

**Johann Friedrich Ruhe: Suites pour
Viole de Gambe et Violoncello (bass viol)
Ed. Günter and Leonora Zadow
Edition Güntersberg G286**

Johann Friedrich Ruhe (1699-1776) was Kantor at the Johanniskirche 1725-33 (a Lutheran church built in the mid seventeenth century with help from the Swedish crown) in Halberstadt, where he was born. In the Saxony-Anhalt region, Halberstadt is the capital of the Hartz district, notable currently for hosting a performance of John Cage's composition 'As slow as possible' which began in 2001 with a rest lasting 17 months.

Ruhe became 'Summisarius' at Magdeburg Cathedral in 1733, serving there for the rest of his life. His duties involved the direction of the entire cathedral musical establishment including composing the music.

Although the title is in the plural there is just one suite (with eight movements) composed in the French style: *Air*, *Chiacon ma allegretto*, *Loure*, *Bourée*, two *Menuets*, *La Rejouissance*, *Passepied* and *Harlequinade*.

The adagio *Air* has challenging rhythmic interest in the first half and an attractive alternation of duplets and triplets in the second. In this movement the cello/second bass viol also has a considerable amount of interest. The *Chiacon* (a rondo) is great fun, lots of running semiquavers and arpeggios for the viol while the cello accompanies. It is followed by a *Loure* which some has nice slurred groups and the same little strokes used by Telemann to denote staccato notes. A lively and tuneful *Bourée* is followed by a stately, poised *Minuet I* which opens with arpeggiatic figures and a contrasting though still major *Minuet II*. *La Rejouissance* seems to take us into an almost rumbustious country dance while the *Passepied* is in a more delicate, legato 3/8. *Harlequinade*, the finale, is a grotesque, almost anti-masque with bizarre rhythms reminiscent of Rameau.

I would place this suite in the moderately easy bracket. Some of the rhythms are a bit tricky, but it seems to lie under the fingers quite well despite its two sharps. It hardly goes above the frets, and the only (easy) chord is at the end of the *Air*. The cello part also works perfectly on the viol.

This Suite has been available in a facsimile for some time; Günter informs us that it is error free, though not easy to read.

We are provided with two books having both parts which is helpful (and also offers the opportunity of swapping parts at repeats if one is feeling democratic). There are no page turns, and the print is very clear and a good size.

This suite provided a very enjoyable play. Now I will practise it properly!

Jenny Tribe