

Introduction

Whoever compiled this *Viola Gambas Book* some three centuries ago obviously did so out of pure joy for music and playing the viola da gamba. The small anthology was his musical notebook, in which this unknown gambist and music lover recorded everything that gave him pleasure in playing and listening. No philological respect for untouchable original versions limited his passion for collecting, nothing forced him to be formally complete. He cut, adapted, shortened, mixed, placed the sublime alongside the curious, and thus created a very personal selection. His collection provides us with an unexpected insight into a different kind of music culture, one that – far removed from elite centers – moved along little-traveled side roads and nurtured the spread of music through a base accessible to everyone.

Our unknown gambist and writer therefore obviously had very little interest in identifying sources or even listing the names of the composers. Only three of the 26 pieces in his manuscript bear the name of a composer, and of these three, only one is immediately recognizable: the *Sarraband de Mons* = *Corelli* (10) is indeed a *Sarabanda* from Arcangelo Corelli's famous Opus V. The other two author references, however, remain a mystery to us: Who is the composer of *Fantasia* (6), hidden behind the initials *B. L.*? And who might *Rendil*, composer of *Schampettre* (18), be? Unfortunately, these questions remain unanswered to this day.

Fortunately, some musical concordances allow us to add further composers' names to this unsatisfactorily short list. From Marin Marais, the manuscript includes two movements from his *Pièces de viole* (17, 26); Jean-Baptiste Lully is represented with an aria from his opera *Roland* (4); the first two pieces in the collection (1, 2) are linked by a dense network of concordances to the name of the lutenist, gambist, and composer Nicolas Hotman.

Other thematic connections, however, lead to compositions that remain anonymous also in the concordant sources. The melody of *Ach mein*

Glücke (8) corresponds to that of the chorale 'Liebster Jesu du wirst kommen,' which, in keeping with the genre, can hardly be traced back to a composer.¹ Hidden behind the *March* (25) is the *March du Roy du Pruce*, the author of which is unknown.² Three of the minuets (12, 20, 21) can be found in anthologies, where they were intended partly for the violin and partly for a keyboard instrument, but even there they are handed down without any indication of the name of the composer.

The concordances reveal that the writer of the *Book* not only compiled pieces that were originally conceived for the viola da gamba, but also enjoyed transcribing music for his instrument that was originally intended for voice, violin, harpsichord, and even orchestra.

When might the *Viola Gambas Book* have been written? We have a reliable indication for establishing a post quem date: the copyist undoubtedly copied the *Muzette* (17) from the printed version of Marais' third book. This can be seen from the number 105, which is taken from the consecutive numbering in Marais' book, and is confirmed by the extensive correspondence in many details. In addition, there is a small but significant clue: the gross writing error in bars 26–27 of the *Muzette*, between which a superfluous half bar has been inserted, coincides in the printed version with a page break that divides bar 26 into two halves, as was customary. It is likely that the copyist first completed the half bar at the end of the page, perhaps with the help of the custos, and then accidentally copied the half bar written out on the new page again. All this means that the manuscript could only have been completed after the year of publication of Marais' third book, i.e. after 1711.

Other points of reference date back to earlier decades. The first two pieces (1, 2) take us back to the time of Nicolas Hotman, around the middle of the 17th century. Lully's opera *Roland*, from which the Gavotte *La Mour* (4) is taken, was first performed in Paris in 1685. Corelli's Opus V was published in

¹ Johannes Zahn, *Die Melodien der deutschen evangelischen Kirchenlieder*, vol. 1, Gütersloh, Bertelsmann, 1889, no. 1344 (p. 353). Zahn knows the chorale from *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, Vohrmals in Halle gedruckt, nun aber allhier mit Noten der unbekandten Melodien und 123 Liedern vermehret* [...], Darmstadt, Griebel, 1698; which contains no information about the composer

of the melody (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 275, no. 814). However, the beginning of the text can already be found in *Christliche Gesänge theils alte soviel derselben dieser Orte*, Halle, Schütze, 1697, where it is attributed to a Paul Anton.

² J. W. Enschedé, *Is Frederik de Grootte de componist van de Marche du Roi de Prusse?*, "Tijdschrift der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis, Deel 6, 3de Stuk," 1899, pp. 159–169.