

Franz Xaver Chwatal
Introduction and Variations on
***Was soll ich in der Fremde thun* Op. 29**
for Viola da Gamba and Piano.
Edition Güntersberg G399

Franz Chwatal (1808-1879) was a Bohemian-born teacher, pianist and composer who worked in Merseberg and then Magdeburg and whose piano methods enjoyed great popularity. Although he appears not to have been a gamba player himself, his contact with members of the Maltzan circle may well have been the initial impetus for this work.

Like a number of the relatively obscure 'new' pieces that have been emerging into the daylight of print in recent times, this has required some detective work and reconstruction. The original viol part survives intact, but without its accompaniment. Fortunately, Chwatal also published a piano duet version of the variations (his Op. 29), a copy of which has provided the basis for the piano part we have here. Wolfgang Kostujak has done a skilful job in creating an accompaniment which is playable and convincing, in some places helpfully suggesting alternatives.

The extant title page gives the title as *Variations Amusantes*, suggesting that this is not intended as a work of deep profundity but rather music to amuse and entertain. After a grandiose introduction beginning in the minor with chromatic harmonies and wide ranging key changes, the melody is stated by the gamba over the simplest of accompaniments. There then follow five variations: the first in compound time and triplets, the next a march, followed by a study in semiquavers with many chromatic inflections. Variation four is marked *con forza* with forceful piano writing especially in the left hand, and then comes the requisite expressive slow section. The fast Finale opens like a simple variation and then expands into a lively and applause-summoning close.

Each variation has a distinct mood rather in the manner of a sequence of Schumannesque character pieces. The player of this music needs to find and project the right balance of expressivity, charm, and character in each variation if this music is to come alive for an audience.

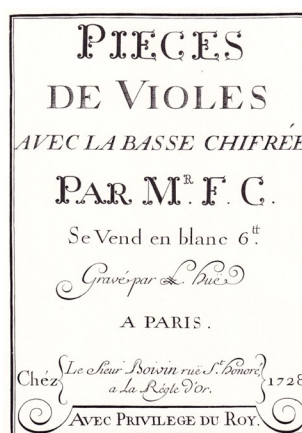
The combination of viol and modern piano can be a challenge, and this calls for a tactful accompanist able to realise the genuinely pianistic textures without dominating the viol. Ideally this should be performed with a period piano or, if not, possibly a smaller instrument.

As always with Edition Güntersberg, the music is presented with exemplary clarity (parts in alto and treble clefs) and has an informative introduction and

historical note by the irrepressible Thomas Fritzsch. For any gamba player looking to expand their solo repertoire into the 19th century this could be a useful point of entry. The music is attractive and the technical challenges not beyond a well-trained player. There is already one version of this on Youtube, suggesting that Chwatal's Variations could yet become a popular show-piece for more adventurous gambists.

Philip Redfern

François Couperin
Pièces de Violes avec la Basse Chifrée
Facsimile Walhall M125



By the time François Couperin (1668-1733) published his two suites for bass viol and basso continuo accompaniment, he had already penned two *Concerts* and one *Plainte* for two bass viols as part of his collection *Les Gouts Réunis* (Paris, 1724). The two finely crafted, more expansive chamber works of 1728 might well

represent the great composer's final tribute to the recently deceased Marin Marais, and they certainly would be a fitting homage if so. They demand considerable left-hand dexterity and an elegant bowing style, but they do repay the players with some of the most exquisite moments in the French viol repertoire.

This facsimile is a reprint of the 1986 Minkoff linecut of the original 1728 Boivin edition and, as a result, presents a superbly clean and legible text on high-quality paper that feels rewarding to work from. The continuo part is here presented as a separate booklet, unlike the well-bound Fuzeau edition I own, which unfortunately requires further photocopying for performance.

Most accomplished players will already count these extraordinary works in their libraries but, for those who do not, Walhall are currently applying a 20% discount on this facsimile. At just over £16, it compares rather favourably with the more expensive and impractical 1989 Fuzeau volume, as well as with the free – but arguably poorer – experience of ISMLP downloads.

Patxi del Amo

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