

Introduction

Nicolas Hotman was probably born in Brussels before 1614. In 1620, he moved to Paris, where he became known as a lutenist, gambist, and composer. As early as 1636, music theorist Marin Mersenne mentioned him, considering him, along with André Maugars, to be one of the best gambists of his time.¹ Hotman is considered the founder of the French viola da gamba school and, according to Jean Rousseau,² taught Sainte-Colombe and Demachy,³ who in turn became teachers of important French viola da gamba players such as Marin Marais and Antoine Forqueray.⁴ Unlike his students, who specialized in playing the viola da gamba, Hotman was considered equally skilled as a lute and viola da gamba virtuoso, demonstrating the close connection between the two families of instruments. At the end of the 17th century, Demachy and Rousseau argued about whether the viola da gamba – similar to the lute – should be played more like a chordal instrument (Demachy) or treated as a melodic instrument (Rousseau). Had this controversy arisen a few years earlier, Hotman could have taken a mediating position, for his suite movements unite apparent opposites: his playing, according to Alison Crum, ‘includes both the melodic and chordal aspects of playing.’⁵ In 1661, Hotman was appointed ‘Ordinaire de la Musique de Chambre du Roi’ [ordinary chamber musician to the king], succeeding Louis Couperin. He died in Paris in 1663.

Like the works of his colleague Dietrich Stöeffken, Nicolas Hotman's pieces are written exclusively for solo viola da gamba⁶ and have been

preserved in various manuscript collections⁷. There are no contemporary prints of Hotman's works.

Hotman's works for viola da gamba comprise approximately 50 suite movements. Without exception, these are written for the standard tuning of the viol (D-G-c-e-a-d') and disregard the scordatura tunings commonly used in the 17th century. Since the vast majority of the pieces are notated in French tablature, they belong to the repertoire for *lyra viol*.⁸ This edition publishes those pieces that have not yet been included in modern editions. Only three pieces (Gigue No. 12, Courante No. 14 and Sarabande No. 16) are exceptions: they can also be found in the edition of the Krakow manuscript for solo viola da gamba published by Edition Güntersberg.⁹ Nevertheless, they appear in this edition because, on the one hand, they belong to a sequence of pieces within a manuscript that is printed here in its entirety.¹⁰ On the other hand, all three pieces differ from the Krakow manuscript: the Gigue appears here without variation, as does the Courante, but with a second voice, and the Sarabande is followed by a variation different from that in the Krakow version.

The selected pieces can be found – mostly notated in tablature – in a large number of manuscripts. Most of them are preserved in the Goëss manuscripts,¹¹ within which Manuscript II (**A-Et Goëss Ms. II**), probably created between 1660 and 1670, contains most of Nicolas Hotman's pieces. Nicolas Hotman is a frequently represented composer in this volume of the collection of lute and viola da gamba pieces in tablature preserved at Ebenthal Castle in

¹ Mersenne particularly emphasizes the art of diminution and the elegant and pleasant bowing technique of Hotman and Maugar. See Marin Mersenne: *Harmonicorum Instrumentorum*, Libri IV, Paris 1635, Liber Primus, p. 47.

² Rousseau reports that Demachy learned ‘beautiful bow strokes’ (‘ces beaux coups d'Archet qu'il a appris de Monsieur Hotman’) from Hotman in particular. See Jean Rousseau: *Traité de la Violle*, Paris 1687, p. 24.

³ Demachy mentions the ‘illustrious Monsieur Hautemant’ (‘l'illustre Monsieur Hautemant’), who also used tablature for teaching purposes because it was easy to learn. See Demachy: *Pieces des Violle* [Paris 1685], Minkoff edition, Geneva 1973, p. 3.

⁴ Cf. Annette Otterstedt: *Die Gambe*, Kassel et al. 1989, p. 71.

⁵ Alison Crum: *Nicolas Hotman, Three Suites*, edited by Donald Beecher (Dovehouse Editions, VDGS-47, 1994), in: *Chelys* 24 (1995), p. 78 f.

⁶ It can be assumed that the second voices in the ‘Berliner Gambenbuch’ and in the Kassel manuscripts are later additions to the original single-voice version and were not necessarily written by Hotman himself. This is supported by the fact that the first voice in the Kassel manuscripts is notated in tablature, as is the case with

all the pieces collected in the Goëss manuscripts, which are in one voice as well. The second voices in the fourth volume of the Kassel manuscripts, on the other hand, are in pitch notation.

⁷ Cf. Bettina Hoffmann: *Die Viola da gamba*, Beeskow 2014, p. 222.

⁸ The term ‘*lyra viol*’ here refers to a repertoire for viola da gamba that was composed between the late 16th and early 18th centuries and was notated in French tablature. This definition goes back to Frank Traficante: *Lyra Viol Music? A Semantic Puzzle*, in: Andrew Ashbee / Peter Holman (eds.): *John Jenkins and His Time: Studies in English Consort Music*, London 1996, pp. 325–352, and is adopted by Joëlle Morton: *The State and Spirit of Gambo: Antiquae-Novae Resources for the Lyra Viol*, in: *VdGSJ* 18 a (2024), pp. 163–194, here p. 170.

⁹ The Krakow Manuscript for Viola da Gamba Solo, Book 4, Nicolas Hotman (G365), Nos. 106, 104 and 100.

¹⁰ These are pieces N11–17b, which form the concluding section of the ‘Berliner Gambenbuch’ (F-Pn Rés. 1111, fol. 264v–270r).

¹¹ Published as facsimiles by Tree Edition: Goëss A (1999), Goëss B (1997), Goëss II (1993). Available online at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kDCollXwqwM4VSMdAUw2hlx7ItvtLmH8> [23.08.2025].