

## Music reviews

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### **Anton Raetzel**

Concerto in A major  
for Viola da gamba, 2 Violins, Viola and Basso  
Ed. Thomas Fritzsch and Günter von Zadow  
Edition Güntersberg G298

Concerti for the viol are as rare as hen's teeth, so it is welcome news that the recently-uncovered Ledenburg Collection, which also contains Telemann's solo Fantasias, has thrown up, so far, no fewer than four examples.

The present work is by a largely unknown (certainly to me) composer, Anton Raetzel, about whom little more than an outline of a biography is available: he was born c.1724 in Brunswick (Braunschweig), played the bassoon, and was employed as Kapellmeister for the Duke of Hollstein. He is last heard of writing a large cantata for the Prince of Schwarzburg in 1760. This concerto is his only surviving work, and is missing the second violin part, here reconstructed by Wolfgang Kostujak.

It is in three movements – fast, slow, fast – and offers no real technical challenges. It confines itself to the top three strings of the bass viol and never ventures beyond the frets. Given that, I imagine that balance – always a difficulty for viol concerti – will be a problem: most of the solo part is accompanied by the strings and continuo, so they would need to play extremely softly for the viol to come through. However, the solo part sits nicely under the hands and offers plenty of opportunity for a rich tone to be displayed.

The musical language is conservative, though we don't know when it was written, and there are no real surprises; yet it is attractive and pleasant, offering satisfying unexceptionable fare, and we beggars can't really be choosers.

*Richard Boothby*