

## Reviews

Edited by John Moran

### Carl Friedrich Abel, Three Ledenburg Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Basso

ISMN 979-0-50174-282-0. G282. Score and parts, including continuo realization by Dankwart von Zadow, €21.80.

### Carl Friedrich Abel or Johann Stamitz, Trio in B-flat major for Viola da Gamba, Violin/Transverse Flute, and Basso

ISMN 979-0-50174-294-3. G294. Score and parts, €13.80.

### Carl Friedrich Abel (attributed), Two Trios for Violin, Viola da Gamba, and Violoncello/Basso

ISMN 979-0-50174-295-0. G295. Score and parts, €17.50.

All ed. Thomas Fritzscht and Günter von Zadow. Edition Güntersberg, 2016.

The headline news among gamba players last year was the rediscovery and publication of Telemann's twelve fantasias for solo viol, assumed by many of us to have been lost forever. These pieces have already become a staple of the repertoire. Edition Güntersberg released the first modern edition, which includes a complete facsimile of Telemann's original publication, last March. That publication is the subject of a two-part review in the forthcoming *Journal of the VdGSA*. Additionally, a review of the first commercial recording of these pieces appears in this issue of the *VdGSA News*. Thanks to a team of players, all twelve fantasias have been performed in micro-mini concerts over the course of our last two Conclaves.

Equally exciting, however, is the backstory. The set of Telemann fantasias was just one of many previously unknown items that came to light in a trove of music centered on the viol: the collection assembled by Eleonore née von Grothaus, who lived with her husband, Baron Georg Hermann Heinrich von Münster, at Ledenburg Manor, in Lower Saxony, during the eighteenth century. Their collection was more recently transferred to the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv in Osnabrück. A detailed description and catalogue, "The Works for Viola da Gamba in the Ledenburg Collection" by Günter von Zadow, is available on the publisher's website. Güntersberg has now issued the viol music from this collection as thirteen new publications, three of which, either by or attributed to Carl Friedrich Abel, are the subject of this review.

The three Ledenburg Sonatas for viola da gamba and basso constitute the musically most substantial of these three publications. Each of the three sonatas survives in a neatly copied manuscript score, all in the same (unidentified) hand. The sources are titled, respectively, *Sonata I, II, and III, à Viola da Gamba Solo e Basso Del Sigr C. F. Abel*. The viol parts in these manuscript scores are, like the other items in the Ledenburg Collection, notated in alto clef. This is a departure from Abel's own preferred practice of using octavated treble clef, i.e., treble clef meant to be read down an octave, a practice that was common for viol and cello solo parts in both London and Berlin. However, Thomas Fritzscht has suggested in his introduction that the use of alto clef might have been an accommodation to Eleonore von Münster, who would have commissioned these pieces, or at least these copies of them, who apparently did not play viol in octave-transposed treble clef. As evidence he points to the set of parts in the collection to the C-major trio (published in G295, described later) where the viol has been transposed to alto clef.

The Ledenburg sonatas are in G major, A major, and B-flat major respectively, each in three movements (Slow, Fast, Fast). These are charming and melodically inventive pieces with plenty of rhythmic variety, featuring the daring harmonic vocabulary of late Abel with no shortage of chromatic appoggiaturas. They are of moderate difficulty, avoiding double stops, with final chords used occasionally at important cadences. It is the type of fare in which an accomplished amateur could have shone. The bass lines, which are entirely free of figures, are independently interesting. Though the bass only exceeds the range of a six-string viol in two places, going to a low C-sharp in the second movement of the A-major sonata and a low C in the last movement of the B-flat-major sonata, it is notable that the parts perfectly fit on the cello, so perhaps Abel had that instrument in mind—much as he did with the "Pembroke" duets for viola da gamba and cello. Nevertheless, the absence of figures in the score would not have precluded the possibility of keyboard accompaniment, and Güntersberg has helpfully provided a functional chordal realization by Dankwart von Zadow. The edition consists of three performance scores, one of which includes the editorial keyboard part. The other two scores, without this added line, save page turns for the ends of movements.

Güntersberg's production of the *Trio in B-flat major for viola da gamba, violin or flute, and basso* required a certain amount of sleuthing. The source that survives in the Ledenburg Collection is nothing more than a part in alto clef, in an unknown copyist's hand, labeled "Viola da Gambo." It shows no indication of composer, instrumentation, or title. Fritzscht was able to match this part to the flute part, transposed down an octave, of the fourth sonata in a manuscript set, *VI SONATES à 3, Flauto Traverso, Violino, con Basso, del Sigr Abel*, in the Universitätsbibliothek in Uppsala, Sweden. Confusion as to authorship arises from the existence in Paris of a separate flute part—no other parts survive—to a set of

six sonatas, published as *Œuvre Posthume de STAMITZ* (Paris, 1764). The flute part of the fourth of these Paris sonatas also matches the fourth trio in the Uppsala manuscript. Fritsch gives more credence to Abel's name on the Uppsala manuscript than to Stamitz's on the Paris edition, because Stamitz was the more famous composer in Paris at the time. It would have been a common trick of the trade to use a well-known name to sell music, even if composed by someone else. This Güntersberg edition brings together the viol part from the Ledenburg Collection with the other two parts from the Uppsala source.

The three-movement trio (Andante, Allegro, Menuetto) is an attractive, if rather ordinary, *galant* piece, in every regard tamer than any of the Ledenburg sonatas. It could pass for Abel or Stamitz without raising an eyebrow. The viol takes the lead role in this piece. The part is relatively easy, occasionally venturing up to a high D, but never lower than the top three strings. The second voice, which the editors assign to flute or violin, is generally higher than the viol part, which effectively moves the soprano line to an inner part. However, since the Ledenburg viol part, which serves as the basis for this published version, is an octave lower than the Paris flute part and this viol part survives in the absence of other parts, it would not be unreasonable to posit a version of the trio where the second line would also be taken by a viol, an octave lower than written. This would retain the original orientation of the top two parts. The bass line is not independently very interesting. The edition includes three parts and a score. Though the publisher has provided no keyboard realization of the bass, an argument could be made for the use of keyboard here.

The attribution to Abel for the two trios (G295) is a plausible one, made by the publisher. Fritsch bases this claim on the existence of other music in the Ledenburg Collection by Abel, i.e., the other items under consideration here and "on the basis of stylistic analysis," which he does not detail. These two pieces are certainly reminiscent of pieces by Abel and by his London colleague Johann Christian Bach. Perhaps Fritsch was referring to the musically equal treatment of the viol and the violin. He also points out that, seven years after Abel's death, "the London booksellers Evan and Thomas Williams offered for sale" a now-missing collection of twenty-four trios for gamba, violin, and cello "by Abel and in his own hand-writing," and suggests that these two trios might have been included in that set. These trios survive as sets of parts in the Ledenburg Collection. The C-major trio bears the title *Trio per violino violada jamba e violoncello* with four individual parts, labeled Violino, Viola da Gamba (in treble clef), Viola da Gamba (in alto clef), and Violoncello. Fritsch draws attention to the unusual spelling "violada jamba," which he says is found in some Berlin sources, and thus posits a possible Berlin origin for this manuscript. The G-major trio survives as a set of three parts with the viola da gamba part in alto clef and the lowest part labeled "basso." All seven parts to these trios are in the same unidentified hand.

These two trios attributed to Abel are stylistically very similar to one another, both of them in three movements (Fast, Slow, Tempo di minuetto). They are technically easier than the B-flat-major trio (G294), and yet perhaps musically more enjoyable. They are not unlike Haydn's "London" trios, written at least a decade later, in both character and style—the type of easy-going, highly sightreadable music that is rarely surprising or demanding, and yet manages to keep the listener's attention. Either trio could serve as a pleasant palate cleanser on a concert program or an elegant entry-level piece for less experienced chamber music players. Here again, the edition consists of three parts and a score without keyboard realization. Inventing a simple keyboard part could be a fun challenge for a player in the early stages of learning continuo realization.

While none of these newly discovered pieces will change our perception of Abel, let alone of late eighteenth-century music, all of them—and especially the Ledenburg sonatas—merit our attention for the breadth they add to the viol's repertoire.

John Moran  
Arlington, Virginia

## Georg Philipp Telemann: 12 Fantaisies pour la Basse de Violle

Thomas Fritsch, viola da gamba. Coviello Classics, 2016.

**V**iol players are once again indebted to the German gambist Thomas Fritsch, whose discovery and subsequent publication of Telemann's long-lost fantasies for viola da gamba rocked the world of Baroque music in 2015. Now available from Güntersburg in Fritsch's own edition, these works are already becoming part of the standard repertoire for the viol. Unlike the generic writing of his simpler sonatas and trios (for example, in the *Essercizii Musici*), Telemann uses the full range of the bass viol with abundant chords and double stops. As in his fantasies for solo violin, dating from the same period, Telemann writes in both the older fugal and the newer *galant* styles, alternating from one to the other throughout the volume.

In this recording, Fritsch deftly handles the technical challenges of Telemann's contrapuntal writing and the occasional non-idiomatic chords. His playing is particularly admirable in fast movements such as the Spirituoso of Fantasy 6 or the Allegro of Fantasy 11, which positively sparkle. His added ornaments and improvisations are both appropriate and tasteful, providing models to emulate.

Unfortunately, the CD falls short on the engineering end. Recording a bass instrument like the viol, with the instrument's tendency to sound overly resonant, presents