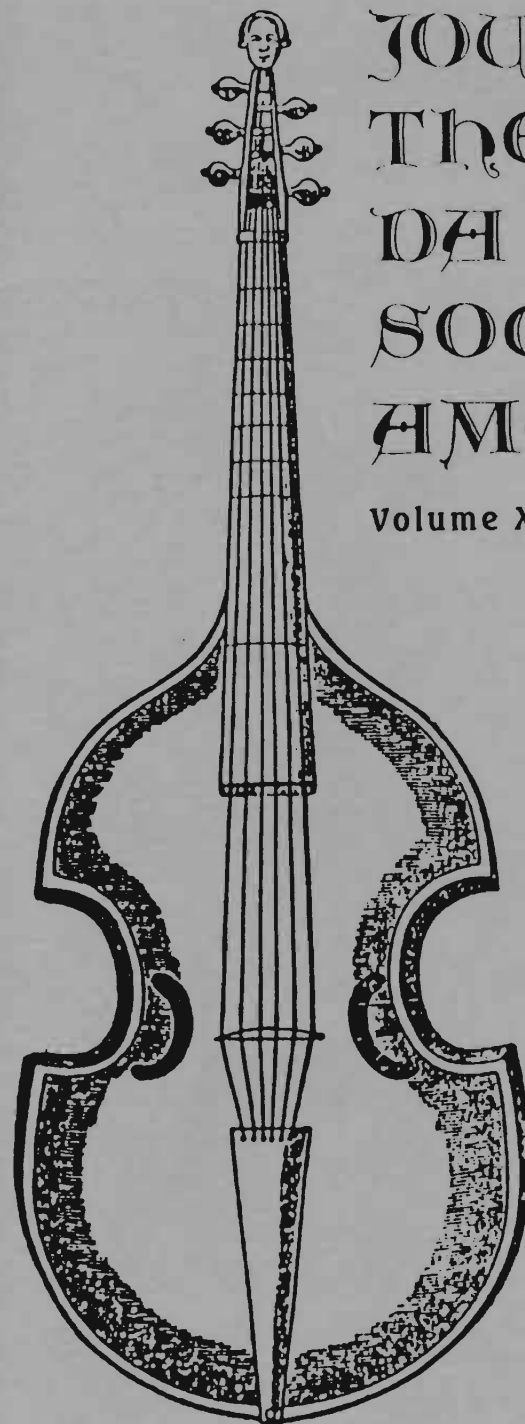


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The *Journal* editors welcome for consideration articles pertaining to the viols and related instruments, their history, manufacture, performers, music, and related topics. Articles, correspondence, and materials for review should be sent to the Editor: Stuart Cheney, 4222 31st St., Mt. Rainier, MD 20712. Authors should consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th Edition, for matters of style. Articles and reviews should be submitted on disk specifying the computer and program used, with two printed, double-spaced copies. Camera-ready music examples must be printed on separate sheets and identified with captions, with source files included on the disk if applicable. Photos must be submitted as black-and-white glossy prints.

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## VIOLA DA GAMBA SOCIETY OF AMERICA

4440 Trieste Drive  
 Carlsbad, CA 92008

vdgsa@enteract.com  
<http://www.enteract.com/~vdgsa>

The Viola da Gamba Society of America is a not-for-profit national organization dedicated to the support of activities relating to the viola da gamba in the United States and abroad. Founded in 1962, the VdGSA is a society of players, builders, publishers, distributors, restorers, and others sharing a serious interest in music for viols and other early bowed string instruments. VdGSA members receive a quarterly newsletter and this annual journal, and have access to the many activities and valuable resources of the Society.

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

We welcome two new authors in this issue of the *Journal*. Ted Conner is a new member of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, and as scholar and performer has undertaken to present and explain certain aspects of Simpson's *Division-Viol*. Joelle Morton of New York City clarifies the complex and poorly understood topic of the G violone in an article that will be interesting to set beside Gregory Barnett's review of Planyavsky's new book, also in this issue.

At the end of my seven-year stint of working on the *Journal*, I would like to share some reflections on the experience. In many ways it has been eye-opening and enlightening to have so many *Journal*-related contacts with scholars, viol makers, teachers, and performers. At Conclaves from California to Vermont, and at a conference in England on the Viol Fantasia from Ferrabosco II to Purcell, it has been evident how alive the interest in the viol is today, and how many more aspects of our favorite instrument and its repertoire still need to be examined.

This note also gives me an opportunity to thank the many people who have been helpful and generous with their expertise. In particular, Tom MacCracken has always been available with his meticulous scholarship and computer wizardry, and Jean Seiler has shared her knowledge and experience as copy editor and her mastery of the art of formatting. Additional constant support and encouragement have always been given to the *Journal* by Jack Ashworth and the Board members of the VdGSA.

For the future the Society is fortunate that Stuart Cheney, who as Review Editor has been ever successful in reaching out to new reviewers as well as finding provocative publications for review, has agreed to take over the Editorship. Roland Hutchinson—gambist extraordinaire, baryton viol specialist, and scholar—will succeed Stuart as Review Editor. In their hands the *Journal* should thrive and prosper in the new millennium.

Caroline Cunningham

## THE GROUNDBREAKING TREATISE OF CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON

Ted Conner

Having now thoroughly, and carefully perused it, I should reckon my self a little wanting to the Publique, if I acquainted not the world, that in so doing I have received much Benefit and Satisfaction. It bears for Title, *THE DIVISION VIOL*; or, *The Art of Playing Extempore upon a Ground*; and it does certainly answer That pretence, both for *Matter* and *Method*, to the highest point of reasonable Expectation.<sup>1</sup>

With these words, Roger L'Estrange, The Licenser of Music for publication during the reign of Charles II, proudly introduced the second edition of Christopher Simpson's treatise on the viol and improvisation. The first edition, published eight years earlier under the title *The Division-Violist*, had received similar praise from such notables as Charles Coleman, John Carwarden, John Jenkins, and Matthew Locke. Coleman, in one of several poems that preface the first edition, testifies to Simpson's skill as a pedagogue. "*Her [harmony's] roughest Descants you have made so clear, 'Tis as much pleasure now, to learn, as Hear. . . .*"<sup>2</sup> Locke echoes Coleman's sentiments, proclaiming, "*How have the Learned Theoricks of their Ages; Burd'ned the World with Volumes; When Three*

---

<sup>1</sup>Roger L'Estrange, "To the Reader," introduction to *Chelys minuritionum artificio exornata/The Division-Viol, or The Art of Playing Ex tempore upon a Ground*, by Christopher Simpson (London: W. Godbid for Henry Brome at the Gun in Ivy-lane, 1665). While the title page indicates the treatise was published in 1665, Nathalie Dolmetsch, in the Foreword, suggests that the actual publication was "delayed till 1667 by the Plague and the Fire of London."

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Simpson, *The Division-Violist or An Introduction to the Playing upon a Ground* (London: William Godbid, 1659), Preface.

*Pages; Formed by your Nobler Muse, have given Us more; Then They, or Knew, or Saw, or Heard before!*"<sup>3</sup>

The accolades received by Simpson were well deserved. Addressing theoretical aspects of composition, their application to various forms of improvisation—what Simpson refers to as diminution or division to a ground—and a wide range of performance issues, *The Division-Viol* presents a rich vision of musical practice in seventeenth-century England. Most important for our purposes is his detailed discussion of improvisational techniques for the viol. Following a brief overview of Simpson's treatise and its pedagogical approach, I will examine the guidelines Simpson develops for playing *ex tempore* to a ground. This more narrow focus will then be expanded to include his thoughts on local and global principles of structure within longer improvisations. Finally, I will analyze several extended passages from Simpson's treatise as well as excerpts from his composition *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground*, to provide a comparison of "theory and practice."<sup>4</sup>

### Overview

*The Division-Viol* is divided into three sections. Part I is devoted to "the Viol it self, with Instructions how to play upon it."<sup>5</sup> Illustrations are included that show a viol appropriate for playing divisions and demonstrate correct position and posture. Instrument setup and tuning, suggestions on left-hand placement and fingerings, and rules for various articulations are also discussed. The second part functions as a primer for the rules of musical composition, providing a theoretical discourse on the "Use of the Concorde, or a Compendium of Descant."<sup>6</sup> Simpson defines

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Christopher Simpson, *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground (with keyboard realization)*, edited by Donald Beecher and Bryan Gillingham (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1980). Beecher and Gillingham's edition is transcribed from Oxford, Bodleian MSS Mus. Sch. C77, a and b, No. 7. The scribal origin and exact date of composition are unknown.

<sup>5</sup>Simpson, *The Division-Viol*, 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 13.

consonant and dissonant intervals, examines counterpoint in two, three, and four voices, and explains the importance of keys.<sup>7</sup> These first two sections serve as preparation for the third part of the work, a practical manual teaching "Division, and the manner of performing it."<sup>8</sup> This organizational framework reflects the influence of the Ciceronian model of theory, imitation, and practice typical of many pedagogical works from this period.<sup>9</sup> Simpson's treatise is designed to provide the student with a thorough grounding in theoretical principles followed by numerous musical examples. These examples are to be imitated and practiced until they have been mastered. Simpson's adherence to this approach is demonstrated by his response to his reader's rhetorical query at the beginning of the third section. "But this [Division to a Ground] you will say is a perfection that few attain unto, depending much upon the quickness of Invention as well as quickness of Hand. I answer, it is a perfection which some excellent Hands have not attained unto, as wanting those helps which should lead them to it; the supply of which want is the business we here endeavour. True it is, that Invention is a gift of

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. In a marked departure from the treatise of his predecessor Thomas Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), Simpson suggests that intervals should be determined from the bass rather than the tenor. "Although our excellent Country-man Mr. Morley, in his *Introduction to Musick*, doth take his sight, and reckon his Concorde from the Tenor, as Holding Part to which He and the Musicians of former times were accustomed to apply their Descant, in order to the *Gregorian Musick* of the Church; yet here, for better reasons (as to our present purpose) I must propose unto you the Bass, as the Groundwork or Foundation upon which all Musical Composition is to be erected; and from it we are to reckon or compute all those distances or Intervalls which we use in joyning Parts together."

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>9</sup>Cicero, *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, I.ii.3, Eng. trans. Harry Caplan (London and New York: The Loeb Classical Library, 1954), 7, 9. "All these faculties [the canons of rhetoric] we can acquire by three means: Theory, Imitation, and Practice. By theory is meant a set of rules that provide a definite method and system of speaking. Imitation stimulates us to attain, in accordance with a studied method, the effectiveness of certain models in speaking. Practice is assiduous exercise and experience in speaking." This approach was more broadly applied to other areas of education in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Nature, *but much improved by Exercise and Practice* [my italics].”<sup>10</sup>

Once the viol player has selected an appropriate instrument, developed the necessary level of technical proficiency, and mastered the rules of musical composition, he or she is prepared to study the art of improvisation. Simpson reveres the improviser as the most skilled of musicians. “In this manner of Play, which is the perfection of the *Viol*, or any other Instrument, if it be exactly performed, a man may shew the Excellency both of his Hand and Invention, to the delight and admiration of those that hear him.”<sup>11</sup>

While Simpson does not believe a lack of intellectual prowess should prevent a viol player from performing, technical proficiency alone is not as highly valued. He makes a distinction between those who improvise spontaneously and those who play previously-composed divisions. The performer of previously-composed divisions “may deserve the Name of an excellent Artist; for here the excellency of the Hand may be shewed as well as in the Other [playing *ex tempore* on a Ground], and the Musick perhaps better, though less to be admired, as being more studied.”<sup>12</sup>

Simpson defines diminution or Division to a Ground as “the Breaking, either of the *Bass*, or of any higher Part that is applicable thereto.”<sup>13</sup> In order to meet the demands of this definition, the improviser may be required to assume a variety of functional roles (i.e., bass, tenor, alto, or soprano)—performing comfortably across the entire range of the instrument—and master several improvisational approaches:

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<sup>10</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 27.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.* At least two instruments are required for the performance of Divisions. The ground in its original form is played by a chordal instrument while the violist improvises against it. “A *Ground, Subject, or Bass*, (call it which you please) is prick’d [written] down in two several Papers; One for him who is to play the *Ground* upon an *Organ, Harpsechord*, or what other Instrument may be apt for that purpose; the Other, for him that plays upon the *Viol*. . . .”

In Playing to a *Ground* we exercise the whole Compass of the *Viol*, acting therein sometimes the Part of a *Bass*, sometimes a *Treble* or some other Part. From hence proceed Two kinds of Division, viz. a *Breaking of the Ground*, and a *Descanting upon it*; Out of which two is generated a Third sort of Division; to wit a *Mixture* of Those, one with the other; which Third or last sort, is expressed in a two fold Manner; that is, either in Single or in Double Notes.<sup>14</sup>

### Breaking the Ground

Breaking the ground, the first kind of division discussed by Simpson, is a linear form of improvisation that does not involve the use of double stops. Through diminution, the notes of the ground are subdivided to produce groupings of shorter rhythmic duration. For example, “a *Semibreve* may be broken into two *Minims*, four *Crotchets*, eight *Quavers*, sixteen *Semi-quavers*, etc.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to rhythmic variation, the pitch structure may also be altered by embellishment and ornamentation.

Simpson examines five techniques for improvising over the basic structure of the ground, what he calls “*Five ways of Breaking a Note*.”<sup>16</sup> The first technique involves rhythmic diminution only (Example 1).<sup>17</sup> With the exception of octave displacement, no alteration is made to the pitch structure of the ground.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>To facilitate discussion, musical examples from Simpson’s treatise have been transcribed in modern notation. Durational values and original barings have been maintained. Generally speaking, the note or notes being broken (or later descanted upon) are presented first, on the left-hand side of the example. Simpson’s embellishments follow. In cases where more than one division is shown, they are separated by a double bar. In several examples, more than one model for division is provided. Where this occurs, each model and its divisions are separated from the others by a solid barline.

<sup>18</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 28. Simpson assumes octave equivalence in his treatise, suggesting that “there is no variation of Sound, by reason of the *Minutes* standing still in the same place, or removing into the *Octave*, which I accompt is but the same Tone.”



Example 1

The second method for breaking a note is an extension of the first technique. In addition to rhythmic subdivision and octave displacement, pitch variation is introduced (Example 2). Alterations in pitch, however, are brief and limited in range. Simpson suggests that “the sound is varied and yet the Ayre retained, either by a quick return, or by keeping near to the place of the Note divided.”<sup>19</sup> Like the first approach, this form of ornamentation embellishes a single note rather than the transition between notes and meets the next note of the ground at the unison or the octave. In modern terms, these divisions may be described as neighbor notes, escape tones, arpeggiations, and arpeggiations filled in with passing notes.



Example 2

With the third technique, Simpson’s focus shifts from the embellishment of a single note to the creation of a smooth transition between consecutive notes in the ground (Example 3). The transition is effected by connecting the two notes with a scalar passage, although the interval of a third may be used occasionally. Once again, the rhythmic value of the diminutions is equal to the duration of the note in the ground, and the original pitch is always sounded on its structural downbeat.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 29.



Example 3

The fourth form of division may be likened to arpeggiation. The note from the ground is broken by leaping to pitches that are consonant to it, which Simpson describes as “skipping into other *Concords*” (Example 4).<sup>21</sup> Consonant intervals are defined according to the principles Simpson establishes in the second part of his treatise and include “a Third, a Fifth, a Sixth, an Eighth, and their Octaves. All the rest (with their Octaves) are *Discords*.”<sup>22</sup> This method for breaking a note seems to anticipate descant. The distinction between these two forms of embellishment, however, rests on the choice of the first pitch of the diminution. When a note is broken the original pitch is sounded on the structural downbeat, while a note consonant to the pitch from the ground is used on the structural downbeat in descant.



Example 4

The fifth and final technique for breaking the ground combines elements of the previous two forms of division. According to

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 15. Simpson treats the interval of a fourth as a special case. “A Fourth, as it is an Intervall betwixt the Fifth and Eighth in the two upper parts, may in that sence be called a Consonant, but Computed with the Bass, it is a Discord.”

Simpson, the notes in diminution “make a *Gradual* transition into some of the *Concords*, passing from thence either to end in the *Sound of the \*Holding Note*, or else, moving on, to meet the next *Note of the Ground*. And though this moving into the *Concords*, be the very same as *Descant*, so long as it continues in that *Motion*; yet in regard of its returning either to its *own Note*, or to meet the *next following Note* in nature of a *Bass*, we must *here* rank it under the name and notion of *Breaking the Ground*” (Example 5).<sup>23</sup>



Example 5

Summarizing, Simpson places his more detailed rules for breaking a ground within three general principles. “The chief *Mysterie of Division* to a *Ground* may be referred to these three *Heads*. First, That it be harmonious to the holding *Note*. Secondly, that it come off so, as to meet the next *Note of the Ground* in a smooth and natural passage. Thirdly, Or if it pass into *Discords*, that they be such as are aptly used in *Composition*.”<sup>24</sup> Several examples are provided to show divisions that are harmonious to the holding note and also make a smooth transition to the next note of the ground (Example 6). To insure smooth passage, Simpson suggests scalar approach (either ascending or descending) of at least two notes, preferably three or more. In more rapid divisions, he recommends that the number of transitional pitches be increased.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 30. Simpson’s asterisk directs the reader to a marginal note indicating that the “*Holding-Note, Standing-Note, Ground-Note, and Note divided, etc. [are] the same.*”

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 31.



Example 6

Four further restrictions are identified as being necessary for the proper execution of division on the viol. Pitches added by diminution must be consistent with the “*Key and Ayre*” of the ground, or in modern terms, the division should be carried out diatonically.<sup>26</sup> Simpson also pays special attention to the chromatic alteration of pitches a seventh above and a second below the note being broken:

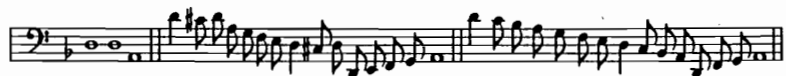
Here a doubt may arise, concerning the *Seventh* above and *Second* below the *Divided-Note*; which, in the *Division*, is sometimes made sharp, and suddenly Flat again, according to its own nature: in which doubts the *Ear* must always be chief *Umpire*. Howbeit, in this particular, something (I think) may be deliver’d by way of *Rule*; which is, that if we descend to a *Second*, and immediately ascend again, that *Second* must be made *Sharp*: The same is understood of the *Seventh* above, in reference to the *Eighth*, as you may see in breaking the two *semibreves* in *D* [Example 7]. Here your *Ear* will tell you that the *Note in C* requires a *Sharp*: but in the second Instance where the next *Note* doth not so ascend, no *Sharp* is required.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 32, 34. Simpson addresses the issue of keys in the second part of *The Division-Viol*. “Every composition in Musick, be it long or short, is (or ought to be) designed to some one *Key or Tone*, in which the *Bass* doth always conclude. This *Key or Tone* is called *Flat or Sharp*, according as the *Key-note* hath the lesser or greater *Third* next above it. If it be the *Lesser Third*, ’tis called a *Flat Key*, if the *Greater Third*, ’tis a *Sharp Key*.” (p. 16)

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 34. Simpson adds that “From this *Rule* we must except, that if the *Ground* do suddenly rise or fall to a *Flat Second*; or fall a *Third*, or make a *Cadence*: In these *Cases* no *Sharp* is required, though the *Note* rise again, as you may see in these *Instances*.”







Example 7

While it appears that Simpson is addressing a general principle of chromatic alteration that would be applied to any note in the ground, in practice his concern is the treatment of the seventh-scale degree in the minor mode. In all his examples, the subtonic is raised to form the leading tone when it functions as a lower neighbor note to the final of the mode and at cadences. In situations where the subtonic functions as a passing note or an upper-neighbor note, no chromatic alterations are made. Although not stated explicitly, Simpson's concern with the seventh-scale degree seems motivated by his previous restriction that diminutions be consistent with the key of the ground. Chromatic alteration of another scale degree would imply tonal transformations—modulation, or at the very least, tonicization—that by their absence, Simpson seems to prohibit from the performance of divisions.

Simpson extends his discussion of chromatic alteration to include cadential patterns suggested within a ground. When a falling fifth or rising fourth in the ground implies a cadence, notes that are a third above or a sixth below must be played sharp to insure that an appropriate sense of closure is achieved (Example 8).<sup>28</sup> This stipulation again reinforces the focus of the previous section: treatment of the seventh-scale degree in the minor mode.



Example 8

Consideration of chromatic alterations applied to the seventh above or the second below the divided note leads Simpson to an examination of intervals and their inversions. Inversional symmetry based on octave equivalence is established for all intervals.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 32.

For example, the rising second or third is equivalent to the falling seventh or sixth respectively (Example 9).<sup>29</sup>



Example 9

The extension of octave equivalence beyond the limited application in the first technique of breaking a note in the ground allows the viol player to apply the concept of registral displacement in more varied contexts. As a practical result, the improviser may meet "any succeeding note of the *Ground*, in the *Unison*, or in its *Octave*, above or below it; for, concerning *Octaves* the reason is still the same."<sup>30</sup> The same rationale is used by Simpson to establish the guidelines for breaking notes above and below the ground (Example 10). "[A]s your Division passes into the Third and Fifth, whilst it moveth above (by which it is made harmonious to the *Ground-Note*) so, in moving beneath, it must pass into the under *Octaves* of those Concorde, viz. into the Sixth and Fourth below the *Ground-Note*."<sup>31</sup>



Example 10

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

Finally, Simpson prohibits the use of a scalar descent as a means of approaching the final note of the ground (Example 11). In one of the few critical remarks found within the treatise, he notes that this rule is frequently violated in what for him are contemporary performances. "Another observation is; that at a *Close* I would always have the *Division* to end in the Sound of the Note next before the *Close*, and from thence leap off into the Sound of the Final Note. . . . And here I cannot but take notice of an error which I have observed in some reputed excellent Violists; who in playing a *Consort-Bass*, would sometimes at the very *Close* run down by degrees to the Concluding-Note; than which nothing is more improper; for, if any *upper Part* do fall from a Fifth to an Eighth (a thing most frequent) the *Bass*, by such a Running down by degrees, doth make two prohibited Eights to the said Part."<sup>32</sup>

Not allowed. Not allowed.

Allowed. Allowed.

Example 11

Simpson's reliance on the pedagogical model of theory, imitation and practice is further emphasized at the conclusion of his explanation of breaking the ground. Having discussed the theoretical aspects of his five techniques, he takes an eight-measure ground and composes divisions for the viol player to practice and imitate. To insure that the relationship between the original notes

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 34.

and their diminutions is clear, the ground is placed directly below the "improvised" line. The opening division is kept fairly simple (Example 12). Only the first three techniques are applied: rhythmic diminution with octave equivalence (which I have denoted below as "1"), pitch variation with a quick return ("2"), and smooth transition between two notes in the ground ("3").

3 -----> 1 -----> 2 ---> 1 --> 2 -----> 1 ----->

Example 12

The treatment of the lower-neighbor notes in the fifth and seventh measures demonstrates the more subtle aspects of Simpson's guidelines for chromatic alteration. His "Rule . . . that if we descend to a Second, and immediately ascend again, that Second must be made Sharp" would suggest that the E $\flat$  eighth note (m. 5) should be raised to an E $\sharp$  and the C (m. 7) should be raised to a C $\sharp$ .<sup>33</sup> However, the C in the seventh measure—despite its status as a lower neighbor—is not the seventh degree of the mode. It does not function as a "leading tone" and, therefore, is not chromatically altered. The same argument can be made for the E $\flat$  that ornaments the F in the fifth measure. Chromatically altering either the C or the E $\flat$  would, at least temporarily, shift the division's focus away from G Dorian, breaking Simpson's rule that "your *Division* be carried on smoothly, as we have formerly admonished; and that your *Flats* and *Sharps* have still relation to the Key and Ayre of your *Ground*."<sup>34</sup> These examples testify to the importance Simpson places on modal stability. Chromatic embellishment of a lower-neighbor note is avoided unless the pitch being altered is the seventh degree of the given key.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 32.

The second division is once again limited to the first three techniques for breaking the ground; however, Simpson uses this example to foreshadow his discussion on “points” or, to use modern terminology, motives (Example 13). The “octave-leap” motive (*a*)—introduced in the third measure of the opening division (see Example 12)—is placed at the beginning of each of the first four measures of Example 13 and recalled on the fourth beat of the fifth measure in the same example. A second gesture, four eighth notes rising a third and then leaping back to the initial pitch (first articulated in the sixth measure of the opening division), is also repeated and varied throughout the second division of the ground (motive *b*). Simpson’s development of motivic structures in this example reflects his sophistication as a pedagogue. While the explicit goal of the division is to demonstrate the various techniques for breaking a ground, the viol player who practices these diminutions is being subtly prepared for a subsequent “lesson.”

1 -----> 2 --> 3 -> 1 -----> 3 -----> 1 -----> 2 -----> 1 -----> 2 ----->

*a*   *b*   *a*   *a*   *b*   *a*   *b*

2 -----> 1 --> 2 ----->

*b*   *b*   *b*   *b*   *b*

Example 13

5 ----->

4 -----> 1 -----> 3 -----> 4 -----> 3 ----->

5 ----->

3 -----> 1 -----> 3 -----> 4 -----> 3 ----->

5 ----->

1 --> 3 -----> 1 --> 2 --> 3 -----> 1 --> 3 -----> 1 --> 3 ----->

5 ----->

5 ----->

+ denotes the brief interpolation of descant

Example 14

In addition to their greater complexity, the diminutions of the third division demonstrate the almost hierarchical relationship that exists among the various techniques for breaking a ground (Example 14). The fourth method, skipping into other concords (“4”) extends the melodic options of the first technique (only octave displacement is permitted) and the fairly limited “arpeggiations” (motion to the third by step and return by leap is allowed) to include all the consonant intervals (third, fifth, sixth and

octave) without the requirement of passing notes. Extending the hierarchy, these first four forms of breaking the ground may be conceptually subsumed under the fifth method: namely, gradual transition into some of the concords ("5"). This technique prescribes melodic motion, either by step or leap, directed towards one of the concords, recalling the first, second, and fourth techniques. Once these embellishments have been executed, the violist is instructed to either return to the original pitch or approach the next note of the ground through stepwise motion. This last direction is derived from the third technique.

### Descant Division

Following his discussion of breaking the ground, Simpson turns his attention to descant and identifies the differences between the two practices:

*Descant Division* is that which makes a Different-concording-part unto the *Ground*. It differs from the Former [breaking the ground] in These particulars. That breaks the Notes of the *Ground*; This Descants upon them. That takes the liberty to wander sometimes beneath the *Ground*; This (as in its proper sphere) moves still above it. That meets every succeeding Note of the *Ground*, in the *Unison* or *Octave*; This, in any of the *Concords*. But in the main business of *Division*, they are much the same: for all *Division*, whether *Descant* or *Breaking* the *Bass*, is but a Transition from Note to Note, or from one Concord to another, either by Degrees or Leaps, with an Intermixture of such Discords as are allowed in Composition.<sup>35</sup>

Descant division involves the addition of another part to be performed simultaneously by the viol player above the ground. Voice-leading between the parts is governed by the same rules of counterpoint applied to composition. The division "may begin with a Third, Fifth or Eighth to the *Ground-Note*; passing on to meet the next Note also in a Third, Fifth, or Eighth: provided you avoyd the consecution of Perfects of the same kind [parallel octaves or fifths], as hath been delivered. The manner of *Breaking* this *Descant* is the same I gave you in *Breaking a Note*, according

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 35.

to those Five Ways mentioned . . . and [it is] left to your liberty to use This or That, as occasion shall require."<sup>36</sup> Discords are prohibited at the beginning of a diminution of a ground-note unless the dissonance is a suspension—called by Simpson a *Syncopation* or *Binding*—that is resolved correctly (Example 15).



Example 15

Simpson's use of sixths in Example 15 appears to be in conflict with his rule that descant division begin with a third, fifth or octave to the ground. This apparent inconsistency is explained by Simpson through a model of subposition quite similar to the theory of supposition articulated by Jean Philippe Rameau over fifty years later.<sup>37</sup> Placing a "fundamental bass" beneath the

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Jean Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony* [1722], trans. Philip Gossett (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 15, 16. In Book I, Chapter 2, Article V, Rameau argues that the "sounds which form the thirds and the sixths are all contained in the divisions of the undivided string and are consequently generated by the fundamental sound. With regard to intervals, however, only the octave, the fifth, and the major third are directly generated by the fundamental sound. The minor third and the sixths are dependent on the fifth and the octave for they arise from the difference between the major third and the fifth and between the two thirds and the octave. This demands some thought, especially with regard to the minor.

"Since all intervals are generated by the octave and begin and end there, so should the minor third. It should not be found indirectly, between the major third and the fifth, but related directly to the fundamental sound or its octave. Otherwise this third could no longer change its position; it would have to occupy the middle position in chords and could never occupy their extremities. This would be entirely contrary to experience and to those properties attributed to the arithmetic and harmonic proportions; i.e., the former divides the fifth (according to our system) by the major third below and the major above. There is a new type of inversion in the order of these thirds, clearly indicating that all the diversity of harmony is indeed based on inversion. . . .

"From everything just said, we must conclude that there are only three primary consonances, the fifth and the two thirds; from these is constructed a

ground, Simpson argues that the sixth is conceptually related to an octave (Example 16). “[T]he black Notes express the full latitude of the *Bass*, according to what hath been formerly shewed. Now, if you do but break this *Ground* according to the black Notes, you will find that your *Division* doth (of it self) produce Sixths to those Notes which stand a Third higher.”<sup>38</sup>



Example 16

Continuing his explanation, Simpson argues that the fifth, normally an acceptable consonance, would be an inappropriate interval in these instances (Example 17). “And here you may perceive the reason, why such Notes affect a Sixth and not a Fifth, because a Fifth would produce a Seventh to those Notes which express the full latitude of the *Bass*.”<sup>39</sup>



Example 17

chord called *natural* or *perfect*. Three secondary consonances arise from the primary consonances, the fourth and the two sixths; from these are constructed two new chords which are inversions of the first chord.”

<sup>38</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 36.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

## Mixed Division

Finally, Simpson discusses mixed division. This form of division—held by Simpson to be the most beautiful—involves the simultaneous use of descant division and the breaking of the ground:

I Call that *Mixt Division* which mixeth *Descant* and *Breaking the Ground*, one with the other; under which name I comprehend all *Division* which presents to our Ears the Sounds of *Two* or more Parts moving together: And, this is expressed either in single Notes, by hitting first upon One String and then upon an Other; or in double Notes, by touching two or more Strings at once with the Bow. This, as it is more excellent than the single ways of *Breaking the Ground*, or *Descanting* upon it, so it is more intricate, and requires more of judgment and skill in Composition; by reason of the Bindings and intermixtures of Discords, which are as frequent in This as in any other *Figurate Musik*.<sup>40</sup>

Simpson’s example of mixed division demonstrates the technical, as well as the conceptual, challenges that face the viol player seeking to master this form of diminution (Example 18).



Example 18

## Applying the Forms

Following his exegesis of the three forms of division—breaking the ground, descant and mixed division—Simpson shifts his focus to motives, or what he calls “points,” and their role in improvisation. “It now only remains that I give you some little assistance, by taking you (as it were) by the Hand, and leading you into the easiest way of Playing *Ex tempore* to a *Ground*. First, you are to make choice of some *Ground* consisting of *Semibreves* or *Minims*, or a mixture of these two: for such ought

<sup>40</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 36.

*Grounds* to be, which are proposed to be Play'd upon at sight. Next, you ought to be provided of ten, twelve, or more points of *Division* (the more the better) each consisting of a *Semibreve* or *Minim*, which you may accommodate to the first Note or Notes of your *Ground*."<sup>41</sup>

Simpson offers twenty-four points to insure that the viol player has appropriate models to begin his study of motivic manipulation and development. Each point represents a diminution of the first pitch of a hypothetical ground, applying one or more of the methods of division discussed earlier in the treatise. Four of his examples are considered in Example 19. The first point uses the fourth technique of breaking a note to embellish the first pitch of the ground. The diminution begins on the F and skips into other concords. The second point is also based on the fourth technique of breaking a ground. The F is embellished by skips into all the concords including the third, the fifth, the sixth, and the octave before returning to the initial pitch. In the third example, the fifth method of descant is applied to embellish the ground-note, F. The point begins a tenth above the original note (note the use of octave displacement) and skips through the concords until the final A, which is embellished by the ornament of quick return. Finally, the fourth point provides a demonstration of mixed division.

Example 19

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 53.

After each point has been studied and practiced, Simpson encourages the viol player to extend the process of motivic manipulation to the remaining notes of the ground. "Being thus prepared, take one of the said Points, and apply it first to One Note, and then to another, and so through the whole *Ground*. When you can do this, take another Point, and do the like with it, and so one after another so many as you please."<sup>42</sup> Once the points he has provided have been mastered, "you may add infinite more at your pleasure."<sup>43</sup> Simpson's division of the ground using his second point is shown in Example 20. In keeping with the fourth technique of breaking a ground, consonant intervals are used through the improvisation except in the penultimate measure where the dissonant intervals of a fourth and a seventh are added. The proximity of the fourth to the sixth and the placement of the seventh on the final beat of the measure are clearly intended to intensify the cadence leading to the final D major triad.

Example 20

Finally, Simpson shifts his attention to larger architectonic issues. He suggests specific strategies for organizing and executing longer improvisations with various combinations of viol and continuo players. These include specific directions for

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

“Composing Division for one Viol to a Ground, . . . two Viols Playing together *ex tempore* to a Ground, . . . [and] Composing Divisions of Two or Three Parts.”<sup>44</sup> For example, when performing extended divisions for two bass viols and a continuo player, he recommends the following steps for structuring the improvisation:

Step Simpson’s Directions in *The Division-Viol*

1. First, let the *Ground* be prick’d down in three several Papers; One for him who Plays upon the *Organ* or *Harpsechord*: The other two for them that Play upon the two *Viols*; which, for order and brevity, we will distinguish by three Letters; viz. *A.* for *Organist*, *B.* for the *first Bass*, and *C.* for the *second*.
2. They may all three begin together; *A.* and *B.* Playing the *Ground*, and *C.* Descanting to it, in slow notes, or such as may sute the beginning of the Music.
3. Let *C.* Play the *Ground*, and *B.* Descant to it, as the other had done before, but with some little variation.
4. The *Ground* thus Play’d over, *C.* may begin again, and Play a Strain of quicker *Division*.
5. Let *B.* answer the same with another something like it, but of a little more lofty Ayre.
6. When the *Viols* have thus (as it were) Vied and Revied one to the other, *A.* if he have ability of Hand, may, upon a sign given him, put in his Strain of *Division*; the two *Viols* Playing one of them the *Ground*, and the other *slow* Descant to it.
7. *A.* having finished his Strain, a reply thereto may be made, first by one *Viol.* and then by the other.
8. Having answered one another in that same manner so long as they think fit, the two *Viols* may divide a Strain Both together.
9. *C.* may begin some Point of *Division*, of the length of a *Breve* or *Semibreve*, naming the said word, that *B.* may know his intentions: which ended, let *B.* answer the same upon the succeeding Note or Notes to the like quantity of Time; taking it in that manner, one after another, so long as they please.
10. This done, they may betake themselves to some other point of a different length, which will produce a new variety.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 57–59.

11. *A.* if (as I said) he have ability of Hand . . . may begin his Point as they had done one to another; which Point may be answered by the *Viols*, either singly or joynly.
12. Both *Viols* may Play another Strain together, either in quick or slow Notes, which they please.
13. If the Musick be not yet spun out to a sufficient length, they may begin to Play *Tripla’s* and Proportions, answering each other either in whole Strains or parcels.
14. Joyn together in a Thundering Strain of *Quick* Division; with which they may conclude; or else with a Strain of Slow and sweet Notes, according as may best sute the circumstance of time and place.

In Composing Division for *two Bass Viols*, you may follow the forementioned method, making sometimes This, sometimes That *Part* move above or below: Sometimes answering one the other in Points, sometimes joyned together in Division; sometimes in *slow*, sometimes in *quick* Motions, such as may best produce Variety: but after their answering one another in Points, I would always have them joyn together in some lofty Strain of *Division*, with which, or with some slow and pleasing *Descant* you may conclude your Composition.<sup>45</sup>

Simpson also emphasizes the importance of using a wide range of approaches when playing *ex tempore* on a ground, “for variety it is which chiefly pleaseth: The best *Division* in the world, still continued, would become tedious to the Hearer; and therefore you must so place and dispose your *Division*, that the change of it from one kind to another may still beget a new attention.”<sup>46</sup> To achieve a satisfactory level of variation, aspiring viol players are encouraged to study his compositions—as well as those of other composers—to gain a better understanding of the principles outlined in *The Division-Viol*. This suggestion is accompanied by an apology and an explanation for his not having included a greater number of examples (!) in his treatise. “In these several sorts of *Division* of *two* and *three Parts*, my self, amongst others more eminent, have made divers Compositions, which perhaps

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 58–59.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 56.



might be useful to young Musicians, either for their Imitation or Practice: but the Charge of Printing *Divisions* (as I have experienced in the *Cuts* of the *Examples* in this present Book) dothe make that kind of Musick less communicable."<sup>47</sup>

### Simpson's Divisions for Two Basses

Taking Simpson's advice, we will examine one of his compositions, *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground*, to see how closely the composer's practice follows the pedagogue's theory.<sup>48</sup> Our primary concern will be his use and development of points as an organizing principle within an extended improvisational setting. *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground* is composed on a fairly simple, four-measure ground that is repeated twenty-seven times. The ground may be partitioned into two equal sections, the second two measures being a slightly embellished variation of the first two measures (Example 21). As Simpson suggests in his directions for two viols improvising together, the continuo (*A.*) and one of the viols (*B.*) play the ground while the second viol (*C.*) descants to it during the first presentation of the ground.<sup>49</sup>

GI/mm. 1-4

Example 21 shows three staves labeled C, B, and A. Above the staves is the text "GI/mm. 1-4". Staff C contains a melodic line with beamed eighth notes, representing a descant. Staffs B and A contain a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes, representing the ground. The music is in 2/4 time and G major.

Example 21

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>48</sup> See note 4.

<sup>49</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 57-59. Ground number (G \_\_) and measure numbers (mm. \_\_) are indicated above the staff. While not the focus of this analysis, it should be noted that in this composition Simpson follows, quite closely, the architectonic principles he establishes for "two Viols Playing together ex tempore to a Ground" (see page 26ff).

In this initial division, *C.* suggests several motivic ideas whose potential for development and transformation are realized as the improvisation unfolds. The focus of this discussion will be the point introduced by Simpson in the first half of the ground (GI/mm. 1-2), a lower-neighbor note to a concord, the third, followed by a scalar ascent to the fifth (Example 22).<sup>50</sup> This motive (denoted as *M*) returns in a transformed realization during the second half of the division (GI/mm. 3-4). While the basic shape and rhythmic profile remain the same (indicated by the beamed notes extracted from the middle system), the intervallic structure is altered so that the melodic line descends through the concords from the fifth to the third and then ascends again, returning to the fifth of the G major harmony.<sup>51</sup>

GI/mm. 1-2                      M.                      GI/mm. 3-4

Example 22 shows three staves labeled C, B, and A. Above the staves is the text "GI/mm. 1-2", "M.", and "GI/mm. 3-4". Staff C contains a melodic line with beamed notes, representing the motive M. Staffs B and A contain a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes, representing the ground. The music is in 2/4 time and G major.

Example 22

During the twenty-seven divisions that follow, Simpson develops point *M* using a wide range of technical and conceptual approaches. These displays of improvisational ingenuity help him

<sup>50</sup>A second point, a descending four-note scalar passage, is also introduced in the initial division. Realized first as quarter notes (with one dotted quarter) descending from G to D (GI/m. 3) and then as an eighth-note descent from E to B (GI/m. 4), this motive is also employed by Simpson throughout the composition.

<sup>51</sup>In Example 22 and subsequent examples examining the development of a point, the lower staves will reproduce Simpson's music as reflected by the ground number and measure numbers. The upper staff will show the motive while the beamed notes will highlight the point's basic shape.



achieve the challenging goal of compositional unity through a sophisticated synthesis of repetition and variation. We will first trace several of the motive's manifestations over the entire composition and then return to consider an especially interesting treatment of the point in the second presentation of the ground. The development of *M* is the primary improvisational device used by Simpson in the sixth presentation of the ground. Beginning in the first measure, *M* is truncated and then presented in sixteenth-note diminution (Example 23). The motive is then literally repeated by *C*. six times to divide the pitch B (GVI/m. 1).<sup>52</sup> With the arrival on D—coinciding with the downbeat of the second measure—*M* is subjected to two further transformations. These alterations follow Simpson's dictum quoted above that even "the best *Division* in the world, still continued, would become tedious to the Hearer."<sup>53</sup> To avoid this danger, the point is first presented in retrograde (*R*) and then altered intervallically (*IT*) by transforming the second associated with the lower-neighbor note to a third. This leap is followed by a scalar ascent that mirrors the initial form of the point. A similar strategy is employed by *B*. in the second half of the ground. Following six repetitions of *M*, the motive is again transformed, this time through retrograde inversion (*RI*) and then, again, through intervallic alteration (*IT*). The process of repetition followed by transformation has a palpable impact on the listener. *M*'s repeated articulation creates tension by producing a musical stasis in which rhythmic, motivic, and harmonic factors proceed without variation. Release during the first half of the ground is achieved through the transformations Simpson applies to the motive. Harmonic and rhythmic aspects remain virtually unchanged. Tension in the second half of the ground is lessened by the brief liquidation of rhythmic and motivic activity coinciding with the arrival on the half note D and the filled-in arpeggiation articulated in the ground on the downbeat of the fourth measure. Both of these strategies maintain the

<sup>52</sup>Simpson allows (p. 58) that if "the *Ground* consist of two Strains" the improvisers may choose to alternate strains. This approach is taken in many of the divisions in *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground*.

<sup>53</sup>See note 46.

motivic focus of the division, but each adds interest by emphasizing Simpson's juxtaposition of similarity and difference.

GVI/mm. 1-4

The image shows a musical score for Example 23, consisting of three staves labeled C, B, and A. Above the staves, the transformations of a motive *M* are indicated: *M M M M M M R IT* for staff C, and *M M M M M M RI IT* for staff B. Staff C is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. Staff B is in treble clef with the same key signature and time signature. Staff A is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The score shows sixteenth-note patterns for *M*, a retrograde form *R*, and an intervallically altered form *IT* in staff C, and sixteenth-note patterns for *M*, a retrograde-inverted form *RI*, and an intervallically altered form *IT* in staff B. Staff A provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Example 23

Similar manipulations of the point occur in the second half of the seventeenth presentation of the ground (Example 24). In this division, the retrograde form of the motive (*R*) receives greater emphasis. Nonetheless, the original sixteenth-note form (*M*) as well as the retrograde-inversion (*RI*) and the intervallically-transformed (*IT*) forms are articulated to insure adequate variety.

The mere identification of these alterations, however, does not credit Simpson for the more global connections that he now begins to establish *across* divisions. *C*'s line represents a fusion and transformation of *C*'s and *B*'s embellishments in the sixth presentation of the ground (Example 25). *C*'s first two articulations of the motive (GXVII/m. 3) are retrograde transformations of *B*'s earlier setting of *M* (GVI/m. 3), while *C*'s final expression of the point in the third measure and opening gesture in the

GXVII/mm. 3-4

R R M M

Example 24

C: GXVII/m. 3      C: GXVII/mm. 3-4      C: GXVII/m. 4

B: GVI/m. 3      C: GVI/mm. 1-2      B: GVI/m. 4

Example 25

GXXV/mm. 3-4

M M M M M M

M T IT M T

M IT T IT M

Example 26

fourth measure (GXVII/mm. 3-4) directly imitate *B.*'s earlier embellishment at the octave (GVI/mm. 1-2). The remainder of the division (GXVII/m. 4) witnesses further imitation by *C.* although this time the inspiration is *B.*'s improvisation (GVI/m. 4). This process of synthetic development once again speaks to the dramatic tension Simpson attempts to maintain between repetition and variation. By integrating aspects of earlier divisions with new elements, Simpson finely balances familiarity with variety, the keystone of his philosophic approach to improvisation.

Both the sixth and seventeenth divisions are recalled during the twenty-fifth presentation of the ground (Example 26). Once again, *M* is repeated then varied through intervallic alteration; however,

in keeping with the thirteenth and fourteenth steps suggested by Simpson for structuring extended divisions (see page 26), both improvisers have begun “to Play *Tripla's* and Proportions, . . . [and now] joyn together in a Thundering Strain of *Quick Division*.”<sup>54</sup> The transformation of the point’s rhythmic profile resulting from the metric modulation, in conjunction with the motivic repetition emphasized by the parallel tenths that predominate, produces a “lofty Strain of *Division*” that serves as the composition’s rhythmic climax.<sup>55</sup> This new, yet seemingly familiar, interplay between rhythmic, harmonic, and motivic factors treats the listener, as well as the performers, to a striking moment in which “the Excellency both of . . . Hand and Invention” comes to full fruition.<sup>56</sup>

Simpson’s divisions also reveal the level of intuitive creativity he hopes his treatise will instill, offering a case study in which his adherence to the rules he establishes in *The Division-Viol* may be compared to his actual practice. The second presentation of the ground provides a remarkable example of the interactive flexibility that Simpson expects improvisers to bring to the art of division (Example 27). In his discussion of architectonic principles outlined earlier, Simpson recommends that, following the initial presentation of the ground, *C.* should play “the *Ground*, and *B.* Descant to it, as the other had done before, but with some little variation.”<sup>57</sup> While the basic principles suggested in the treatise are followed in the division, they are not met entirely. *B.* descants above the ground embellishing the melodic line introduced by *C.* in the first division, but *C.*, rather than executing the complete ground, indulges in a brief interpolation of mixed division in the second measure and first half of the third measure.

<sup>54</sup>Simpson, *Division-Viol*, 59.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 60. Following this section of the improvisation, Simpson introduces several “Strain[s] of Slow and sweet Notes” that bring the composition to its conclusion.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

GII/mm. 1-4

Example 27

*C.*'s decision to employ mixed division, as well as the motivic structures found in *B.*'s improvisation, once again reflect the importance Simpson places on the use and development of points. Anticipating the motivic transformations applied to point *M* in later divisions, *B.* inverts and reverses the motive in the second and third measures (GII/mm. 2-3) to embellish the melodic ascent from *D* to *G* (Example 28). What is especially interesting in this instance is that the point, rather than the use of a specific technique of descant, provides the motivation for the division. While it appears that each articulation of the motive is based on the fourth method of descant, “skipping into other *Concords*,” the ascent from *D* to *F* above the *G* in the ground involves melodic motion from a fifth—a concord—to the dissonant interval of a seventh.<sup>58</sup> From a theoretical perspective, this would preclude the fourth technique of descant and, instead, imply the second method in which “the sound is varied and yet the Ayre retained, either by

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

a quick return, or by keeping near to the place of the Note divided."<sup>59</sup> The variance in technical approach between the first appearance of the point and the two subsequent articulations (which are based on skipping into other concords) clearly indicates that Simpson is more concerned with motivic development than with maintaining a consistent theoretical approach to the division.

Example 28

The interpolation of mixed division by *C.* in the second and third measures of the second division (GII/mm. 2-3) is also related to the development of the same point (Example 29). In this case, however, *C.*'s transformation of the motive is designed to complement *B.*'s ascending line, rather than to embellish a specific note.

This reformulation by *C.* has a truly stunning effect on the division as a whole. Instead of each viol developing the point separately, the addition of *C.*'s mixed division results in the superimposition of three articulations of *M* by *B.* over *C.*'s extended setting of the motive (Example 30). The integration of these gestures unifies the division motivically while simultaneously completing the triadic structures suggested by the ground.

Example 29

Example 30

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 28.

The second division of the ground also provides an omission of chromatic "alteration" that demonstrates the dynamic, and somewhat fluid, relationship that exists between Simpson's rules, in this case his admonition that the "*Flats and Sharps* have still relation to the Key and Ayre of your *Ground*," and his concern with "the *Seventh* above and *Second* below the *Divided-Note*; which, in the *Division*, is sometimes made Sharp, and suddenly Flat again, according to its own nature."<sup>60</sup> While no sharps or flats are indicated in the key signature, the ground is actually in G major. This would suggest that the F<sup>n</sup> articulated by *B*. in the first beat of the second measure (GII/m. 2) should have been raised to an F#. This argument would seem to be furthered by the fact that the F<sup>n</sup>, as a dissonant seventh above the ground, can be heard completing a dominant-seventh sonority and tonicizing the following C-major triad. Both of these observations stand in opposition to Simpson's mandate that the key of the division be maintained. Several other factors, however, appear to be given greater weight. The F<sup>n</sup> does not rise to the octave (in this instance, G), and, instead, functions as an upper neighbor. In these cases, Simpson's usual treatment is to avoid any chromatic alteration to the seventh above the divided note. Perhaps more importantly, Simpson's solution emphasizes the motive and is more satisfying to the ear, and, as he argues, in situations "in which doubts [exist] the Ear must always be chief Umpire."<sup>61</sup>

### In Conclusion

Simpson's insistence on the ear as the final arbitrator speaks to his sophistication as both a composer and a pedagogue while addressing an important aspect of the creative processes that define improvisation. Dissonances clearly exist between the rules Simpson establishes for division and division as an act of creation, differences that can never be completely reconciled. The "rules," codified in theory and illustrated in his examples, may perhaps be more accurately be described as "guidelines." Such a

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 32, 34.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 34.

term suggests a degree of flexibility that transcends ironclad laws and reflects the essence of improvisation: creativity. We can hear the creative interaction between rules and intuition in Simpson's *Divisions for two bass viols on a ground*. Motivic considerations are consistently prioritized above the application of specific techniques, and the creative interplay between the players is always valued above blind adherence to pedagogical canon. Nonetheless, these differences almost always involve subtle shadings rather than radical departures, as shown in the analysis of the second presentation of the ground. Viewed from this perspective, the best way to evaluate Simpson's treatise may be to re-emphasize its purpose. *The Division-Viol or The Art of Playing Ex tempore upon a Ground* is an instruction manual, a pedagogical tool. As such it is designed to provide a method that, if followed, will lead to an understanding of the techniques involved in the division of a ground. Understanding, however, leaves room for creativity, and creativity at its highest level almost always seems to involve the stretching of the "rules." Perhaps it is this stretching that defines invention. With slight alteration, Simpson might have said that "a man may shew the Excellency both of his Hand and Invention, to the delight and admiration of those that hear him . . . [and] much improved [is it] by Exercise and Practice . . . [but] True . . . Invention is a gift of Nature."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 27.

# THE EARLY HISTORY AND USE OF THE G VIOLONE

Joëlle Morton

Over the last few decades, musicologists have shown that at different times and places the term violone (literally, “large viola”) was applied to a variety of different instruments, which classifiers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have come to standardize with a number of more specific names, including cello and double bass. Among these is a large member of the viola da gamba family that can be tuned either gdAFCG' or aeBGDA'.<sup>1</sup> Although in historical documents this instrument is most often referred to as the *bass* viola da gamba (which can lead to confusion with the smaller gamba tuned d'aecGD), today it is more commonly called either the G violone or the great bass viol. Unfortunately, despite the great number of references to this instrument in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents, most modern practitioners employ it infrequently. This work will argue, using several different lines of evidence, that the current paucity is not an accurate reflection of its original historical role. First, theoretical treatises documenting the tunings for viols indicate that the G violone was a common member of the gamba consort. Second, an examination of repertoire reveals an abundance of solo and ensemble music that either requires or suggests, but ultimately demonstrates, G violone use. Finally, an assessment of extant instruments verifies the violone's existence, and is utilized to determine an average size and string length. Taken all together, it is hoped that the overwhelming evidence for G violone use will encourage more historically informed performance practice and discussion among the modern public.

## Early Descriptions of the G Violone

The early history, development, and performance practice of the viola da gamba family has been researched and chronicled in

<sup>1</sup>Tuning pitches are given here from the highest string to the lowest.

recent years by a large number of music historians and players, who have focused on organological aspects of the instrument itself, and on its specific repertoire and its place in society. It now appears to be well accepted that the Renaissance viol was imported to Italy and northern Europe from Spain, at the end of the 1400s.<sup>2</sup> Like many other Renaissance instruments, the viol was constructed in a variety of sizes, so that a pure consort of viols might cover all the voices of a contrapuntal composition: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The composition of the early consort is clearly described in a number of historical treatises. An examination of these documents is presented below, from which, it will be argued, it is evident that a viol with a lower tuning than the present-day bass viol's d'aecGD tuning was in widespread use as a standard bass member of the viol consort.

Twenty-six theoretical documents dated prior to 1650 describe tunings for viole da gamba.<sup>3</sup> A chronological compilation of the information contained within these treatises is provided in Table 1 (next page; full bibliographic citations are listed in the Appendix, page 65). Most of these sources describe an entire family of gambas, and label each instrument according to its function within the consort (such as tenor or bassus), rather than by an individual name based on its specific size, as in modern practice. With limited exceptions, these documents describe six-string instruments that are tuned in fourths with a major third between the middle two strings. Because such a tuning results in a two-octave span between the highest and lowest strings, the pitch name of these two strings provides a convenient means of classifying each instrument. (If the instrument has fewer than six strings, a “nominal” tuning classification may generally be made based on the instrument's top string pitch.) For example, the modern-termed bass viol with the tuning d'aecGD may be classified as a D instrument. There are four distinct classes of

<sup>2</sup>See Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup>To the best of my knowledge, these are all of the known treatises that describe viol tunings prior to 1650. Most of these documents have been examined in detail by musicologists, and their contents are fairly readily available, many in facsimile, and some in translation. Many are discussed in detail in Woodfield, *Early History*.

Table 1. Summary of Theoretical Documentation of the Viol Consort c. 1515–1650

Date	Treatise	Provenance	Terminology for Bass Instrument	Consort Tuning (treble, tenor, bass)	Classification of Bass Tuning	No. of Strings	G or A Violone Tuning
c.1515	Venice – Biblioteca Marciana ms.Lat.336, coll. 1581	Italian		only bass described	D	6	
c.1520	Florence – Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Ms.Magl. xxx 164-7	Italian	alla bassa	only bass described	A or E	6	aeBGDA'
1523	Munich – University Library 4° Cod.ms 718	German	bassus	adA or dgD	A or D	5	aeBGD
1528/29	Agricola – Musica instrumentalis deutsch	German	bassus	adG	G	6	gdAFCG'
1532	Gerle – Musica Tenesh	German	bassus	adA or dgD	A or D	5	aeBGD
1533	Lanfranco – Scintille di musica	Italian	violone – basso	daDorE	D/E	6	
c.1536	Yale – University Music Library Misc. ms 243 (Alfonso della Viola)	Italian	violon	daE or egD	E/D	6	
1542	Gaussen – Regola Rubertina	Italian	violone – basso	dgD or daD or egD or daE or adA	D/E or A	6/5	aeBGD
1545	Agricola – Musica instrumentalis deutsch (rev)	German	bassus	only descendant described	A or D	4/5	aeBG(F)
1553	Ortiz – Tratado de glosas	Italian	violone	only bass described	D	6	
1556	Jambe de Fer – L'Épistome Musicale	French	bas	gdG	G (nominal*)	5	e'gdAE
1568	Troiano – Discorsi	Italian	viola grosse	adA or dgD	A or D	6	aeBGDA' (assumed)
1587	Marinani – Somma di tutte le scienze	Italian	violone	daD	D		
1589	Mareschal – Porta Musicos	French	adG		G (nominal*)	5	e'gdAE
1592	Zacconi – Pratica di musica	Italian	basso	fdG	G	5	gdAFCG'
c.1600	Virgiliano – Il Dolcimelo	Italian	basso	adA or daD	A or D	4/5	aeBG(D)
1601	Cerreto – Della pratica musica	Italian	basso	daD	D	6	
1606	Prandi – Compendio della Musica	Italian	violone del basso	only tenor described	G/A?	6	gdAFCG' (likely)
1609	Banchieri – Conclusioni nel suono del organo	Italian	violone da gamba	gdG	G	6	gdAFCG'
1611	Banchieri – L'organo suonarino	Italian	prima viola – basso	gdG	G	6	gdAFCG'
1613	Cerone – El Melopoe	Spanish	bexo	gdG or adG	G	6	gdAFCG'
1619	Prætorius – Syntagma Musicum	German	Klein bass viol de gamba	adGera	G/A	6	gdAFCG' aeBGDA' (or variations)
1628	Hizler – Neue musica	German	bass geige	7dG	G	5	GdAFG
1636	Mersenne – Harmonie Universelle	French	basse	daD or egD	D	6	
1640	Doni – Annotazioni	Italian	violone da gamba		G	6	
1650	Kircher – Musurgia universalis	German	chelys hexachorda	only bass described	D	6	gdAFCG'

Notes: Full bibliographic citations appear in the Appendix.

General provenance has been assigned to each source, based on its place of publication, or the national trend it claims to portray.

Consort Tuning lists the three sizes/classifications of instruments mentioned in that source.

\* Where a theorist describes more than one size of bass instrument, both tunings are acknowledged in the Classification of Bass Tuning column.

\* The two French sources have been classified as "nominal" G tunings, as per Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viola*, 200–201.

bass instruments described in the twenty-six treatises: some with higher tunings in D or E, and others with lower tunings in G or A. However, these four classes probably only relate to two sizes of instruments: one corresponding to the instrument we know today as the bass viol (no matter whether tuned in D or E), and the other being the lower-pitched and larger-bodied instrument that we call violone (tuned in either G or A).

This system of classification provides an effective means for analysis, unlike the use of historical terminology, which can be problematic. Although the treatises document a limited number of tunings for bass instruments, these are called a variety of names (summarized in Table 1). For example, in nine sources that describe the specific instrument tuned gdAFCG', there are six different names attributed to it: *bassus* (or *basso* or *baxo*), *violone del basso*, *violone da gamba*, *prima viola – basso*, *klein bass viol de gamba*, or *bass geige*. But the problem is even more complex. Not only are similarly tuned instruments referred to by different names, but also disparate instruments are sometimes labeled with identical names. Thus the simple name *bassus* (or *basso* or *baxo* or *bas*) was applied not only to an instrument tuned as above, but also to the three other classes (d'aecGD, or e'bf#dAE, or aeBGDA'). One may readily conclude that there were not standard names by which these instruments were identified. Certainly, if theorists—whose goal was actually to define these instruments—were not in agreement, we should perhaps use caution in assigning a single historical name to each instrument, or in searching other kinds of literary sources for specific reference to these terms. The lack of consistency in the theoretical documents argues against the use of historical terminology, and it is for this reason that I propose, and will employ, the system of classification described above, which is based on tuning.

Documentation for a violone tuned in A or G appears in some of the earliest theoretical documents to describe tunings for a gamba consort, and continues to appear, with increasing frequency, through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The earliest reference comes from a student of Alfonso della Viola, who jotted down a set of four fingering charts at the back of a bassus part book, dated c. 1520. This player implies that the



Italians employed two systems of tuning a viol consort; and the first is labeled "*alla bassa*," in which an instrument tuned in A is the bass.<sup>4</sup> In *Regola Rubertina* (1542), Sylvestro Ganassi's *Regola Quarta* provides confirmation of this system. Ganassi's first three rules had concentrated on describing the tunings for a consort in which the D or E bass viol was utilized. But in the fourth rule, Ganassi concludes his discussion with the statement that "since most players play the viols a fourth higher than in our first rule, I would like to show you this method."<sup>5</sup> He illustrates that the pitch d' (which in the first rule was the top, open string), is actually usually fingered at the fifth fret on the top string. The bass viol in customary use according to Ganassi, then, is tuned a fourth lower (and therefore in A) than the previously discussed instruments, and as a result, players fingered the notes a fourth higher on those instruments, to obtain the pitches desired, than they would have on the smaller instruments.

From an assessment of theoretical sources, it is clear that the G/A violone was widely known. There are eighteen references to consorts in which the large A- or G-tuned violone is cited as the bass instrument, in comparison to fifteen sources that describe a D- or E-tuned bass viol in that capacity.<sup>6</sup> Of those descriptions, seven fall into both categories, since they allow for the possibility of tuning one's consort in two different ways (as in the two treatises described above). These seven treatises were likely depicting two different systems that were in use, concurrently, by players at that time.<sup>7</sup> The first system corresponds to the use of a

<sup>4</sup>Described in Woodfield, *Early History*, 240.

<sup>5</sup>"E perche il piu di sonatori si sona le viole una Quarta piu alta de la prima regola nostra: però voglio insegnarti il ditto modo." Described in Woodfield, *Early History*, 144–145.

<sup>6</sup>In the seventeen treatises that list the A or G violone as the bass, the D- or E-tuned bass viol is almost invariably presented as the *tenor* member of the consort. Thus, almost all of the treatises do describe D- or E-tuned bass viols. I wish to emphasize that the figures cited above are only representing the number of times the instruments are mentioned as the *bass* member of the consort.

<sup>7</sup>Some authors have put forth the persuasive argument that a second tuning, rather than being a physical description of how the instrument is oriented, is actually a mental tool the player can use as an aid for transposition. In early-sixteenth-century practice, viol consorts adapted many musical models to their own needs by transposing them, so that they lay in a comfortable range on their

"high consort" of smaller instruments, consisting of the three sizes d-treble/g-tenor<sup>8</sup>/D-bass; this is the most usual practice among gamba consorts today. The second system illustrates a "low consort" of larger-bodied viols. This instrumentarium still calls the instruments by the names treble, tenor, and bass, but these names now correspond to different sizes of instruments: g-tuned tenor (called treble)/D-tuned bass (called tenor)/G (or A) violone (called bass).<sup>9</sup> Note that the bass instrument of the high consort would have been the alto and/or tenor-sized instrument of the low consort.

That both kinds of consorts were known and utilized is confirmed by nineteen theoretical descriptions, where only single systems are illustrated. By excluding the above-mentioned seven treatises from the figures, one finds eleven (of eighteen) unambiguous descriptions of a low consort, with the G/A violone as bass, and eight (of fifteen) unambiguous descriptions of a high consort, with a D or E bass viol. Further, by comparing the frequency of reference to like-tuned instruments, one may conclude

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instruments. Instead of writing out the music at a lower pitch, players developed systems of re-fingering the same pitches, in a relative sense, by thinking of them as if they were playing on different (i.e. larger) instruments, which thereby transposed the music downwards by the interval of a fourth or fifth. Of course, this principle makes good sense, particularly for a period in musical history when instrumental music was not yet idiomatically conceived. For more information, see Woodfield, *Early History*, 109–10; Howard Mayer Brown, "Notes (and Transposing Notes) on the Viol in the Early Sixteenth Century" in Iain Fenlon, ed., *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Kathleen Moretto Spencer and Howard Mayer Brown, "How Alfonso della Viola Tuned His Viols, and How He Transposed," *Early Music* 14 (1986).

<sup>8</sup>As with the bass viols, each "size" may actually have been tuned in a variety of ways. Based on different theorists' accounts, the "g-tenor" may have been tuned in G, or pitched an entire tone higher in A, or a whole tone lower in F.

<sup>9</sup>Modern conventions in the United States, Great Britain and much of Europe commonly dictate a consort in which the D bass viol is used as the bass instrument. Some German consorts, however, have adopted the practice of utilizing the larger A or G violone. They consequently label the instruments of their consort by the name of the part each instrument plays, as one would with a low consort. For the sake of clarity, and in order to facilitate this discussion, I prefer to assign the modern name of A or G violone, so that the term "bass viol" retains its usual meaning to most readers.



that by the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the G tuning came to take precedence over the A tuning (for the larger bass), and the D tuning came to take precedence over the E tuning (for the smaller bass). Even more striking, by comparing bass instrument use during the last quarter of the sixteenth century through the first half of the seventeenth century (as described in fifteen sources), one finds eight references to the G violone, three references to an A-tuned violone, and four references to the bass viol in D. Based on the regularity of its description, one may easily conclude that by the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the low consort, with the G-tuned violone as its bass, appears to have become the most favored gamba consort tuning.

Through a comparison of the treatises, it is equally simple to observe that the G violone's use was not limited geographically, but rather was known across the Continent. By assigning general provenance to each source (based on the place of publication, or the national trend it claims to portray), the number of times and ways the different tunings appear may be compared. Of fifteen Italian sources, ten describe D/E basses, while nine describe G/A violoni. (Again, as above, there is something of an overlap, since four of these allow for either the smaller or the bigger instrument.) Of the seven Germanic sources, four describe D/E basses, and six describe G/A violoni. The three French sources are less clear-cut, since the two sixteenth-century theorists describe an atypical (to other Continental systems) five-string, nominal G tuning,<sup>10</sup> yet the third theorist unambiguously describes a D-tuned bass viol. The single Spanish author describes a G violone.

Based on the above analysis, one may draw the following conclusions about national preference. In the case of the Italian community, there are a sizeable number of sources, which seem to indicate that both the bass viol and the violone were in common use, and equally well represented, until circa 1600 when the larger size took precedence over the smaller one. Although fewer in numbers, the Germanic sources also serve to illustrate the same perspective: both sizes were in use. In the case of the French, Spanish, and (non-existent) English sources, however,

<sup>10</sup>As per Woodfield, *Early History*, 200–201.

the numbers of sources are limited, so evidence is inadequate for drawing justifiable conclusions. One should only be aware that both sizes of bass viol were evidently well known and in use concurrently by Italian and German musicians. And since many Italians and Germans stocked the musical ensembles outside of their native homeland, there is good reason to speculate that their instrumental customs were put into practice in some of the other musical centers.

### G Violone Function in the Low Consort

It is important to remember that the theoretical discussions of string instruments present the gamba as a family, with an eye to advising how the viols in a consort are tuned in relation to each other. Regardless of which specific tuning was being prescribed for the bass member of the consort, the bass was always tuned a fourth or fifth below the alto/tenor instrument, and this in turn was tuned a fourth or fifth below the treble instrument. Each theorist described three sizes of viols. (It is perhaps surprising that not a single one suggested the addition of a G or A violone to a high consort, which would result in a consort of four sizes of viol.) Pietro Cerone's description in *El melopeo y maestro* (1613) is typical of many of the others. Cerone describes a consort of *vihuelas de arco*, labeled with the names *triple*, *tenor*, and *baxo*. He provides a tuning chart illustrating that the lowest note on the bass is G'. He claims this instrument has a range of "19 notes," the highest being d' (which corresponds to the seventh fret, on the top g-string). Skeptics might choose to argue that with a low consort, the treble instrument would not have a high enough range to play most consort treble parts. By examining Cerone's tuning chart, this issue is laid to rest. His treble instrument (which corresponds in size to a modern g-tenor viol) is tuned in A, and utilizes the range above the top fret, extending a full "22 notes," up to a" (an octave above the open top string). This upper range, then, is in fact generally adequate for most consort music. Cerone's tenor viol, as one might expect, is pitched between these two other sizes, and tuned in D (corresponding to the bass viol as we know it), with an upper range to a' (the seventh fret).

In all of the treatises that portray the G/A violone, this instrument is always illustrated as a usual and regular member of

the viola da gamba consort. One observes that theorists describe a single technique, i.e. fingering and bowing principles and playing position, that is applicable for all sizes of viols: the bow is held underhand and a four-finger system of fingering is employed.<sup>11</sup> Prior to 1664 there is no evidence for wound strings, so we must assume that these instruments were strung with six pure gut strings.<sup>12</sup> And in gamba consort practice, players are assigned individual parts, instead of doubling each other's lines. Detailed discussion of these practices is beyond the scope of this current article, but it is important to bear in mind that the G violone's technique and reading habits appear to have been the same as those of its smaller relatives. Certainly, if its habits were different, there is no mention of them whatsoever in any of the theoretical documentations.

These points may seem self-evident to some readers, but they are called to your attention for several reasons. First, it is particularly important to place the G violone in the context of the gamba consort, in order to avoid the modern-day tendency to view it as a double bass and assign it a different set of performance practices.<sup>13</sup> Among the few people to avail themselves of this instrument today, many characterize it as a "large ensemble" instrument, suitable for use almost exclusively "if the part goes especially low" or "if one wants to make a special impact" or "to reinforce the organ." But none of the early primary sources ever

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<sup>11</sup>Documented by Hans Gerle, *Musica Teusch* (Nuremberg, 1532); Silvestro di Ganassi, *Regola Rubertina* (Venice, 1542); and Philibert Jambe de Fer, *Epitome Musicale* (Lyons, 1556). Discussion of these is provided in Woodfield, *Early History*.

<sup>12</sup>The earliest reference to wound strings occurs in the form of a printed advertisement located at the back of John Playford, *A Breef Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, 2nd ed. (London, 1664).

<sup>13</sup>For example, there is no evidence to support the point of view that the large bass might have been a transposing instrument, playing its part an octave below the notated pitch. Should one make that claim, one might also have to assume that the treble and tenor viols transposed their parts down an octave! Many historians have made the assumption that if it is a "big" bass, it must be a "double bass." For example, see Alfred Panyavsky, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*, trans. James Barket (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), and Paul Brun, *A History of the Double Bass*, trans. Lynn Morrel (Paris: published by the author, 1989).

describe a G violone in this manner. Secondly, the function of the G violone may have undergone a radical change during the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century: from that of a non-transposing instrument to one that sounded its part an octave lower than written pitch (in true double bass fashion). It is not my aim at this time to start a discussion of *when* this doubling instrument was appropriate, nor to chronicle the changes in practice the G violone saw in later periods.<sup>14</sup> The point I wish to make is that based on all eighteen theoretical references to G/A violoni written prior to 1650, the instrument is treated very simply as the bass member of the gamba consort, and as such it surely behaved (technically and in application) in the same manner we accept for the D bass viol. Following on this, it is surely logical to assume that a good portion of the Renaissance and early Baroque repertoire for bass viola da gamba may in fact be legitimately, if not quite effectively, suited to the larger G violone, as an alternative to the smaller "bass viol" to which we are more accustomed.

### Repertoire for the G Violone

#### Solo Music

Turning now to the issue of repertoire, we begin with the premise that some Renaissance and early Baroque music is suitable for, if not specifically intended for, the G violone. In searching for this music there are several pitfalls to avoid, having to do with terminology. Much sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century music is not idiomatic, in the sense that in many cases composers did not specify their ideal instrumentation, or they may have provided for the suitability of various instruments. And as was discussed above, the terms *basso da viola* [da

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<sup>14</sup>It is common belief among modern players that an even larger/lower gamba, tuned a full octave below the D bass viol, hereafter called the "D violone" (daECGD'), was in common use during the period currently under discussion. In actual fact, there are only two references to such an instrument prior to 1737: these are by Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo* (Bologna, 1609), and Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum, Vol. 2: De Organographia* (Wolfenbüttel, 1619). In both cases, each author deliberately excluded the D violone from his discussion of the tuning of the gamba consort. It is only in reference to *this* particular instrument that Praetorius discusses the issue of octave transposition.

*gamba*] and *violone* may in fact refer to any one of several differently tuned instruments. So we must exercise caution when attempting to define which bass viola a composer had in mind, and not automatically leap to a conclusion that either the smaller or the larger size is more appropriate, based on its nominal designation. Instead, I propose that we begin with an examination of music that is chosen for its general, if not specific, suitability for a bass-range viol (whether as a solo instrument or in consort), and within that context proceed to isolate any materials in which the lower range descends below D, out of the D bass viol's range, thus requiring a lower-pitched instrument.

Before assessing the music itself, it is worthwhile to consider the upper and lower extent of the violone's range (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. G violone tuning and range.  
Open-string pitches are notated with whole notes.  
The upper (fingered) range is notated with black notes.

Based on the theoretical treatises, we know that players may have tuned their instruments of this size in A or G, but by the beginning of the seventeenth century the evidence points towards a preference for the G tuning. As is typical for all viols, this instrument's basic range extends at least from low G' up to d', the pitch on the top string at the seventh fret. (This was described by Pietro Cerone, in the discussion above.) We might also assume that notes between that top fret and the octave above the top open string (g') are within its reasonable range, since other members of the *gamba* family are known to utilize that range regularly. (Again, see Cerone's treble instrument, described above.) For music to be considered idiomatic or suitable to the G violone it must fit comfortably within this range, and it must seemingly not pose undue challenges that might more logically be met on another size of *gamba*.

Based on the above criteria, there is a sizeable body of known solo repertoire clearly suggesting, if not necessitating, the use of the G violone. This music comes from the Italian viola bastarda and division viol repertoires, dating from the first half of the seventeenth century, and includes pieces by Francesco Rognoni, Francesco Maria Bassani, Vincenzo Bonizzi, and Bartolomeo de Selma y Salaverde (see Appendix, page 66).<sup>15</sup> Since theoretical treatises indicate that the G violone was well known and in use in Italian centers at precisely this time, and also given that this style of musical composition was specifically for a solo *bass* viol, necessitating a lower range extending to low G', the suitability of this repertoire for G violone should not be surprising.

Francesco Rognoni published *Selva de varii passaggi difficili* (1620),<sup>16</sup> in the tradition of many late-sixteenth-century instruction manuals, as an aid for players learning to improvise divisions. At the back of the book were included four viola bastarda settings of well-known tunes, the second of which is entitled "Susana d'Orlando: Modo di passeggiar per il Violone . . . alla Bastarda." The range of this setting of Lasso's well-known chanson "Susanne ung jour" descends to low Bb' and C on five occasions. But this lower range in and of itself is not complete confirmation of the piece's suitability for G violone. For this, we must look to the overall tessitura of the music. The bulk of the piece lies comfortably between the notes C and d'—a range that fits very comfortably on the G violone, with minimal need for shifting or for playing above the frets (see Example 1, next page). The highest note in the piece is f', a pitch that is within the upper range of this instrument. Furthermore, the central tonality of the composition is D minor. Cadential figures occur on many of the open-string pitches, including the notes g, d, A and C, or their octaves. Thus, many of the "important" pitch

<sup>15</sup>For detailed discussion and transcriptions of most of this repertoire, see Jason Paras, *The Music for Viola Bastarda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>16</sup>Francesco Rognoni Taeggio, *Selva de varii passaggi . . . and Parte seconda* (Milan: Filippo Lomazzo, 1620). Available in facsimile edition by Bibliotheca Musica Bononiensis, 1983, and in modern edition by Bernard Thomas, London Pro Musica Editions, REP 15. Also see Jason Paras, *Music for Viola Bastarda*.

centers in the piece have a natural resonance that is facilitated by the tuning of the instrument. Taken as a whole, because of the lower pitches required, the upper range that fits comfortably, and an overall sonority that is favorable, it may be argued that this piece effectively exploits the idiomatic character of the G violone.



Example 1. F. Rognoni, "Susana d'Orlando," mm. 15-17.

Much more challenging technically, but illustrating many of the same kinds of idiomatic features as Rognoni's setting, is the collection of nine pieces published by Vincenzo Bonizzi in 1626, under the title *Alcune opere di diversi auttori*. . . .<sup>17</sup> The title page specifies "per la Viola Bastarda," and each of the pieces requires the use of the range below low D (four go down to low G', three descend to low A', one descends to Bb', and one to C). For the virtuosity they require of the player, Bonizzi's settings of well-known madrigals and chansons might be considered the height of the bastarda repertoire. The range of each piece is huge, extending not only down to the very lowest register of a bass instrument, but also very high, sometimes encompassing as much as three octaves plus a major sixth (to e"). This range is further highlighted by Bonizzi, who appears to delight in switching octaves at the seemingly slightest whim, and who calls attention to the great span by descending through that range, sometimes dramatically, by playing as many as four of the same note, each in a different octave! (See Example 2.) Bonizzi's passagework is extensive, but much lies comfortably on the G violone between the open fourth string (F) and the seventh fret

<sup>17</sup>Vincenzo Bonizzi, *Alcune opere di diversi auttori* (Venice: Alessandro Vincenti, 1626). Available in facsimile edition by Archivium Musicum: Strumentalismo Italiano, 1983, and in modern edition by Bernard Thomas, London Pro Musica Editions, REP 18 and 19. Also see Jason Paras, *Music for Viola Bastarda*.

on the top string (d'). In many instances, open-string sonorities are used as cadential, resting, or "pivot" points, where an elaborate run pauses momentarily before regrouping or changing direction. As in most viola bastarda music the lines are extremely florid, even relentless, in their continuity, so as to call attention to the player's virtuosity. To my mind, Bonizzi clearly utilizes the resonance of a G instrument to excellent effect.



Example 2. V. Bonizzi, "Invidioso amor," mm. 73-77.

In addition to the music based on pre-existing models, some solo pieces composed in a free or fantasia style require the low range of the G violone. Francesco Maria Bassani's notebook of counterpoint exercises *Lezioni di contrapunto*<sup>18</sup> includes eight pieces "per viola bastarda"; three are attributed to Orazio Bassani (his uncle), and one to Vincenzo Bonizzi. Two of these compositions are toccatas—elaborate divisions on a bass line—and the "Tocata per b quadro" (of unknown authorship) illustrates a clear three-octave range, from A' to a'. Large shifts in this piece are always facilitated by the use of an open string. For example, in the fifth measure the two-octave leap from A to a' is feasible largely because the bottom note is an open string, allowing the player time to shift without jeopardizing the instrument's resonance (see Example 3, next page). Bassani's use of the note A' as the lower extent might imply that he was writing specifically with an A violone in mind. (In that case, the two-octave leap would still have utilized an open string, since the top note a' would then lie as the octave harmonic above the top open string.)

<sup>18</sup>I – Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Cod. misc. 89. *Lezioni di contrapunto fatte da Francesco Maria Bassani, con alcune toccate e vari madrigali rotti (ossia passeggiati) da Orazio Bassani suo zio anno 1621*. Information and transcriptions are available in Jason Paras, *Music for Viola Bastarda*.

But his inclusion of music by Bonizzi (who used the low G' in his music), suggests that Bassani was just as likely familiar with the G violone tuning.



Example 3. [F. M. Bassani,] "Tocata per b quadro," mm. 5-7.

Examined as a group, this body of solo repertoire has important implications for how we might view the G violone. But first, how do we conclude that this music was intended to be played at pitch, instead of being transposed up a fifth and played on a D bass viol? After all, this seems to be the manner in which twentieth-century players approach these pieces, if they acknowledge them at all. My response is that the original model (madrigal or chanson, or newly composed bass line) seems to be fairly firm; composers intentionally did not vary the modality/tonality of the original composition. In this way, the original counterpoint functioned as an accompaniment for the embellishments, without any transposition. This logic is borne out in Bonizzi's publication, where a new *basso seguente* part is provided as accompaniment to the solo line, so that it may be performed with a harmony-realizing instrument if desired, instead of all the individual parts. Yet Bonizzi was strict in keeping to the tonality of the original model, so transposing his pieces up a fifth would not make sense. Concluding that this repertoire was intended to sound at its written pitch, it remains to reiterate that the G violone was the only gamba capable of the lower range necessary for its performance. The repertoire is virtuosic in style, necessitating the use of the extended upper range of the instrument, but most falls comfortably within the general range of standard viol technique.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Having performed much of this repertoire on G violone myself, I can attest to its "playability." Certainly, it is no more difficult on the G violone than it would be in a transposed form on the bass viol.

The repertoire discussed above is highly virtuosic and exploits the full range of the instrument, from the lowest notes on the bottom string to the highest notes up at the end of the fingerboard. The music reflects the cutting edge of compositional techniques of the time, namely the art of improvising, rendering divisions on a pre-existing model, or the free, fantasia style common to solo canzoni of the early seventeenth century. G violone players evidently had great agility and command of their instruments, the physical size of their viols not being considered a hindrance. It is hoped that this will provide incentive for modern scholars to reconsider some of the other "basso solo" music of the same period. Even when notes below low D are not required, there is now reason to justify exploration of this music by players on instruments other than the D bass viol.

### Ensemble Music

Turning to the issue of consort music, it is again logical to begin with repertoire that seems to require the use of an instrument larger than the bass viol, by virtue of the lower range required. Although not nearly as virtuosic or dramatic as the solo repertoire, examples of consort music in which the bass line descends below D do occur in a wide selection of the standard Continental and English music. For example, in Monteverdi's madrigal "Con che soavita," the lowest choir is comprised of three "viole da braccio overo da gamba" and the bottom line stays very low through most of the exposed writing, with low C's and C#'s and D's.<sup>20</sup> Low C's are also common in bass lines of much of the German consort repertoire of the early seventeenth century, including the *Banchetto Musicale* suites of Johann Hermann Schein and ensemble canzoni by Samuel Scheidt. And most players of the D bass viol will have experienced a few opportunities during consort sessions of English Jacobean music when they were required to tune their bottom string down to C, for example in music of William Lawes, John Ward, or Alfonso Ferrabosco II to name a few.

Generally, the lowest extent of consort bass parts is low C. (The only consort pieces I know of that go lower than this are Gibbons's fantasias, which will be discussed below.) For this

<sup>20</sup>Claudio Monteverdi, *Libro 7* (Venice, 1619).



reason, it is sometimes difficult to prove definitively which size is more appropriate: a G- or D-tuned bass. After all, English consort music specialists provide justification for the distortion of their D-tuned instruments by citing evidence that some contemporaneous lyra-viol composers were in the habit of tuning the bottom string down to C while using standard tuning for the rest of the strings. Certainly, I don't rule this out as a possibility. But the ability to play low C is not the only reason to consider the use of a G or A violone. Bearing in mind that viol strings at this time were made of pure gut, the longer the vibrating length of a bass string of low frequency the better it would speak and project. Thus the larger the instrument's body size, the better the low string would respond and provide support. So on any consort parts that would lie very low on a D bass viol, it might be prudent to consider the possibility of using a violone. The resulting resonance may in fact be noticeably enhanced.

The range and upper register of a G violone also would likely have been adequate for rendering most consort bass lines. It is generally accepted that viols sound better on their upper strings. Lower courses are thicker and muddier-sounding, lacking both the sweetness of tone and the crisp attack possible on thinner strings.<sup>21</sup> Ideally then, in order to sound its best, each line should be played on an instrument where the moving notes are in the clearest range, and where the highest notes of the line do not typically exceed the natural range or "comfort zone" imposed by the top fret. A brief survey reveals that a great number of consort bass lines fit very comfortably on the G violone, since they do not exceed high d'. As a random selection, Volume 9 of *Musica Britannica*, *Jacobean Consort Music*, provides illustration of this fact.<sup>22</sup> Browsing through the collection, one observes very quickly that the bass lines of much of the three-, four-, and five-part consort music stay below d', notes above are rather infrequent, and f# seems to be the general upper limit. Assuming these parts to be played on a G violone, most of the writing will lie on

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<sup>21</sup>See Michael Morrow, "Sixteenth Century Ensemble Viol Music," *Early Music* 2 (1974), and Woodfield, *Early History*, 109–10.

<sup>22</sup>Thurston Dart and William Coates, eds., *Jacobean Consort Music*, *Musica Britannica*, vol. 9 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1962).

the top three or four strings, and therefore within the best-sounding range of the instrument. On a D bass viol the music lies at least one string, and in some cases two strings, lower (for example, the note A is the open third string on the G violone, while it is a fingered note on the fifth string on the bass viol). In consort music, the use of a violone on the bass line is not justifiably disclaimed by virtue of its register—either higher or lower.

### The Great Bass Viol and Its Music

In general, modern practitioners have largely ignored the possibilities of using the G/A violone in English consort repertoire. Since no English writers documented descriptions of gamba consort tunings (as the Continental theorists did) prior to Christopher Simpson, Thomas Mace, and James Talbot in the second half of the seventeenth century,<sup>23</sup> there actually is no precise record of consort practice or tuning at the time when English composers were at their best and most active for this type of ensemble. Twentieth-century players and scholars have tended to use Simpson's descriptions in particular, and apply them retroactively, making the assumption that because the G or A violone was not mentioned as a consort instrument in the second half of the century, it also likely was not in use at the beginning of the 1600s. But there is a small pile of evidence to contradict that point of view.

Peter Holman has shown that there were at least two *great* bass vyalls [sic] in use at the English court, since Jerome Lanier and Alfonso Ferrabosco II were each paid £20 for providing them, in 1624 and 1626 respectively.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned above, there are no written sources that directly confirm tuning or prove that a *regular* bass viol in England at that time was tuned in D. But we might logically infer that a great bass viol was larger in size than another instrument that was referred to as a bass viol. And since Continental sources cite D/E and G/A instruments as

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<sup>23</sup>Christopher Simpson, *The Division Viol* (London, 1665); Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument* (London, 1676); and James Talbot, "The Talbot Manuscript," Oxford, Christ Church Library Ms. 1187, c. 1694.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540–1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 216–17.

bass viols, it makes sense to think that these English terms probably relate to the sizes we have been discussing.

The only English consort repertoire to specify preference for other than a normal bass is Orlando Gibbons's fantasias "for the great Dooble Base." These are scored for three and four players, with the "doble base" part notated at pitch, extending down to low A', and clearly being contrasted to the (regular) bass, with a different part, playing above it. Unfortunately, there is no way of confirming if this was the same instrument as the "great bass" viol, nor of determining Gibbons's exact tuning for the "doble base," even though his use of low A might imply an instrument with that as its lower extent. On the other hand, it is surely plausible that the many Italian and Flemish viol players who stocked the English noble and court consorts in the late 1500s and early 1600s were familiar with European traditions, instrument sizes, and tunings. Based on Gibbons's writing for a large bass gamba that extended (at least) to low A', in conjunction with the many other consort parts of the time that definitely utilize low C, it does seem that there would have been a regular use for the large bass gamba.

That the great bass viol was more to English musicians than just a passing curiosity seems likely. In a painting by Peter Lely dated 1640,<sup>25</sup> a large bass viol is shown accompanying the transverse flute (see Plate 1). Lely's adult male violonist is seated; his violin-shaped, fretted instrument is played underhand, and is too big to rest on the calves. The other figures in the painting are in correct proportion to the violonist: two children (one plays the flute, the other a keyboard) are behind him, and four female courtesans in various states of attire are clustered alluringly around the scene, one of them patting a dog. The violonist is the focal point of the painting; his eyes are raised heavenward, as if in communication with his muse. The painting is a realistic enough portrait; both the people and objects depicted are convincingly lifelike. So there is no reason to believe that Lely made a mistake depicting the size of the instrument, which is clearly larger than a standard bass viol. His player is shown

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<sup>25</sup>Located at the Courtauld Institute Galleries, London; reproduced here with their permission.



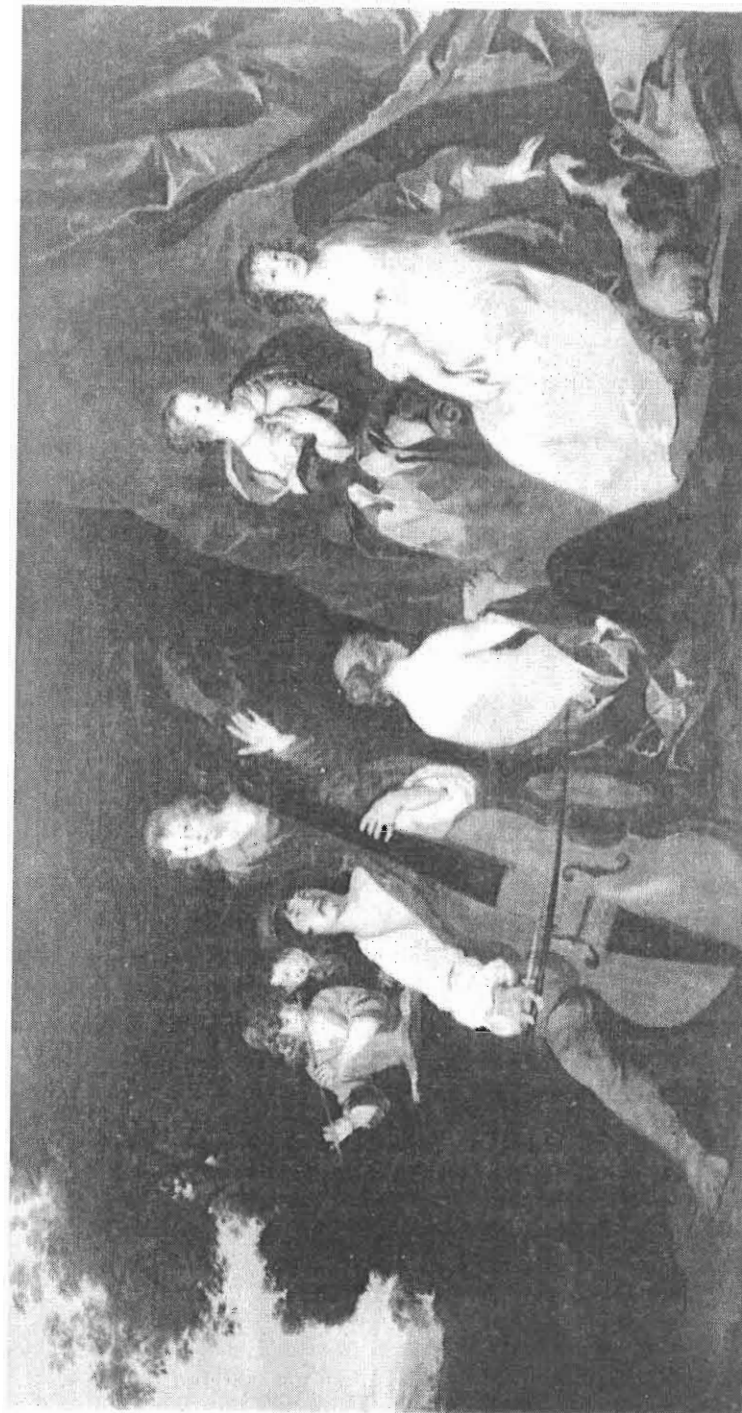
Peter Lely's "The Concert," 1640. By kind permission of the Courtauld Institute, London.

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Peter Lely's "The Concert," 1640. By kind permission of the Courtauld Institute, London.



playing in a seated position, and not utilizing an endpin. The player's bow grip and left hand position resemble those considered standard for the smaller viol family members. Finally, Lely's painting portrays this presumed "great bass viol" in a private chamber music setting, in which it is the only bowed bass. This suggests that the great bass viol may also have been used in chamber music in addition to being part of the gamba consort.

### Extant Instruments

#### Instruments and Size

A final step in proving the existence and features of the G violone comes from assessing extant viols that are reliably dated to the period in question. As the definitive guide to extant viole da gamba, I consulted the *Viol List*<sup>26</sup> with an eye to examining and comparing instruments that were deemed larger than D bass viols. Although there is no such thing as "standard" bass viol size (string lengths in modern use vary as much as from 64 cm. to 76 cm.), I started my search with what seemed reasonable: instruments that were larger than 78 cm. string length.<sup>27</sup> Because the List did not give a string length for every instrument, and also because string length is an imprecise measurement (it can so easily be varied according to personal taste, bridge location, or neck length), I chose instead to sort the instruments according to their body length, in centimeters. The body length of each instrument proves to be an excellent means of comparison, because it relates roughly to what would be an "ideal" string length for the instrument, but without the personal variation of individual set-ups. (This will be further discussed below.) A final point is that for inclusion in this comparison the instrument in question was required to have five or six strings, this being the most basic characteristic feature of the viola da gamba family and one that

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<sup>26</sup>Peter Tourin and Thomas G. MacCracken, *Viol List: A Comprehensive Catalogue of Historical Viole da Gamba* (Duxbury, Vt., 1979, and Oakton, Va., 1998). I am grateful to Tom MacCracken who provided me with an updated copy of the list, presorted to my specifications.

<sup>27</sup>I am grateful to Tom MacCracken and luthiers John Pringle and Edward Maday for helping to confirm the parameters and measurements under which modern bass viols are generally classified.

would potentially distinguish it from other "double basses" of the violin family, which would likely only have three or four.

The results of this compilation were quite substantial: there are twenty-three known extant instruments (see Table 2, next page), with body sizes ranging from 81.0 cm. to 122.0 cm. Only six of those instruments have body lengths of more than 100.0 cm., and fourteen are clustered in an apparently related group, illustrating body lengths from 86.3 to 97.0 cm. (Note that this 10.7 cm. difference among the violoni is less, even, than the 12.0 cm. string length difference on modern-day bass viols mentioned above!) Six of the instruments that fall within this "average" group of fourteen were made by a single maker (Ernst Busch of Nuremberg), yet these have varying sizes, ranging from 86.3 to 91.3 cm. Interestingly, many of the instruments outside the average measure of this central group are the ones that appear to have used five strings instead of six. As with other sizes of viols, the individual construction of the extant violoni reflects all different kinds of shapes, scrolls, and decoration, even though the majority have *f* holes. Since most of these particular attributes are so clearly not standardized, it may be assumed that they were of little importance to the function of the instrument.

#### String Length

Approaching the question of "standard" size for the G/A violone from a different direction, I recently spoke with several string makers to try to determine if, by modern standards, a certain string length might be considered most reasonable or functional to obtain the pitches desired.<sup>28</sup> Of course, it would be unreasonable to assume that players historically set up their instruments under standard, optimal, and/or similar conditions, so this question can only be answered speculatively. Nonetheless, there is a distinct correlation between the size of the extant instruments and their string lengths, as proposed for G and A violone tunings.

Since they cannot be ascertained for the known extant instruments, we must leave aside the substantial issues of personal setup and pitch standard (which varied as much as from A=392

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<sup>28</sup>I am particularly grateful to Daniel Larson of Gamut Musical Strings in Minnesota for providing me with much of this information.

Table 2: Large Bass Viols – Extant Instruments

Maker	Place of Origin	Date	Body Length (in cms.)	No. of Strings	Features	Tourin ID
unknown	Italian	1577	unknown	5	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	LEIP 27
Rechaldini	Venice	1605	81.0	5	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, Venetian scroll	BRUS 42
Busch	Nuremberg	1641	86.3	6	festoon shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	NURN 9
unknown	German	1677	86.4	6	festoon shape, scroll	NURN 12
Busch	Nuremberg	1638	87.0	6	festoon shape, flame holes, scroll	KOPEA 32
Stainer	Absam	1652	87.0	6	viol shape, C holes, lion head	KOPEB 19
Busch	Nuremberg	c. 1630	87.0	6	festoon shape, flame holes, scroll	STOCK 32
Busch	Nuremberg	c. 1615	89.0	6	festoon shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	GENEV 20
Busch	Nuremberg	unknown	89.3	6	festoon shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	none assigned
Maggini	Brescia	c. 1600	90.0	7	guitar shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	SHRIN 5
Busch	Nuremberg	c. 1630	91.3	6	viol shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	BERB 19
Vogel	Nuremberg	1563	95.0	6	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	NURN 4
unknown	Italian	1677	96.0	6	viol shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	BRUS 44
Gasparo	Brescia	1576	96.0	7	<i>f</i> holes	PARUS 13
Maggini	Brescia	c. 1600	96.5	6	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	DOLM 16
Gasparo	Brescia	c. 1600	97.0	7	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	SHRIN 6
Edlinger	Augsburg	1686	99.5	6?	viol shape, flame holes, lion head	private
Linarol	Padua	1585	102.5	6	viol shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	VIENNA 8
Zenatto	Treviso	1680	111.0	6	guitar shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	BRUS 41
Stainer	Absam	1645?	112.5	?	viol shape, Negro head	INNS 2
unknown	Italian	c. 1650	114.5	5	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, scroll	LEIPC 14
Tielke	Konigsberg	1662	118.0	5	cello shape, <i>f</i> holes, lion head	LEIPB 27
Zenatto	Treviso	1683	122.0	5	?	LEIPB 27

Note: Data for this table were compiled from: Peter Tourin and Thomas MacCracken, *Viol List: A Comprehensive Catalogue of Historical Viols da Gamba* (Duxbury, Vermont, 1979 and Oakton, VA, 1998). I am grateful to Tom MacCracken who provided me with a copy of the list, pre-sorted to my specifications.

to A=465 or more over the course of several centuries, and in varying musical centers).<sup>29</sup> But by using average modern standards (regardless of their historical accuracy) where A=415 or A=440, a set of string lengths acceptable for the G violone may be determined. Low-pitched strings, because they can be made in such a wide variety of gauges, are not problematic for instruments the size of those extant. Instead, it is largely the pitch of the top string that is inflexible, for if the string is too thin it will sound “reedy,” or if the tension is too high it will break. (That is why Ganassi and several other Renaissance theorists advised tuning the top string of the bass viol first, to as high a pitch as it would stand without breaking, and then tuning the other strings and the rest of the gamba consort to that.<sup>30</sup>) In modern practice, string makers use a “tension-to-length ratio” to monitor and balance the tension exerted by each string on the bridge and table of the instrument. Under average modern standards, 11.5 kg. of tension may be balanced, with an “acceptable-sounding” top string for a G tuning, at string lengths of 85.0 to 95.0 cm. An A violone tuning would favor a slightly shorter string length.

String instrument builders have differing opinions about how to determine precise string lengths. Some claim that the string length should be just slightly more than the body length, and others claim it should be just slightly less.<sup>31</sup> Measurements provided for some of the extant instruments reflect this imprecision, and of course, each individual player’s personal choice of exact bridge and nut location would only have served to confound the situation. By splitting the difference, and assuming that string length is almost equally proportional to body length, there is a very close correlation between what modern string

<sup>29</sup>See Herbert Myers, “Pitch and Transposition,” in *A Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997) 325–40.

<sup>30</sup>Sylvestro di Ganassi, *Regola Rubertina* (Venice, 1542). Also see Woodfield, *Early History*, 150–51.

<sup>31</sup>Two instruments in my possession illustrate that both systems can be made to work. My copy of the Dolmetsch Maggini has a body length of 96.5 cm. and a string length of 92.5 cm. Conversely, my Edlinger has a body length of 99.5 cm. and a string length of 102.0 cm. Both instruments accommodate seven frets easily enough, and both “sound” well. I cannot claim to have an opinion on which system is better—they both work.

makers propose as feasible string lengths for the pitches of the G violone tuning and the "average" body lengths of the extant instruments. We may conclude that since the extant instruments of approximately 86 to 97 cm. body length were potentially able to accommodate tunings for G or A violone, they were likely intended by their makers to have been used in that capacity.

#### Conclusions and Notes Concerning Terminology

That an instrument larger than the modern-termed bass viol was a regular member of the gamba family and consort, in common use during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, is now hopefully beyond doubt. I have argued that such an instrument was widely known on the Continent and in England, and that it was used as a solo, chamber, and consort instrument. Its repertoire includes a substantial oeuvre of solo and consort music requiring its use (by virtue of the low range), but also likely includes portions of repertoires that we generally attribute to the smaller bass viol. Although in theoretical documents the instrument under consideration is most often referred to as the *bass viola da gamba*, it is more practical for us to assign it the modern name of G violone (or A violone when an A tuning is specifically prescribed or utilized) so as not to confuse it with the smaller instrument known today by the name bass viol. The name great bass viol is likely appropriate specifically for English repertoire. Each seems specific enough to call to mind this particular size of viola da gamba through direct reference to its tuning, which ultimately serves as a more practical means of classification than the use of historical terminology. But no matter how it is called, it is my hope that players and historians alike will make an effort to become familiar with this no-longer-forgotten instrument, and bring it back into regular discussion and appropriate use.

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## RECENT RESEARCH ON THE VIOL

### Ian Woodfield

This bibliography is intended as a concise guide to recent research related to the viol. It lists books, articles, dissertations, selected reviews, published papers, and major scholarly editions of music. Research on any aspect of the viol (and related instruments such as the baryton) will qualify for inclusion. Suggestions for additional entries in any language would be most welcome. They should be sent to Ian Woodfield, School of Music, Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland; or e-mailed to <i.woodfield@qub.ac.uk>.

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## REVIEWS

**Alfred Planyavsky.** *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*. Trans. James Barket. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 1997. xvi+197 pp. ISBN 0-8108-3448-0. \$45.00.

The title of Alfred Planyavsky's book, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone* (*Der Barockkontrabaß Violone*), while it may appear overdetermined, reflects Planyavsky's single-minded aim of stamping out the notion that the violone was ever anything but a double bass; that is, an instrument capable of playing below the lowest note of the modern violoncello (Great C)—one that would be better represented by the double bass than by the violoncello when using modern instruments to perform Baroque music.

Planyavsky's intent is therefore to describe the characteristics and uses of the violone so that modern musicians, both bass players and others, might make better-informed choices of instrumentation when faced with the term "violone." The range of his research in support of this effort is comprehensive: the period covered here begins in the mid-sixteenth century and proceeds through the mid-eighteenth. In addition, he draws upon an impressive array of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century iconographic, theoretical, and other documentary sources from Germany, France, and Italy.

In order to make his ambitious argument that the violone signifies a double bass in all cases, Planyavsky uses a broad definition of "double-bass instrument." As he says,

the deciding features that characterize the violone as a double-bass instrument are: the range, which reaches into the sub-bass region; the tuning of the strings in fourths (fourths/third); the gamba form (mixed with braccio details); the standing playing position (or sitting on a high stool); the use of a short end-pin; and, finally, the size of the instrument, which varies, but is generally that of a human being. (p. 3)

Working with this set of guidelines, Planyavsky breaks his text into ten chapters; the first eight cover the Baroque era, and the last two fill out this work with observations on the violone and

double bass after 1800 (Chapter 9) and a discussion of large-string-instrument building (Chapter 10). In each chapter, however, the organization of information is less than clear. Most are divided into two or more sections, but the material seems not always to fit well together. For example, "The Violone in Italy" begins Chapter 2, which also includes sections entitled "Michael Praetorius" and "Baritone Clef." The third chapter's two sections, entitled "Trio Sonata" and "Jacob Stainer's Violone," similarly make an odd combination.

Within the various sections that make up each chapter, the flow of ideas is often disjointed and confusing. The opening paragraph in the section entitled "Notation in 16' and 8'" illustrates this sort of problem:

The double bass is designated as a sixteen-foot instrument because it sounds one octave lower than its notation. This characteristic is irrelevant, however, when considered alongside the practice of individually used bass instruments which predominated in the sixteenth century. This designation only becomes significant with the practice of bass-line doubling along with an 8' instrument. The iconography recognizes the use of human-sized string basses since 1516, and the tuning diagrams of this period confirm the non-transposing notation. In some cultural circles, the double bass is still written in actual pitch (8'). (p. 40)

First, 16' and 8' are borrowed from organ terminology, in which each octave is classified according to pipe lengths; the bass is a sixteen-foot instrument because it can play in the sixteen-foot range (C'-B') and not because it sounds an octave below its notation. Second, Planyavsky does not say what iconographic evidence he has in mind. Third, in the last sentence, he must mean that the notation for the double bass—and not the double bass itself—is still written at actual pitch. The prose here forces the reader to ponder the logical connections from sentence to sentence after puzzling over the syntax of each, all in order to apprehend that the "human-sized string basses of the sixteenth century . . . [used] non-transposing notation."

Added to the difficulty of piecing together Planyavsky's arguments is the questionable nature of his overall thesis. Both the

period and the geographical area that he covers would preclude any historian's ability to make blanket assertions about the use and meaning of the term "violone," and Planyavsky's global approach fatally undermines both his thesis and his method of arguing it. While there is a solid case to be made in support of the contrabass classification of the violone when it is used by eighteenth-century German authors, there is little basis for doing so in seventeenth-century sources. In particular, many late-seventeenth-century Italian sources indicate that the violone referred not only to a member of the violin family (and not the gamba family) but also to a bass whose lowest note was C or Bb'. In short, violone meant violoncello or something closely similar to it in late-seventeenth-century Italy.

Iconographic evidence that Planyavsky dismisses (p. 98) provides some of the strongest evidence in this regard: the elaborately engraved frontispiece to Corelli's famous violin sonatas (Op. 5, 1700) shows two putti standing with a violin and what appears to be a violoncello (see illustration, next page). Both the proportions (in relation to the violin, the putti themselves, and the adult-sized Athena at the center of the image) and the form of the instrument (violin corners, not gamba; four strings, not six; *f*-shaped soundholes, not C-shaped; and high rounded shoulders, not low and sloping) indicate the bass member of the violin family of strings, an instrument ultimately called the violoncello. Corelli's title page, however, refers to the bass instrument accompanying the violin as the violone, but Planyavsky dismisses the relevance of this evidence on the grounds that engraved illustrations were used generically for several different publications. While this is true of several engravings, Planyavsky does not show this to be true of the image used in Corelli's Op. 5; instead, we must accept that it could be true as evidence enough to discount its relevance. And yet, even if the putti and their instruments were discovered to decorate other publications, their association with Corelli's Op. 5 argues persuasively in favor of identifying the term "violone" with the image chosen to represent it.





Frontispiece from Arcangelo Corelli's *Sonate*, Opus 5 (1700)

Whether scholars of the late twentieth century accept the evidence of the frontispiece or not, it appears that early-eighteenth-century Dutch and English publishers unequivocally interpreted “violone” to mean “violoncello” in their editions of Corelli’s music. Two examples make this point: Pierre Mortier’s first publication of Corelli’s Op. 1–4 trio sonatas (Amsterdam, 1705) and John Walsh & John Hare’s first publication of the same music (London, 1703). The title page of Mortier’s edition preserves the wording of the Italian title pages, “Due violini e violone...,” and then substitutes the term “violoncello” in the partbooks. Walsh & Hare refer to an instrumentation of “two violins and bass” on their title page, but the partbook for this “bass” uses both the newer term “violoncello” for Opp. 1 and 3 and the older “violone” for Opp. 2 and 4. In both cases, publishers working during Corelli’s lifetime associate violone with violoncello, either replacing “violone” with “violoncello” or using them interchangeably.

Nor does this interchangeability of violone and violoncello occur only in connection with Corelli’s music: for example, the title page of Giovanni Maria Bononcini’s Op. 12 (1678) reads “Arie, e Correnti a trè, due Violini, e Violone,” whereas the individual partbooks are labeled “primo Violino,” “secondo Violino,” and “Violoncello.”

With regard to the iconography that Planyavsky uses, he makes numerous questionable interpretations. For example, Figure 18, which is reversed, shows a fully seated figure on the extreme left playing a large string instrument, which appears only slightly larger than a modern violoncello. Yet Planyavsky describes this instrument as “the size of a small double bass” (p. 34), an assertion that strains credibility. Other depictions of putative double basses show instruments that might fairly be characterized as between the modern violoncello and double bass in size, but without evidence that attests to their tuning their inclusion in Planyavsky’s book serves no constructive purpose. Nor do his captions provide help, because there is no indication of whose terms appear in them. Figure 1 on page 4, for example, is called a “Violone,” but Figure 2 on the same page is called a “Double-bass gamba”; where do these terms originate, and what

accounts for the different names applied to these similar instruments?

Misspellings, mistranslations, inaccurate bibliographical data, and grammatical errors, all of which occur with alarming frequency, further detract from the quality of this book. "Constructed" is written as "conctructed" (p. 135); Louis IV is mentioned where Louis XIV is surely intended (p. 143); "criteria" is used as the singular form of the noun instead of "criterion" (p. 137); the reproduction of an illustration from the published music of John Eccles occurs in volume 3 of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, not volume 4 (p. 99); the author of the 1971 University of California, Berkeley Ph.D. dissertation, "The Performance of the Basso Continuo..." is Tharald Borgir, not Therald (p. 10). This last error is corrected in one of the two bibliographic entries mentioning Borgir, but, on the matter of that author's work, Planavsky should have known to mention the revised and expanded form of Borgir's dissertation, published by U. M. I. Research Press in 1987. In a few places (pp. 32, 97, 102, and 140, for example), references to earlier footnotes in the book give incorrectly low citation numbers, evidence that extra footnotes were since added without correcting the later references. I find fault here with the editors at Scarecrow Press for not bothering to check this detail.

Should modern bassists take on the challenges offered by violone parts? Certainly they have the technique to do so. And yet, despite Planavsky's efforts to link these abilities with historical precedents of seventeenth-century cello-like part-writing for the "double bass violone," we cannot say that the violone is the seventeenth-century counterpart to the modern double bass. Far too much evidence argues to the contrary. And finally, while Planavsky aims for an examination of the evidence *sine ira et studio* (p. 21), his work ultimately reveals the attitude of a partisan. This is to be lamented; he has read widely and demonstrates familiarity with a great many sources in several languages. Were it not for his biases, Planavsky might well have written a useful study of the violone.

Gregory Barnett

Andrew Ashbee, ed. *William Lawes, 1602–1645: Essays on his Life, Times and Work*. Aldershot, England and Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 1998. \$98.00.

History does not stand still. Our present understanding is always based upon past research and interpretation of known information. New facts may be discovered, sources of music newly uncovered or compared, and more recent scholars may assimilate all such information, bringing about a reassessment. New history is thus created, and over time the dissemination of the gathered data, interpretations, and opinions will lead to revised or new editions—and perhaps more enlightened performances.

Such has definitely been the case with the historicity of the viol and its English repertoire. For many years, the only substantial study was the work that Ernst Meyer had carried out for his German dissertation in 1934 and that was published in 1946 as *English Chamber Music*; unfortunately what was claimed to be a "new and completely revised edition" as *Early English Chamber Music, from the Middle Ages to Purcell* in 1982 was really quite a lot less. Many current perceptions of individual composers, their music, style, and significance are still compounded from their origins in Meyer. However, major contributions and expansions can be credited to Thurston Dart (especially in his studies that led to *Jacobean Consort Music*, vol. 9 of *Musica Britannica*) and to Gordon Dodd, whose *Thematic Index of Music for Viols* (London: Viola da Gamba Society, 1980– ) has provided a solid base for the new wave of scholarly activity presently in progress.

Such bursts of knowledge and deeper understanding frequently center around the efforts of a particular individual, and Andrew Ashbee has been a catalyst for a number of significant achievements. His long study and editions of John Jenkins have brought a fine instrumental composer out of obscurity, and his meticulous archival labors have resulted in five volumes of *Records of English Court Music* (Aldershot, England and Brookfield, Vermont: Gower Publishing, 1986–95; at least three more volumes are planned). Such is the stuff upon which history can be solidly based. Furthermore, Ashbee has brought together groups of scholars on at least three occasions for conferences where they



can all interact directly and establish stronger understanding. A 400th-anniversary conference in 1992 led to *John Jenkins and His Time: Studies in English Consort Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) edited by Ashbee and Peter Holman (reviewed in this volume).

Papers read at the Viola da Gamba Society's 1995 York conference "The Fantasia in England from Ferrabosco to Purcell" were instigated by Ashbee and published in three volumes of *Chelys*, 25–27 (1996/7–1999; with the incorrect title "The Fantasia in England from Dowland to Purcell"). In that same year, 1995, Ashbee also organized the Oxford conference commemorating the 350th anniversary of William Lawes's death at the battle of Chester in 1645, and the present excellent collection is the result.

Those VdGSA members who attended the Oxford conference to hear the papers and the concerts by Fretwork will find that some of the titles and even contents differ among the present essays, but often papers read and published will change format because of the circumstances or medium in which they are delivered. Surely in the three-year interim historical interpretations were altered by the substantial study by major Lawes scholar David Pinto, *For ye Violls: The Consort and Dance Music of William Lawes* (Richmond: Fretwork Editions, 1995) published for the Oxford conference (reviewed in this *Journal* 33 [1996], 89–93).

The present essays range widely and are arranged in two sections, "The Environment" and "The Music." Ashbee begins by dealing with Lawes's court position, based upon his study of the court records of Kings James and Charles—when most of the major viol consort composers were actively producing the great repertoire in which we all revel. For modern viol players, one basic question remains: under what circumstances was the music composed and performed? Ashbee (p. 6) quotes Pinto:

The large body of fantasies in two to six parts with a fringe of dance forms, apparently begun by Alfonso Ferrabosco II and followed by his court colleagues such as Coprario, Gibbons and Lupo, makes it clear that we must envisage some form of concert performance at court, from which the music derived its

renown among the wider public. How exactly the vogue was created, how the music was disseminated and by whom are questions yet to be fully answered.

Julia Wood argues for revisions in the interpretation of theater music in the seventeenth century, because erroneous historical perceptions now need to be corrected and "Lawes's music for plays has been a casualty of this neglect" (p. 11). She deals especially with musical aspects in the Lawes songs because others have previously concentrated upon literary elements. In fact, she hesitates to identify any instrumental music for plays, and although many of us have played music from *The Triumph of Peace*, Wood advises that "caution is necessary in ascription" (p. 59, note 13). Her tables that catalog individual songs, sources, and performance circumstances will provide groundwork for further study of a complex and much misunderstood idiom.

A series of three essays deals with the issue of music in Oxford, especially when the court was resident there before and during the Civil War. Such a rich tapestry, thick with interwoven threads of religions, sects, and court display, has also suffered over time so that some patches are almost threadbare—and the music fabric has been especially worn, not so much by misuse as by disuse and neglect. Anthony Milton wades into the turbulent waters of the Chapels Royal from the 1620s to 1640s (plural "Chapels" because each was resident in a major palace). The beliefs and preachings of Archbishop William Laud posed an abiding influence upon the role of music in court worship as well as public ceremony in an age when Puritan, Calvinist, or Catholic policies affected the style of religious music. Moreover, significant attention was aroused by the Chapel of Queen Henrietta Maria (sister to King Louis XIII of France), whose Catholic belief produced considerable hostility. David Pinto attempts to reconstruct a lost music repertoire of court carols produced for King Charles at Christmas feasts by relating traditions lost or subverted by allegiances, and tracing mutations of earlier devotional idioms, although he admits that any "attempt to reanimate the vital connections that must have existed between composers and poets can of course only go so far" (p. 109). Jonathan Wainwright presents a small part of his dissertation research on music

in Civil War Oxford (his 1997 book *Musical Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England* is one of the important new series being published by the Ashgate press), dealing with documentary evidence and manuscript sources of music in order to trace the Royalist repertoire of both the king's chapel (at Christ Church) and the queen's (at Merton College). Much of the musical repertoire appears to be Italian prints, gathered by Christopher, First Baron Hatton, and mostly surviving in the great Christ Church library—one of the finest collections outside the British Library in London and the Bodleian in Oxford. Hatton had much music copied for presumably court presentation, mostly early-seventeenth-century madrigals and motets performable with a handful of singers and possibly continuo, mostly of Italian origin; some motets are addressed to "Maria"—the Virgin and the queen who was Her champion on earth. Wainwright's appendices provide valuable resource materials for corroboration and further research.

Further offerings about Lawes's "environment" include the study by Robert Thompson (now the editor of *Chelys*) who identifies papers specially chosen for music and used in manuscripts associated with King Charles's Oxford court, autograph part-books of Lawes, and the Oxford viol-playing circles (see my article in this *Journal* 19 [1982], 7–70). Layton Ring utilizes maps and documents to reconstruct the events by which Lawes met his end on Wednesday, September 24, 1645 (thus the reason for the Lawes anniversary conference at that time of year). Andrew Robinson deals with Henry Lawes's publication of *Choice Psalms* (1648) as a monument to his brother and similar music "newly composed after the Italian Way"—"Italian" because of their pioneering use of figured bass and of trio-sonata texture. Especially illuminating are the observations about William's compositional methods in his vocal canons, and that "in his instrumental pieces he took liberties that make a modern editor's job difficult . . . and all we can do is boggle" (p. 185).

Part II, "The Music," gathers some substantial studies that range beyond Lawes and simultaneously address his idiosyncrasies. Christopher Field offers the largest, "Formality and Rhetoric in English Fantasia-Suites," linking the numerous contemporary

writers, English and German, who associate figures of speech with those of music to the compositions for one or two violins, viol, and organ by Coprario, Lawes, Jenkins, Hingeston, and John Birchensha (with further references to Lupo and especially Gibbons's "musick for the great Dooble Base"). Such meticulous analysis of melodic shapes, rests, harmonies, and rhythms as well as formal designs allows a rare opportunity to understand this music more in the manner of contemporary musicians. Field observes that "there has been little investigation of what impact rhetorical ideas may have had on the 'eloquent' style of Jacobean and Caroline consort music" but points out warnings that this is "a field one enters at one's peril" (p. 215). Nevertheless, his discussion of Lawes's "strong-willed, rough-hewn writing . . . with audacious leaps and clashing dissonances" on a "grander scale" that display "a fondness for big, flamboyant gestures" in comparison to Coprario's fantasia-suites benefits from Field's treatment of musical "figurae" by seventeenth-century English writers—and a tantalizing reference to a treatise by Birchensha that was never published. Surely such study of declamatory motifs can help us to understand the rhetorical background (and perhaps, purpose) of Lawes's erratic musical nature and often urgent instrumental speech; Field concludes that "oratory's power over the affections, and its concern for good formal disposition, gave it common ground with music in an age when musicians were greatly interested in the moving of the affections, new declamatory styles and the wordless eloquence of bowed string instruments" (pp. 234–35).

David Pinto offers a second study on the versions of the Royall Consort (one for two trebles, tenor, bass, and continuo; the other for two violins, two bass viols, and two theorbos), their interrelations and dating, and particularly the thorny "chicken-and-egg" issue of precedence. He argues for differing versions stemming from their performing function, in court circles and possibly among university players, all in a treatment that is intensive and even convoluted as one tries to follow his lead. His observations about relative dating of textures and of dance ensembles are highly perceptive, as he discusses the changes from five to six instruments "normative until after 1610" (p. 257) to smaller

groups often with two trebles. He dives into manuscript source studies, biographical details about copyists, and other parallel cohort composers, in order to attempt some dating of the Royall Consort versions, finally admitting that “constructing a standard stemma for the varying stages of the work’s development would run into a logical impasse if it relied on musical texts alone” (p. 273). Pinto provides valuable tables that list the contents of specific manuscripts containing dance repertoire, comparing their various scoring differences—a study that should assist Lawes research as well having as broader ramifications.

Mark Davenport attempts to identify the style characteristics that are unique to Lawes—the breaking of conventions, instrumental combinations, and formal structures—by looking especially at his movements marked “Aire” in his 5- and 6-part consort sets. Much scrutiny has been directed at the fantasias, but the aires have received far less attention. So Davenport studies both (although I wish he had spoken to Field about rhetoric rather than speculate [p. 286] about incipient sonata form), and arrives at his discussion of the aires by remarking that “what should be simple, light-hearted dances, are not what they seem” (p. 287). A chart of characteristics of Lawes’s aires assists in Davenport’s observations that by close to the mid-seventeenth century the definition of “ayre” had expanded, with Lawes’s pieces standing as quite modern manifestations of the *almaine* in their descending bass patterns, dissonance, augmented triads, and suspensions (p. 295).

The last two essays deal with vexing problems of identifying and distinguishing instruments and the music written for them. Annette Otterstedt, curator of pre-1800 instruments in Berlin, musicologist, and accomplished player and teacher of the viol, deals with Lawes’s division viol and its pedigree. Even though he composed in his idiosyncratic manner, Lawes followed traditions long established on the Continent, so that although he “seems to have been the first to use the term ‘division viol’” (p. 328) he was involved in a transformation of style associated with the *Viola Bastarda*. The repertoire for the Italian instrument is rare, and Otterstedt demonstrates that Alfonso Ferrabosco II was a major link in the Anglicization, taking “the step from ensemble virtuoso

to soloist, at the same time breathing new life into an inherited technique” (p. 323) by employing chords rather than the flashy Italian embellishments of Rogniono or della Casa. The instrument he wrote for was no longer tuned like a tenor, but an untransposed bass. Though more discussion is presented concerning viols with organs, tunings, and temperaments (see also her article in *Chelys* 25 [1996–7], 32), Otterstedt here presents evidence to show that “it is a truism that Lawes was indebted to Coprario, but Ferrabosco’s influence must have been significant, too” (p. 328). Her comparisons of musical examples illustrate the evolutionary direction toward writing genuine compositions for virtuosi rather than encouraging improvisation, and show that Lawes leaves “no scope for variants to the two virtuoso viols going along with the dominant organ” (p. 332).

Frank Traficante concludes the book with his observations about Lawes’s lyra-viol music—that is, any music written for viol in tablature. He takes a side trip into peculiarities of tablature notation among scribes and copyists, including Lawes’s autograph manuscripts, more to illustrate how much the actual writing is inextricably connected to individual playing of the instrument, and also to suggest that because of such an intimate connection much of such music is assumed lost. Among the forty-four extant complete pieces and the fifty-two fragments are pieces by Lawes for three lyras “of high aesthetic level and technical complexity” (p. 349)—a “foreshadowing of the fascination with so-called *style brisé* that would become so important a part of later French keyboard music” (p. 349). For the conclusion of his article, Traficante quotes the “flight of anthropomorphic fancy” written by Sir Peter Leicester about solitary viol playing, its sentiments beautifully capturing the special sense of William Lawes’s music and its time as conveyed by this significant publication.

Bruce Bellingham

*The poem by Sir Peter Leicester, referred to above, is reprinted on the following page.*

*To His Viole*  
by Sir Peter Leicester

*Come Sweete Companion, Solace of my Life,  
Asswager of my Cares, another Wife;  
Let us retire into some shady Place,  
where with my Circling thighs I may embrace  
and aptly hugge thee, till thy trembling stringe  
cause the sweete friskind ayre to dance & singe  
Whiles I bestride thy belly, Sweetest Mate,  
It is expected we should propagate:  
The numerous issue of thy pleasing mirth  
Are all Abortives, perish in the Birth.  
Oh I could wish the Sportes of all leasure  
might like the Spheres move in Eternall pleasure.  
Embleme of Heaven! fit for the feasts of Jove;  
where's nothinge else but harmony and Love.*

**Andrew Ashbee and Peter Holman, eds.** *John Jenkins and His Time: Studies in English Consort Music.* Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1996. \$98.00.

**John Jenkins.** *Consort Music of Three Parts*, ed. Andrew Ashbee. *Musica Britannica*, Vol. LXX. London: Stainer and Bell, 1997. Score; parts available. \$120.00.

The reviewer of a new edition or collection of music normally expects to look into recent research on the composer, just as the reviewer of a new book normally expects to look into the compositions of the composer or composers cited in the book. Two recent publications, both edited by Andrew Ashbee, treat, on one hand, compositions of John Jenkins, and on the other, research related to Jenkins. This concordance relieves the reviewer of a quick trip to see what has been written, but at the same time it forces the evaluation of research results in two different spheres.

*John Jenkins and His Time*, the earlier publication, is edited by Ashbee and Peter Holman. The unwary reader is cautioned to notice the subtitle: *Studies in English Consort Music*. The book is

more about English consort music than about Jenkins, though Jenkins is the focal point. Most of the thirteen essays in the collection were stimulated by a conference in July 1992 to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of John Jenkins's birth. Other essays were added in order to give a perspective of recent research in consort music. Thus we see chapters dedicated to Gibbons and Ferrabosco, as well as chapters on musical apprenticeship and manuscript copyists. The resulting collection of essays adds a great deal of new scholarly information to our knowledge of the composition and patronage of English consort music.

Christopher Field's very thorough study of "Jenkins and the Cosmography of Harmony" may be daunting to the uninitiated, but it offers a clear explanation for the use of incomplete or conflicting key signatures in seventeenth-century music. With apologies to Michael Steinberg (writing in the *New York Times*, June 13, 1999, "Toward Fresh and Friendly Concerts"), who advises writers on music to avoid the use of the word "hexachord" in program notes, and even in pre-concert lectures, I find it my duty to report that the musicians of the seventeenth century were still using such hexachords and their modulations and mutations. The music of Jenkins and his time looks like major and minor to the modern consort player, but the composers of the time were still thinking in terms of those hexachords.

Field also gives a logical explanation for the lack of sufficient sharps or flats in many key signatures from the early part of the seventeenth century. It was not carelessness, he writes, but the custom to use no more than two flats or sharps in any signature. Jenkins used signatures of three flats for C minor and three sharps for A major by the time of his late (c. 1670–74) *Fantasias and Aires for Two Violins, Bass Viol, and Thoroughbass*. But Purcell still used two flats for the C minor signature and two sharps for the A major signature in 1683 (*Sonatas of III Parts*). The paper points out that Jenkins was a revolutionary in the use of modulations, enharmonic modulations, and explorations of the circle of keys. Field's charts of the modulations and key signature choices in selected works by Jenkins are very helpful for analysis of the compositions.

Joel Kramme's contribution is a suggested reconstruction of the missing alto part in William Cobbold's "New Fashions," according to the composer's use of popular tunes in the quodlibet. Bruce Bellingham analyzes "Convention and Transformation in Ferrabosco's Four-Part Fantasias," while Andrew Hanley investigates similarities and differences in the music of Richard Mico and Jenkins. Kathryn Smith's paper is a discussion of Jenkins's sacred vocal music in its context.

The paper by Lynn Hulse on "Musical Apprenticeship in Noble Households" is a delightful essay on this aspect of musical life in the seventeenth century. Another paper with interesting information on the life and times of the era's composers is David Pinto's "Gibbons in the Bedchamber." Other timely topical essays are "Jenkins's Lute Music: An Approach to Reconstructing the Lost Multitudes of Lute Lessons," by Matthew Spring, and "Lyra-Viol Music? A Semantic Puzzle," by Frank Traficante. In the latter article, of great interest to players of the viola da gamba, Traficante seeks to settle the many disputes among scholars as to the meaning of the term "lyra-viol music." He suggests that the term specifies music notated in tablature but does not specify the size or structure of the intended instrument. His very valuable appendix includes an exhaustive table of references both to lyra-viol music and to instrumental structure.

Jonathan P. Wainwright's "The Christ Church Viol-Consort Manuscripts Reconsidered" discusses the work of the various scribes who contributed to major consort manuscripts housed at the library of Christ Church, Oxford. His conclusions about the authorship of certain manuscripts present information crucial to the understanding of variant readings in extant sources. Other chapters on manuscript sources are Ashbee's "The Transmission of Consort Music in Some Seventeenth-Century English Manuscripts" and Robert Thompson's "Some Late Sources of Music by John Jenkins." Thompson dates, from watermarks and paper sources, a large number of manuscripts copied after 1670. Ashbee's enlightening article gives the reader an insight into the culture of musical patronage, where wealthy members of the aristocracy hired their own musicians and copyists, and lent manuscripts to each other for copying.

Of great interest to viol consort performers is Peter Holman's "Evenly, Softly, and Sweetly Acchording to All": The Organ Accompaniment of English Consort Music." Holman concludes, both from the comments of contemporary writers like Thomas Mace and Roger North, and from evidence in the manuscripts of a number of composers, that it was the custom in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for the instruments to be accompanied by a chamber organ. In many manuscripts organ parts are provided, while in other cases the organist was expected to provide his own doublings or improvised chords.

Considered as a whole, *John Jenkins and His Time* is a useful companion for the serious scholar of seventeenth-century consort music, and a valuable addition to the serious music library. Though some unsuspecting music lovers will pick up the book thinking it to be a life and times of John Jenkins, a friendly title like this is a key to wider dissemination.

Several of the papers in *John Jenkins and His Time* stimulate the reader to go to the music for more study. Ashbee's edition of Jenkins's *Consort Music of Three Parts* for the Musica Britannica series affords a compatible resource. Ashbee presents a complete consideration of all the extant sources for two collections: the consort music for treble, two basses, and organ, and the music for two trebles and a bass. His introductory notes are excellent, and his textual commentary (that is, the listing of variants in note spellings and accidentals) is thorough.

Ashbee's primary source for the twenty-seven fantasias and a pavan for treble, two basses, and organ is the set of four partbooks from the collection belonging to the North family of Cambridgeshire, dated 1654 (Oxford: Bodleian Library MSS Mus. Sch. E.406-9). In addition, he has provided commentary on the variants in this and other sources. His primary source for the works for two trebles and a bass is the holograph score of the twenty-one fantasias, almost certainly made by the composer for Sir Nicholas Le Strange in the 1640s (London: British Library Add. MS. 31428), with commentary on variants in other sources.

From the point of view of a researcher trying to compare the different sources, the Musica Britannica style of listing the variants in a string at the back of the book proves extremely

difficult to use. In many cases, such as obvious scribal mistakes or misreadings, this is the only practical method. But when more than one choice might be acceptable, especially regarding variant accidentals, it would certainly be preferable to see the variant above the note, with a concise reference to the source and a rationale for choosing the preferred source.

For example, in Fantasia No. 2, for treble, two basses, and organ, Ashbee apparently prefers the suggestions in the earliest source (partbooks from the library of Archbishop Narcissus Marsh of Dublin, copied before 1642). The resulting Dorian mode transposed down a fifth to G produces sharpened sixths and flattened sevenths. Though added accidentals flatten sixths in some downward passages or sharpen sevenths at cadences, the number of angularities such as tritone cross-relations is disconcerting. A reading from the later partbooks from the North family collection produces a smoother linear and harmonic flow (Christopher Field's essay alludes to the gradual change in taste from the early to middle seventeenth century, during which Jenkins began to notate his music in the "new composing" style). Comparison of the different versions would be much easier if the variant accidentals were above the score.

Discrepancies in interpretation can be found between the music edition and the collection of essays. Christopher Field, in his "Jenkins and the Cosmography of Harmony" cited above, calls attention to a number of Jenkins's works, including some in the *Consort Music of Three Parts* collection. This reviewer honed in on these pieces immediately, and discovered, to great distress, that a forward-looking notation of a B# in a G# major chord, called to our attention by Field, is nowhere to be found in Ashbee's edition. In defense of Field, the Musica Britannica edition had not been published at the time of his paper's presentation. But, on the other hand, the missing B#, which is quite essential to the particular cadence of which it is a part, is also nowhere to be found in any of the textual commentary.

Both publications will be fine additions to institutional and home libraries. In addition to publications like these, this reviewer looks forward to seeing more and more access to new research and to historic manuscript collections through the Internet.

Ashbee's paper on the transmission of consort music describes the dissemination of musical scores and parts in the seventeenth century. The industry of music publishing changed the culture in the following centuries. In the oncoming twenty-first century, musicians, publishers, libraries, researchers, and performers will have the opportunity to develop entirely new methods of transmission and scrutiny.

For example, the Library of Congress currently sponsors the American Memory project, which already includes on-line images of George Washington's papers and other major historical documents, together with modern transcriptions of manuscripts. The American Memory project also includes Historic American Sheet Music, digitized musical scores from Duke University's collection (access from the Library of Congress web page). The Treasures Digitisation Project of the British Library has the Magna Carta and several other treasures from its collection on line. The purpose of these projects is both to protect the originals and to allow greater access to the documents. It would be wonderful if every Jenkins student or consort player could see the images of some of the manuscripts described in the volumes under discussion. Both volumes contain a few photographs of manuscripts; these are interesting, but entire manuscripts would be more helpful.

Ellen TeSelle Boal

*Recueil de pièces de viole en musique et en tablature 1666: Fac-similé du Ms M2.1.T2.17C. Case, Washington, Library of Congress. Introduction and index by Stuart Cheney. Geneva: Éditions Minkoff, 1998. \$48.00.*

*Jean (?) de Sainte-Colombe. Recueil de pièces pour basse de viole seule ca 1690: Fac-similé du manuscrit M.3 de la Bibliothèque de Tournus. Preface by Henri Lévêque and introduction and index by François-Pierre Goy. Paris: Minkoff France Éditeur, 1998. \$74.00.*

How many of us have stopped to consider how fortunate we, as viol players, are to own or have access to high-quality facsimile editions of so much French repertory? Armed with



these, we have the luxury of playing from them, drawing comparisons with other copies of the same works, and making our own editions—wherever we may be in the world. For this we are indebted above all to Madame Sylvie Minkoff who, with her late husband, has been making them available for the past three decades. It is, for example, a remarkable state of affairs that three manuscript concordances of the two facsimiles under consideration here have already been issued by Minkoff.

Why, then, was it important to issue facsimiles of these particular manuscripts? As contemporaries, Dubuisson—or Jean Laquemant (1622/23–1680/81) as he is now known to have been—and Jean (?) de Sainte-Colombe represent two branches of the French viol school identified by Jean Rousseau in 1687. The Library of Congress manuscript, whose viol pieces are attributed to Dubuisson, carries the date September 1, 1666, suggesting that the twenty-three pieces contained within could represent the earliest dated French music for solo bass viol. The page of instructions on bowing and fingering included at the end of the manuscript—which, incidentally, also contains six dances in French violin clef and twenty-five signals for hunting horn—is also the earliest of its kind. Of further interest is the fact that the pieces are grouped in four suites—“the oldest French suites for any media written in the ‘classic’ sequence: prelude–allemande–courante–sarabande [one with a *double*]-gigue”—and followed by two preludes in tablature. As for the manuscript of pieces by Sainte-Colombe at Tournus, it came to light only in 1992 (the same year in which the film *Tous les matins du monde* drew so much attention to the mysterious Sieur de Sainte-Colombe) and represents the largest single known source of his pieces for solo bass viol. Let me now consider them separately.

Stuart Cheney, in his introduction, makes an intriguing conjecture as to how the Library of Congress musical miscellany was compiled. He believes it belonged to someone apprenticed to a music master and who studied separately with a viol player—Dubuisson—as well as a violinist and a horn player, identified as “Jacques Chrestien.” The manuscript is written in five different hands: Hand A was responsible for the viol pieces (each of which, except for the final prelude, is annotated either with “Dubuisson”

or “D.B.”) and the directions to Dubuisson’s house written on the inside cover, and Hand D the page with performance practice instructions. Although the existence of the manuscript has been known since the 1960s and a modern edition (Dovehouse) of the four suites, edited by Barbara Coeyman, has been available since 1980, it is only now that the larger context for the manuscript has been explored.

The interest and importance of the manuscript are not in doubt, and while Dovehouse issued a second edition (1995) of the four suites for solo bass viol—incorporating details from concordances in a Warsaw manuscript of viol music (*PL Wtm R 221*), a facsimile of which is itself now available from Minkoff—Cheney has discovered still more concordances in two further manuscripts in Kassel (*D KI Ms. 4° Mus.108, v.3* and *2° Mus. 61<sup>L1</sup>*). What we lack now is a critical edition that takes account of all the variants. There are, of course, the odd splotches of ink on the manuscript that may be susceptible to reinterpretation (for example, the chord on the second beat of measure 8 of the A minor courante—see folio 14v—which is unplayable as interpreted in the Dovehouse edition).

There is, it would seem, at least one issue of performing practice still to be resolved: what the copyist (Dubuisson?) intended the fermata sign to mean. Cheney believes the half-circle over a dot indicates a bowstroke in the same direction—presumably the same as that of the previous note. However, this would not seem to be consistently borne out by the music: “yes” in the D major courante and sarabande, “no” in the D major and A major allemandes. Coeyman, in the notes to her edition, concludes that the sign was used randomly; but then she systematically adds dots to all the empty half-circle lines in the manuscript, occurring over the final cadence chords of the D minor and A minor preludes and the end of the first section of the A major allemande.

The discovery of a substantial manuscript of solo bass viol pieces by Sainte-Colombe was celebrated with a musicological conference organized by the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles at Tournus on October 28, 1995, including a performance by Jordi Savall and broadcast by France Musique. (Stuart Cheney’s report on the conference appeared in this *Journal* 32



[1995], pp. 54–57.) The manuscript contains 153 items, nine of which are at the moment anonymous and one is by Marais (*Gigue à l'angloise*); one is incomplete, and six are scored *avec basse continue*. As with the other Sainte-Colombe facsimiles issued by Minkoff (*F Pn Rés. Vmc. ms 85* and the Edinburgh manuscripts *GB En Mss 9468* and *9469*), François-Pierre Goy provides an excellent introduction to the facsimile of the Tournus manuscript, summarizing the recent archival research of Corinne Vaast and Jonathan Dunford on Sainte-Colombe's identity as a "bourgeois de Paris" living in the parish of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois (as did Dubuisson and Marais), and describing the undated Tournus manuscript and its concordances (mentioned above) and comparing them.

They turn out to have much in common: handwriting, titles, time signatures, and passages of free rhythm within large beats—irregular numbers of sixteenth and thirty-second notes (played in single bow strokes) and *notes perdues* (separately bowed eighths). They vary in the use of clefs (only the Tournus manuscript uses first-line G clef), articulation, ornamentation, and in the length and the complexity of final cadences, which for Goy indicates that the copyist(s) had access to sources reflecting different states of composition; another interpretation might be that the manuscripts were to some extent tailored to the individual player/owner (certainly the Edinburgh manuscripts—and a lost third volume—originally belonged to a viol player, Harry Maule, sent to Paris during the 1670s to complete his education). Like the better-known *Concerts à deux violes esgales*, the solo pieces in the Tournus manuscript are restricted to a limited number of keys and, with the exception of the G minor pieces, all require a seven-string viol.

Seventeen of the pieces for solo bass viol also survive in versions for two viols, and it is among these that issues and possible explanations are revealed. Goy feels that as yet it is impossible to determine which version came first. Most often, the solo version closely resembles the top part of the duo version; however, in the sarabande on folio 13v (which compares with the "Sarabande du trembleur" of *Concert XXIX*), the solo viol part represents a synthesis of the top line of the *concert* and elements

of the *double* that follows it. Here and there one version elucidates the other: in the ballet on folio 19v of the Tournus manuscript there are whole notes in measures 16 and 24 that might seem to cry out for accompaniment, and indeed in the Paris manuscript, in the "Balet gay" of *Concert XXXIII*, the second viol has eighth notes in measure 16 and a mixture of note values (including *notes perdues*) in measure 24. Even more interesting is the "Petite piece" on folio 35r (corresponding to the first part of the "Balet tendre" of *Concert XLI*): in the Tournus manuscript version the passage beginning in measure 120 takes twice as long to reach the cadence because of the addition of echoes. If we play this game long enough—and the more facsimiles we have to hand, the better the game—we will, I believe, eventually reach answers. Thank you again, Madame Minkoff.

Julie Anne Sadie

**Orlando Gibbons.** *Three Fantasias of Six Parts, Apt for Viols.* Edited by Virginia Brookes. Albany, CA: PRB Productions, 1998. Viol Consort Series No. 36. Score and parts \$16.00.

**Thomas Ravenscroft.** *Four Fantasias of Five Parts.* Edited by Virginia Brookes. Albany, CA: PRB Productions, 1998. Viol Consort Series No. 35. Score and parts \$16.00.

"[Orlando] Gibbons—we shall have to recognize him as the greatest master of the fantasia of the period," says Ernst H. Meyer in his pioneering *Early English Chamber Music*, and it seems to me that few would give serious challenge to this bold statement. Whether for two, three, four, five, or six parts, Gibbons's instrumental music is held in high esteem.

There is, however, some controversy regarding Gibbons's six-part fantasias, a debate outlined by Gordon Dodd in his *Thematic Index of Music for Viols, Second Instalment, 1982*, and by Michael Hobbs in his edition of Gibbons's *Six Fantasias for Viols in Six Parts* (Faber, 1982). Scholars Meyer (1934), Edmund H. Fellowes (1951), and Peter Le Huray in *New Grove* (1980), represent the old school by listing only four six-part fantasias for viols, including the three pieces in the present

edition. Current consensus is that Gibbons's six-part instrumental music includes nine fantasias, a set of variations on "Go from my window," a pavan, and a galliard. Of the nine "fantasias," six (those edited by Hobbs [also by George Hunter, Northwood, 1980]) are definitely in the fantasia style, while three—those published here—are in a vocal (madrigal/motet) style, although without text. The "vocal" fantasias are found in a single manuscript source (Oxford, Christ Church MS21) without attribution; the manuscript also includes a quantity of Gibbons's texted vocal music. All twelve of Gibbons's six-part instrumental pieces are included in *The Consort Music of Orlando Gibbons* (Musica Britannica, Volume 48, transcribed and edited by John Harper, 1982), the comprehensive and authoritative edition of his music for instruments. Harper suggests that the restrained style of these three fantasias may indicate that they are early works.

Whatever the case may be regarding authorship and musical style, all of the fantasias are of high quality and well worth study. For the "vocal" fantasias it would indeed be enlightening and helpful to know of any texts Gibbons might have had in mind when he composed them, but, barring extraordinary luck, we will probably never know of these extramusical meanings. Viol aficionados, if they are not already familiar with this music, should be very pleased to add three new pieces to the six Gibbons fantasias that they more frequently encounter.

Virginia Brookes wisely labels the three "new" fantasias of her edition numbers 7–9, to avoid confusion with numbers 1–6 already assigned by the Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain (VdGS[GB]) to the more famous fantasias. Her enlightening preface succinctly places Gibbons and his music in its historic context, describes the single manuscript source including what we know of its history, and outlines fundamental points of Gibbons's musical style. Her bibliography is cursory, omitting several fundamental sources perhaps too obvious to mention, but the preface reads well and is satisfactory for a practical edition.

Brookes's editorial method is both logical and suitable to the music. Original note values are retained, accidentals are clarified, and the few variants she suggests are clearly identified. Contrary to one point made in the preface, I would point out that the three

"vocal" pieces are indeed listed by the VdGS(GB) under the numbers supplied by Meyer in his now outdated catalog. The VdGS (GB) may not recognize them as official "fantasias," but it does leave open the possibility of a change of scholarly mind. Brookes's score and parts are clear and easy to use. The note size in the score may be small for some eyes; the performing parts, however, do have larger-sized notes. None of the parts include page turns within individual pieces.

These pieces call for an unusual distribution of parts: two treble viols, three tenor viols, and one bass viol. Brookes employs the common clef assignments of treble, alto, and bass clef respectively. The tenor viol parts include alternative versions in octave-treble clefs for those who might prefer this. Befitting the vocal nature of the music, ranges are smaller than for the instrumental fantasias.

This publication, then, contains three very attractive compositions. While one might not logically call them "fantasias," they do suit viols very comfortably. It is not far-fetched to include them in the literature for viol consorts. (In similar fashion one might welcome parts for Gibbons's *The First Set of Madrigals and Motetts of 5 Parts*. Although score and texts are available for this collection, these marvelous vocal pieces are not widely performed by gambists partly because a good modern performing edition is lacking.) Brookes's new edition is especially welcome because it provides performing parts and thus makes the music easily accessible to many who might otherwise overlook it.

Thomas Ravenscroft (c. 1582–1635) was not a prolific composer for instruments. While he did compose a number of verse anthems employing viols, his only fantasias are those published here. These pieces have been published previously but were not available in a good modern edition until now.

Fantasia No.1 is interesting as one of the rare places where dynamics ("softe," "lowde," and so on) are found in seventeenth-century manuscripts. Dynamics are not specified in fantasias 2–4.

All of the fantasias are shaped by excellent rhythms, interesting points of imitation, and well-composed counterpoint. Brookes rightly describes the music as "fresh and vigorous and full of vitality." Although the fantasias change mood from section to

section in a madrigal style, they are almost completely contrapuntal in nature.

Brookes's format and editorial method for her Ravenscroft edition are the same as for her Gibbons edition. Her brief but well-written preface includes both a condensed outline of Ravenscroft's life and works and a concise description of his musical style as found in the fantasias. Again the bibliography is skimpy. Her editorial work, however, is excellent, her decisions good. Brookes builds the edition on the most complete manuscript source (British Museum Add MS 39550-4), consulting four other manuscripts to clarify certain points. The textual commentary is clear, logical, and well done.

Virginia Brookes is quietly building a substantial collection of practical and thoughtfully prepared editions for viol consort, and for this we are grateful. These two new publications are both handsome and welcome.

Gordon Sandford

## CONTRIBUTOR PROFILES

**Gregory Barnett** teaches music history at the University of Iowa. He earned his Ph.D. in musicology at Princeton University in 1997 and is completing a book on Italian instrumental music of the late seventeenth century to be published by the University of California Press. His recent article on the violoncello da spalla appears in volume XXIV (1998) of the *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*. He also plays the double bass in both modern and period-instrument ensembles.

**Bruce Bellingham**, Vice-President and President of the VdGSA from 1975 to 1979, was educated in Toronto (B.Mus., M.A., Ph.D.) and taught at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester before settling in Connecticut in 1974. He is Professor of Music History at the University of Connecticut and plays jazz and orchestral bass. He has chaired the American Musicological Society's Collegium Musicum committee, edited bicinia publications for A-R Editions and Bärenreiter, and collaborated with Andrew Ashbee on the *Alfonso Ferrabosco II Four-Part Fantasias* for *Musica Britannica*, vol. 62. His articles and reviews have been published by *Chelys*, *Notes*, Oxford University Press, and this *Journal*.

**Ellen TeSelle Boal** has frequently contributed articles and reviews to this *Journal* and to the VdGSA Newsletter, as well as to other publications. A graduate of the University of Colorado, she received a Ph.D. in musicology from Washington University in Saint Louis. Studies included work with early music specialists Curtis Price, George Houle, James Tyler, Nicholas McGegan, and Trevor Pinnock. A performer on both cello and viola da gamba, she has been a member of a number of professional orchestras, and has performed as a soloist and chamber musician with many ensembles including the New Music Circle of Saint Louis, Early Music Ensemble of Saint Louis, Washington (DC) Bach Consort, Interlochen Chamber Players, and Boulder (CO) Bach Festival; she was founder of the Washington (DC) Purcell Consort. Her teaching positions have included

Hastings College, Bradley University, the Peabody Conservatory, and Washington University.

**Ted Conner** received a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from the New England Conservatory, a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from the Johns Hopkins University, a Master of Music Theory from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in music History and Theory from the University of Connecticut. He is Assistant Professor of Music at Muhlenberg College, where he teaches music history, directs the Muhlenberg Collegium Musicum, and runs the Muhlenberg Jazz Improvisation Ensemble. He plays viola da gamba, lute, and recorder, and is an active jazz guitarist. His research interests include improvisation, narrative theory and opera, rhetoric and English viol music, time and space in music, and philosophy and Romantic music.

**Joëlle Morton** performs professionally in the U.S., Canada, and Europe on double bass and a variety of period instruments, including Renaissance and Baroque viola da gamba and violone. She is founder/director of Parnassus, a Renaissance viola da gamba consort, and co-founder of the gamba duo Girasolle. She performs on Baroque double bass and violone with the New York Collegium, Philomel, Concert Royal, and the Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra. As a modern double bassist, Ms. Morton has played as a member of such groups as the Toronto Symphony, the Los Angeles Mozart Orchestra, the Long Beach Symphony, and the Frauen Kammerorchester (Vienna). In addition to performing and teaching, Ms. Morton is active as a musicologist and clinician, specializing in the history and evolution of bowed bass instruments, and period performance techniques. She is General Editor of the International Society of Bassists, and a contributor to *Double Bassist Magazine*. She may be heard on recent recordings with the Ensemble de'Medici, Musica Viva, Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra, and with Lynette Johnson, a Celtic harpist. Ms. Morton makes her home in New York City.

**Julie Anne Sadie**, a pupil of John Hsu while at Cornell University, has written extensively on Baroque music, and the French viol school in particular, and is a regular reviewer in *Gramo-*

*phone* of recordings of viol music. She is the co-editor of the *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* and, with Stanley Sadie, she is compiling a guide to European composer museums and memorial places (*Calling on the Composer*) for Yale University Press.

**Gordon Sandford** has recently retired from the faculty of the University of Colorado in Boulder. For many years he directed the University Collegium and at different times was Chair of the String Faculty and the Musicology Faculty. He has served as president and vice president of the Viola da Gamba Society of America, hosted two VdGSA Conclaves in Boulder, has written many reviews for the VdGSA's publications, and continues to serve on the Editorial Board for the *Journal*.

**Richard Sutcliffe** received two bachelor's degrees from the State University of New York at Potsdam in modern violin performance and music education. In 1999 he completed his masters in viola da gamba performance with Wieland Kuijken and Gail-Ann Schroeder at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel. He currently lives in Brussels, Belgium where he teaches viola da gamba and chamber music privately. He has taught at various workshops in the United States and has performed on the viola da gamba and pardessus de viole in Europe and the United States with groups such as Les Honnêtes Curieux, Le Goût du Siècle, and Jacobean Viols. He is currently studying chamber music at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel as well as continuing his research on the repertoire of the pardessus de viole.

**Ian Woodfield** received his bachelor's degree from Nottingham University and his master's and doctorate from King's College, University of London. He was Herschel Fellow at Bath University in 1976-1977. In 1978 he was appointed to the music faculty of Queen's University of Belfast, where he is now Director of the School of Music. His first book, *The Celebrated Quarrel Between Thomas Linley (Senior) and William Herschel: An Episode in the Musical Life of 18th-Century Bath*, was published by the University of Bath in 1977. He has also contributed articles and reviews to *Early Music* and the *Proceedings of the*

Royal Music Association. His book *The Early History of the Viol* (published by Cambridge University Press in 1984) is now a classic on the subject. He delivered two lectures at the 1994 VdGSA Conclave. His most recent book is *English Musicians in the Age of Exploration*, published by Pendragon Press in 1995.