

Introduction

Johann Gottlieb Graun was born in the small Saxon town of Wahrenbrück in 1702 or 1703, the second of three brothers, each of whom was to become a distinguished musician. He counted among his ancestors an organist and several generations of Protestant pastors, but his father August served a more materialistic cause: he was a tax collector and brewer. Educational possibilities in Wahrenbrück were limited, and all three brothers were sent elsewhere for further education. The eldest, August Friedrich (1698/99-1765) went to Grimma in 1711, at which point he may be allowed to depart from this biographical sketch. Johann Gottlieb and his younger brother Carl Heinrich (1703/4-1759) remained together, a situation which pertained throughout much of their lives, and which has ever since caused considerable confusion and difficulty in attribution of much of their music. Johann Gottlieb went to the Kreuzschule in Dresden in 1713, and Carl Heinrich followed him there in 1714. This excellent school offered general education with an emphasis on music. It was associated with the Dresden Kreuzkirche, and trained singers for its choir, the Kreuzchor.

During his time at the Kreuzschule Graun would have come in contact with the fine musicians of the Dresden court, as well as visitors such as Telemann and J. S. Bach. The Saxon capital was a major political and cultural centre, and its court orchestra was widely admired. Among its finest younger virtuosi was the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel (1687-1755), who was appointed in 1712 and took over as *Konzertmeister* in 1728. Like almost all leading German musicians, Pisendel studied in Italy; in 1716 he studied with Vivaldi in Venice, and in 1717 with Montanari in Rome. Half a century later Burney interviewed Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), who attributed the excellence of the Dresden orchestra to Pisendel's training. Probably soon after his return, Pisendel accepted young Graun as a violin student. Graun's other violin teacher was the famous Italian violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770).

Graun's first known appointment was at Merseburg, where he was appointed as *Konzertmeister* in 1726. He must have already built up a reputation, because J. S. Bach sent his son Wilhelm Friedemann there to study violin with Graun from 1726 to 1727. One of the few works of Graun which were ever published in the eighteenth century, a set of six sonatas for violin and harpsichord, appeared during this time. Graun did not stay long in Merseburg; in 1727 he obtained another appointment, this time at Arolsen in the State of Hessen-Cassel, again as *Konzertmeister*.

In 1732 Graun became the first musician to be appointed to the service of the Prussian crown prince Frederick. Graun moved with the crown prince and his *Kapelle* to Rheinsberg in 1736, and on to Berlin and Potsdam on Frederick's accession to the throne in 1740. Frederick (later called "the Great") valued his services highly; from that year until his death in 1771, he earned an annual salary of 1,200 Thalers, or four times the rank-and-file orchestra rate. As *Konzertmeister* he was responsible for training and preparing the orchestra. His training was modelled on that of Pisendel, and emphasised precision, unified bowing and expressive playing. The meticulous attention to dynamics which is so much in evidence in Graun's scores became an important part of the Berlin style.

In 1766, Hiller summarized Graun's creativity:

The Concertmaster's great strength on the violin and his superb composition[s] are known everywhere. ... Our Mr. Graun's compositions comprise very many unusually fiery concertos for one and two violins, also double concertos for other instruments; concertos for the violoncello, the viola da gamba, etc.; very many extremely splendid symphonies, some with many obbligato instruments, and some overtures; beautiful trios and quartets for different instruments; many solos, and also some cantatas, etc.¹

Between them, Graun and his brother (Frederick's *Kapellmeister* Carl Heinrich Graun) wrote at least 161 concertos. Forty-six of these, including the present concerto, can be definitely ascribed to Johann Gottlieb, but he almost certainly wrote many more of them. His concertos show a dazzling variety of instrumental colour: he wrote solo concertos for violin, viola, viola da gamba, flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, harpsichord and organ, as well as group concertos for several unusual or unique combinations of instruments. Graun's concertos use the "ritornello" form which was pioneered by Vivaldi, but are formally more developed, and more directly influenced by his teacher Tartini.

Like many of Graun's concertos and indeed his works in all instrumental genres, this concerto appears in different variants: two of the three sources have violin and viola da gamba as solo instruments, and the other has vio-

¹ Johann Adam Hiller, "Verzeichniß der Personen, welche gegenwärtig die königliche preußische Capellmusic ausmachen, im Julius 1766," *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*...1:10 (1766), 75.

lin and viola. There is no autograph, and only one of the three copyists is known by name: Ludwig Christian Hesse, the copyist of Q2 (see “Our Edition” below), the set of parts in Darmstadt. This gamba virtuoso worked together with Graun for over 20 years in Frederick’s *Hofkapelle*, and almost certainly inspired him to write not only this work, but up to nine solo concertos and many other works for gamba. In 1766, J. A. Hiller said of Hesse: “The skill, attractiveness and fire in performance which our Mr. Hesse possesses to such a high degree make him, in our time, incontestably the greatest gambist in Europe.”¹

Hesse copied many of Graun’s gamba works, and typically did it with freedom and creativity. One of his habits was to add thirds, sixths and chordal filling notes to the texture of the solo gamba part, and sometimes to remove them. In this work he has removed a few parallel thirds, for example in bar 70 in the first movement and in bars 77, 78, 90 and 91 in the last movement. In the last movement examples, he has removed the lower third from the semiquavers. This suggests that the modern player also has the right to make the part easier or more difficult by the appropriate removal or addition of thirds. Hesse also added some chordal filling notes to the finale, and these are shown as cue notes (e. g. bar 398). Unfortunately the solo violin part of Q2 has not survived, but Graun’s violin parts generally show fewer doublestops than his gamba parts, and there appears to be less flexibility in their use. The two cadenzas for both solo instruments were almost certainly written by Hesse, and are rare examples of written-out cadenzas from the period.

With its fascinating and unusual textures, this work shows Graun’s consummate knowledge of both solo instruments, as well as his ability to orchestrate in such a way that they are not obscured. It is a valuable addition to the relatively scarce baroque and classical double concerto repertoire.

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Brisbane, Australia, June 2005



Q1: Zweiter Satz, Anfang des Gambensolos

Q1: *Second movement, beginning of viola da gamba solo*

¹ Johann Adam Hiller, “Bey seiner königl. Hoheit dem Prinzen von Preußen sind als Musici in Diensten,” *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* 11 (1766) 81.