

Preface to suite by Dietrich Stöeffken

This suite by Dietrich Stöeffken is taken from two sources, Archbishop Marsh's lyra viol book Z3.5.13 and the "Göess A" manuscript from Ebanthal castle near Klagenfurt in the southern Austrian province of Carinthia. The prelude is from the Göess and the following suite from Marsh, the movements are in their original order, but in Marsh were untitled. I have applied titles based on meter and dance character.

The movements are in "high harp way flat tuning" which in the Göess manuscript is referred to as "ton de Steffkin". The viol strings should be tuned in the following way: Abbreviated in tablature letters: f e d f h; sounding notes d' a f d A D. It is possible to play this music in the standard viol tuning, but it is not recommended as the particular sonorities of the tuning will be lost.

Narcissus Marsh's lyra viol book is one of the most important sources we have for ornaments, articulations and bowing for the Lyra viol in the 17th century. For this reason, I have added a transcription of the original bowings and ornaments at the end of this edition as an indication for historical performance practice. Of particular note is the dotted slur which is in the Manchester Gamba Book referred to as a "slur with jobbing juts", interpret this as you see fit!

There is an abundance of spellings for Stöeffken in 17th century sources: Steffkyn, Steffkyn, Steffkin, in Marsh's book the spelling is "Mr. Stephkin". I have chosen to use the spelling Stöeffken which is how he signed his own name. c. 150 pieces survive from Stöeffken all in manuscript form. His music was never published possibly because he seems to only have composed for the viol.

Stöeffken was born in the early 1600's and died in Cologne c. 1673. In 1628 he was in England as a musician to Charles the first's consort Henrietta Maria. In 1636 he succeeded Maurice Webster as a "musician for the consort in ordinary" to the King. In 1641 alongside John Jenkins he was a member of the prestigious group "Lutes, Violls and Voices". In 1642, unlike his English colleagues, he fled the civil war in England and took the position of viol player to Friederich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg. He was in The Netherlands in the period 1648-1659 which we know from frequent letter correspondences with the Dutch viol player Constantijn Huygens who admired him greatly. The Göess manuscripts containing his music were probably compiled in Utrecht in this period before they were taken to Ebanthal Castle. In 1660 Stöeffken returned to England where he was one (of ten) of the King's private musicians in the Henrietta Consort. Stöeffken's sons were later appointed as viol players at the court: rare accolades for non-English musicians.

Stöeffken was greatly admired for his skill and proficiency as a virtuoso on the viol throughout Europe. Huygens wrote to Mersenne in 1646, *"the marvellous Stiphkins, who performs more wonders on the viola da gamba than any man yet"*.

Roger North, a pupil of John Jenkins, recalled the *"particular friendship cultivated between old Mr Stephkins, the famous violist"* and Jenkins who *"often sent him kind tokens, which were pieces of fresh musick"*.

On hearing Stöeffken's performance in Hamburg in 1653 the English merchant and music lover Robert Bargrave remarked, *"Mr Steffkins did charme mine Eares, with his admirable skill on the base Viol, which is as I think it impossible to exceed"*.

Marsh's Lyra viol book is housed in Archbishop Marsh's library in Dublin, Ireland. It was compiled by an unknown scribe and was probably passed into Marsh's possession on 1666, the date which bears his signature of ownership. It was in this year that Marsh began weekly meetings of viol players in rooms in Exeter College, Oxford, which continued until his appointment as provost of Trinity College Dublin in 1678. In Marsh's book works by Stöeffken are to be found in close conjunction with works by Jenkins and Lawes who he was almost certainly playing with earlier in the century. The style of pieces is diverse, perhaps as a result of how much Stöeffken travelled in his life. The prelude is German in style and the following movements are of French/German influence, the courante is reminiscent of Hotman (who also appears in the Göess A) and the Gigue is technically demanding with often bizarre harmonic movement. All of this to be found in a book compiled by an English man and left in a Library bearing his name in Dublin, Ireland.

Textual Commentary:

Movement	Bar Number	Variant and Comment
Prelude	16	5th note is "g" in the tablature 2nd note is "a" in the tablature
Courante	7	1st note is a unison a in the tablature
Sarabande	5	I have added an f to the highest note of the chord
	12	The lower note of the chord is "a" in the tablature

Nicholas Milne, June 2005