

Introduction

Gottfried Finger was born in 1655 in Olmütz in Moravia (today Olomouc, Czech Republic). Very little is known about his career in Moravia, but it is quite certain that he was a viola da gamba player in the renowned ensemble of Bishop Liechtenstein-Castelcorno, since Finger's viol music displays the influence of the famous viol and violin virtuoso Heinrich Ignaz Biber, who was active at the bishop's court.¹ Around the mid 1680s, Finger went to London, where he became a member of the renowned Catholic Chapel Royal in 1687. Although King James II went into exile in 1688, Finger remained in London and began a freelance career, composing music for numerous operas, singspiele, masques, instrumental suites, songs, and choral works of which some were even published. Finger's successful time in England ended abruptly when in 1701 he came in only fourth in a competition for the best opera composers in London. He promptly departed London and lived as a composer and musician in Vienna and Berlin. In 1706 he entered the service in Breslau of Count Charles III Philip of Palatinate-Neuburg, following him shortly thereafter to Innsbruck, where he became concertmaster of the court chapel. In 1717 he went with this court to Neuburg on the Danube, then to Heidelberg, and finally in 1720 to Mannheim. There, owing to his experience in working with larger ensembles, he contributed to laying the foundation for the future "Mannheim School" under Stamitz. He died there in 1730.

Whereas many works have come down to us from Finger's time in Moravia and, above all, London, only very little music has been preserved from the following period. The quantity, not to mention the variety, of Finger's preserved compositions is nevertheless immense. They are impressively documented in Robert Rawson's work.²

Music for viola da gamba makes up a substantial portion of Finger's works. It has long been known that this music is to be found above all in English libraries. However some twenty years ago a trove in Germany, which was first described by Fred

Flassig, attracted attention:³ In Sünching Castle, located near Regensburg, an extensive manuscript with works for viola da gamba was found.⁴ It consists of two part books, bound in leather, with the inscription *VIOLA DI GAMB: i* and *ii*, respectively. The collection is anonymous, but thanks to numerous concordances, Fred Flassig and Robert Rawson were able to show that it exclusively contains works by Finger, which are indeed even autographs.⁵ On the basis of dated concordances, it can be concluded that the Sünching manuscript was written around 1670, thus before Finger's arrival in London.

In the first part, the manuscript contains nineteen sonatas, two intradas, and five suites for two viols. The second part is made up of seven suites for the rare combination of viola da gamba and barytone. The present edition is of the last of these suites, Suite no. 7.

The performance material of Suite no. 7 can be described as follows: the first Sünching partbook contains the bass viol part. In the second partbook we find the music for the barytone, which is notated on two staves. The upper staff displays the part that is to be bowed on the barytone in the manner of the bass viol. The second staff contains the bass that is to be plucked with the thumb of the left hand. There is, however, a peculiarity: in the middle of the Passaglia, at measure 50, in the upper part, that is to say, in the bowed barytone part, there is a rest, *whereas the bass continues*. In measure 57, the upper part starts again, but now in treble clef and to be played, according to an annotation in the viol part, on a "violet." This instrumentation is retained until the end of the suite.

Obviously, a change of instrument is intended here. But what instrument is meant by "violet"? Because the bass line continues onward, the barytone player cannot simply put down his instrument and pick up another, for example, a treble viol, although this is presumed by some.⁶ Robert Rawson, on the other hand, has expressed the hypothesis that it must have been a special barytone that had a third, high set of strings on the front, which probably could

¹ The biographical information largely comes from the preface of *Gottfried Finger, The Music for Solo Viol*, eds. R. Rawson and P. Wagner (London: Fretwork, 2009), FE28.

² Robert G. Rawson, *From Olomouc to London: the Early Music of Gottfried Finger (c.1655–1730)* (London: Royal Holloway, University of London, 2002), Thematic Inventory, p. 149ff.

³ Fred Flassig, *Die solistische Gambenmusik in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1998), p. 56ff.

⁴ D-SÜN Ms 12.

⁵ Rawson, *From Olomouc*, p. 32.

⁶ Flassig, *Die solistische Gambenmusik*, p. 68 and Bettina Hoffmann, *Die Viola da Gamba* (Beeskow 2014), p. 283.

have been plucked by the right hand in alternation with the bowed register. He cites a relevant description by Walter Rowe from 1640/41.⁷ Unfortunately, such a barytone with three registers has not come down to us, and there is also no known illustration.

Besides this peculiarity in the instrumentation, almost none of the parts sound as they are notated.⁸ The instruments were not tuned to the normal tunings. It is necessary to differentiate between the first part of the Suite, which is in C Minor, and the second, which is in C Major. First of all, the three barytone registers: the bass always sounds a sixth lower than notated. The bowed register is tuned G–c–e-flat–g–c'–e-flat' (C Minor) and G–c–e–g–c'–e' (C Major), but the music is notated for the normal tuning D–G–c–e–a–d'. The “violet” register sounds a minor third lower than notated. The viola da gamba sounds as notated in the C-Minor section, but a whole tone lower in the C-Major section. Thus, one has to retune between the two parts of the suite.

In view of the described complexity of this suite, it stands to reason that a rendition in the intended manner could be accomplished today only by specialists. In order to make this beautiful music generally accessible, however, we decided upon several compromises in this edition. The bowed register of the barytone is to be played by another bass viol and, from measure 57 of the Passaglia, by a treble viol. The plucked register is to be realized as basso

continuo by one or two instruments. All the parts are notated at sounding pitch, and can also be played so. The change to treble viol does not have to take place with particular haste, since the foregoing couplet E can be repeated as often as necessary. The original viol part shows also at the beginning of Couplet E a repeat sign, added by a different hand.

In the light of the above, we have followed the model as exactly as possible. Missing ties, as obvious from parallel passages, have been added. Corrected accidentals are in parentheses. Bar lines, which are frequently lacking in the manuscript, have been added without comment. Other modifications with respect to the model are listed in the Critical Report.

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Kritischer Bericht *Critical Report*

Wir vermerken die Schreibweise des Originals, wenn diese von unserer Edition abweicht. Die Notation entspricht unserer Edition, d.h. klingend. T1 = Takt 1, N1 = Note 1

We indicate the original reading, if it differs from our edition. The notation is according to our edition, i.e. as it sounds. T1 = bar 1, N1 = note 1

Courante T1, VdG2	
Courante T3, N5–6, VdG2	
Courante T7, VdG2	

Courante T11, VdG1	
Courante T12 N1, alle Stimmen <i>all parts</i>	Halbe <i>minim</i>
Courante T12 N2–4, VdG2	
Courante T24 N1, alle Stimmen <i>all parts</i>	Halbe <i>minim</i>
Passaglia T8, VdG2	
Passaglia T14, VdG2	
Passaglia T46, VdG2	
Passaglia T116, VdG2	

⁷ Rawson, *From Olomouc*, p. 129.

⁸ Rawson, *From Olomouc*, p. 190f.

⁹ *Furiosa – Gottfried Finger, virtuoso music for two bass viols*, Jessica Horsley and David Hatcher, Pan Classics PC 10228, 2007.