

Mr Falle's Solos: Pieces for Viola da Gamba Solo from Manuscript A27 of the Durham Cathedral Library

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg (G367), 2020. ISMN 979-0-50174-366-4. €13.80.

Mr. Sanguinazzos Book of Exercises (ca. 1710): 36 Ricercari für Violoncello (Viola da Gamba) solo

arr. and ed. Dietmar Berger. Edition Walhall (EW 1027), 2019. ISMN 979-0-50265-027-8. €17.80.

Giovanni Battista degli Antonii: Twelve Ricercars for Solo Violoncello (or Solo Bass Viol)

ed. Theresa Villani. PRB Productions (B069), 2020. ISBN 978-1-56571-475-05. \$15.00.

Even though the repertoire for solo bass viol is extensive enough to keep a diligent player busy for a lifetime, when confined to playing alone for months on end one begins to wonder what else lurks beyond the familiar horizon. Over the last two decades publishers have continued to regale us with rediscoveries at a surprisingly steady rate. This review looks at offerings proposed by three different houses as new additions to the standard fare.

Mr Falle's Solos is Günter and Leonore von Zadow's selection of the unaccompanied solos included in Philipp Falle's 350-page manuscript collection, still in the collection of Durham Cathedral three centuries after Falle served there as a priest. Falle seems to have had access to a wide range of now-lost sources because many of the pieces he copied, often by well-known composers, do not survive in other sources outside this manuscript. Rather than being organized by composer, the fourteen pieces of this edition are grouped by key, as they were in the original tome. The named composers represented here are Christopher Simpson, with five snippets from the *Division Viol*; François Dufaut, with an arrangement of a lute suite not found elsewhere; Sainte-

Colombe *le fils*, who apparently worked in London and Edinburgh; Gottfried Finger, with a single prelude; and Dubuisson and Frederick Steffkin (not to be confused with Dietrich Steffkens), each with a four-movement suite unique to this collection. Additionally, we find several anonymous pieces and a suite mysteriously credited simply as "ex Mss Gallico." Furthermore, the von Zadows discovered, after the release of the version reviewed here, another important solo piece in Falle's book, an otherwise unknown sarabande by Marin Marais. It is included in subsequent printings and can be downloaded from the publisher's website.

As usual Güntersberg provides excellent background information on the source material, which Falle assembled over the course of three decades (1700-1730), and the von Zadows' own editorial decisions. This is a wonderfully eclectic collection that reveals the specific personal tastes of its compiler. It makes for rewarding browsing, dipping in and out of different pieces, eventually selecting one for more attention. One has the sense of slowly becoming acquainted with a like-minded soul from another age.

Mr. Sanguinazzos [sic] *Book of Exercises*, published by Walhall, reproduces a very different manuscript, a collection of ricercars written out in about 1710, likely by an Italian nobleman who styled himself with his name backwards "Olocin Ozzaniugnas, dilettante di violoncello," on the title page of this and several other manuscripts. This item is catalogued in the Este Collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, where the pieces are designated as exercises for a bass instrument. The date, the provenance, and the writing all point to music conceived for the cello. Dietmar Berger, the editor, has suggested that the pieces work well on either cello or gamba and suggests that they are entertaining and suitable to either instrument. Sanguinazzo was Falle's direct contemporary, but their manuscripts reflect the tastes of diametrically opposed musical worlds. Our Italian dilettante was aiming for something with the energy of Vivaldi and the passion of Caldara, occasionally coming very near, if never directly hitting his mark.

The thirty-six pieces here vary widely with regard to level of compositional polish, potential musical interest, and adaptability to the gamba. Some of them sound like improvisations that need some rethinking (e.g., no. 12), while others present fetching melodies (e.g., no. 7). They give insight into the mentality of the early galant style and might give a performer courage to write something for herself. The best of these ricercars merit performance. As just one example, no. 19 in D minor is pleasingly quirky without being unconventional, composed of scalar and arpeggiated figures with well-placed leaps, traversing an interesting harmonic landscape. Overall they certainly can work on the viol, though some, such as no. 21, really cry out for a cello. Berger does offer several *ossias* for viol players, which do render the affected passages more playable. While he includes some useful background material in his

introduction, he is less than transparent about his editorial procedures: "The succession of the pieces was modified, in some cases also the keys. Furthermore, a few repetitions and variations were added..."

Giovanni Battista degli Antonii's *ricercars*, in a new edition from PRB Productions, are well known to cellists of the Baroque persuasion. They are often cited as among the earliest solo pieces written for the cello. The story, however, is not so straightforward, because the first edition (Bologna, 1687) calls the pieces "Ricercate for the violoncello" and then, in smaller type, "or harpsichord." Further complicating the situation, a manuscript version, apparently unknown to the editor of this edition, presents a very different picture of the pieces. The manuscript, consisting of two separate parts, (Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Mus. D. 9) calls them "Ricercate for the violin" and includes a bass part that is identical to the cello solo pieces.

This is a sound edition, which Theresa Villani says she based entirely on the 1687 publication. A scan of the early, movable-type edition can be viewed on IMSLP. The present one is substantially easier to read, and players will appreciate that the editor has done away with the profusion of clefs of the original, though gamba players might wish that the passages reproduced in tenor clef were rather in alto clef. These are witty pieces that work surprisingly well on the gamba and make sense both as unaccompanied solos and as bass parts to duos with violin. (If you want to try the two-part version, a facsimile that includes the violin part was published by Forni in 2007, edited by Marc Vanscheeuwijck.)

These three publications demonstrate the astonishing diversity of style that was present in a relatively short timespan around 1700. It is fun to take cello music for a spin on the viol every now and then. If you have a hankering to get out more without leaving your own home, you might wish to try any of them.

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