

## Composer's Note

THIS SONATINA was written to provide amateur viol players with a short concert work that contains interesting—but not, one hopes, overly intimidating—musical challenges. That this task puts before the composer a set of quite different challenges is only just.

Writing serious music suited to intermediate players is more technically demanding than writing for the professional. A composer can generally rely on professionals to play what he has written, but when writing for amateurs the composer has the additional burden of *making the music playable by those players*, and he must do this without bowlderising the music itself and removing most of what makes it worth playing at all. This 'balancing act' can be extremely daunting, and that may explain why much new music for intermediates is rather simplistic and uninteresting to play.

But a look at the works in *Der getreue Music-Meister* is highly instructive, and reveals that Telemann, at least, felt no need to 'dumb-down' his musical vocabulary to make the pieces accessible to non-professionals. While challenging, these works are mostly within the scope of the amateur players for whom they were written. Telemann, renowned (and feared!) as the composer of some of the most demanding virtuoso music of the Baroque, thus demonstrated that a work may *appear* much harder to play than it actually is, *if* the composer takes into account the technical difficulties of each musical demand he makes of his players, *and* if he does not throw too many different difficulties at them simultaneously.

An excellent example of this approach can be seen in the Allegro of his Recorder Sonata in C Major (TWV 41:C2). At first glance, the runs of 16<sup>th</sup> notes appear beyond the reach of any but a veteran virtuoso, but a close examination of the fingering reveals that Telemann has organised things so that the repetitive patterns of successive groups of four are both intuitive and musically logical, and the notes fall quite effortlessly under the fingers. Moreover, he has not complicated matters by asking the performer for difficult high or low notes in those same runs. A good amateur can play through these passages with an *élan* that will surprise even himself.

I have taken this lesson from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century masters to heart. It is all very well, for example, to ask an amateur viol player for one-finger double stops, or to require an occasional note on the 7<sup>th</sup> fret. But to do both at the same time—or to do either one when the tempo is already straining the players' technique to the limit—is not reasonable, and I have not done so in this sonatina.<sup>1</sup>

Quick passage-work is always somewhat challenging, but careful treatment can bring the runs within reach of the

<sup>1</sup> There are many double stops, but all can be played with at most one stopped string—and some on two open strings—and nowhere do I require fast changes from one double stop to another. There is indeed a 7<sup>th</sup>-fret high A in the Treble I part, but it is in the Largo, and the first three notes of that measure are played on open strings, giving the player ample time to shift up.

amateur player. I have written these in groups of no more than four 16<sup>th</sup> notes at a time—to give the player a chance to 'breathe' between them—and kept them mostly scale-wise and diatonic. Where such groups comprise jumps or arpeggios, most can be played on open strings and none require skipping strings in the bow crossings.

The greatest overall technical demands on the players will be found in the third movement, primarily because of the tempo (which is generally the mid-level player's *bête noire*). Performers should remember that the suggested metronome markings are an indication of the *fastest* tempo appropriate for each movement, and should feel free to adopt a tempo which they are comfortable in maintaining.

The *fugato* sections of this movement present the ensemble itself with a different sort of challenge, but not, I hope, an insuperable one, as the result of a good execution is well worth the effort required to accomplish it.

There are places in this sonatina where tenor players will find themselves asked to play on the two lowest strings, strings on which (I am told) they may not be accustomed to play. Hence this aviso which may apply to the treble as well, as I have scored the Treble II part down to its bottom note in the second movement. The tenor viol is likewise used to full advantage, paired in unison or even set to cross voices momentarily with the bass in some sections. No attempt should be made to play up an octave in these sections as this would not only adversely affect the harmonic balance, but would complicate the fingering, possibly beyond a mid-level player's comfort zone.

Finally, as to dynamics, articulations, bowings, and ornaments: With the exception of a few notes marked *sforzando* in the third movement (for reasons that will become obvious upon playing those sections), I have abstained from marking any of these in the score. *This aspect of music belongs to the performers, not to the composer.* Most of these elements are rarely found in period scores because the composers (quite rightly) presumed the players would interpret and embellish the works in their own fashion during the performance. Such ornamentation as does appear in early manuscripts and editions is often the product of a copyist or engraver, and is rarely more than a rough outline in any event.

Some intermediate players may feel insecure about the lack of 'direction' in this area, but I would counsel them to listen to their musical instincts and not be too timid. In a memorable exchange between Hank Knox, the eminent Canadian harpsichordist, and a student violinist playing under his direction at a summer early-music camp, Knox suggested that she put a trill on a certain note before a cadence. The young violinist looked horrified. 'But there's no trill marked in the part, Maestro!' she exclaimed.

'Be brave, my dear,' replied Knox with a smile. 'That note is just crying out for a trill...'

--T.H. Richards  
Mont-Tremblant, Québec  
May, 2016

# Suite des eaux

Sonatina in C Major for viol consort

Op. 1, No. 2

(Composed for the 2016 VDGSA Traynor Competition)

## I. La rivière (Moderato ~♩ = 60)

The musical score is written for a viol consort and consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes Treble Viol I, Treble Viol II, Tenor Viol, and Basse de viole (7-string). The second system includes Tr I, Tr II, T, and B. The third system includes Tr I, Tr II, T, and B. The music is in 3/2 time and C major. The tempo is Moderato, with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The score is divided into three systems, with measures 9 and 15 marked at the beginning of the second and third systems respectively.

# Suite des eaux (Richards)

## III. La mer (Vivace ~♩ = 60)

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each containing four staves. The first system includes Treble Violin I, Treble Violin II, Tenor Violin, and Bass Violin (7-string). The second system includes Tr I, Tr II, T, and B. The third system includes Tr I, Tr II, T, and B. The fourth system includes Tr I, Tr II, T, and B. The music is in 6/8 time and consists of 16 measures. The tempo is marked Vivace with a metronome marking of approximately 60 beats per minute. The score features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The dynamics are marked with accents and hairpins.

# Suite des eaux (Richards)

21

Tr I  
Tr II  
T  
B

This system contains measures 21 through 25. The first two staves (Tr I and Tr II) are in treble clef, and the last two (T and B) are in bass clef. The music features a melodic line in the upper strings and a harmonic accompaniment in the lower strings.

26

Tr I  
Tr II  
T  
B

This system contains measures 26 through 29. The notation includes accents and slurs over the melodic lines in the upper staves.

30

Tr I  
Tr II  
T  
B

This system contains measures 30 through 32. The upper staves feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

33

Tr I  
Tr II  
T  
B

This system contains measures 33 through 36. The upper staves feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the lower staves continue the harmonic accompaniment.