

Introduction

This introduction covers three sonatas with viola da gamba by J. C. Pepusch which are available in three separate editions:

- G229 Sonata in D minor Cook 2:023 for flute, recorder or violin, viola or viola da gamba, continuo
- G232 Sonata in B minor Cook 2:029 for violin, viola da gamba, continuo
- G230 Quartet in G minor Cook 2:040 for two violins, viola da gamba, continuo.

Johann Christoph (or John Christopher) Pepusch was born in 1667 in Berlin and worked at the Prussian court before coming to London in the late 1690s, perhaps in the entourage of William III following the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. Little is known about his activities during his first years in England. Charles Burney wrote that he was a viola player in the orchestra at the Drury Lane theatre, and he is occasionally mentioned in advertisements for London concerts from 1707. He also played the harpsichord in the Italian opera company at the Haymarket Theatre from its inception in 1706–7, arranging the music for the pasticcio *Thomyris* (1707). He was active in the London's concert halls and theatres for much of his career, writing Italianate masques for Drury Lane in 1715–16 and working at Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre in the 1720s; he is most famous today for arranging the music for *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). He devoted most of his later life to teaching and to his antiquarian interests, becoming a leading light in the Academy of Ancient Music. He died in London on 20 July 1752.

Pepusch wrote a good deal of chamber music in his first years in London, for performance in concerts, for teaching purposes or just for publication. A number of his sonatas have obbligato parts for the viola da gamba, reflecting the continued popularity of the instrument in England and the fact that one of his colleagues in the opera orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre, Pietro Chaboud, played it as well as the flute and the bassoon. The German traveller Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach went to a London concert directed by Pepusch on 14 June 1710, when he heard 'a charming *Concert*', presumably a sonata, for recorder, gamba and continuo, played by James Paisible, Chaboud and Pepusch himself.

It is strange that Pepusch's sonatas with gamba mostly survive in German sources, given that they seem to have been written in England; he is not known to have visited Germany after his arrival in London. Of the three sonatas that we are concerned with here, only the Sonata in B minor⁷ Cook 2:029 survives in an English manuscript, a set of parts, now London, Royal College of Music, MS 1198(1). It was copied by an unidentified hand, who entitled it 'Sonata | for | 1 Violin, 1 Base Viol & Tho. Base | By | M Jn^o. Chr. Pepusch. | B# 21'; the honorific 'M' or Mr suggests that it was copied before July 1713, when he received a doctorate from the University of Oxford and became known as Dr Pepusch. The Sonata in D minor⁸ Cook 2:023 comes from a set of parts, originally from the Stuttgart court collection but now in the Universitätsbibliothek Rostock, Mus. Saec. XVII. 18-37/3, where it is entitled 'SONATA | a | Flauto Traversa | ou Violino | Viola | e | Basso Continuo | del Seig^r. Pepusch. | VII'. The Quartet in G minor⁹ Cook 2:040 comes from a set of parts in the Dresden court collection, Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Mus. 2160-Q-5, where it is entitled 'N: 4 | Trio¹⁰ | Viola de Gamb. V^{no}. e Basso | 4 St.¹¹ | Del Sig^r. Pepusch'.

⁷ edited here

⁸ Edition Güntersberg G229

⁹ Edition Güntersberg G230

¹⁰ It is actually a quartet.

¹¹ 4 Stimmen (4 parts)



Londoner Quelle: Beginn der Viola da Gamba-Stimme
 London source: beginning of the viola da gamba part

These sonatas and their sources raise some questions of scoring and performance practice. In the seventeenth century sonatas for violin, bass viol and continuo were normally played without a second bass instrument doubling the continuo, for the bass viol part usually shadows and elaborates the bass line. However, in Pepusch's sonatas the bass viol is completely independent from the bass, functioning as an obbligato part in the tenor range, so it is likely that he intended the continuo part to be doubled, probably by a violoncello. The obbligato second parts in the B minor and G minor sonatas are clearly intended for gamba, as the labels 'Base Viol' and 'Viola de Gamb[a]' indicate, but the one in the D minor sonata is equally suitable for the viola; the unqualified label 'viola' was used at the time equally for *da braccio* and *da gamba* instruments. The Rostock manuscript gives the violin and the transverse flute as alternatives for the upper part, but its range, *g'-d'''*, suggests that Pepusch originally intended it for the treble recorder rather than the flute; the flute only began to replace the recorder in England in the 1720s.

Although these sonatas might be thought to be related to the German seventeenth-century tradition of sonatas for violin, bass viol and continuo or two violins, bass viol and continuo, represented by works by Buxtehude, Erlebach, Reincken and others, their musical idiom is derived from modern Italian music, in particular the sonatas in Albinoni's opp. 1 (1694) and 2 (1700). Albinoni's op. 2 was republished by John Walsh in London in 1709 while op. 1 would have been known to musicians in England from a reprint by Estienne Roger of Amsterdam, imported by Roger's London agent François Vaillant. Like Albinoni, Pepusch laid out his sonatas in the slow-fast-slow-fast *da chiesa* pattern, with the second movement in a fugal style and the last in a minuet-like triple time or a jig-like compound time. Pepusch also used a melodic and harmonic idiom influenced by Albinoni, but apparently varied it according to his intended performers, keeping things relatively simple and easy to play in the D minor sonata, which was probably written for amateurs, and writing in a more complex and demanding manner in the B minor and G minor sonatas, which look as if they were written for Chaboud and other members of the Italian opera orchestra in London.