

Preface

Johann Pfeiffer was born in Nürnberg in 1697. He studied violin and law and became a member of the Weimar court cappella in 1720 as a violinist. In 1726 he was appointed concertmaster, a position that had been unoccupied since the departure of J. S. Bach in 1717. In the years following he held several other posts, eventually leading to an appointment as Kapellmeister and composition teacher for the future Countess Wilhelmine in Bayreuth. He held this position until his death in 1761, earning respect as composer and musician. Proof of the high esteem which he enjoyed are his honorary title of „Court Minister“ as well as records which prove he was the best-paid musician in Bayreuth¹.

Pfeiffer's instrumental compositions include orchestral suites, chamber music, and solo concertos for various instruments including flute, oboe, lute, viola da gamba, and violin. His vocal works encompass several cantatas, arias and a requiem. Much of his work has been lost or cannot be definitely attributed to him.

Our edition is based on a copy of the manuscript **D-HRD FÜ 3608a** (executed by a contemporary of Pfeiffer) which was made available to us by the musical collection of the Bibliotheca Fürstenbergiana of Schloss Herdringen. The composition is not dated but it is assumed that it was composed during the time Pfeiffer was in Bayreuth. The title reads „SONATA / a / 1 Viola di Gamba / è / Cembalo Concertato. / dell Singr: Pfeiffer. Ex D.“ The manuscript consists of two parts, marked „Viola di Gamba“ and „Cembalo“ (harpsichord).

The order of the four movements *Andante – Allegro – Largo – Tempo di Bourrée* is similar to the majority of the trio sonatas of the time, including, for example, the gamba sonatas in G major and D major by J. S. Bach. On the other hand, due to the family relationship between the two princely houses of Bayreuth and Berlin, and the ensuing collaboration between the resident musicians, Pfeiffer's compositional style was also influenced by the Berlin School. The charm of this sonata lies in the close correspondence of the musical ideas between the two instruments, ideas which, when taken alone, seem rather simple. However, as a whole they produce a diverting, interesting and (in the slow movements) expressive piece, unique to the gamba repertoire. For an in-depth analysis of the sonata see Flassig².

Our edition remains as true as possible to the original. For ease of reading we made the following clef changes in the score: the gamba part is notated either in octavated treble clef (instead of alto clef) or bass clef, the upper system (right hand) of the harpsichord part in treble clef instead of the original soprano clef. The gamba part retains the clefs as they appear in the manuscript. All corrections are notated as such, and editorial slurs are appear as dotted lines.

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Translation by Lynn Dickinson

¹ Fred Flassig, *Die solistische Gambenmusik in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1998, p. 124

² Flassig, p. 127