

## Introduction

Carl Friedrich (or Charles Frederick) Abel was the greatest viola da gamba player of the second half of the eighteenth century, and was one of the most prolific composers for his instrument.<sup>10</sup> He was a prominent figure in London's concert life for nearly thirty years, from his arrival in England in the winter of 1758-9 until shortly before his death on 20 June 1787. His standard practice in public concerts was to play one of two 'solos' or sonatas for gamba and bass, though he is also known to have played concertos and to have taken part in quartets and other chamber pieces, taking the viola part on the gamba. Elizabeth Harris wrote to her son James on 8 March 1765 that a Bach-Abel concert two days earlier had included 'a most delightfull quartetto between Abel, Bartolemon, Tacett & Ciri';<sup>11</sup> François-Hippolyte Barthélemon was a violinist, Joseph Tacet a flute player and Giovanni Battista Cirri a violoncellist. Similar groups were used by a chamber group in Queen Charlotte's household, and in 1796 J.F. Reichardt wrote that Abel's main role in the queen's household was 'to play the viola part on the gamba' ('Abel die Bratsche auf der Gambe zu spielen').<sup>12</sup>

Abel could easily have played the viola parts of quartets without arranging them for the gamba, but he is known to have composed a number of works specifically for flute, violin, gamba and violoncello: in the spring of 1794 the London booksellers Evan and Thomas Williams offered for sale 'TEN Quartettos, in score, for a Viola da Gamba, Flute, Violin and Violoncello in Abel's handwriting'.<sup>13</sup> The Quartet in G major WKO 227, A6:1 was presumably drawn from that set, and is the only one to have survived with exactly that scoring, though it is likely that others survive as conventional flute quartets.<sup>14</sup> It was first published in 1951 by the late Edgar Hunt, using a manuscript set of parts in his possession.<sup>15</sup> According to a note in his edition the tenor part is labelled 'Violetta' in the work's title but 'Viola da Gamba' on the part itself, and was copied in the treble clef. This makes it likely that Hunt's manuscript, which cannot be traced at present, was copied in the late eighteenth century. Abel, like other composers at the time, wrote his gamba music in the treble clef, while the alto or tenor clefs were normally used for the instrument in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, a number of wrong notes and missing accidentals in Hunt's edition show that his manuscript is not an autograph.

The other two sources (S1 and S2, see below) are late, copied in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, though a number of small variants and independent readings show that they were not derived from the Hunt manuscript; their ultimate source may have been a manuscript, now apparently lost, that was offered for sale in Hamburg on 25 February 1783 as '*Abel*, I Quatuor. Viola da Gamba Fl. Violin & Violoncel G dur'.<sup>16</sup> Item 3 of the source S1 is a score from the collection of the cellist and gamba player Johannes Klingenberg (1852-1905), and is probably in his hand. In this manuscript the work is in two movements, as in the Hunt manuscript, but in source S2, a set of parts also copied by the 'Klingenberg' hand, the work has a central slow movement, a *Cantabile* in 3/4 for gamba solo, violin and violoncello. This movement, a version of the slow movement of Abel's Sonata in G major for gamba and bass WKO 151, A2:10, is described in S2 as an insertion ('Einlage'), and it looks as if it was arranged by Klingenberg himself. There are several versions of the violin and violoncello parts, as if he was experimenting with them, and the arrangement has several dubious features, such as chords in the violin and violoncello parts, anachronistic expression marks such as *mf* (almost unknown in eighteenth-century music), a 'hairpin' crescendo, and the

<sup>10</sup> For Abel and his gamba music, see Peter Holman, *Life after Death: the Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge, 2010), ch. 5 and 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: the Family Papers of James Harris 1732-1780*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford, 2002), 441.

<sup>12</sup> *Musikalischer Almanach*, ed. J.F. Reichardt (Berlin, 1796), part 4.

<sup>13</sup> *The Morning Herald*, 3 April 1794.

<sup>14</sup> For full details, see *RISM Series A/II: Music Manuscripts after 1600* (<http://www.ebscohost.com/academic/rism-series-a-ii-music-manuscripts-after-1600>). For the numbering of Abel's works, see Peter Holman, 'Charles Frederick Abel's Viola da Gamba Music: a New Catalogue', *The Viola da Gamba Society Journal*, 4 (2010), pp. 36-73 (<http://www.vdgs.org.uk/publications-Journal.html>).

<sup>15</sup> C.F. Abel, *Quartet in G for Flute, Violin, Viola (da gamba) and Violoncello*, ed. Edgar Hunt (London, 1951), Schott, no. 10190.

<sup>16</sup> *Magazin der Musik*, ed. C.F. Cramer, i/1 (Hamburg, 1783), p. 283.

modern type of accent mark. Also, the movement has four more bars than in the Sonata in G major A2:10, which function rather like the keyboard postludes of nineteenth-century songs. Significantly, the version of the movement in Item 1 of D-B, Mus. ms. 263, Klingenberg's arrangement of A2:10 with a realised keyboard part, has a similar postlude. Thus it is likely that Klingenberg's source preserved the work in two movements, as in Hunt's manuscript, and that he borrowed the *Cantabile* movement from A2:10, arranging it in the process. Roy Whelden's recent edition was made solely from S2, and thus gives the work in its three-movement form.<sup>17</sup> The present edition, the first to take account of all three sources, rejects the *Cantabile* as inauthentic.

In its two-movement form the Quartet in G major is typical of the lighter types of chamber music composed by Abel and his contemporaries in England. His accompanied sonatas opp. 2 (1760), 5 (1764), 13 (1777) and 18 (1784) are mostly two-movement works, as are his sonatas op. 9 (1772) for violin, violoncello and continuo.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, his more serious works, such as his string quartets opp. 8 (1769), 12 (1775) and 15 (1780) and his string trios op. 16 (1783), all have three movements. The quartet begins with a typically expansive and easy-going sonata-pattern movement in the *galant* style, with the three upper instruments taking part in a polite conversation, at times entertaining with virtuosity, at others captivating the listener with elegant and expressive phrases. The second movement also conforms to type in that it is cast in lively dance rhythms – in this case, derived from the gavotte – and is a rondo with two episodes, the second plunging into the tonic minor. Abel was evidently fond of the music of this quartet: both movements appear in a conventional flute quartet in CZ-Pnm XXII A 7, the first of a set of seven quartets or divertimenti by Abel, while the Allegretto is also found as the finale of Abel's String Quartet in G major, op. 12, no. 6, WKO 72.

Peter Holman  
Colchester, July 2011

## Our Edition

The quartet WKO 227 has survived in two sources from the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, and in an important edition.

**S1 D-B Mus. ms. Klingenberg Nr. 2.** Collection of manuscripts, which contains the score of our quartet as the third item. Title page: *Quatuor 3tia | ex G. | Flauto Traverso | Violino | Violetta | con | Violoncello | No 4 | Del Sigr. Abel.* The parts are labelled as follows: *Flauto traverso, Violino, Viola da gamba* (octavated treble clef), *Violoncello*. The manuscript shows pencil corrections which make sense, so that they may have been made by someone with a critical eye and musical understanding.

**S2 D-B Mus. ms 253/10.** Four parts which are labelled as in S1. The gamba part is written in the treble clef (at pitch) and bass clef.

**S3 Edition by Edgar Hunt, 1951** (see footnote 15). This edition is based on an additional manuscript which is not identical to S1 or S2 and which was not available to us.

The three sources show little difference in the notes, but they show major differences in the articulation (mostly in the slurs). S1 is our main source. At places where our notes deviate from our main source and follow one of the other sources we have indicated this by a footnote in the score. Our other editorial suggestions are based on S2 and S3 as well and are shown as dotted slurs and trills in brackets.

We thank Peter Holman for his idea for this edition and for his introduction.

Günter von Zadow

<sup>17</sup> C.F. Abel, *Quartet no. 3 for Flute, Violin, Viola da Gamba and Cello*, ed. Roy Whelden (Albany CA, 2003), PRB, Classical Series, no. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel, *Six Sonatas op.9 für Violino, Violoncello oder Viola da Gamba und Basso continuo*, ed. G. und L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg, 2011), Güntersberg G216.