

## Music reviews

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**Carl Friedrich Abel**  
**The Drexel Manuscript**  
**29 Pieces for Solo Viola da Gamba**  
**Edition Güntersberg G333**

The pieces for solo bass viol contained in the opening 25 pages of US-NYp, Drexel MS 5871 constitute a fascinating corpus of musically inventive and technically challenging works by the German composer and virtuoso violist Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-1787). Abel, who was born in Cöthen to the family of the court violist Christian Ferdinand Abel, was in the employment of the Dresden royal chapel from 1745, eventually settling in London by 1759. 124 of his works for viola da gamba have been catalogued. The 29 items in this autograph manuscript are arranged by key and are seemingly stand-alone works that may well represent a tantalising window into the sort of music Abel played in private to his ‘intimate Friends’ over ‘a Bottle or two of good Burgundy’. Peter Holman’s discussion of this collection in *Life After Death* (Woodbridge, 2010), especially pp.203-209, cannot be recommended highly enough.

Günter and Leonore von Zadow join an already crowded field here, with no fewer than five modern editions of these works in existence. These publications vary in quality, scope and intent, and Edition Güntersberg’s G333 serves the important purpose of rendering the contents of the manuscript with the absolute minimum editorial alteration. To this end, the works (with their catalogue numbers and – where appropriate – their titles) are presented in the original sequence, including the four charming flourishes or cadenzas. The musical text features the original clefs, and all necessary corrections are dutifully reflected in the excellent Critical Commentary, where one may also consult the relevant fragments of the source material. An inserted supplement (G333A) is provided with the entire edition in the alto and bass clefs in which most people prefer to read their solo repertoire.

I think this volume is a paradigm of clarity, simplicity and editorial integrity, and as such I have a very few reservations about it. The wider implications of the only concordance (A1:23, which also appears in the Maltzan Collection, labelled ‘vivace’ as part of a three-movement work and – crucially – with a hitherto unknown bass part) perhaps merited additional consideration. The only erratum to be found has already been noted by the editors, acknowledged on the website and presumably corrected for future reprints (namely A1:11, bar 74, note 5 is A and should be F sharp, a third lower). In a further typographic error of no real textual relevance, the title of the G333A supplement is unfortunately given as ‘Das Drexel-Manukript’.

In short, this is a hugely practical edition that comes as a valuable addition to Edition Güntersberg’s already important contribution to the availability of Abel’s music for the viol.

*Patxi del Amo*