

Johann Gottlieb Graun (1702-1771)
Concerto en Trio for bass viol, violin and bc
Güntersberg G 228

Güntersberg now have three sonatas, six trios, and a couple of concertos involving solo bass viol by Johann Gottlieb Graun in their catalogue, providing us with an interesting and highly overdue survey of this important bass viol composer. Their latest offering, entitled *Concert en Trio*, using a curious mixture of Italian and French, is either a transcription of a concerto for bass viol and larger forces, or a chamber work composed to mimic the form and feel of a conventional concerto. The result is a solo for bass viol in the normal fast-slow-fast format,

accompanied by one violin and basso continuo.

Compared with other pieces written at court in Berlin for the great virtuoso Ludwig Christian Hesse (1716-1772) the solo part is relatively undemanding, with few chords and little above the frets. In fact an advanced player will be able to sight-read the whole thing quite easily. The slow movement is particularly effective and is marked *con sordini*. Does this betray its possible origin as an orchestral piece? Surely Johann Gottlieb, after all his brother's Italian operas at court, would know that one player would use a 'sordino', a section 'sordini'? Or were they just, as demonstrated by the title, a little cavalier with their languages?

I don't know how many times in reviewing new publications I have mentioned page turns. Here again the first page of the bass viol part, which consists of only five lines, could easily have been accommodated on the next two pages of the first movement by very slightly reducing the space between the staves, compressing bars with simple note patterns, and moving the few dynamic indications closer to their target note. (If I can do this on my computer at home, surely it is not beyond the wit of a highly professional organisation to do the same?) Thus the player would have half the movement on the first two pages, half on the next two pages, not only avoiding a page turn but also giving him a useful formal overview. The editor's solution is to stop playing and turn during a two-bar 'tutti' section, which could work in an orchestral setting but not in this version. It would surely be easy to ask a violist with experience of the concert platform to look through the parts before hitting the print button? It is wonderful to have these clear new editions, but for sheer practicality in that one respect, old editions are still generally better.
Charles Medlam