

Preface

This edition is based on the only surviving work by Demachy. It was printed in Paris in 1685 and is now in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, Paris, RISM siglum and call number **F-Pn VM7-6264**.¹ Of the eight solo suites for viola da gamba, the first four are printed in music notation, the last four in tablature. Demachy explains his reasons for this in a very detailed introduction, entitled *Avertissement*, see translation on the following page. All eight suites are composed in a remarkably uniform style and can therefore be regarded as a coherent work. Interestingly, however, Suites Nos. 5–8 remain quite strictly in the same sequence: *Prelude*, *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, *Gavotte* and *Menuett*, while in Suites Nos. 1–4 there are repeatedly slight variations by *Doubles* or also a *Chaconne*. It is possible that the tablature suites were composed first. The freer suite form with *Doubles*, on the other hand, points to a later composition. Here we can see that Demachy was a clever businessman. The great age of tablature pieces for viola da gamba was on the decline – so he put the music notation first in his edition, even though he himself preferred tablature.

Although Demachy is well-known among gambists today, his works are rarely played. In fact, the charm of this music is particularly revealed by the intense preoccupation with all the ornaments [*Agréments*]. Demachy describes them in great detail in his *Avertissement*, both in the form of a table and by explaining them in the text. This provides us with a valuable document of the playing practice of the time. Apart from the fact that Demachy sometimes gets rather polemical when he explains the advantages of tablature or does not want to see the viola da gamba reduced to a mere melody instrument, we learn a lot about the position of the left hand, bowing technique and much more. Certainly, this

print was a prototype at the time with great influence on the later generation of French gambists. After all, 1685 was just one year before Marin Marais published his first book of *Pièces de Violes*.

After I had recorded the four suites in tablature as a coherent first recording for SWR 2,² I also wanted to publish them in music notation – so they are now also available to players who are not familiar with tablature. Interestingly, the very disadvantages Demachy describes have proved tricky to transcribe: You need more space for the various clefs – which makes the score more confusing – and you have to make many decisions about the beaming – which always has an influence on the polyphonic voice-leading or grouping of the notes (as in the *Preludes*, for example). Fortunately, one could get a good orientation from the first four suites. In order to get the exact definition of strings, which is naturally given in tablature, I have added fingerings. Double stops can be recognised by two note stems. Only in the case of Demachy's rather surprising solutions have I marked open strings with '0'.

There are some minor inconsistencies in the original, such as rhythmic errors. They are corrected directly on the respective page, and the original reading is given in a footnote.

I would like to invite everyone to study the translation of the *Avertissement* in detail. The text is amusing, informative, and above all, it motivates you to make Demachy's music sound.

I would like to sincerely thank Leonore and Günter von Zadow for their fruitful and enriching cooperation on the edition.

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¹ The original print can be found online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr>

² SWR: Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk, Germany.

The recording of Suite 8 in A major can be found online at

<https://www.swr.de/swr2/musik-klassik/musikstueck-der-woche/musikstueck-der-woche-a-bis-z-100.html>