

Introduction

Concertmaster of Frederick the Great's illustrious court orchestra in Berlin, Johann Gottlieb Graun was one of the most significant of all eighteenth-century composers for the viola da gamba. Like many of the Berlin court composers, Graun came from Saxony. He was educated at the Kreuzschule in Dresden and studied violin under the Dresden concertmaster Pisendel. In the early decades of the century the Dresden orchestra was one of the finest in Europe, and was known for its discipline and uniform bowing under Pisendel's direction. Graun brought this attitude to Berlin, and it can perhaps be seen in the unusually precise dynamic indications which are found in the music of Graun and his colleagues. Early in his career Graun developed a fiery and virtuosic style of violin writing, which he carried over into the music he later wrote in Berlin for Frederick's resident gamba player, Ludwig Christian Hesse. In 1766, J. A. Hiller said of Hesse: "The skill, attractiveness and fire in performance which our Mr. Hesse possesses to such a high degree make him, in our time, incontestably the greatest gambist in Europe."¹

Graun wrote at least 24 works involving the viola da gamba, often in a soloistic capacity. They include solo concertos, group concertos, solo and ensemble sonatas, and cantatas.

This piece is similar in genre to the three sonatas for gamba and harpsichord obbligato by J. S. Bach, or at least it has its genesis in this form. Sonatas of this type were originally converted from Italianate trios for two melody instruments (often violins or flutes) and bass, whereby the gamba takes one of the upper parts, and the keyboard right hand the other. Many obbligato sonatas by Bach, Graun and others also exist in this "trio sonata" form.² However, no such variant of this piece has been found, and indeed it is hard to imagine that one ever existed. In the traditional trio model, the two melody instruments (or the single melody instrument and the harpsichord right hand) share the same melodic material, which allows for imitative entries and contrapuntal treatment. Graun stays close to this model in all three movements, but the two fast movements contain passages which were clearly specifically written for the keyboard.

As in many sonatas of the Berlin School composers, the slow movement is placed as the first of the three movements. This system may have been invented by G. B. Somis³ and was also used by Tartini, who is thought to have been a teacher of Graun. It lays emphasis on the slow movement, which no longer has the character of an intermezzo or (in the case of a four-movement sonata) of a short prelude to a contrapuntal *Allegro*. The Berlin opening slow movements are weighty pieces in binary form, but without repeated sections.

The fermata in the last bar of the first movement is an opportunity for either or both of the soloists to play a cadenza. One of the manuscripts of a double concerto for violin and gamba by Graun has two double cadenzas inserted on a separate slip of paper. The soloists alternate on quasi-improvised flourishes, each accompanied by the other holding a sustained note.

In the autograph, the layout of the score (see "Our Edition" below) suggests performance by a continuo player or group in addition to the two solo instruments. The continuo would ideally be played by a chordal instrument such as a theorbo, organ or second harpsichord, with the possible addition of a cello or second gamba. The Berlin court orchestra had a theorbist in Ernst Gottlieb Baron (1696-1760), who served there (and in its predecessor, Frederick's *Kapelle* in Rheinsberg) from 1737 until his death, and there are at least two accounts of organs being used in private homes in Berlin. However, it is also possible to play the work with just the two instruments, as the Bach obbligato sonatas are normally presented.

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¹ Johann Adam Hiller, "Bey seiner königl. Hoheit dem Prinzen von Preußen sind als Musici in Diensten," *Wöchentliche Nachrichten* 11 (1766) 81.

² For example, Bach's Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027, or Graun's Sonata in F, Wendt 107 (Edition Güntersberg G057)

³ See e.g. Sonata 1 and 2 in *Königliche Gambenduos*, Edition Güntersberg G033

Our edition

This trio (Wendt 119¹) has four sources, all kept in the Berlin National Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv):

Q1 – D-B SA 3627. Trio F-Dur “Trio a Viola di Gamba e Cembalo con Fondamento di Graun,” the composer's autograph. This source from the collection of the Berlin Sing-Akademie (Archiv der Sing-Akademie zu Berlin [Depositum in der Musikabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin]) was lost since the Second World War, but was rediscovered a few years ago. We are grateful to the Sing-Akademie for providing us with this source early in 2004.

Q2 – D-B AmB 240/4. “Trio Cembalo, Viola da Gamba, Basso,” a contemporary copy.

Q3 – D B Mus. Ms 8295/68. “Sonata per il Clavicembalo e Violino”, a contemporary transcription.

Q4 – D-B SA 4453 “Sonata per il Clavicembalo e Violino dell Sigr: Graunn”, a contemporary transcription.

Only Q1 and Q2 were consulted for this edition. Both of these sources are in score. The autograph, Q1, is notated in four staves: the right and left hand of the harpsichord, the gamba and the basso continuo. The copy, Q2, has only three staves: the harpsichord right hand, the gamba part, and the general bass. The copyist has clearly taken advantage of the fact that the harpsichord left hand is largely identical with the basso continuo. In Q1 the basso continuo is figured throughout, but the bass in Q2 lacks figures.

A comparison of the two sources used shows that the copy Q2 holds closely to the autograph Q1. Q2 lacks a few slurs, trills, dynamics and double-stops. However, Q2 also has some passages in thirds which are not found in the autograph, for example in the gamba part, second movement, bar 21:



The notation in Q1 can clearly be interpreted as a shorthand, which the copyist then wrote out. Other differences between Q1 and Q2 are found above all in the third movement in the treatment of the bass, which is in many places allocated alternately to the harpsichord left hand or the continuo, but not both at once. Q2 obviously lacks this differentiation.

Our edition follows the autograph Q1 in many details. However, in the case of the abovementioned examples in thirds, we have inserted the extra notes from Q2 in small print (four passages).

Our score is presented like Q1, in four staves. Although the bass voices in the second and fourth staves are often identical, we have reproduced both lines in full, with the figures only in the fourth staff. In the separate part for the obbligato harpsichord we have inserted some of the missing parts of the continuo bass (in small print) and the figuring, in order to enable the player to play the continuo, as far as the solo part allows. For this purpose we have also inserted a suggested realisation of the figured bass in the harpsichord part. The trio can thus be played with only one harpsichord if necessary. In the sources, the gamba line is notated in bass and alto clefs. We have retained this in the separate gamba part, whereas in the score we have used the octave-transposed treble clef, for greater readability.

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¹ Matthias Wendt, *Die Trios der Brüder Johann Gottlieb und Carl Heinrich Graun*, Diss. Bonn 1983