

Preface

The Italian violinist and composer Giovanni-Pietro Ghignone was born in Turin as the son of a merchant in 1702. He was a pupil of G.B. Somis. In 1725 he gave his debut in Paris in the newly founded “Concert Spirituel,” where he engaged in a competition with Jean-Baptiste Anet to prove the superiority of Italian over French music. Ghignone received acclaim for his brilliant playing and was frequently to be heard in this concert series during the subsequent twenty-five years. From 1730 he belonged to the private orchestra of the Prince of Carignan for at least two decades. Around this time he also began to play his own compositions before the king, which led to his appointment to the royal court chapel in 1733. He changed his name to **Jean-Pierre Guignon**, taking French citizenship in 1741. Highly regarded for his virtuoso playing, he performed together with famous contemporaries such as the gambist Forquerai, the violinists Anet, Leclair, Mondonville, and Guillemain, and the flutist Blavet; he also participated in the performance of Telemann’s Paris Quartets.

In 1737, provided with a royal privilege, Guignon began publishing his own compositions – concertos, sonatas, and duos in Italian style in which for the most part the violin stands in the foreground. Yet, he received more recognition for his violin playing, which according to his contemporaries was of admirable lightness, than he did for his compositions. Moreover, he gained notoriety due to his belligerent character. Because of a quarrel with another musician, he had already spent time in prison as a young man. He was later involved in intrigues that drove Anet and Leclair out of the king’s service; he ousted Mondonville as the teacher to the heir apparent; and he initiated legal proceedings in financial matters and against other musicians. On the other hand, he was generous enough to teach talented pupils for free. Well provided with pensions from the king and from his aristocratic pupils, he died at Versailles in 1774.

The present sonatas for two bass instruments were published in Paris in 1737. Our edition is based on an exemplar that is housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, under the shelf mark **F-Pn VM7-6352**. The title page reads: “VI SONATES / A DEUX VIOLONCELLES / Baßes de Viole, ou / Baßons, /.../ PAR J.P. GUIGNON. / Premier Violon ordinaire de la Musique du Roi. / et de S.A.S. Monseigr. le Prince de Carignan. / SECOND CEVRE ...” The print is in score form, containing both parts: the upper part is written in tenor and bass clefs, the lower part only in bass clef.

The choice of keys, the voice leading, the use of tenor clef, the (few) double stops, and the title suggest that these sonatas are intended primarily for violoncellos. On the other hand, there are passages that lie better on gamba than on cello, and a few that sound as if they were written for bassoon. To meet the needs of all players interested in this music, we have prepared an edition in the original clefs for violoncellos or bassoons, and one in alto and bass clefs for violas da gamba.¹

Our edition is based on the original print. Thus, even if it might seem rather inconsequential today, we have in most cases retained the original beamings and the repeated accidentals. We have added a number of cautionary accidentals. The (very few) notes that have been altered for harmonic reasons are indicated by annotations. Several time signatures have been altered without comment (“3/4” instead of “3”, “2/4” instead of “C”), as have the lengths of final measures in pieces that begin with an upbeat. Superfluous repeat signs at the ends of pieces have been deleted and trill markings standardized. The placement of several clef changes has been altered for ease of reading.

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Translation: Howard Weiner

¹ Edition Güntersberg G083, Six Sonatas op. 2 for two violoncellos or bassoons, Sonatas I-III
Edition Güntersberg G084, Six Sonatas op. 2 for two violoncellos or bassoons, Sonatas IV-IV
Edition Güntersberg G085, Six Sonatas op. 2 for two violas da gamba, Sonatas I-III
Edition Güntersberg G086, Six Sonatas op. 2 for two violas da gamba, Sonatas IV-IV