

Introduction

This edition will present transcriptions made by the great eighteenth-century violist Ludwig Christian Hesse of the opera *Les Surprises de l'amour* by Jean Philippe Rameau. This work, while considered to be a sort of opera, is in fact a series of unrelated acts, known as *actes de ballet*. Rameau constantly changed the pieces in the *Surprises*. One of the earliest versions, from 1748, included the acts *Le Retour de l'Astrée*, *La Lyre enchantée*, and *Adonis*. By 1757 Rameau reworked the piece, renaming *Adonis* to *L'Enlèvement d'Adonis*, adding a new overture, retaining *La Lyre enchantée*, and adding a new act entitled *Anacréon*. The other acts (especially *La Lyre enchantée*) were revised by the following year and include additional music. The version that attracts our attention here is yet another, most probably the 1757 version that contains four acts: *L'Enlèvement d'Adonis*, *La Lyre enchantée*, *Anacréon*, and *Les Sibarites*. The libretto for the first act was written by Pierre Joseph Bernard and first presented in Paris in 1748 at the *Théâtre des Petits appartements*.

Ludwig Christian Hesse (1716-1772) was the son of Ernst Christian Hesse (1676-1762). Ernst Christian, also a viol player, had studied in Paris with Marais and Forqueray as attested by the following anecdote: Ernst Christian Hesse attempted to study with both masters. Knowing of their rivalry, he studied with one under his real name and with the other as "Sachs." Unfortunately for him, Forqueray and Marais eventually got around to bragging to one another about their respective brilliant German students. A competition between Sachs and Hesse was arranged. Poor Hesse showed up alone (needless to say) and tried to calm the roiled waters by playing first in Marais' style, then in Forqueray's. For this impertinence he was packed off to Darmstadt where he came from, and was seen no more in Versailles.

In 1766 Ludwig Christian Hesse was appointed as the private teacher to Prince Frederick William II in Berlin for whom these transcriptions were probably destined. These opera transcriptions are his only known compositions; this is not surprising in view of the fact that he was the son of a great violist/composer as well as a celebrated singer. Other transcriptions, listed in Thouret's catalogue, are also attributed to him.⁴ Unfortunately, many did not survive the Second World War, but it is certainly interesting to see the sheer number of opera transcriptions that Hesse produced. Most of these were for two viols, but there were some arrangements for three viols as well as for violin.

Hesse was keen on transcribing French operas, but did not exclude composers from Italy or his native Germany (such as J.C. Bach and Graun). The predilection for French opera might be viewed as a way for the German court to keep up with what was à la mode in Paris at the time. Hesse used a very heterogeneous way of expressing himself. The French language is ubiquitous, but he often uses Italian or even German expressions. It is amusing to see Rameau's original French instructions Italianized, which also provides insights into Hesse's interpretation of the original meaning.

Hesse's transcriptions are remarkable in many ways, including his ingenious manner of adapting music originally for a large orchestra with choir to the bare minimum of two viols. The essence of the opera is preserved and miraculously falls naturally under the fingers, as if Rameau had conceived it as a viol duo in the first place!

Our hope in presenting this edition is to quench viol player's thirst for solo music by Rameau and to shed more light on a period that is commonly believed to have displayed waning interest in the viol.

Paris, March 2010
Jonathan Dunford

Our Edition

Our primary source for this edition is housed in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelsson-Archiv with the shelf number **D-B KHM 2253**. This is an anthology titled *Les Motets de Campra / L'enlèvement d'Adonis, la Lire enchante, Anacreon, Sibaris, Balets p. M. Rameau, La Bohémienne par Zingoni et Mad Favart, Ninette a la cour par ... On ne s'avise jamais de tout par Monsigny, Le Sorcier par M. Philidor / Viole / par Monsieur Hesse / a Berlin Janvier 1767*. It consists of two part books, *Viole* and *Basse/Violoncelle*, that are written in the hand of Ludwig Christian Hesse.

⁴ Georg Thouret, *Katalog der Musiksammlung auf der Königlichen Hausbibliothek am Schlosse zu Berlin*, Leipzig 1895