

Christoph Schaffrath
Sonate G-Dur
für obligates Cembalo und Viola da Gamba
Ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow,
Edition Güntersberg G379

Christoph Schaffrath was born in 1709 in Hohnstein, near Dresden and died in 1763 in Berlin. He was court musician to Frederick, Crown Prince of Prussia (later Frederick the Great), and afterwards to his sister, the Princess Amalia, who was herself an accomplished musician and composer. Schaffrath worked as keyboardist alongside CPE Bach and other Berlin musicians who wrote in the *Empfindsamer stil* (the sensitive style), which is characterised by the use of dramatic changes of mood in the music, designed to stir the emotions of the listener. Schaffrath's writing is described as being similar to CPE Bach, but 'less dramatic and confrontational'. His works were incorporated into the Princess's extensive music library after his death. The Amalien-Bibliothek, as it is known, contains four gamba pieces by Schaffrath, including the very fine duetto for two bass gambas in D minor, and this

sonata in G major – all of which are now available on Güntersberg. The scoring of this particular sonata follows the models left by JS Bach. In these pieces, the right hand part of the harpsichord forms a duo with the gamba over the left hand bass line, creating a three-part texture.

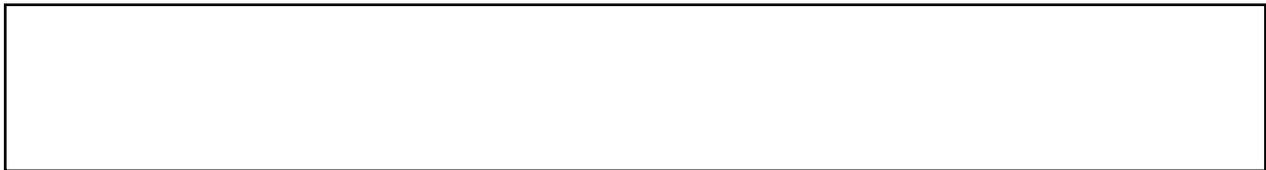
The character of this sonata is perhaps less serious than any Berliner examples that I've come across, and happily not as demanding. This is surely good news for someone who avoids this repertoire because of the reputation it has for being technically difficult. Although there are a few rapid passages in the quick movements and some in thirds in the slow, these are nowhere near as challenging as what you may find in say in a CPE Bach sonata or a JG Graun concerto.

Somewhat surprisingly for a keyboard player, Schaffrath has also kept the harpsichord part relatively straightforward. In fact, in a few places the writing is actually quite sparse, and Güntersberg in

these instances has provided additional harmony notes to bulk up the lines, as well as figured bass realisations when only the left hand is playing.

This edition comes with a very informative introduction by Michael O'Loughlin, who has written much about the music from the court of Frederick the Great. As usual with Güntersberg, the presentation is immaculate, the gamba part is clearly laid out, and the bar numbers, as well as figured bass in the keyboard part, are easy to read. If there was a suggestion for improvement I would say it would be in the keyboard part, where occasionally the page turns proved slightly problematic for the player. This is a very pleasing and enjoyable sonata to play and would make a good introduction to the Berliner *Empfindsamkeit* school for anyone who would like to get to know it.

Ibrahim Aziz

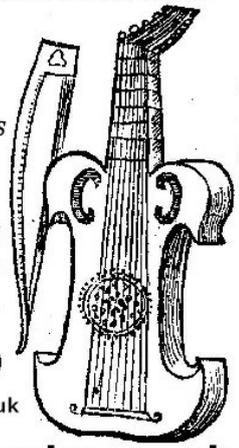




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