

## Introduction

The British Library holds under the shelfmark Add. Ms. 31697 an extensive manuscript collection with works by Carl Friedrich Abel for viola da gamba. It is entitled “Sonatas & Solos for the Viola da Gamba, formerly the Music Book of the Countess of Pembroke ... C. F. Abel.” It is thought that Elizabeth Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, was a gamba student of Abel, and that this collection was created for teaching purposes.<sup>1</sup>

The Pembroke Collection begins with a sonata with bass<sup>2</sup> in Abel’s hand and several pieces for viola da gamba solo.<sup>3</sup> These are followed by two extensive sections in a different hand, each with 15 sonatas with bass. These 30 sonatas are the subject of this edition.

The Pembroke Collection has been held by the British Library since 1881, and has therefore long been known to gambists. It should not be confused with the Second Pembroke collection, which has only been known since the end of the twentieth century. This second collection contains gamba music which Abel probably also wrote for the Countess.<sup>4</sup>

Our edition in four volumes contains all 30 sonatas in the Pembroke Collection, complete and in the original order. The A-number under each sonata title refers to the current catalogue of the gamba works of Abel.<sup>5</sup>

The beginning of the sonata collection contains mostly pieces in two movements, which are if anything suitable for beginners. It then becomes technically and musically more demanding, and concludes with works on the same level as the well-known *Six Easy Sonatas*, the only gamba sonatas by Abel which appeared in print in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Abel obviously liked to convey technique through good catchy melodies. Even practice should be enjoyable.

It is thought that the Pembroke Collection was copied directly from Abel’s own manuscript, since it contains typical characteristics of Abel, such as the two dots to the right of the treble clef which show the position of the note G. Abel normally notated gamba music in treble clef, and the copyist has retained this. Our edition comprises two scores: one presents the solo part in treble clef, and the other in alto and bass clefs, which are more in use today. The notation in treble clef has the advantage that the pieces can be played on the violin or – with a few simple octave transpositions – on the flute. This practice was also suggested on the title page of the *Six Easy Sonatas*.

The unfigured bass part is sometimes kept very simple, with considerably less movement than the solo part; nevertheless it offers the gamba student great support. In some pieces it descends to the low C. It is interesting that the Pembroke manuscript has on one of the first pages a drawing which shows the fingerings for individual notes on the viola da gamba. The lowest string is tuned to C, but underneath the text reads “Some times tuned D.” Naturally, the bass can be played on the violoncello or a keyboard instrument.

Our edition follows the original, which does show some copying errors, as precisely as possible. Where we suggest an accidental which differs from the original, it is placed in brackets. Wrong notes which we could easily correct from the context are listed in the Critical Report. Any omitted or unclearly positioned slurs have been shown with broken lines, where possible with reference to parallel passages.

Günter and Leonore von Zadow  
Heidelberg, November 2018  
Translation: Michael O’Loughlin

<sup>1</sup> See also Peter Holman, *Life after Death, The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge 2010), p. 209f and 243f.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel, *Sonata Viola da Gamba Solo & Basso aus der Pembrokesammlung*, ed. G. and L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2010), G188.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel, *Sonata Viola da Gamba Solo Senza Basso und andere Stücke für Bassgambe solo aus der Pembrokesammlung*, ed. G. and L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2008), G142.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel, *Zweite Pembroke-Sammlung, Vier Duette für Viola da Gamba und Violoncello*, ed. Thomas Fritsch. (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2014), G250–G252. Carl Friedrich Abel *Zweite*

*Pembroke-Sammlung, Zehn Sonaten für Viola da Gamba und Basso continuo*, ed. Fritsch (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2014), G253–G254.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Holman and Günter von Zadow, “Charles Frederick Abel’s Viola da Gamba Music: A New Catalogue, Second Revised Version,” *The Viola da Gamba Journal* Vol. 11 (2017), p. 73–136 [vdgs.org.uk/journal] and [guentersberg.de/papers].

<sup>6</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel *Six Easy Sonatas*, ed. G. and L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2005), G061–G062, G501 (Facsimile).