

## Introduction

Information about the life of the great German-Dutch viola da gambist Johan Schenck (Johannes, Johann, Joan, Giovanni, Schenk) is sparse and varies depending on the source. What is certain is that he was baptized in 1660 as the son of ethnic German parents in Amsterdam, where he grew up. He developed into a respected musician who published his own works. However, it is not known with whom he studied. In 1696, Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm II, who himself played viol, summoned Schenck to his court in Düsseldorf as a chamber musician. Schenck attained great fame there as a gambist and composer and published highly regarded works, mostly for the viol. But he also had a career in Düsseldorf outside the musical sphere, serving in various positions at court; from 1710 he held the important office of chamberlain. It is assumed that he remained in the service of the electoral court until Johann Wilhelm's death in 1716, and died shortly thereafter.

In 1702 Schenck had his opus 8, a collection of twelve sonatas, entitled *Le Nympe di Rheno*, for two violas da gamba without bass, published by Roger in Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> On the richly embellished title page, "Giovanni Schenck" dedicated the work to his Prince-Elector "Giovanni Guglielmo." The well-preserved print consists of two part-books, *Viola Prima* and *Viola Seconda*.

The title, *Le Nympe di Rheno*, which comes from the mythology of the German Nibelungen saga, is possibly to be understood as an obeisance toward the prince-elect, for Düsseldorf lies on the Rhine. The twelve sonatas, which can also be referred to as "suites," display a fusion of Italian, French, and German influences.

The legendary viol pioneer Karl Heinz Pauls deserves the credit for republishing this work in 1956,<sup>2</sup> anchoring it in the consciousness of every gambist to the present day. However, sixty years later, we believe it is time to attempt a new edition that satisfies the needs of today's players for faithfulness to the original and practical orientation.

There is yet another edition of the work,<sup>3</sup> in the preface of which Lucy Bardo opines that the original print was carelessly edited, and that the parts were irregularly and incompletely marked, so that today's editor has to

add and correct the articulations and much more. We do not share this view. On the contrary, we take the model seriously and reproduce it as unaltered as possible. It is true that the articulations in the two parts do not correspond in many parallel passages or even appear to be incomplete. But, on the one hand, the differences could have been intended, since we find them in all contemporary works and, on the other hand, in many passages that at first glance look inconsistent, the differences are due to considerations of bowing technique. With our edition, we want to present the players the Urtext, providing them the opportunity to decide for themselves how they want to treat such passages.



However, there are also modifications in our edition. We employ the original clefs with the exception of the today rather uncommon soprano clef, which we have replaced by alto clef wherever possible. We notate the accidentals according to today's usage; they are thus valid for the whole measure. Editorial accidentals are given in brackets. We also employ the key signatures as usual today; for example, Sonata I in B minor has only one sharp in the original, but is reproduced with two sharps in our edition. The beaming is original, but occasionally we have tacitly changed parallel passages to match. In a few cases, we have added dashed slurs/ties that we consider to be self-evident in terms of bowing technique and within the musical context. Other corrections are explained in footnotes in the score.

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<sup>1</sup> The only preserved copy of this print is today in the holdings of the Cathedral Library in Durham.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Schenck, *Le Nympe di Rheno für zwei Solo-Gamben*, ed. Karl Heinz Pauls, *Erbe Deutscher Musik*, vol. 44 (Kassel, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Johann Schenck, *Le Nympe di Rheno per due Viole di Gamba Sole*, ed. Lucy Bardo (Albany, CA: PRB, 2005).