

William Young (?-1662)
21 pieces for two bass viols
Ed. Günter and Leonore von Zadow
Edition Güntersberg G401

William Young was born in England, but worked in Innsbruck at the court of Ferdinand Charles, Archduke of Austria. We don't know when or where he was born, but he died in 1662 in Austria, and is buried in what is now Innsbruck Cathedral. He was one of those 'world-beating' English viol virtuosos who found better employment on the continent, and who spread English music and renown in foreign parts.

He published two sets of sonatas, one for violins in 1653, and another for three viols in 1659. There is, furthermore, plenty of other music in manuscript for lra viol that is yet to be made available.

So this publication of 21 pieces for two bass viols is very welcome. They are found in two manuscripts, one in Durham and the other in Oxford, and the editors have made intelligent choices about which to follow. The result is a valuable addition to any viol-player's library.

The pieces are grouped according to key: 1-6 are in G major, 7-12 in D minor, 13-20 in D major, the last is back to D minor. Some pieces are very short: for example, No. 10 is only 8 bars - while others are more substantial. There are plenty of elegant triple-time works that could be courantes or sarabands; and the duple-time pieces are either allemandes or more ambitious sonata-like movements. Stylistically, I am reminded of Locke and Purcell, though there is plenty of originality about the writing.

Technically, some of the movements are quite challenging (No. 7, I'm talking about you) and one can easily start a movement too fast for the obstacles thrown in your way later on. Clearly, Young was a fine player, and he fills out his movements with lots of chords and double-stops, which can give a full and satisfying harmonic direction to the pieces.

It will be straightforward to construct a suite of movements from this collection, with a sonata, allemande, courante, air and saraband, for example.

This is an excellent publication, with the usual high standards of printing and clarity that we have come to expect from Edition Güntersberg. Now perhaps they will turn their attention to the lra works by Young.

Richard Boothby

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