

## Preface

The German composer Johann Michael Nicolai lived from 1629 to 1685. We know little about his musical training in Thüringen. He played several instruments and was a member of the count of Sachsen-Lauenburg's court band. From 1655 until his death he was an instrumentalist at the court of Stuttgart and instructed the choir boys.

In addition to sacred music, Nicolai composed numerous instrumental works, including 12 sonatas for 2 violins and viola da gamba or bassoon. Unfortunately, many of these compositions have been lost.

The manuscript of the present, hitherto unpublished sonata, was bequeathed to the Durham Cathedral Library in 1722 by the Prebendary of Durham, Philip Falle, where it still resides as part of a collection of European instrumental works.<sup>1</sup> The same manuscript also contains the already published sonatas for 3 bass viols and continuo by Nicolai.<sup>2</sup>

The score of our sonata is found on pages 11-19 of manuscript **GB-DRc D10** and carries the title: „à du: Viol di Gamb:“ and „Auth: J. M. Nicolay“.

This title seems rather confusing to us. The score has four systems throughout. The first part is marked „Viola da Gamba Prima“, the second „Viola da Gamba Secunda“. The third part is marked „Organo“ but another word, perhaps „Teorba“ (hardly legible), has been written over it. The fourth part is also marked „Organo“. The 3rd and 4th part are often identical as well as carrying the same figures, for example in the „Preludium“. In other places however the two parts are quite different, the third voice having a musical line of its own corresponding more to the first two voices and often weaving around the bass (see, for example, the „Fantasia“ on page 6).

In our opinion the sonata works very well when played by *three* bass viols (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> part) and a keyboard instrument (4<sup>th</sup> part) – preferably an organ. We have therefore marked the parts as such and omitted the figures in the third voice.

Our aim was to reproduce the manuscript in modern notation with as few changes as possible. However, since the original contains several mistakes, we have made some corrections; these are summarized in the „Kritischer Bericht“ (editorial notes) on page 4. Any accidentals, dynamic markings or names of movements added by us have been set in parentheses. We have followed modern convention in regards to the choice of clefs, using octavated treble clef in the score and alto clef in the first and second viol parts. In the manuscript the two upper voices were notated in both alto and tenor clef.

Our thanks is extended to Dankwart von Zadow for the realisation of the figured bass and for the addition of missing figures (set in parentheses). We also thank Lynn Dickinson for the translation of the preface.

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Leonore von Zadow-Reichling  
Günter von Zadow

Translation by Lynn Dickinson

<sup>1</sup> Brian Crosby, *A Catalogue of the Durham Cathedral Music Manuscripts*, Oxford 1986

<sup>2</sup> Richard Maunder, *Dovehouse Editions Canada*, 1981