

Introduction

This remarkable work is Graun's⁴ only solo sonata for viola da gamba and basso, and exists in two quite different authentic variants: the composer's autograph and a transcription by his colleague, the gamba virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse. The different nature of the variants, and the fact that we can identify the authors of both, allows us to construct a narrative concerning the creation of these variants, and encourages us to take the unusual step of publishing both. Each variant has its own character, and each had its own purpose, its own way of fulfilling the *galant* ideal, that of 'seeking to please'.

Hesse was one of the great virtuosos of the instrument. In 1766, Johann Adam Hiller wrote: '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.'⁵ Graun and Hesse worked together in the court ensemble of Frederick II of Prussia ('the Great') for over 20 years, during which time Graun wrote several pieces, such as this one, which exploited Hesse's virtuosity. In 1763 Hesse left Frederick's employ, probably to take up a position immediately with the young crown prince, Frederick's nephew Friedrich Wilhelm. In any case, he was certainly working as musician and music teacher to the prince by 1766. In this capacity he tirelessly arranged quite vast amounts of music for the prince to play on the gamba, often in the form of duets to play with his teacher.

The prince's skill on the gamba, of course, did not approach that of his brilliant teacher. The sonata as Graun wrote it would have been too difficult for him, so Hesse adapted it for his student. He dealt with the very difficult passages by simplifying them, substituting different music, or cutting them altogether. In addition, he wrote in ornamentation for his student, suggestions which Hesse himself or other professional musicians would have been expected to improvise. This process has left us with a work which is still interesting and beautiful, certainly not bland or oversimplified, but much easier to play than Graun's original.

Before discussing in more detail the unique characteristics of each variant, it may be helpful to outline the basic nature of the sonata. As in many sonatas of the Berlin School composers, the slow movement is placed as the first of three movements. It is in binary form, with a dominant cadence in the middle of bar 14. The fermata on the six-four chord in the second-last bar is an opportunity for an improvised cadenza. The *Allegretto* is a typical sonata movement in the *galant* style: the melody is decorated by parallel thirds and sixths, triplets and syncopations, and supported by a light bass line which does not distract from it. The final movement is a minuet which is fully developed into a typical preclassical sonata form movement.

J. G. Graun, Original Version

Writing about the solo sonata, eighteenth-century theorists stress the need for the composer to provide the performer with a work which allows them to display their capabilities, and those of the instrument.⁶ When Graun wrote this sonata, Hesse might have been the only person in Germany capable of playing it, and he clearly had his colleague in mind. The first virtuoso technique which

⁴ For information on Graun, please see the preface to *Johann Gottlieb Graun, Concerto for Violin, Viola da Gamba and Orchestra* (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2005, G069), which is also on the Güntersberg website: <http://www.guentersberg.de/noten/en/g069.php>. See also M. O'Loughlin, *Frederick the Great and His Musicians: the Viola da Gamba Music of the Berlin School* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), Chapter 7.

⁵ Johann Adam Hiller, 'Bey seiner königl. Hoheit dem Prinzen von Preußen sind als Musici in Diensten,' *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* 11 (1766): 81. See also O'Loughlin, *Frederick the Great*, Chapter 6.

⁶ See O'Loughlin, *Frederick the Great*, Chapter 4.

confronts the player is the liberal use of parallel thirds and sixths. These are often found in Graun's virtuoso gamba music, and seem to have been a favourite technique of Hesse; he certainly used them frequently in his arrangements. Another texture which conveys the impression of virtuosity, even when it is not always particularly difficult to play, is the use of fast scale and arpeggio passages in triplet sixteenths and thirty-second notes.

Finally, the chordal passage in bars 72–76 of the second movement confirms Graun's sonata as a



J.G. Graun, original version, second movement, bars 72-75

work specifically written for the gamba. Such passages of chords of three, four or more notes occur frequently in Graun's gamba music, and it is often clear from the context that this is a shorthand for broken chords, perhaps ascending and descending in triplet sixteenths or thirty-second notes. This particular passage is unusual in that over the first three bars, certain notes have been struck through – possibly by Hesse, possibly by Graun himself, we cannot be sure. We have indicated these notes as small cue

notes. The alterations reduce all five- and six-note chords in those bars to four notes. The reductions do not necessarily make the passage easier: rather, they require it to be played above the frets over an open G string pedal, producing a virtuoso effect which also occurs quite often in Graun's violin music. The five-note version can however be played in first position. The player is now free to choose either version of this passage, or indeed modify it further according to taste, for example by playing only five notes of the six-note chord in bar 72. The original notation of this chord was surely a miscalculation.

In its original version, Graun's sonata makes a strong statement: uncompromisingly virtuosic, but certainly playable. We find evidence of a strong rhetorical sense, for example in the two notes in bars three and four in the first movement which are pointedly left unaccompanied by any double stops, and in the increasing tension and momentum in passages such as bars 44–53 in the second movement.

L. C. Hesse, Transcription

Hesse made a number of quite radical alterations to the work. There are cuts in each movement: eight bars from the first movement, 13 bars from the second, and 13 from the third. The cut in the first movement, a quarter of its 32 bars, has the effect of changing its formal structure considerably. Hesse has greatly simplified the harmonic structure of the movement by removing almost all of Graun's section of discursive harmony (the part which would later in the classical period become the development section) from the dominant cadence in bar 14 to the tonic recapitulation in bar 23. We are left with a single bar of the theme in the dominant, followed by an immediate recapitulation. This cut also removes a potentially tricky passage of thirty-second notes in parallel thirds. The cuts in the fast movements, however, do not significantly affect their structure. Here, Hesse has simply removed the more technically difficult sections of fast passage work, replacing them with easier and in most cases much shorter sections. In the third movement, as well as making a large cut in the second half, Hesse has rewritten bars 17–23 and 59–65. In these sections he has kept basically the same harmony, but replaced Graun's fast passage work with charming melodic lines.

Hesse has also simplified the texture by removing some of the parallel thirds. While removing the more difficult faster ones such as in bars 8 and 9 in the first movement, or bar 1 of the second movement, he has deliberately left many easier examples of this characteristic texture untouched.

He also provided several lessons in ornamentation for the prince: for example, in bars 2 and 6 of the first movement he has added a series of *coulés*, along with a connecting flourish in bar 6. In bars 3 and 4 of the second movement, he has removed the difficult fast thirds, but also shown how a repeated figure can be increasingly ornamented. It could be argued that through his alterations, Hesse has made a *galant* sonata even more so.

Michael O’Loughlin
Brisbane, Australia, October 2012

Our Edition

The gamba sonata GraunWV A:XVII:1 exists today in these sources, all in score format:

- S1** D-B SA 3627/12. Autograph, Johann Gottlieb Graun.
- S2** D-B Mus. ms. 13525. A transcription by Ludwig Christian Hesse, entitled ‘Solo per la Viola di Gamba’ at the end of his copy of a number of *Pièces de Viole* by Roland Marais.
- S3** GB-Lbl Add. Ms. 32390. A 19th-century copy of S2.
- S4** D-B Mus. ms. Sammlung Klingenberg Nr. 54. A copy of S2 by Johannes Klingenberg, dated ‘Braunschweig, Oktober 1896’.

For our edition we have used only S1 and S2.

We have used the modern convention for accidentals, in which each accidental applies for the rest of the bar. The standard modern abbreviations have been used for the dynamic indications *for*, *fortiss*, *pia*, *piano*, and *pianissimo*. Editorial dynamics in the continuo part have been printed in a smaller font. In the Graun version, the original clefs have been retained. In the Hesse manuscript, the gamba staff is written in treble clef (octave transposed) with occasional use of bass clef. We have converted the treble clef sections to alto clef, retained the bass clef, and also used it in bars 20 and 21 of the second movement. Slurs are shown as in the manuscripts, and the few editorial slurs are shown with a broken line. In the original manuscripts, slurred passages in two voices are often marked with double slurs, both above and below; for the sake of clarity, we have used single slurs. Appoggiaturas are sometimes slurred to the main note, sometimes not, but contemporary advice from C. P. E. Bach and others makes it clear that they should always be slurred. The Graun manuscript S1 generally uses strokes for staccato, but occasionally these look more like dots, or something in between. The context makes it clear that there was no intention to make a distinction, so we have rendered all of them as strokes. Hesse (S2) has consistently used strokes for the normal staccato, and dots for repeated notes under a slur in the two passages in the last movement which do not occur in the Graun manuscript. This distinction is consistent with other Berlin School manuscripts: the slurred dots are probably to be interpreted as a bow vibrato, which would also apply in bars 21–23. The bass figures are original, with any editorial suggestions in square brackets. Hesse often added a few fingerings to his manuscript copies, and he has done this in this one also. We have reproduced these.

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Günter von Zadow
Heidelberg, October 2012