

## Introduction

Christoph Schaffrath was a significant member of what C. F. D. Schubart called in the 1780s “the world-famous Berlin School,” the group of composers who worked at the court of Frederick the Great in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Hohenstein near Dresden, but little is known about his student years. In 1733, he was shortlisted for the position of organist at the church of St. Sophia in Dresden, but was beaten at the audition concert by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. The next year, Crown Prince Frederick appointed him on the recommendation of Quantz as keyboardist in his fledgling Kapelle in Ruppin near Berlin, and with the other musicians he followed Frederick to Berlin on the king’s coronation in 1740. In 1744 the king’s younger sister, Princess Anna Amalia, offered Schaffrath a position as keyboardist and chamber musician, a post which would perhaps have allowed him more creative freedom than Frederick’s court. Schaffrath remained in Amalia’s employment until his death. His music collection, including many of his own works, was willed to Amalia, and was incorporated into her extensive library, the Amalien-Bibliothek, which is still the only surviving eighteenth-century source of Schaffrath’s works for viola da gamba.

This work is a “cembalo obbligato” sonata, a form quite often used by Berlin School composers. In essence it is a trio playable by two performers: two upper voices are played by the keyboard right hand and the gamba, over a bass played by the keyboard left hand. I use the term “keyboard” because in Berlin at the time several keyboard instruments were in use for secular chamber music: harpsichord, fortepiano, organ and clavichord, the last being more appropriate for solo music due to its low volume. Many obbligato sonatas were rearranged from earlier trios for two melody instruments and bass. In the case of Schaffrath’s two obbligato gamba sonatas, no such variants are known.<sup>2</sup> The texture of this work suggests that Schaffrath conceived it in this form: in any hypothetical trio sonata variant, both upper voices would need to be capable of playing two voices, in thirds and other intervals.

In this work Schaffrath does however adhere quite strictly to the conventions of the trio. All three movements commence with imitative entries between the upper parts, in each case led by the gamba. The points of imitation, that is the periods before the entry of the keyboard right hand, are quite long, at eight, 14 and 10 bars. The bass part always remains just that, never participating in the thematic material. The Baroque trio is meant to show contrapuntal interplay between two equal upper parts, and Schaffrath does this by making sure that almost all thematic material is shared equally, despite the sonic differences between the instruments. The only motives of any significance which are not shared occur first in bars 43 and 44 of the final movement. Here, a crisp little figure in the keyboard right hand is answered by a short contrasting passage of parallel thirds in the gamba. These reappear in the second half, each instrument retaining ownership of its motive.

Elsewhere, I have written: “The broad harmonic arch structure which characterises classical sonata form is as foreign to Schaffrath as it is to . . . the other Berlin School composers.”<sup>3</sup> A closer look at this sonata (and others) indicates that this view needs revision. In fact, all three movements are couched in a proto-sonata form. All of them have a first subject followed by a second subject in the dominant. All have a central cadence in the dominant, marked by a double bar in the two Allegro movements, but unmarked at bar 56 in the Largo. This is followed by a development section and a recapitulation. In the first two movements the second subject does not reappear in the recapitulation, but that is hardly unique in sonata form movements. In all three movements Schaffrath appears to subvert briefly the sonata harmonic structure by inserting a false reprise of the first subject in the tonic soon after the central cadence; but this is then followed by a typical development section with more discursive harmony. This quirk is typical of Berlin School sonata movements, as is the brief minor passage which occurs just before the end of each section in the Allegro movements.

<sup>1</sup> C. F. D. Schubart, *Des Patrioten, gesammelte Schriften und Schicksale* (Stuttgart, 1839), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> See also Christoph Schaffrath, *Sonate A-Dur für obligates Cembalo und Viola da Gamba* (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2003), G048.

<sup>3</sup> Michael O’Loghlin, *Frederick the Great and His Musicians: the Viola da Gamba Music of the Berlin School* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Repr. London: Routledge, 2016), p. 165.

Schaffrath's style is similar to that of his colleague C.P.E. Bach, but is less dramatic and confrontational. Both composers demonstrate typical Berlin *Empfindsamkeit*, otherwise known as the sensitive style. This is characterised by frequent dissonant appoggiaturas, and poignant moments such as the two unaccompanied notes at the end of bar 5 in the first movement. A keyboard player, Schaffrath writes beautiful melodic lines which are equally comfortable and natural on both instruments. Like his other Berlin colleague Johann Gottlieb Graun, he employs frequent passages in parallel thirds, but they are shorter and narrower in compass than Graun's, and therefore less difficult and virtuosic for the gamba player.

This charming work is the last of Schaffrath's four fine compositions for the viola da gamba to be published by Edition Güntersberg. The others include another obbligato sonata with some rather different textures<sup>4</sup>, a solo sonata<sup>5</sup> and a fascinating duet for viols.<sup>6</sup>

Michael O'Loghlin  
Brisbane, Australia, December 2020

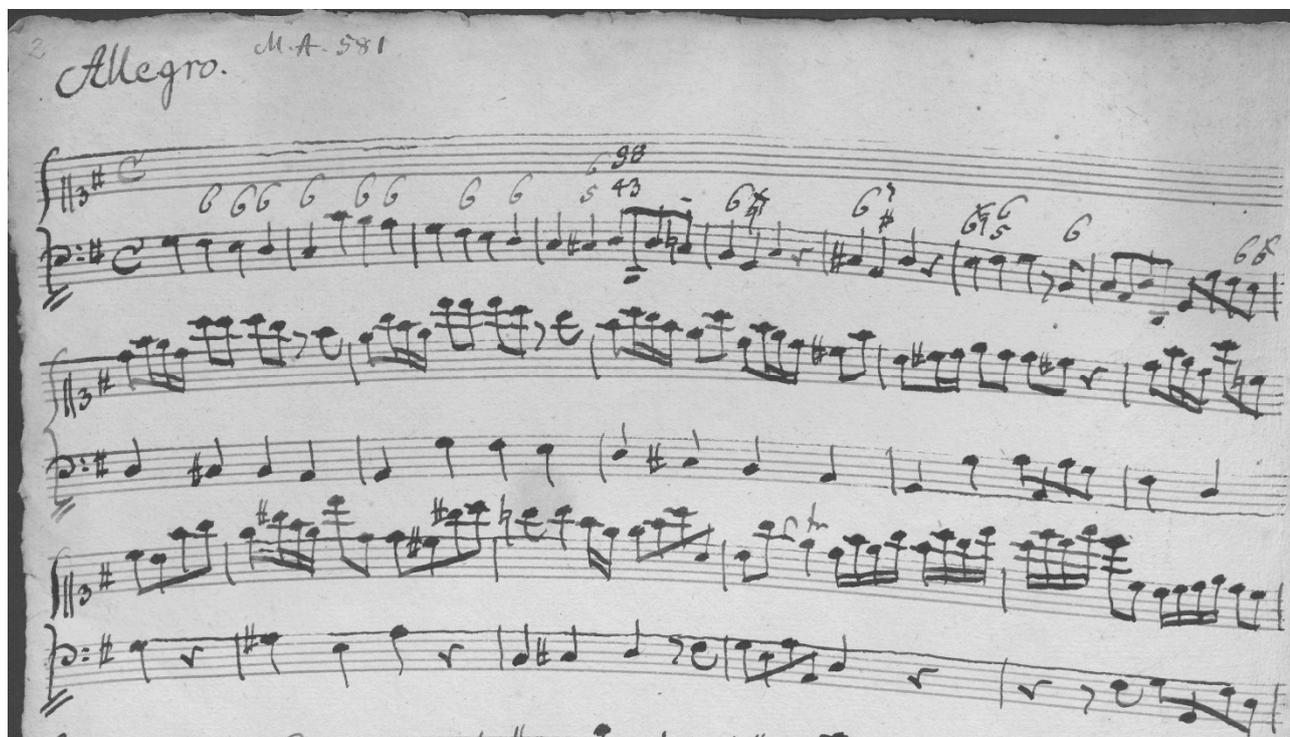
## Our Edition

Our edition is based on the autograph of this sonata, which is kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, under siglum and shelfmark D-B Am.B 581.<sup>7</sup> It is housed in the Berlin Amalien-Bibliothek, which was at that time supervised by Christoph Schaffrath. It consists of the partly figured harpsichord part in soprano C1 and bass clef (6 pages) and the viola da gamba part in treble clef (3 pages). The manuscript is clearly legible and virtually error-free. The sonata is designated CSW:F:21 in the Schaffrath catalogue of works.<sup>8</sup>

Our edition follows the original very closely. However, we notate the viola da gamba part in alto clef and the upper harpsichord part in treble clef. There are no editorial additions except for very few dotted slurs and accidentals in brackets.

We thank Dankwart von Zadow for the realization and Michael O'Loghlin for his introduction.

Günter and Leonore von Zadow  
Heidelberg, December 2020



Christoph Schaffrath, Sonate G-Dur, Beginn der Cembalo-Stimme, Autograph D-B Am.B 581  
Christoph Schaffrath, Sonata in G major, Beginning of the harpsichord part, autograph D-B Am.B 581

<sup>4</sup> Obbligato sonata in A major, see footnote 2.

<sup>5</sup> Christoph Schaffrath, *Solo B-Dur für Viola da Gamba und B. c.* (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2003), G049.

<sup>6</sup> Christoph Schaffrath, *Duetto für zwei Violen da Gamba* (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2006), G087.

<sup>7</sup> RISM ID no. 452506492.

<sup>8</sup> Reinhard Oestreich, *Verzeichnis der Werke Christoph Schaffraths (CSW)*, (Beeskow: ortus, 2012).