

Baldassare Galuppi, *Suonata à Viola da Gamba in G major*

ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow with an introduction by Bettina Hoffmann and continuo realization by Angela Koppenwallner. Edition Güntersberg, G275, 2015, ISMN 979-0-50174-275-2. Score and parts, €15.80.

According to Benedetto Marcello in his satirical tract lampooning every aspect of contemporaneous opera, "It will be one of the chief duties of a violinist to act as barber, to remove corns, comb wigs, and to compose music."¹ Though his purpose was to raise a laugh, still most of the farcical details in Marcello's description of the machinations of an opera theater were true to the current state of affairs. The above description of a violinist, for example, is perfectly suited to Galuppi's father: Bettina Hoffmann indicates as much in her thorough introduction to this edition, stating that the composer was "the son of a violin-playing beard trimmer." Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785) himself was an active theater musician in Venice, initially as a youthful harpsichordist whose early compositions were savaged by Marcello. However, after

deepening his knowledge of counterpoint through study with Antonio Lotti, Galuppi became a highly respected and prolific opera composer in Venice.

It is remarkable that a Venetian composer was writing music for the viola da gamba in the mid-eighteenth century. Hoffmann suggests that Galuppi's connection with the city's four orphanages, in particular the Ospedale dei Mendicanti, where he was appointed *maestro di coro* in 1741 after the successful performance of his oratorio *Sancta Maria Magdalena* there, might have contributed to his interest in the instrument. We know that the Ospedale della Pietà, where Vivaldi composed solo parts for the "viola all'inglese," and the Mendicanti did have viols on hand. As Hoffmann points out, "unusual instruments—both those long obsolete as well as highly modern—were gladly played there." This cultivation of the arcane was possible because, unlike similar institutions for boys, such as the four conservatorios of Naples where most of the charges were eventually channeled into theater orchestras in that city's thriving opera scene, the women of the Venetian ospedales tended to live out their lives in these institutions, where the music making was not beholden to current popular taste.

The source for this previously unpublished sonata is a manuscript in an unknown hand, housed in the Thuringian State Archive in Greiz: *Musikaliensammlung Greiz Nr. 10*. The first page is inscribed *Suonata a Viola da Gamba del Sigre Baldassar Galuppi, detto il Buranello, Maestro die Capella à Londra*. The nickname "Buranello" referred to Galuppi's birth in the Venetian island village of Burano, while the inscription further indicated that he held some sort of position in London. The manuscript consists of a six-page, two-staved score, with the designation "Viola da Gamba" on the upper line and no instrumentation specified for the unfigured bass line. The manuscript presumably dates from the years 1741–1743, when Galuppi was working in the London opera scene on a leave of absence from his post as *maestro di coro* at the Mendicanti in Venice. This period was in the midst of a quarter-century lull in the viol's popularity in London, when it was no longer played publicly in the theater, and well before Carl Friedrich Abel's arrival on the scene at the end of the 1750s. Hoffmann suggests that the overall appearance of the manuscript is indicative of a professional Venetian copyist. From the survival of other music for gamba, including works by Johann Gottfried Donati and Johann Friedrich Ruhe, in the collection from the 1740s and 1750s, it can be surmised that a viol-playing musician was associated with the Counts of Reuss in Greiz, and that this manuscript thus made it into their collection. Up to now, no other music by Galuppi for solo instrument and basso continuo has come to light; however, the editors make a compelling case that this sonata is authentic. Stylistically, Galuppi's name is definitely a good

¹ Benedetto Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda* (Venice, [c. 1720]), trans. by Reinhard G. Pauly in *The Musical Quarterly* in two parts, vol. 34, no. 3 (July 1948): 371–403 and vol. 35, no. 1 (January 1949): 85–105. (Quote appears p. 88.)

fit for this work, and it would appear that the circumstances of his biography would not contradict the idea that he was the actual composer of this piece.

The sonata is a charming piece in a late Baroque *galant* style, which makes limited use of a few simple chords and double stops in the first movement as well as broken chords that are idiomatic to the instrument. The sonata is in three movements: Un poco Vivace in common time; Larghetto in 3/4; and Presto in 3/8. The first movement is the most technically challenging of the three with some running sixteenth notes, broken chords and bariolage patterns in sixteenths, along with some sixteenth-note triplets and a few *tirades* in thirty-second notes, challenging for an intermediate player though largely sight-readable by an advanced player. The other two movements are shorter and simpler. The sonata is musically engaging, and, especially because of the paucity of eighteenth-century Italian music for the viol, it makes a wonderful addition to the repertoire.

The edition consists of three scores. Two of these, like the manuscript, present the music on two lines, solo and basso without figures, while the third score includes a tasteful, uncluttered chordal realization for a keyboard instrument, prepared by Angela Koppenwallner. In addition to Hoffmann's excellent introduction, in German and English, the edition provides a facsimile of the first page of the manuscript. The source itself, like a good shave, is very tidy, so some players will wish that the entire manuscript had been reprinted in facsimile. As we have come to expect from Günter and Leonore von Zadow's high editorial standards, the edition is a pleasure to use from a practical standpoint, and, short of the minuscule details for which only a facsimile will do, this edition will also satisfy the curiosity of those with a scholarly bent.

John Moran
Arlington, Virginia