

Preface

The German composer, organist, and violinist, Dietrich Becker, was born in Hamburg in 1623. He began his musical career in 1642 as organist in the castle church at Ahrensburg. From 1654 to 1655 he was violinist in the cappella of Count Magnus de la Gardie in Stockholm, in the years following he found employment in the Court Cappella in Celle. In 1662 he left Celle – at first with the intention of returning - in order to pursue further studies in Lübeck and Hamburg. However, his plans apparently changed as his name was entered into the Hamburg list of citizens as “Musician” the very same year. Somewhat later his name appears as solo violinist in the Hamburg Municipal Cappella. In 1667 he was named director of the Municipal Cappella, thus becoming the successor of Johann Schop the Elder. In 1674 he also took on the responsibilities connected with a “Small Canonical” in the cathedral, where his job was to compose a “figural music” on a quarterly basis. Becker died in 1679, respected but penniless.

Although Becker began his musical career as an organist, we know of no organ works composed by him. This can be taken as a sign that he very quickly devoted himself exclusively to the violin. On the other hand, there is also no indication that he ever wrote any solo violin compositions, despite the fact that he was one of the best-known violinists in northern Germany in the second half of the 17th century. What we do have are several collections of instrumental and vocal works, for example the “Musicalische Frühlings-Früchte” (“Musical spring fruits”) – sonatas for 3-5 instruments and basso continuo, printed in Hamburg 1688 – and “Schaffe in mir Gott, ein reines Herz” (“Create in me, God, a pure heart”) – sacred cantata for alto, 2 violins, 2 violas da gamba, violone and basso continuo.

Becker’s compositions can be compared to the instrumental works of Weckmann, Reincken und Buxtehude, although the former show a stronger influence of the Italian compositional style of the day. The clearly structured sonatas are in most cases supplemented by a suite of dance movements, often with a thematic connection between the sonata and the suite.

The sonata reprinted in this facsimile edition was taken from the following collection:

Erster Theil / zwey-stimmiger / SONATEN und SUITEN / Nebst einem gedoppelten Basso
Contituo / gesetzt / von / Dieterich Beckern / Bestalten Rahts-Violisten in / Hamburg ... Gedruckt
bey Georg Rebenlein / Im Jahr 1674 ...

The original publication consisted of three instrumental parts – Violino Primo, Violino Secundo, Basso Continuo. Copies of this print can be found in the following libraries today:

DK Kk – Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Kopenhagen
GB DRc – The Cathedral Library, Durham

The collection contains 45 numbered pieces divided into 9 sonatas (each with its corresponding suite). The last of those sonatas is the one appearing in this edition. It is titled “**Sonata à 2. Violino & Violadagamba**”, which indicates that in this sonata the second violin should be replaced by a viol.

Our new edition¹ makes as few alterations to the original material as possible, at the same time complying with modern notational convention. Any editorial suggestions are indicated by footnotes or set in parentheses. Some of the figures in the continuo part were corrected without comment.

Edition Güntersberg has also published a facsimile edition of this sonata. The order number is G502.

We wish to thank Dankwart von Zadow for the realisation of the figured bass and Lynn Dickinson for the translation of the preface.

Heidelberg, January 2005
Leonore von Zadow-Reichling
Günter von Zadow
Translation by Lynn Dickinson

¹ A previous edition of this sonata (without the accompanying suite) appears in score form in the often quoted dissertation by Alfred Einstein „Zur deutschen Literatur für Viola da Gamba im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert“, Leipzig 1905.