

Introduction

Aside from the fact that Benjamin Hely was active in London during the 1680s and 90s, we know very little about his life. Many viol players are familiar with the viola da gamba method *The Compleat Violist*, which was printed in London in 1699 and includes Hely's two suites for viola da gamba solo. On the title page of this collection, Hely is described as "y^e late famous master," from which we can deduce that he had been a professional musician. Aside from the compositions in this edition, we know six sonatas for three violas da gamba by Hely.¹ Hely died in London in 1699 as can be seen from the still extant list of his legacy of instruments and music.²

The present edition contains the above-mentioned two suites for viola da gamba solo and a third suite for two violas da gamba. There are two sources for the two solo suites:

Q1

Print, London 1699

The Compleat Violist or An Introduction to y^e Art of Playing on y^e Viol, wherein all the necessary Rules & Directions are laid down in a plain & familiar Method ... Printed for & Sould by J. Hare Musical Instrument maker ... The print in landscape format contains the Suite in A Minor with four movements by *Mr. B. Hely* on pages 13–14, and the Suite in A Major with four movements, likewise by *Mr. B. Hely*, on pages 15–16.

Q2

GB-Cfm³ MU MUS 641

A Sett of Lessons in Arc Sharpe by *M^r Hely* (page 2) and *A Sett of Lessons in Arc Flatt* by *M^r Hely* (page 4). The manuscript is made up of four pages and contains the same eight movements as the print Q1, however in a different order. It additionally includes a further movement in A major.

The two sources largely correspond. For our edition, we chose Q1 as the primary source, which we

also followed in terms of the movement order. We appended the additional movement from Q2 as number 9.⁴

There is only one source for the duo suite:

Q3

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For Two Bass Violls (page 1), *M^r Hely* (page 6, bottom). The six-page manuscript contains the individual parts *1st Viol* and *2nd Viol*. It consists of six movements. The second viol part is lacking in the Sarabande, since it is erroneously identical with the first part.

Our edition followed sources Q1 and Q3 as closely as possible. However, several corrections were necessary in the duos. All modifications and additions are indicated by dashed lines and parentheses, or described in footnotes.

The missing part in the Sarabande (nos. 14 and 15) has been reconstructed in two versions by Wolfgang Kostujak, to whom we are greatly indebted.

We have combined Benjamin Hely's solo pieces and the duo in one volume, since each section is rather short on its own, and because both sections are suitable for teaching purposes. The solo suites, however, place greater demands on the player than the duo suite. The former are made up of the usual sequence of almand, courant, saraband, and jig, are written idiomatically for the viol, and frequently display arpeggiated chords in the manner of the *style brisé*.⁵ The simpler duo movements follow an at that time rather old-fashioned contrapuntal pattern and, apart from several of the concluding chords, can also be played by other instruments. They are certainly welcome exercises for viol pupils.

Günter von Zadow

Leonore von Zadow-Reichling

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Translation by Howard Weiner

¹ Benjamin Hely, *Sechs Sonaten für drei Violen da Gamba oder zwei Violen da Gamba und Basso continuo*, edited by G. and L. von Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2017), G317 and G 318.

² Peter Holman, *Life after Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge 2010), p. 32.

³ University of Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.

⁴ The designation of the additional movement "[Ayre]" conforms to the suggestion in the *Thematic Index* of the English Viola da Gamba Society.

⁵ Holman, *Life after Death*, p. 33.