

## Reviews

Edited by John Moran

Marin Marais, *Kompositionen aus dem Ersten Buch, für zwei Violen da Gamba und Basso continuo* [Compositions from the *Premier Livre*, for two violas da gamba and basso continuo]

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow with continuo realization by Dankwart von Zadow.  
Edition Güntersberg, 2014.

Suite in D minor, *Tombeau de Mr. Meliton* (G258), ISMN 979-0-50174-258-5. Score, score with continuo realization, three parts, €19.80.

Suite in G major (G259), ISMN 979-0-50174-259-2. Score, score with continuo realization, three parts, €19.80.

Günter and Leonore von Zadow have produced yet another very fine edition for our gamba community. This time the two volumes consist of much-admired, much-loved pieces for two viols and continuo by Marin Marais, all from his First Book. This handsome, practical edition adheres to high standards of scholarship, but do we need it? I hope the following review will clarify why it is very useful alongside the available facsimiles and the monumental scholarly edition of John Hsu published by the Broude Trust.

What follows is a bit of history of Marais's publications in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that will give my remarks some context, and support my admiration for these new editions.

Marin Marais (1656–1728), one of the greatest viol players of his time, worked at the French court and published five volumes of viol pieces as well as some other chamber music. (He also composed operas, and performed at the highest levels of music-making at Versailles and in Paris.) His earliest viol pieces survive in manuscripts, but he published his *Premier Livre* in 1686 as a volume of suites, almost like a lute book, without continuo, that ended with two suites and a tombeau for two equal viols. Three years later, in 1689, the companion continuo book was published providing figured bass lines for the suites, a rather new fashion in France. That continuo volume also included some new pieces for solo viol and continuo in score, something that Marais did not do again until printing some chamber music in the 1720s. All of his other viol music was published in separate solo and bass books.

Many viol players are familiar with the look of Marais's books from the facsimiles that James Caldwell and Catharina Meints first sold in North America in the 1970s. Later, Ruedy Ebner

published a facsimile edition in Basel, and eventually an even cleaner and larger one was printed by Fuzeau. It turns out that a number of libraries and archives throughout the world have original copies of Marais's books. Even before the early music revival, some string players and collectors were aware of their value. Thank goodness they were cared for! Various scholars (George Hunter, Gordon Kinney) made scores of some of the suites to make rehearsing a bit easier, but John Hsu was the first to attempt and produce the complete Marais pieces in a multi-volume scholarly edition: the *Premier Livre* was published by Broude in 1980.

Hsu's work involved more than putting the solo and continuo lines into score. It turns out that Marais kept the engraved plates to these books himself, having new pressings made when there was demand for more sales. He was a real entrepreneur! Indeed, he made changes to fingerings, bowings, ornaments, and even rhythmic notations over time, for all the sorts of reasons that composers tinker with their music. The Hsu/Broude volumes document these changes in their Critical Reports, and attempt to present the latest version in the scores. Sorting out the layers of changes in some of the books was a tour de force of scholarship: it seems that in the *Premier Livre*, Marais's changes to the solo parts were made between the first printing in 1686 and the issue of the continuo book in 1689. It is that 1689 version of these duo suites that the von Zadows use as the basis for their edition.

Now back to my original question: do we need this new edition, since we already have the truly beautiful seventeenth-century engraving, which is easy to read, and we have the Hsu/Broude score to assist with rehearsing and study? My answer is: YES. First of all, in these duo suites, the solo parts 1 and 2 in the original partbook are printed on facing pages, sometimes forcing a page turn at a bad musical moment, albeit at the same time. This is no problem with the short dance movements, but is a problem in the D minor Prelude, the G major Chaconne, and the Meliton *Tombeau*. Photocopying, cutting, and pasting can solve this, but these Güntersberg editions are so easy to work with, and they already have measure numbers so you don't have to write them in for yourself. I love playing Marais from the facsimiles, partly because the notation is so beautiful and elegant that it sometimes suggests how to play a phrase. However, the Güntersberg policy of retaining Marais's beaming and their success in notating the special Marais ornaments makes their edition a pleasure to use, and preserves some feeling of the original. Furthermore, when you buy their edition you get two solo parts, a continuo part with figures, a score with figures, and a score with a realized figured bass. I know in this day and age it seems that most harpsichordists know how to realize a bass line, but it is still helpful to have one if your favorite harpsichordist is not around and another has to play at short notice.

Last of all, the Güntersberg volumes are, as I said at the outset, really handsome productions themselves. The sturdy cover has a Marais engraving on it, and it will stay open on a stand. A useful introductory text, with citations of Hsu, is given in German, English, and French. The individuals whom the editors have engaged as consultants and translators—Geneviève Bégou, Monika Schwamberger, Richard Sutcliffe—are all distinguished viol players with scholarly credentials. There is even a table of ornaments and a reproduction of some pages from the Marais original. This is a great resource at a good price.

As a final word, especially to those who have shied away from playing Marais, this edition might be just what you need. Give it a try! The *Tombeau de Mr. Meliton* is one of the most beautiful pieces you will ever play. It is almost certainly the source for the melodic subject that opens Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, not a bad recommendation.

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