provided viol players with a new publication which is important both for the wider cultural context and for giving bass players some very welcome additional solo music.

*Thomas Munck*



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