

Introduction

Christoph Schaffrath was a significant member of what C. F. D. Schubart called in the 1780s “the world-famous Berlin School,” the group of composers who worked at the court of Frederick the Great in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. He was born in Hohenstein near Dresden, but little is known about his student years. In 1733, he was shortlisted for the position of organist at the church of St. Sophia in Dresden, but was beaten at the audition concert by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. The next year, Crown Prince Frederick appointed him on the recommendation of Quantz as keyboardist in his fledgling Kapelle in Ruppin near Berlin, and with the other musicians he followed Frederick to Berlin on the king’s coronation in 1740. In 1744 the king’s younger sister, Princess Anna Amalia, offered Schaffrath a position as keyboardist and chamber musician, a post which would perhaps have allowed him more creative freedom than Frederick’s court. Schaffrath remained in Amalia’s employment until his death in 1763. His music collection, including many of his own works, was willed to Amalia, and was incorporated into her extensive library, the Amalien-Bibliothek, which is the only surviving eighteenth-century source of Schaffrath’s works for viola da gamba.

In the manuscript of this work, the upper part is partly in the hand of the virtuoso gambist Ludwig Christian Hesse (1716-1772), who was employed from about 1741 at the royal court and later in the ensemble of the king’s nephew Crown Prince Frederick William (1744-1797) (see “Our Edition” below). 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 The young prince was an enthusiastic gamba player and a student of Hesse, and the work may have been written for him and his teacher to play. Alternatively, Hesse may have played it with Frederick William’s father August Wilhelm (1722-1758).

Within the large repertoire of gamba duets, this piece is outstanding in its quality and in the variety of its compositional techniques. The first movement commences with a conventional imitative entry and initially continues in this vein, with much tossing of ideas back and forth. However, before the end of the first half the two parts begin to develop separate personalities, while remaining equal in importance. The *Adagio* is a dialogue between two very different characters, the endlessly melodic upper part and the forceful second part. In the last movement, the upper part remains largely in the “singing allegro” style of which Schaffrath is an acknowledged master, while the lower part requires more agility, with its great leaps and vigorous passage work.

Given the different character of the two parts, it seems quite likely that the work was written specifically with the artistic personalities of the performers in mind. Although Hesse’s hand is present only in the upper part, the more virtuosic lower part is the one which more closely matches what we know about his playing, and what we may deduce about him from the many other works which were written for him. It is interesting that only the lower part uses the seventh string, the low A⁷. We can be fairly sure from the virtuoso music which was written for Hesse that he played a seven-string viol, which was more unusual in Germany than in its French homeland. He may have prepared the upper part for his aristocratic partner, who must have been at least competent, if less brilliant than Hesse. However, such hypotheses must remain speculative, and need not impinge on our enjoyment of this fine piece.

The fingerings which Hesse has written into the upper part are well worth studying. While some may seem obvious, others tell us something about the priorities of the master gambist. For example, in bar 50 of the first movement, the use of the fourth finger on the first f rules out the trill which one might otherwise reasonably have placed on that note. Here Hesse appears to have chosen to sacrifice the trill in order to avoid any shift in the middle of a phrase. In other places he allows the shift, but makes sure it occurs between slurs, and not under them. Hesse borrows two fingering conventions from the French school: in bar 21 of the first movement he uses the sign for the *doigt couché*, where the first finger is barred across two or more strings; and in bars 63 and 67 of the last movement, the two dots below the fingering indicate that the note is to be played on the second string, again avoiding a shift.

The appoggiaturas, which are indicated as grace notes in small print, are an important element of the Berlin style. In his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, C. P. E. Bach writes that the appoggiatura is played on the beat, not before it. Irrespective of its written length, it should take half the value of the following note.

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

With its wide range and creative use of the singing style as well as leaps, passage work and well-chosen double stops, this piece is very idiomatic gamba music, as no other non-keyboard instrument of the eighteenth century could play either part. It is a significant part of the repertoire in its genre.

Our Edition

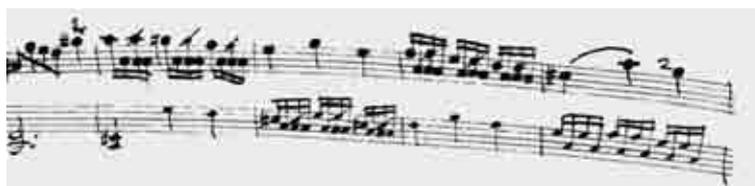
This work is found in a single manuscript source in the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage, Music Department with Mendelssohn Archive, under the shelfmark **Am.B. 498**. We thank the library for permission to use this manuscript. It is in score format, and originally in the hand of the composer. The first page carries the title “Duetto,” and the parts are labelled “Viola di gamba 1^{ma}” and “Viola di gamba 2^{da}.” Later modifications in the upper part in the hand of Ludwig Christian Hesse involve overwriting almost all of the noteheads and possibly some of the beams in this part, and the addition of numerous slurs, staccato strokes, trill signs and fingerings. The entire lower part, most of the beams and stems in the upper part, and the titles, tempo markings, stave brackets, clefs, key and time signatures appear to be in the hand of Schaffrath. As in much German gamba music, most of the work is written in treble clef, to be played an octave lower. Bass clef (played at the written pitch) is used for lower passages.

All fingerings and other performance markings present in the original have been reproduced here. Almost all of the original markings are in the upper part. We have introduced corresponding editorial articulation markings into the lower part, and occasionally also into the upper part. Editorial slurs are marked in dotted lines; editorial dynamic markings and staccato strokes are enclosed in square brackets. All beaming is reproduced exactly from the original. Although triplets are clearly identifiable from the beaming, the figure “3” is also used occasionally in the original to identify them. We have added the “3” to the other triplets, in accordance with modern convention.

In the original manuscript Schaffrath has generally followed the convention that accidentals apply only to the note before which they stand, or immediate repetitions of this note. In an effort to bring the eighteenth-century musical experience a little closer we have retained all accidentals, including those which are repeated within the bar. However, to avoid confusion we have added editorial cancellations where we believe they are required by modern convention. All editorial accidentals are enclosed in brackets.

In the score we have retained the clefs exactly as they stand in the manuscript. We have provided two sets of parts, one with the original clefs, and the other in alto and bass clefs.

In bars 76-78 of the third movement, corrections have been made in the manuscript, almost certainly contemporary with the writing of the piece. In the edition we have used the corrected text. This facsimile shows the passage in question:



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