Parthenia In-Violata
Twenty Pieces for Harpsichord and Viola da Gamba
London ca. 1625
Edition Güntersberg

Parthenia In-Violata or Mayden-Musicke for the Virginalls and Bass-Viol, Selected out of the Compositions of the most famous in that Arte ... sums up this new publication which consists of twenty short pieces for keyboard with a part for bass viol (doubling the lowest notes). However, it is one of those intriguing collections that raises as many questions as it answers!

The original Parthenia of c.1612, was sold as the first attempt at printing keyboard music and contained large-scale pieces by the pre-eminent composers of the day – Byrd, Bull, and Gibbons. It seems likely that it was created for the celebrations of the marriage of James I's only daughter Elizabeth to Prince Frederick of the Palatinate. The full title, *Parthenia or the Maydenhead of the First Music that ever was printed for Virginalls,* engages in the typical contemporary linguistic allusions – both to the newness of the concept and the marriage.

The origins of *Parthenia In-Violata* are more obscure, but it may have been intended as a parallel offering for the wedding of Prince Charles and Henrietta Maria in 1625, the viol included as a reference to the Prince's known enthusiasm and skill as a player, the music perhaps intended for the royal couple to play together.

Unlike *Parthenia,* the pieces in this volume are published anonymously. Scholars, primarily the indefatigable Thurston Dart, have managed to identify works by Bull, Hooper, and Coprario, while a few pieces appear in other collections – again anonymously. In a further contrast with the 1612 set, the pieces here are short and straightforward eschewing the elaborate or virtuosic in favour of a direct, largely dance-inspired style. Included are Almaines, Corantos and dances and 'Toys' but, interestingly, no Pavans. Most follow the standard pattern, a short passage stated and then repeated with elaboration, but that only in the keyboard part.

Parthenia In-Violata could well suggest that it might have been common practice to play the virginals with the bass notes supported by another instrument. It certainly opens up possibilities not usually explored, but perhaps this is, after all, a one off.

The keyboard part is not especially demanding and the bass viol part is very simple. The standard ornaments of the Virginalists are frequently deployed (never in the viol part). The introductory notes in this edition give an explanation of their interpretation and of contemporary fingerings found in the only source.

The edition is, as always with this publisher, clear and well laid-out. The ornaments appear as rather thin lines, less easy to distinguish than the generally thicker and blacker signs used by most keyboard publications of this repertoire (a case of regular versus **bold.**) Otherwise, this is attractive, even tuneful, music for an unusual arrangement of instruments, well worth exploring.

Parthenia In-Violata seems to have languished in obscurity since Dart's facsimile edition of the 1960s. Edition Güntersberg are to be commended, therefore, for bringing it back to our attention, especially in what could be its 400th anniversary year.

Philip Redfern