

Introduction

It was not until 2016, almost 300 years after they were written, that the “12 Fantasias for Viola da Gamba solo” first published by Georg Philipp Telemann in Hamburg in 1735 reappeared in print after an interval of over 280 years.¹ Although the works were always known to exist, it took a long time to unearth the actual scores. Accordingly, their discovery in the Ledenburg collection was a genuinely sensational find, not only for the Telemann Archive in Magdeburg.² The composer’s inexhaustible wealth of melody, his predilection for perky rhythms, his relish for ingenious canons and his frequently surprising harmonies have since delighted gamba players and their audiences all over the world.

What then could be more natural than to envisage an edition of this spirited, appealing and highly entertaining music for cellists as well?

Initial doubts as to whether the keys originally opted for by Telemann could be preserved in a cello version were soon dispelled, albeit not without occasional changes to the text. The slurs, on the other hand, are fully in line with Telemann’s specifications.

The changes made for the cello version result from the lower number of strings, the absence of frets, greater string tension due to significantly higher curvature of the bridge, and different string

tuning. Close chords within the range of an octave were a constant preoccupation. Some I have left as they were, others I have replaced by one note only or by a multiple stop with a greater compass. Often I have changed thirds into tenths or complementary sixths, occasionally I have ventured to propose a tritone as a substitute or even to omit one or the other third altogether. Occasionally, for tonal reasons or just for the sheer fun of it, a melodic idea or even just a bass note appears in a different octave than in Telemann’s manuscript. To enhance the readability of double stops, I have frequently taken the liberty of reducing bass notes that Telemann correctly gives a longer note value to the duration of their actual execution (in cases like these, Telemann refers to the longer values as “eye music”).

Much to their credit, Edition Güntersberg has decided to include a facsimile of the fantasias in the cello edition as well. This is of special interest because Telemann engraved the plates himself. It will help users to verify the decisions underlying my arrangement and possibly to arrive at different conclusions of their own.

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translated by Andrew Jenkins

¹ Georg Philipp Telemann, *Zwölf Fantasien für Viola da Gamba solo*, eds. Th. Fritsch and G. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2016), G281.

² Found at the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv – Standort Osnabrück, shelf mark Dep 115b, Akz. 2000/002 Nr. 528. RISM ID No. 1000000656.