

Introduction

When Edition Güntersberg published the works for viola da gamba from the Maltzan Collection in November 2016, we concentrated on Carl Friedrich Abel¹ (23 works) and his contemporaries Johann Christian Bach² and Andreas Lidl³ (one work each). This collection comes from the castle of the Silesian Maltzan family in Militsch (today Milicz, Poland), and has been in the possession of the Poznań University Library since 1945. The above-mentioned works came to Militsch in the 1780s through the agency of the Prussian envoy in London, Joachim Carl Graf Maltzan. The contents and genesis have been described in detail by Sonia Wronkowska, who discovered the Matzan Collection.⁴

In fact, the collection contains several works by other composers, works that stem from a later period and show that solo playing on the viola da gamba was cultivated in Militsch Castle well into the nineteenth century. Among the composers are Franz Xaver Chwatal (1808–1879), Friedrich Heinrich Florian Guhr (1791–1841), Johann Ludwig Willing (1755–1805), and also Joachim Carl Ludwig Mortimer Graf Maltzan (1793–1843), the grandson of the London envoy. In his recently released CD, *The 19th-Century Viol*, viola da gambist Thomas Fritzsch presents the most important of these works and, in the CD-booklet, discusses the role of the viola da gamba during the Romantic period.⁵

Found among these works are also the *Variations* for viola da gamba and pianoforte by Hermann Gustav Jaeschke, which are proffered in this edition. Siglum and shelf mark of the source in the Poznań University Library are **PL-Pu 7468**. The score for *Viola di Gamba and Pianoforte* is made up of thirteen handwritten pages of music and a printed title page in landscape format. The title reads: *VARIATIONEN | für Viola di Gamba | und Piano-Forte. | über | ein Thema aus der Oper | JAKOB UND SEINE SÖHNE | von Mehul | componirt und | S^r Excellenz dem Erb-Ober- Kämmerer von Schlesien, Königs | Kammerherrn, Obrist a. D. freien Standesherrn, Ritter hoher Orden, Herrn, Herrn Reichsgrafen | v. MALZAN. | hochachtungsvoll gewidmet | von | H. Jaeschke.*

The theme, marked *Andante*, begins after a romantic *Introduction* and is followed by two variations of which the second, with its quick thirty-second notes, makes

great demands on the viol player. The subsequent *Adagio* contains a variation in minor, which is followed by a rapid *Finale*. All the sections follow one another without a break, whereby there are longer transitional passages for the pianoforte alone.

Concerning the composer “H. Jaeschke,” we found the following in a contemporary reference work:⁶

Jäschke, Hermann Gustav. Born on 13 December 1818 in Breslau. A notable violin virtuoso, who was blind from an early age. A musically talented boy, he received his initial music instruction at the Institute for the Blind in Breslau. In 1837 he became a pupil of the chamber virtuoso Lüstner, under whose tutelage he became an artist in his own right. J. was able to perform by memory all known classical and modern compositions for violin. After studying composition with Freudenberg, he composed chorales, preludes, fugues, sonatas, rondos, art songs, and also a quartet which was received with great acclaim.

An encyclopedia, which was published in 1846, provides a somewhat more detailed resume of Jaeschke’s life,⁷ but does not indicate a year of death. From this we surmise that Jaeschke lived at least until 1846.

Beyond that, we know relatively little. In the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin there are several printed works by Jaeschke for piano. And there is a letter dated 1846 from Adolph Friedrich Hesse to Louis Spohr, in which Hesse recommends to Spohr’s attention the “young man by the name of Jäschke,” who “has turned all his activity and ambition to music.”

The theme of the present variations originally comes from a *Romance* in the opera *Joseph* by Étienne-Nicolas Méhul (1763–1817) on a text by Alexandre Duval. It was premiered in Paris in 1807. Later, for the first time in 1817, it was performed under the title *Jakob und seine Söhne in Egypten* (“Jacob and his Sons in Egypt”) in Dresden under the baton of Carl Maria von Weber. A number of composers wrote variations based on this theme, including von Weber in 1812 and Franz Xaver Mozart in 1820. If we assume that Jaeschke wrote his variations only after his composition lessons with Carl Gottlieb Freudenberg in 1840,⁸ they probably came into being after 1840.

¹ C. F. Abel, *Duetto für zwei Violon da Gamba*, ed. by Sonia Wronkowska (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2016), G301; C. F. Abel, *Sonaten für Viola da Gamba und Basso*, ed. by Sonia Wronkowska (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2016), G302–G308.

² J. C. Bach, *Sonata a Piano forte e Viola da Gamba obbligato*, ed. by Sonia Wronkowska (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2016), G309.

³ A. Lidl, *Sonata a Viola da gamba Solo e Violoncello*, ed. by Sonia Wronkowska (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2016), G310.

⁴ Sonia Wronkowska, “Newly discovered works for viola da gamba by Carl Friedrich Abel: the Maltzan Collection,” *Early Music* 46 (May 2018).

⁵ CD *The 19th-Century Viol*, Coviello 2001, COV92001. See also Thomas Fritzsch, “Viola di Gamba, dies romantische Instrument,” *Viola da Gamba* 113 (December 2019); idem, “The Viola da Gamba, ‘this Romantic Instrument,’” *The Viol* 57 (Winter 2019/20).

⁶ Karl Gustav Heinrich Berner, *Schlesische Landsleute* (Leipzig 1900), p. 222.

⁷ *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon*, ed. by Kossmaly und Carlo (Breslau 1846), vol. 1, p. 114f. I would like to thank Thomas Fritzsch for calling this source to my attention.

⁸ *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon*, p. 115.

Our edition reproduces the original musical text very accurately. We have merely replaced the non-transposing treble clef in the viola da gamba part by alto clef. Editorial accidentals that differ from the original are printed in parentheses. The very few other corrections are listed in the Critical Report.

With this edition, I am pleased to present a real composition for viola da gamba from the Romantic era. It was composed fifty years after the death of Carl Friedrich Abel, who is commonly believed to have been “the last great viola da gambist,” who still played the viol when this instrument had allegedly already been long

forgotten and superseded by the violoncello. We possibly have to reconsider our views.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Sonia Wronkowska for providing a copy of the source and the first modern version. I would also like to thank Thomas Fritsch and Michael Schönheit for their suggestions and their critical reading of this edition.

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Translation by Howard Weiner

Hermann Gustav Jaeschke, Variationen für Viola di Gamba und Piano-Forte, Beginn (Quelle: PL-Pu 7468)
Hermann Gustav Jaeschke, Variations for Viola di Gamba and Piano-Forte, beginning (source: PL-Pu 7468)