

The Viol, No 45, Winter 2016/2017

**Giacobo Cervetto: Drei Sonaten für
Viola da Gamba und Basso
Ed. Thomas Fritsch and Günter von Zadow
Continuo realisation by Angela Koppenwallner
Edition Güntersberg G285**

Cervetto (born in Italy ca 1681/2) worked in London for most of his very long life where he was active as a cellist, musical instrument dealer and composer. He belonged to a group of resident Italians who brought the cello as a solo instrument into fashion in England. He published a collection of twelve solos or sonatas for cello and basso continuo in London in ca 1750. Three of these appear in the Ledenburg Collections attributed to Cervetto. They have been transcribed for the viola da gamba with some clef changes and several passages adapted for the viol.

As is usually the case with Güntersberg editions there is a good choice of parts to play from. The main score consists of solo part plus figured bass; each of those also exists separately and there is a score with solo, bass and a keyboard realisation. This made me raise my eyebrows in a few places. However, a sensitive player could leave out some of the more fussy bits in the right hand.

The sonatas are in D major, G major and B flat major with movement types varying from *andante*, *minuet*, *allegro*, *grazioso*, *spiritoso* and, interestingly, *allegro sostenuto*. Does that tell us something about how *allegros* were played in London at that time? It is quite interesting and varied rhythmically – he was obviously very fond of Scotch snaps and triplets and these abound in most of the movements. The style reminded me of some of Abel's pieces. On the whole they are not too difficult, though there was one bit of double stopping which gave pause for thought. One of the best things about the sonatas is the bass part which is interesting in itself and in many places provides a real duet with the solo part. I particularly enjoyed the final Minuet with long notes and chords in the solo part with running quavers in the bass.

On the front cover of this edition there is portrait by Johann Zoffany of Giacobbo Cervetto with his cello looking quite benign and cheerful – this rather sums up the flavour of the music.

Elizabeth Dodd