

# THE VIOL Spring 2013 No 30

**Lorenzo Bocchi, *Zwei Sonaten und Variationen über eine irische Weise für Viola da Gamba und Basso Continuo Dublin ca. 1724*, ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow, continuo realisation by Angela Koppenwallner, with introduction by Peter Holman, G219 (Heidelberg: Edition Güntersberg, 2012).**

These three pieces by Lorenzo Bocchi for viola da gamba and continuo, are attractive with a certain early 18th-century charm. According to Peter Holman's informative introduction, Bocchi's sonatas have the distinction of being the last music composed for the viola da gamba before the modern revival of the instrument; and the piece consisting of variations on the Irish tune "Pléaráca na Ruarcach", is one of the earliest examples of a British melody given an Italianate gloss.

Bocchi was known as a cellist, who worked in Scotland and Ireland in the 1720s. Presumably he also played the viola da gamba. The two Sonatas of the present edition were first published in Dublin c. 1725 and again in Edinburgh in 1726, in a collection of sonatas, four for violin, four for recorder, two for cello, and two "Per la Viola da Gamba". The first has been recorded by The Parley of Instruments, with Mark Caudle playing the gamba, and it is possible to hear extracts from all three movements at <http://www.allmusic.com/performance/allegro-mq0000294731>.

In the opening Andante e Staccato of the first Sonata, Bocchi makes frequent use of a demi-semiquaver rest and three demi-semiquavers preceding a quaver or crotchet, giving a jerkiness reminiscent of a French overture. This slow movement in 3/4 is followed by an Allegro in a faster 3/4 similar to a courante, starting and finishing with an ear-catching four-note chord of D minor. Holman refers to the last movement, Affetuoso in 3/8, as a minuet; there is much double-stopping, and the two distinctive opening notes – a slurred descending sixth – are echoed by the continuo.

The second Sonata also consists of three movements: a Largo e staccato, with groups of three demi-semiquavers similar to those in the opening movement of the first Sonata; a Vivace in 6/8, subtitled "an English Aire Improv'd after an Italian manner", a tune which Holman identifies as "The Parson Among the Peas" from the 1714 edition of Thomas D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy*; and an Andante "In Imitation of a French horn". This last movement should really refer to two French horns, since the solo gamba maintains two voices throughout with double-stopping; it is reminiscent of the "Minuet for the French Horn" in Handel's Water Music.

The set of variations on the Irish melody "Pléaráca na Ruarcach" has a "Chorus", an *ad libitum* part for one or more violins to double some of the bass notes an octave higher. After the initial statement of the melody there are three variations with single-line divisions, nothing overtly flamboyant, but pleasing to the ear. The last variation has some bars of triplets rather like an Irish slip jig in 9/8.

The music is well laid out, with score and separate parts, including one for the "Chorus" violin. There are no page turns within a movement or variation, made possible by wisely putting the last page of the Introduction at the end of the score. The upper part was originally notated in the treble clef to accommodate a violin or flute, with the option of a cello or gamba playing an octave lower. The present edition is aimed at viol players, so the upper part is notated an octave lower with the alto clef.

Stewart McCoy