

WILHELM JOSEPH WASIELEWSKI

THE VIOLONCELLO AND
ITS HISTORY

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The Violoncello and Its History:

Содержание

AUTHOR'S PREFACE	6
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE	7
INTRODUCTION	10
Viol da Gamba	10
The Art of Violoncello Playing In the Eighteenth Century	70
I.—ITALY	75
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	93

**Wilhelm Joseph
von Wasielewski
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and Its History**

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH

BY

Isobella S. E. Stigand

THIS TRANSLATION
IS INSCRIBED TO

My dear Sisters

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the following pages I present to the musical world the History of the Violoncello and Violoncello playing. I have preceded it by the History of the Viola da Gamba, for the reason that this instrument must be considered the precursor of the Violoncello. For my work I have made use of the musical dictionaries extant, especially Gerber's old and new musical Lexicon as well as Fétis's "Biographie Universelle des Musiciens." What has been borrowed from other works will be indicated in the course of the narrative. The great courtesy of Herr Friedrich Grützmacher, the Royal Concert-director of Saxony, in placing at my disposal his extensive collection of old and new Violoncello Literature, has been of especial value to me in my undertaking. By its means I have been enabled to find my way through the historical development of Violoncello composition. I willingly seize this opportunity of expressing my thanks to him for it.

V. WASIELEWSKI.

Sondershausen,
December, 1888.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It may be that we are not a musical people, but if so the encouragement and appreciation which the sister Art to painting has of late years received in England is not a proof of the truth of the assertion frequently made. Our Concert-rooms are always crowded to overflowing; foreign artists think it worth while to come year by year to England; schools of music are multiplying, and eagerly attended by amateurs as well as professionals; and I think it may now be taken for granted that a musical education may be as thoroughly acquired here as abroad. Every kind of musical instrument is taken up, if not always with a really serious intention; but no instrument has more rapidly or more certainly come into favour amongst all lovers of music, as well with those who study as with those who listen, than the Violoncello. It is therefore somewhat surprising that up to the present time no book has been published in English, either as regarding its History or its Literature. This consideration, as well as the hope that not only those who devote themselves to the Violoncello, either as professors or amateurs, may be interested in its History, but also the general musical public who delight in listening to its deeply pathetic tones as produced by the great masters of it, has induced me to attempt the translation of Mr. Wasielewski's interesting work. We love to know and often take pains to enquire into the history of any favourite picture, to learn something of

the artist's life, the circumstances under which he painted it, and often the origin of its conception. I therefore hope that the story of the Violoncello will be acceptable to all who love it and give their lives to the development of its many beauties and capabilities.

The account of the Violoncello's forerunner, the Viola da Gamba, cannot but be especially interesting, this instrument having been formerly cultivated in England to so great an extent. The frequent allusions which Praetorius in his "Syntagma Musicum" makes to English Gamba players, with a decided preference to their manner of playing and tuning their instruments, is a proof of how high their reputation was abroad; and if any further evidence were wanting the dictum of Mersennus that English Gambists excelled all other nations in Gamba playing, is sufficient to show that in the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth centuries they held the first rank. If for a short period we have no violoncellist of extraordinary merit to chronicle, more modern times have produced artists who will bear comparison with any of the greatest players on the Continent. Concerning these and English Gamba players I have ventured to add a few more particulars than Mr. Wasielewski has given, hoping they would prove interesting to English readers. These details have been gathered from Grove's Dictionary, Leslie Stephen's Nat. Biography, and various other works. For the technical portion, Mr. Niecks's Dictionary of Musical Terms has been consulted, as well as Mendel and Dommer. I

have supplemented the Violoncello Schools by others collected from Mr. Heron Allen's Bibliography, and various sources, introducing some of the old Instruction books for the Gamba.

I must here thank Mr. Wasielewski for his kind permission to translate his valuable work, as well as Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel for their courteous assistance. I beg Mr. George Herbert to accept my grateful acknowledgment for his most kind help and encouragement, and Mr. Heron Allen for the interest he has taken in my work. To Mr. Arthur Hill I am indebted for much kind advice, and to Mr. Nosèda of the Strand for his courteous permission to reproduce from his oil-painting the portrait of Robert Lindley as a Frontispiece.

THE TRANSLATOR.

INTRODUCTION

Viol da Gamba

The history of the Violoncello and Violoncello playing is connected in its early stages up to a certain point with that of the Viola da Gamba and its forerunner, “the Basso di Viola,” of the sixteenth century. This last-named instrument formed the bass in the string quartets of that time, to which also belonged, according to the Italian designation, the “Discant-Viola” or “Violetta,” as well as the “Viola d’Alta” and “di Tenore.” In Germany these instruments were called Diskant, Alto, Tenor, and Bass viols. The terms Viola and Violin,¹ were at that time consequently synonymous. From the foregoing remarks it will be perceived that it is a question not of one kind, but of a whole family of stringed instruments. Descriptions and illustrations of them are found in the following music-authors of the sixteenth century.

Sebastian Virdung: “Musica getutscht,” 1511; Hans Judenkünig: “Ain schöne kunstliche Vnderwaisung,” u.s.w., 1523; Martin Agricola: “Musica instrumentalis deutsch,” 1528; Hans Gerle: “Musica Teusch” (Deutsch), 1532; Ottomar

¹ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the name “Geige” violin, then in ordinary use, must not be confounded with the violin of our time. This term was not applied to the more modern instrument until later.

Luscinus: (Nachtgall), “Musurgia seu praxis Musicae,” 1536; and Ganassi del Fontego: “Regola Rubertina,” 1542. Agricola’s and Gerle’s works appeared in various editions. The work of the former, as well as Luscinus’ “Musurgia,” are partly reproductions of Virdung’s “Musica getutscht.”



According to the descriptions of the above-named authors, violas or violins were of two kinds.² Some of them had no bridge,

² A more detailed account of the above stringed instruments and their precursors is contained in my work, “The Violin and its Masters,” Second Edition (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel), and “History of Instrumental Music in the Sixteenth Century” (Berlin: Brachvogel and Ranft), therefore a repetition of what is there said

others, on the contrary, were provided with one. For the object before us the last only claim our consideration, of which, as well as of the bridgeless violins, there were four different examples. The alto and the tenor were the same size, but of different methods of tuning. The so-called violas (fiddles) were provided with six strings which were called, like the six lute chords, Great Bumhardt (Bombarte), middle ditto (tenor); small ditto (counter-tenor); middle string (great mean); vocal string (small mean); and quint string (treble). The “Great Bumhardt” was left out in those instruments provided with five strings only. In Italy the six strings were called: Basso, Bordone, Tenore, Mezzanella or Mezzana, Sottanella or Sotana, and Canto. In France, according to Mersennus: Sixiesme, Cinquiesme, Quatriesme, Troisiesme, Seconde, and Chanterelle. The same author gives for the violas the names: “Dessus,” “Haut Contre,” “Taille,” and “Basse Contre.”

In Judenkünig’s and Hans Gerle’s works are found the accompanying illustrations of stringed instruments provided with a bridge. Their identity is unmistakable, though they differ from each other in many peculiarities of form. Both instruments represent the so-called “big fiddle”³ or “Basso di Viola.” The tuning was that of the lute, which, as an older stringed instrument, served in this respect as its model. Only in

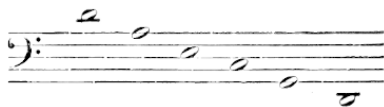
is unnecessary.

³ The “big fiddle” of the sixteenth century must not be confounded with the stringed instrument of that time, of which the pitch answered to our modern Contra-basso, and in Italy was already called “Violone,” as appears from Laufranco’s “Scintille,” 1533.

regard to the pitch did any difference exist. Judenkünig makes it thus:—



Hans Gerle, on the contrary, writes it thus:—



Here the pitch of the second is a fifth lower than the first. Judenkünig's pitch represents the tenor and that of Gerle the bass. Agricola says in his "*Musica instrumentalis*," regarding the height of pitch for the lute:

“Zeuch die Quintsait so hoch du magst
Das sie nicht reist wenn du sie schlagst.”

(Draw up the fifth string as high as you may,
That it may not be broken when on it you play.)

And in Hans Neusiedler's Lute-book (1535) it is said: “He who wishes to learn how to tune the lute, let him draw up the Quint string, not too high, and not too low, a medium height,

as much as the strings will bear.” Similar instructions are to be found in Gerle’s “Musica Teutsch.”

The capability of tension of the Quint string was consequently the guide for the pitch in tuning the lute—beyond this there was as yet no normal pitch—and in stringed instruments it was in every case so maintained. In playing with wind instruments the stringed instruments had, therefore, to adapt the pitch to them.

The “great violins” were, in the first half of the sixteenth century at least, according to all appearance played in two ways. From the drawing in Judenkünig’s treatise, a mode of handling is seen which requires no further explanation. That the handling of the “great violin” represented by Judenkünig without any explanation is treated of as not exceptional appears also from the accompanying vignette of another publication of that period.



The bass viol performing with the two lutists represents the same position and manner of playing as the woodcut in Judenkünig's treatise, with the sole difference that he is holding his instrument in the left hand, whereas the peg-box of the instrument, bent sharply backwards, of Judenkünig's player rests on his shoulder. It is very evident that in both cases scarcely more could be executed than the simplest bass accompaniment. More, however, was eventually to be produced according to the treatment of the "great violin" prescribed by Gerle. He says regarding it: "When you have according to my instructions 'beschriben' (noted),⁴ tuned and drawn up the violin, and wish to begin playing, proceed thus: Take the neck of the instrument in the left hand and the bow in the right, sit down and press the viola between the legs, that you may not strike it with the bow, and take care when you play that you draw the bow directly and evenly over the strings neither too far from nor too near the bridge⁵ on which the strings lie, and that you do not draw the bow over two strings at once, but only over that which is placed under the figuring in the Tablature, and this must be especially attended to."

It appears, according to Gerle's instructions, that the instrument of which he speaks was a so-called "Knee violin"—

⁴ The word "beschriben" refers to the letters which, for the convenience of the player, it was the custom to mark for the fingers on the fingerboard.

⁵ The artist who drew the sketches of the instrument for Gerle's "Musica Teutsch" has left out the bridge in the "great viola." See page [2](#).

in Italian, “Viola da gamba.” It seems, however, that in the sixteenth century this description was not in common use. Hans Gerle, a native of Nuremberg, born about 1500, had already received important consideration during the first twenty years of the sixteenth century, not only as a skilful performer, but also as a maker of lutes and viols. Yet the making of these instruments, and especially of viols, had already been carried on at a much earlier period by others. The oldest fiddle or viola maker of whom we have any mention is a certain Kerlino, who, according to Fétis’s account, lived and worked in Brescia. It is most probable that he was a German, or at least of German extraction, for the name Kerl, in every kind of variation, both as a common and individual or family name, had been constantly in use among the German races. In the German dictionary⁶ of the Brothers Grimm are indicated the various forms of the name “Kerl”: Kerle, formerly Kärle; Kerls, Kerles, Kerlis, Kerli, Kerlin, Kerel, Kaerl, Kerdel, and Kirl. They are of German origin, and are derived from middle or low German, whereas the Anglo-Saxon equivalents are “Carl,” or “Ceorl.”

Originally the word “Kerl” (kerle), according to Grimm, was synonymous with “Mann” (man), and also with Ehemann (husband). But it was also used as a family or tribal name, as is proved from the names Jacob de Kerle (sixteenth century), Joh. Kaspar von Kerll (also written Kerl, Kherl, Cherle), born 1628,

⁶ See the article “Kerl.”

and Vitus Kerle (in the eighteenth century).⁷

Another form of “Kerl,” Kerlin, was, according to Grimm, used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Who can doubt then that the Brescian instrument maker Kerlino was of German origin?⁸ He was, evidently, originally called Kerl or Kerlin, to which name was added by the Italians either the diminutive syllable “ino” or the vowel “o.” It cannot be of Italian origin, for the Italian has no “k.”

Fétis informs us that Kerlino must be considered as the founder of the school of Brescian viola makers which, as the oldest in Italy from the middle of the sixteenth century, attained such a great reputation, through Gaspar da Salò and his reputed pupil, Giov. Paolo Maggini. If what appears so extremely probable has any real foundation, to a German, or, at least, to a man of German extraction, must be justly conceded the merit of having, in a measure, been the originator of the art of Italian stringed instrument making which later on developed to the highest point.

Further, we learn from Fétis that in the year 1804 a Parisian violin maker, named Koliker, was in possession of a violin which had been previously described by the French writer on music, de la Borde, containing the inscription

⁷ Also at the present time it is a family name. We need only mention G. H. Bruno Kerl, Professor of the Royal Berg Academy at Berlin.

⁸ Other authorities, however, say he was a Breton—Fétis, Casimir Colomb &c.—(Tr.)

“Joan. Kerlino, ann. 1449,”

and which originally had been a “Viola da braccio.” Doubtless this remarkable instrument exists at the present time. Fétis, who saw it himself, describes its quality of tone as “agreeably soft and faintly subdued.” Among the composers who wrote for the viola, we must mention Giov. Battista Bonometti, born at Bergamo about the end of the sixteenth century. In 1615 he caused to be published in Vienna a collection of trios for two violas and a bass.

After Kerlino there appeared in North Italy as noted lute and viola makers the monk Pietro Dardelli, in Mantua about 1500; Gaspard Duiffopruggar, in Bologna, 1510; Venturi Linarolli (Linelli), in Venice, 1520; Peregrino Zanetto, in Brescia in 1530; and Morglato Morella, in Venice, 1550. Amongst these G. Duiffopruggar is evidently of German birth,⁹ and remarkable as having, as far as we can see, made the first violins.

This artist was in 1515 summoned to France by King Francis I.; he at first lived in Paris and then at Lyons. He made some excellent Bass viols (Gambas), of which two fine specimens are extant in France. A similar bass viol was represented by Raphael in his painting of St. Cecilia. This splendid picture, in the Pinacothek at Bologna, existed in 1515.

After Duiffopruggar, Andreas Amati (1520 to about 1580),

⁹ The name Duiffopruggar doubtless came from the same source as the surname Tieffenbrucker, still existing in South Germany.

the founder of the Cremona school, distinguished himself in the making of violas (as well as violins). His instruments obtained such a great reputation that Charles IX. of France, an enthusiastic amateur of music, had twenty-four violins, six tenors, and eight basses made by him. Amongst the latter there were several bass viols, like the viola da gamba. The instruments made for Charles IX. by Andrea Amati were every one of them destroyed during the French Revolution of 1792.¹⁰

Contemporaneously with Andreas Amati the manufacture of stringed instruments was vigorously carried on by Gaspard da Salò, in Brescia.

In Germany, from the second half of the sixteenth century, Lauxmin Possen, in 1550, at Schongau, subsequently instrument maker for the Hofkapelle at Munich; Joh. Kohl, who at the same time worked at Munich and in 1599 was appointed Court instrument maker there, and also Joachim Tielke were successively celebrated. The latter lived, as Gerber informs us, at Hamburg from about 1660 to 1730, and even made lutes of real ivory and ebony, the necks of which were inlaid with gold and silver and mother-of-pearl, but one especially with nine pegs of the most beautiful tortoiseshell. Tielke, however, made also violins and excellent gambas. One of these, a costly instrument which was formerly in the possession of the Elector Joh. Wilhelm

¹⁰ Mr. Heron Allen in his "Violin Making, &c.," page 74, says that two were recovered.—(*Tr.*)

of the Palatinate,¹¹ was brought from Mannheim to the Duke of Maxburg's Museum at Munich, and thence into the Royal Bavarian National Museum, where it is preserved as a treasure of rare value. The peg-box, the fingerboard, the tail-piece, the sides, and the back are all decorated with designs of flowers, foliage, and tendrils, as well as symbolical and allegorical representations taken from mythology, the subjects representing for the most part love and music. These decorations and designs are inlaid work in tortoiseshell, ivory, ebony, mother-of-pearl and silver.¹²

Another valuable specimen of a gamba made by Tielke in the year 1701, which belonged to the famous cello virtuoso, F. Servais, has been described and represented by A. J. Hipkins, of Edinburgh, in his lately published work, "Musical Instruments: Historic, Rare and Unique."¹³

¹¹ The same Prince to whom Corelli dedicated his "Concerti Grossi," published in 1712.

¹² Herr Obernetter, of Munich, has taken two beautiful photographs of this richly decorated instrument, which reproduce with great accuracy all its peculiarities. As far as I know they can still be purchased.

¹³ Here may be mentioned also a third magnificent gamba, that of Vincenzo Ruger, said to have been made in Cremona in 1702. It is distinguished not only for its beautiful exterior in every respect, but also by an extraordinarily sonorous and unusually fine quality of tone, which combines the resonant character of the gamba with that of the violoncello. The latter circumstance is attributed to the fact that the back, which is usually flat in the ordinary gamba, is arched in this one. This instrument, which has been lately purchased by the Prussian Government for the Berlin Museum, was formerly in the possession of Herr Paul de Wit, in Leipsic. The account of instrument making published by him contains (Vol. VI., No. 21) a description and illustration of the gamba in question.

During the second half of the sixteenth century there must have been a considerable multiplication of the different kinds of violas then in use, and especially of the bass viol, for Michael Prätorius mentions in his “Syntagma musicum,” which appeared in 1614-1620, the following examples:

1. Very large Bass Viol with four strings (corresponding to the modern Contrabasso).
2. Great Bass Viol de Gamba in three different tunings, with five and also six strings (also like the Contrabasso).
3. Small Bass Viol de Gamba, five different examples with six, four, and three strings (answering in tone, in some measure, to the modern Violoncello).
4. Tenor and Alto Viol de Gamba, in two different pitches, with six, five, four, and three strings (answering partly to the Violoncello and partly to the modern Tenor).
5. Cant Viol de Gamba (*Violetta piccola*), four different kinds with six, five, four, and three strings (the tone also partly answering to the Tenor and partly to the Violin).
6. Viol Bastarda, in five different pitches, with six strings (the tone corresponding to that of the Cello).
7. Viola de Braccio, four different examples, with five and four strings (corresponding in tone partly to the Violoncello and partly to that of the Tenor).

Moreover, Prätorius mentions, under the heading “Viole de Braccio Viols,” the “Discant Viol” (our modern Violin), the small “Discant Viol” (tuned a fourth higher than our Violin), and two

“very small Viols with three strings,” of which the lowest string of the first is a ninth and of the second an octave higher than the G String of the Violin.

Of the multitude of these different kinds of Viols then in use, which later on by manifold improvements were gradually reduced to a smaller number, until they resulted in the modern Violin and Tenor, as well as the Violoncello and Contrabasso, we must keep in view, for the object of the present work, the “Viola da Gamba” only, which must be regarded as the precursor of the violoncello. Prätorius gives a sketch (annexed) of the so-named instrument.

A comparison of these gambas with the sketches of viols by Judenkünig and Gerle shows what substantial alterations the stringed instrument in question underwent in the course of the second half of the sixteenth century. The neck had assumed a more modern and more convenient form for the technique of the left hand and the sounding-board had acquired more elegant and attractive outlines. At the same time the sound-holes, corresponding to the curves of the belly, were turned round and placed in a position more agreeable to the eye.

Prätorius expresses himself regarding the Viola da Gamba as follows: “Violas, viols, and violuntzes¹⁴ are of two kinds—1. Viole de gamba; 2. Viole de braccio (or de brazzio)—and the former is so called from having been held between the legs; for

¹⁴ Violuntzes is synonymous with the old French instrument, violonsse. *Vide* Grimm’s Dictionary of the German Language.

gamba is an Italian word and means a leg; le gambe, the legs. And since they have much larger bodies and, on account of the length of the neck, have strings of a much longer tension, they produce a mellower resonance than others, 'di braccio,' which are held on the arm. The two kinds are distinguished by town musicians: the viole de gamba by the name of violas: the viole 'di braccio' (among which Prätorius includes violins) by the name of fiddles or pollish fiddles....



“The Violes de Gamba have six strings and are tuned in fourths and in the middle a third, exactly like the six-stringed lute. Englishmen when they play them alone sometimes tune them a fourth, sometimes a fifth lower, so that the lowest strings are tuned—the bass to D, the tenor and alto to A, and the canto

to E. On other occasions each one (reckoning by the chamber-pitch)¹⁵ a fifth lower—as, for example, the bass to G G, the tenor and alto to D, the canto to A; and tuning in this manner produces much more agreeable, grander, and more majestic harmonies than when the instruments are at the usual pitch.”

What Prätorius says regarding the mode and way of English viol-tuning is supplemented by Mersennus in his “*Harmonie Universelle*” (1636-37). This author says: “Il faut remarquer que les Anglois ioüent ordinairement leurs pièces un ton plus bas que les Français, afin d’entendre l’harmonie plus douce et plus charmante, et conséquemment que leur sixiesme chorde à vuide fait le C sol au lieu que la nostre fait le D re sol.”

The pitch then in England was a varying one, though the series of intervals borrowed from the lute, to which the gamba like the bass viol was tuned, were those which commonly prevailed.

In other respects, Mersennus gives no more explicit directions for the handling of the Viola da Gamba than Prätorius. He does not use this name for the instrument in question, but calls it “*Basse de Viole*.” The French designation, “*Viole de jambe*,” corresponding to the Italian name, appears consequently to have been in vogue later and to have been generally little used.

Like Gerle’s “great fiddle” (*Basso di Viola*), the Viola da Gamba had also as a rule seven frets on the fingerboard like the

¹⁵ The Kammerthron or chamber-pitch, as distinguished from the obsolete “Chorton” or choir-pitch, which formerly prevailed in German churches, was a tone, or even more, higher than the secular pitch.—(*Tr.*)

lute, for fixing the tones and semitones.

The gamba was played in various ways, and used for a variety of musical purposes, as a solo instrument, as well as in orchestral performances, and as an accompaniment to singing. The way in which it was valued during the first half of the seventeenth century as an obbligato accompaniment to singing, may be seen from the preface to Heinrich Schütz's "Historia of the joyful and victorious resurrection of our only Saviour," and so on, published in 1623. It is there said, after Schütz has named the instruments which are to accompany the parts of the Evangelists: "But when it can be done it is better that the organ and everything else should be left out and instead of these only four Viole di Gamba (which must also be present), should be used to accompany the parts of the Evangelists."

"It will, however, be necessary that the four viols should be thoroughly '*practised*' with the part of the Evangelist in the following manner: The Evangelist takes his part to himself, and recites it straight through without any fixed time, just as it seems correct to him, but not holding longer on one syllable than is customary in ordinary slow and distinct speaking. The violas must not mark any particular time, but only pay attention to the words recited by the Evangelist, and to their parts written below the 'falso-bordone' and so doing they cannot go wrong. A viola may also '*passagiren*' amongst the others, as is usual with the falso-bordone,¹⁶ and this gives a good effect."

¹⁶ "Faburden," according to Mr. Niecks.—(*Tr.*)

It appears from the explanation that the gambas were used to support the harmonies of recitatives. The “*passegiren*” suggested by Schütz of one of the accompanying violas was nothing else than the usual improvised ornamental colorature or *diminuendos* used at that time and up to the eighteenth century.¹⁷

For solo playing gambas were used not only for the execution of monotone—viz., compositions of one part only; but also for several parts, and especially for double-stops and chords.

The oldest French gambist of whom we have any account is a certain Granier. Gerber says, concerning him, that he had been “in the service of Queen Margaret of France,” and died, about 1600, in Paris, and that he was the greatest artist of his time on the gamba.

Concerning the artistic use of violas, amongst which, as already said, gambas were included, Mersennus writes as follows: “Encore que les Violes soient capables de toutes sortes de musique, et que les exemples que j’ay donné (*sic*) pour le concert,¹⁸ des violons leur puissent servir, néanmoins elles demandent des pièces, plus tristes et plus graves, et dont la mesure soit plus longue et plus tardive; de là vient qu’elles sont plus propres pour accompagner les voix. Or l’on peut jouer toutes sortes de pièces non seulement à cinq parties, comme l’on fait ordinairement sur les Violons, mais à six, à sept, à douze et à tout autant de parties que l’on veut.”

¹⁷ Concerning this, see my “History of Instrumental Music” in the *Century*, page 107.

¹⁸ By the word concert, Mersennus means concerted piece.

At the beginning of the above-quoted passage it is remarked, that violas were used for every kind of music, but the use of these instruments for solo playing is not expressly mentioned. In another passage of his work Mersennus says, however, with regard to gamba playing and the French performers of his time.

“Personne en France n'égale Maugars et Hottman, hommes très habiles dans cet art: ils excellent dans les diminutions et par leurs traits d'archet incomparables de délicatesse et de suaveté. Il n'y a rien dans l'harmonie qu'ils ne savent exprimer avec perfection, surtout lorsqu'une autre personne les accompagne sur le clavicorde. Mais le premier exécute seul et à la fois deux, trois ou plusieurs parties sur la basse de viole avec tant d'ornements et un prestesse de doigts dont il paraît si peu se préoccuper, qu'on n'avait rien entendu de pareil auparavant par ceux qui jouaient de la viole ou même de tout autre instrument.....”

It is here clearly expressed that solo playing on the gamba, and notably in several parts, was much cultivated and highly appreciated.

The Maugars¹⁹ here mentioned by Mersennus expresses

¹⁹ Maugars is called in the “*Historiettes de Tellement des Réaux*,” as Fétis informs us, the “greatest fool that had ever lived.” His “*Réponse faite à un curieux*” (completely unprejudiced, although somewhat conceited) in no way agrees with this. It is easy to discover that Maugars was not liked by his countrymen, because he openly declared that French music was far behind the Italian. On that account he had incurred the displeasure of French artists. The Parisian musician, Corrette, in the eighteenth century, was guilty of the same offence. He had been candid enough to say to the French that the standard of French violin playing of the eighteenth century was,

himself regarding his own performances as a gamba player in his “Réponse fait a un curieux sur le sentiment de la Musique d’Italie écrite à Rome le premier Octobre, 1639,” which was published either at the end of 1639 or the beginning of 1640. After having spoken of his intercourse with the artistic family Baroni during his residence in Rome, he relates:—

“In this worthy house, at the solicitation of these gifted people, I was induced for the first time to exhibit in Rome the talent with which God had endowed me. It happened in the presence of ten or twelve of the most experienced people of Italy, who, after they had listened to me attentively, bestowed on me some eulogiums; not, however, quite ungrudgingly.

“In order to test me further the Signora Leonora (Baroni) induced me to leave my viola at her house, and begged me to return the following day. This I did, and as it was reported to me by a friend that it was said I played studied things very well, on the second occasion I gave them so many kinds of preludes and fantasias that they really granted me more appreciation than the first time. The respect, however, of these worthy people did not succeed in winning over the experts, who were somewhat over-refined and reticent to concede applause to a foreigner. It was told me they acknowledged that I played very well alone, and that they had never heard such harmonised viola playing, but they doubted if I were capable of extemporising a theme and playing variations

compared to the Italian, in a disorganised condition. In retaliation they called his pupils scornfully “les anachorètes” (“les ânes à Corette”).

on it. You know, sir, that in this I am not a little successful. The same words had been told me on the eve of St. Louis' day in the French church, while I was listening to the fine music then being performed there. This determined me on the next day, excited thereto by the name of Saint Louis, as well as for the honour of the nation and the thirty-three cardinals who were present and taking part in the Mass, to ascend into the gallery. When I had been greeted with applause, I was given fifteen to twenty notes, in order to make myself heard after the third Kyrie with the accompaniment of a small organ. This subject I treated with such infinite variety that great satisfaction was shown, and the cardinals caused me to be invited to play again after the Agnus Dei.

“I considered myself very fortunate that I had been able to afford this little pleasure to so distinguished a company. I was given another somewhat more cheerful theme than the first, which I treated with so many variations and such a diversity of movements that they were extremely astonished, and immediately came to me in order to requite me with eulogiums. On account of the friendship which you cherish for me, my dear sir, I am convinced you will not accuse me of vanity in this digression. I have only made it in order that you may know that if a Frenchman desires to gain a reputation in Rome he must be well armed; and so much the more because it is thought here that we are not capable of improvising on a given theme. In fact, whoever plays an instrument deserves no extraordinary

consideration, unless he shows himself equal to such a demand, especially for the viola—to play on which, by reason of its few strings and the consequent difficulty of playing in parts, is always a thankless task—it is necessary to possess some individual talent in order to be inspired by a subject and expand into beautiful inventions as well as agreeable variations. The capacity to do this requires two real and innate qualifications—viz., a lively and strong imagination and skilful execution, in order promptly to carry out one's ideas.”²⁰

The unlimited tribute of praise which Mersennus pays to the performances of Maugars, renders credible the remarkable account given by himself. Maugars' gamba playing excited in Rome the greatest consideration, because at that time neither there nor anywhere else in Italy was there any prominent artist for that instrument. “As regards viola playing, Maugars declares there is no one in Italy who is distinguished for it, and in Rome it is very little cultivated. This has greatly astonished me, as formerly they had a certain Horace of Parma who performed wonderfully on this instrument, and left behind him some excellent compositions, which some of our musicians cleverly made use of for other instruments besides those for which they were composed. The father of the great Italian, Ferabosco, was the first to make them known to the English, who from that time have excelled all other nations.”

²⁰ I give this and the following quotations from Maugars' writings, according to my translations in the monthly parts of the “History of Music,” published in the year 1878.

From the last words it is to be inferred that gamba playing in England was much in vogue at the time of Maugars. The Ferabosco (Ferrabosco)—with the christian name of Alfonso—mentioned by him, who first made the English acquainted with this art, can be no other than the composer of that name referred to by Fétis as born in Italy about 1515. He settled in London about 1540, and about the year 1587 appears to have been in the service, as “gentilumo,” of the Duke of Savoy.²¹

Amongst English gambists of distinction must be named Thomas Robinson, Tobias Hume, William Brade, and John Jenkins. Probably they were all pupils of the elder Ferabosco.

Concerning Thomas Robinson, who was born in the second half of the sixteenth century, and lived and worked in the beginning of the seventeenth in London, nothing further is known than that he published a curious work under the title, “The Schoole of Musicke: the perfect method of true fingering the Lute, Pandora, Orpharion, and Viol da gamba. London, 1603.”

His contemporary, Tobias Hume, was an officer in the English army, and spent much of his time in Sweden. He was reputed one of the cleverest gambists of that period; he caused to be

²¹ The English writers on music affirm that the well-known composer, Ferabosco, who was born at Greenwich in the second half of the sixteenth century, and who was also called Alfonso, was the son of the above Ferabosco, with which the remarks of Maugars agree. Fétis doubts the truth of the assertion made by the English writers on music. The younger Ferabosco appears also to have been a gamba player, for he published, in the year 1609, in London, “Lessons for one, two, and three viols.” He died in 1665.

published, in 1605, a work with the following title: “The first part of Ayres, French, Pollish, and others together, some in Tabliture and some in Pricke song. With Pauines, Galliards, and Almaines for the Viole di gamba, and other Musicall Conceites for two Basse-viols, expressing five partes, with pleasant Reportes one from the other; and also for two Leero-Viols, and also for the Leero-Viole with two Treble Viols, or two with one Treble. Lastly, for the Leero-Viole to play alone; and some Songes to bee sung to the Viole with the Lute, or better with the Viole alone. Also an Invention for two to play upon one Viole. Composed by Tobias Hume, gentleman. Printed by John Windet Loud, dwelling at the sign of the Cross Keyes, at Powles Wharfe, 1605.” It is evident that the composition of arrangements for two instruments, which might also be played on one only, was no invention of the Salzburg violinist, Joh. Hein. Biber.²² In 1607 he published another work, under the title “Captain Hume’s Poeticall Musicke, principally made for two basse viols yet so contrived that it may be plaied eight severall waies upon sundry instruments with much facilitie. London.” This work, of which the British Museum possesses a copy, was dedicated to Anne of Denmark. He was received into the Charterhouse as a poor brother in 1629, and known as “Captain Hume.” His mind seems to have given way, and he died there on April 16, 1645.

William Brade flourished about 1615, and spent much of his life out of England. He was appointed violist to the

²² See my work “The Violin and its Masters,” Part ii., p. 203.

Duke of Holstein-Gottorp and of the city of Hamburg at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1619 he seems to have been Capellmeister to the Margrave of Brandenburg and went subsequently to Berlin. He was esteemed a good performer on the gamba, and published in 1609, 1614, and 1621 a number of Paduans or Pavans, Gaillards, Canzonets, Volts, Courantes, in five and six parts (Berlin, 1621). A great confusion exists regarding the bibliography of his works, authorities differ as to their titles. They are of unusual interest, as containing many English airs, some of which are mentioned by Shakespeare. He is said to have died at Frankfort in 1647.

John Jenkins, born at Maidstone in 1592, was one of the most celebrated composers of music for viols. In early life he made choice of music as a profession, and was appointed musician in ordinary to Charles I. He lived in the family of Sir Hamon l'Estrange and instructed his sons in music. In 1660 he gave lessons to the sons of Lord North at a salary of £1 a quarter! Roger North in his autobiography calls him, "that eminent master of his time, Mr. Jenkins, not conceited nor morose, but much a gentleman." He was appointed musician to Charles II., and spent the last years of his life with Sir Philip Wodehouse, at Kimberley, in Norfolk, where he died on October 27, 1678. He had for his time extraordinary capacity on the lute, viol, and several bowed instruments, and wrote a great number of compositions for viols, which were not printed; but in 1660 he published "Twelve Sonatas for two violins and a bass, with a

thorough-bass for the organ or theorbo” (London, 1660), the first of the kind produced by an Englishman. Indeed he is credited with having been the earliest English composer of instrumental music. Most of his compositions he called Rants or Fancies. He also wrote music for “Theophila, or Love’s Sacrifice; a Divine Poem, by Edward Benlowes, Esq., several parts thereof set to fit Aires by Mr. Jenkins” (London, 1652). Many of his MSS. exist at Christchurch, Oxford. Hawkins reports that it was said of him, “he was a little man, but had a great soul.”

Thomas Simpson is another Englishman who stands out conspicuously as a violist and gamba player; in 1615 he was appointed violist in the service of the Prince of Holstein-Schaumberg. He published: *Opusculum, Neuer Pavanen, Gaillards, Couranten und Volts* (Frankfurt, 1610); besides *Pavanen, Volts und Gaillards* (Frankfurt, 1611), and a “Tafel-Consort,” containing all kinds of cheerful songs for four Instruments and a Thorough-Bass (Hamburg, 1621).

John Cooper, born about 1570, was a most distinguished performer on, and good composer for the Viol da Gamba. In his youth he travelled in Italy, and returned with the Italianised name of Coperario. He was master to the children of James I., who was himself not only very musical, but had an excellent judgment on music. He is said to have played eight different instruments, amongst them especially well the harp. Two of Cooper’s pupils were the celebrated musicians, William and Henry Lawes. The elder, William, besides his other numerous compositions, wrote

his “Great Consort,” consisting of six Suites for two treble viols, two theorbos, and two bass-viols. Charles I. was also Cooper’s pupil and played the gamba well, since he was able to perform the organ fantasias of his master on that instrument. Cooper published a great number of compositions, and among them were many for the Gamba. He died during the Protectorate.

By far the most eminent English gamba player was Christopher Simpson²³ (or Simpson), who was born at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and died in London between 1667 and 1670. He was a follower of Charles I., and served as a soldier in the army commanded by the Duke of Newcastle against the Parliament. After the defeat of the Royalists, Sir Rob. Bolles, an important adherent of this party, granted him a refuge in his house and entrusted to him the education of his son, John Bolles, who was noted as a very clever musical dilettante and player on the gamba; he died in Rome, 1676, where his mortal remains were laid in the Pantheon. Christopher Simpson is the author of several noteworthy instruction books on music, of which we shall mention only those relating to the viol da gamba. The first of them has the title, “The Division-violist, or the Introduction to the playing upon a ground. Divided in two parts—the first, directing the hands, with other preparative instructions; the second, laying open the manner and method of playing, or composing division to a ground. London:

²³ His name was usually written Simpson, but he sometimes himself spelled it Simpson.—(*Tr.*)

John Playford. 1659.”²⁴ The title of the second of Simpson’s works referred to for the gamba is “A brief Introduction to the Skill of Music. In two books. The first contains the grounds and rules of music. The second, instructions for the viol and also for the treble violin.”²⁵ The third edition enlarged. To which is added a third book, entituled ‘The Art of Descant or Composing Music in Parts,’ by Dr. Thom. Campion,²⁶ with annotations thereon by Mr. Ch. Simpson. London, 1660.”

Thomas Brewer was also a celebrated performer on the gamba, who was born in 1611. He was admitted to Christ’s Hospital at three years of age, and learnt the viol from his music master. He composed various fantasias for his favourite instrument, besides airs, catches, rounds, as well as Pavins, Courantes, &c., for which kind of composition he seems to have been noted.

The English gambists of the first half of the seventeenth century must then have had some considerable reputation abroad, for the Frenchman, André Maugars, already mentioned, went about 1620 to London, lived there for nearly four years, and perfected himself after the models of the best gamba players. He

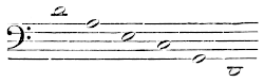
²⁴ This seems to have been the title of the first edition, a copy of which is in the possession of Messrs. Hill, of New Bond Street.—(*Tr.*)

²⁵ This work contains, besides the viola tutor, an introduction to violin playing. It is the first attempt at a violin school.

²⁶ Thomas Campion was a physician, poet, and musician in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and an authority on music. He published two books of Ayres, and various other pieces, besides the above.—(*Tr.*)

does not seem to have had pupils. But his compatriot and rival Hottmann²⁷ (or Hotteman) not only taught, but distinguished himself especially by some charming compositions. One of his most noted pupils was Marais (Marin), born in Paris on the 31st of March, 1656. At first a choirboy in the Sainte Chapelle, he educated himself further under the direction of Hotteman, and then under Sainte-Colombe, another excellent Parisian gamba player at that time. Lully gave him instructions in composition. In 1685 Marais became solo gambist at the Court Chamber Music Concerts, which position he held until 1725. He died August 15, 1728.

Besides Sainte-Colombe there were at that time two able French gamba players—namely, Desmarests and Baisson. Marais, however, excelled them in artistic execution. He added to the six strings of the instrument tuned in the accepted manner—



also a seventh, the A of the “contra octave.”²⁸ This enabled him to surpass in harmonised playing all his predecessors and contemporaries. He was the first who caused the lowest strings

²⁷ He has already been mentioned, p. [13](#).

²⁸ Michael Corrette ascribes this to Sainte-Colombe in his violoncello school, which appeared in 1741, concerning which we shall speak farther on.

of the gamba to be cased in metal wire so as to give them greater tension and resonance, a step in advance which was soon adopted for the two lower strings of the violoncello. Besides some operas, Marais was the author of a considerable number of gamba compositions which appeared in five parts. The fifth of them, for one and two gambas with a bass, was printed in 1705.

Out of his nineteen children, three sons and a daughter devoted themselves to the study of the gamba. Amongst them the most distinguished for his performances was

Roland Marais. In the year 1725 he succeeded his father as solo gambist at the Royal Chamber Music Concerts, the prospect of which had been assured to him some years previously. Quantz, who heard him in 1726, reported him as a very skilful player. He published, in 1711, a "Nouvelle méthode de musique," and in the years 1735 and 1738 two volumes of gamba pieces with figured bass.

The Sainte-Colombe mentioned above had, besides Marais, two noteworthy pupils, Rousseau and Hervelois. Jean Rousseau perfected himself as a distinguished gamba player, and was actively engaged in Paris during the second half of the seventeenth century. He also made himself more widely known by the production of two "livres de pièces de viole," as well as a gamba school, "Traité de la viole." The latter work appeared in Paris in 1687.

Caix de Hervelois, born about 1670, became, under the direction of Sainte-Colombe, an excellent player, and after

further study entered the service of the Duke of Orleans. In Amsterdam he had two books of his compositions published: “Pièces pour la basse viole avec la basse continue.”

Another French gambist of distinction in the seventeenth century was Antoine Forqueray. He was born in 1671 in Paris, and was one of the performers at the chamber music Concerts of Louis XIV. Forqueray received instruction from his father. At the age of five years he already excited the astonishment of the king by his performances, who called him “his little wonder.” In the year 1745, on June 28, he died at Nantes, whither he had retired upon his pension.

His son, Jean Baptiste Antoine, born on April 3, 1700, in Paris, was esteemed as the most able French gamba player of his time. He also at five years of age was heard with such favourable result before Louis XIV. that he later on became a member of the royal music society. He again had a son, whose christian name was Jean Baptiste, born about 1728, who was also a gambist and published several books of compositions for his instrument. He does not seem, however, to have made himself conspicuous as a performer.

Gerber mentions in his musical Lexicon a Parisian gambist of the eighteenth century of the name of Forcroix, or Forcroy, “whose delightful playing Quantz, who was in Paris in 1726, admired.” Possibly this artist may be identified as the A. Forqueray mentioned above.

The art of gamba playing was pursued in Germany with as

great or perhaps greater zeal than in England and France. While the pursuit of music by the English and French was confined chiefly to London and Paris, there were in Germany many courts who admired and cherished with fostering care the art of music; and the result was, especially after the tumult of the thirty years' war had subsided, a widely-spread musical life throughout the whole of the German nation.

Amongst the first German players to be mentioned is David Funk, born about 1630, in the Saxon town of Reichenbach. Gerber says of him, he was "an excellent musician and master of the violin, the viola da gamba, the angelica,²⁹ the clavier, and guitar"; and then goes on: "Funk was in every way a genius. His chief study, which he carried to no small degree of perfection, was that of the law. He was, besides, a wit and a poet, and was reckoned among the good German poets of that time. As a musician he was not only a virtuoso on all the above-named instruments, but he was also a composer, and won the applause of the public in a variety of styles, for the church as well as for the chamber.... How and where he had gained all these distinctions there is no account. He was first known as a composer in the year 1670, by the publication of his work on the gamba." This enthusiastic account emanated, according to Gerber's report,

²⁹ Concerning this instrument, Mattheson says: "The Angelique, somewhat resembling the lute, must have been far easier to play, and has more cords or strings, which one can accurately touch by reason of their arrangement without moving the left hand much. There is nothing specially besides to remember." It was, therefore, an instrument of the lute kind.

from the precentor Joh. Martin Steindorf, of Zwickau, who was personally acquainted with Funk.

In the year 1682 Funk gave up his appointment in Reichenbach and accompanied the "East Friesland Princess" into Italy as secretary, where he remained with his mistress seven years. After her death there in 1689 he returned to his native land, and, driven by the necessity of beginning again to earn his livelihood, he had no other choice but to accept, at "Wohnsiedel (Wunsiedel?), the miserable post of organist and girls' schoolmaster." Funk's dissolute character led him to misuse his office as teacher to immoral purposes with the girls entrusted to his care, so that he was compelled "by night and fog to fly in order to escape the rage of the parents."

From that time Funk led a vagabond life. He next betook himself to Schleitz, and remained three months at the Court there. Thence he was obliged to decamp as he was rigorously pursued by the police of Wohnsiedel. He made his way to Arnstadt, but did not reach that place. He was found one day lying dead underneath a hedge.

At the same time as Funk, the virtuoso August Kühnel was at work—born August 5, 1645, in the little town of Delmenhorst, in Oldenburg. From 1695 to 1700 he lived at Cassel, holding a position at the Court. During this time he published "Sonatas or Parts for one or two Viole da gamba, together with a bass, 1698." According to Gerber, several of his works should be in the Museum at Cassel. In composition, Kühnel was a pupil of

Agostino Steffani during his residence in Hanover. His successor in office appears to have been a certain Tielke,³⁰ for he was from 1700 to 1720 gambist in the Cassel chapel.

Another gambist of the name of Kühnel (Johann Michael) lived in the second half of the seventeenth century, and was engaged at the Berlin Court. From here he went, in 1717, to Weimar, and later on to Dresden, in the service of Field-marshal Flemming. He seems to have ended his life in Hamburg. Of his compositions there appeared at Rogers's in Amsterdam, "Sonates à 1 et 2 Violes de gamba."

One of the most important gamba players of Germany at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century was Johann Schenk. As he appears to have had his second work, "Konst œffeningen," printed at Amsterdam in 1688, consisting of fifteen sonatas for the gamba and bass, it may be concluded that he was born about the middle of the seventeenth century. Towards the end of it he was chamber musician in the Elector Palatine's service, which post however he must have given up at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for he is said to have settled in Amsterdam about that time. Whether he remained there to the end of his life is doubtful, for on the title-page of his sixth work, "Scherzi musicali, per la viola di gamba con basso continuo ad libitum," he calls himself "Chamber Commissary and Chamberlain of the Elector Palatine." On the other hand,

³⁰ He was perhaps a brother or relation of the instrument maker Tielke mentioned pp. [7](#) and [8](#) of this work.

Mattheson informs us that he (Schenk) was named inspector of the fish market, because he had played the gamba so well! On the whole, he published eight works, chiefly pieces and sonatas for the gamba, as well as for the violin with a bass; a copy of the one, of which the title is mentioned above, is preserved in the Royal Library at Sondershausen. This comprehensive collection, consisting of 101 musical pieces, is dedicated to the Elector Palatine Prince William, consequently to the same art-devoted Prince to whom Corelli, in the year 1712, dedicated his “Concerti Grossi.”³¹

The title-page of the “Scherzi musicali” bears no date, but it maybe assumed that they appeared between 1692 and 1693, for Schenk published his Op. 3 in the first and his Op. 7 in the latter year, and the collection in question, as already observed, bears 6 as the number of the work. The compositions which it contains are grouped after the manner of “Chamber Sonatas” or “Suite.” It is true that the author has made use of neither of these terms, but the keys chosen by him leave no manner of doubt as to the description of instrumental compositions to which these “Scherzi musicali” belong. We know that it was usual for all the subjects of a suite at that period to be in the same key. Looking from this point of view at Schenk’s work for the gamba, it is apparent that it contains twelve suites or chamber sonatas, of which some indeed are unusually long. For example, the second suite (F major) and the fourth (A minor) consist of fourteen pieces.

³¹ Compare p. 8.

Dances, such as Allemandes, Courantes, Sarabandes, Giges, Gavottes, and Minuets, make up by far the greater portion of the volume. There are also a couple of Bourrées; but then the composer gives also Chaconnes and Passacailles with variations, which in some cases are of great length, as well as Rondos and “Arias.” The fourth sonata contains moreover a Canzone and an “Allabreve”; the ninth, a Fugue; the eleventh, the same³² and an Overture. The greater number of the suites begin with a Prelude, though, on the contrary, the second begins with a Fantasia, the fourth with a “Sonata con Basso obligato,” and the eighth with an “Overture,” the ninth with a “Capriccio,” and the twelfth with a “Caprice.” The mode of writing alternates from one to several parts, and the chords, by frequently doubling the intervals, are extended to five notes struck simultaneously. For the notation Schenk required four different keys—viz., bass, alto, discant,



and treble, by which means the compass extends from



to We conclude from this that Schenk, like the French gambist Marais, used a gamba with seven strings, and, indeed, the highest of them must have been tuned up to the one-lined G. Schenk must have gone considerably above the seventh fret of the

³² It is worthy of observation that this second fugue (D minor) has the theme which Mozart, nearly 100 years later, made use of for the second *Finale* of the “Magic Flute.” There is no doubt this was purely accidental, as Mozart could hardly have seen Schenk’s work.

fingerboard in order to reach the twice-lined B flat. With regard to the artistically musical quality of Schenk's compositions for the gamba, they are mediocre; they bear no comparison with the violin compositions of Corelli of the same period. He succeeded best in the dances, compared with which the more elaborate productions appear poor and are in some measure incorrect. Especially is this true of the two so-called fugues, which do not rise above feeble attempts at fugues. It is, however, interesting to know what position Schenk took as one of the best reputed gamba virtuosos at that time with regard to composition, for his productions give an average idea of the executive capabilities of his contemporaries. At the same time, Schenk's works prove very surely what double-stoppings, chords, and figures were possible on the gamba, and in this respect reveal a remarkable richness in various styles of playing.

Opposed to this by its simplicity in a technical point of view is a "Sonata a Cembalo Obligato col Viol da Gamba," by Handel. Double-stops and chords are altogether omitted. It is true that he has quite another object in view, for Handel treated the gamba not like Schenk, as a solo instrument, but as subsidiary only to carry out a musical idea, thus placing it on a level with the clavier. He chiefly uses also the middle positions of the gamba in the alto key throughout. Otherwise this Sonata,³³ though solid in form, is of small importance, and gives the impression of a composition quickly thrown off for some special occasion.

³³ A MS. copy exists in the Royal Library at Berlin.

Handel's great contemporary, Joh. Seb. Bach, treated this instrument, in his three sonatas composed for it and the clavier, in quite another manner. It is true that with rare exceptions he makes no use of the scored and harmonised technique for the gamba; but the artistic and complete mode of working out by which all his instrumental works are more or less distinguished is also peculiar to the gamba sonatas just mentioned, of which the most important are the first in G major and the third in G minor.

Charmingly and with characteristic effect did Bach employ the gamba in his Passion Music from the Gospel of St. Matthew and St. John, as well as in some of his Cantatas. One has only to recall the splendid, deeply touching alto aria "It is finished," in the Passion Music of St. John. Now at the performance of this sublime work the gamba part in the aria referred to is played by the violoncello, which does not quite express the deeply melancholy, pathetic tone that Bach's music was designed to express. But there is no more appropriate substitute in the modern orchestra for the gamba than the violoncello.


One peculiarity of Joh. Seb. Bach is that, with a rare knowledge of art, he made use for his purpose of all the instruments current in his time which adapted themselves in any way to the representation of a special effect. But he further conceived the idea of enriching the choir of instruments by an invention of his own. During his work at Köthen he constructed the "Viola Pomposa," a stringed instrument of the cello kind, though, like the violin, for the hand, which had five strings tuned


to C, G, d, a, ē—



Gerber remarks concerning it: “The limited way in which the violoncello in Bach’s time was handled compelled him, for the quick basses in his works, to the invention of the so-called viola pomposa, which, rather longer and higher than a tenor, had a fifth string, e, in addition to the four lower strings of the violoncello, and was placed on the arm. This convenient instrument enabled the player to execute more easily the high and rapid passages which occurred.”

It may be seen from Bach’s Suites for Violoncello Solo, which were originally written for the viola pomposa, the compass of

this instrument extended from the great octave C  to

the thrice-accented G  However, the “Viola pomposa” did not attain to general use. It scarcely survived its inventor, and disappeared, as it seems, even before the gamba, out of the musical sphere.

Bach’s eldest son, Philipp Emmanuel, also wrote for the gamba. Amongst other things a sonata in three movements, with

the clavier, in G minor,³⁴ which was apparently composed about 1759. The three-part movement in this is solid, though somewhat meagre and dry.

Amongst the gamba compositions of the previous century, which have lasted up to our time, there is also to be noted an unpublished Concerto by Joseph Tartini, the famous founder of the old Paduan violin school, with accompaniment for four stringed instruments and two horns.³⁵ Possibly Tartini wrote it during his three years' residence in Prague (1723-1726) for a German gambist, as about that time the gamba was still cultivated in Germany with great enthusiasm, though it had been, in Italy, thrust into the background of music by the violoncello. The Concerto bears all the marks of the author's manner of expression, but it is in the main quite as antiquated as all his violin concertos. The introduction and *Finale* are in G; the "Grave" between the two movements is in D minor. The single part theme of the solo, with the exception of a few double-stoppings and chords, is throughout written in tenor and bass clef. It is worthy of remark that all the pieces are provided before the full close with cadences, written at full length, for the solo instrument, after Tartini's usual manner in all his violin concertos.

As a contemporary of Schenk, the War Minister of Hesse-Darmstadt, Ernst Christian Hesse, who was born on the

³⁴ The MS. is preserved in the Royal Library at Berlin.

³⁵ It is to be found in the autograph collection of Count Wimpfen at his estate near Gratz.

14th April, 1676, in the Thuringian town of Grossengottern, distinguished himself. Gerber says of him, that he was the first and most famous gambist of his time in Germany. Having spent his school years at Langensalza and Eisenach, he entered the Darmstadt chancery service as supernumerary and followed the Court of his new master in 1694 to Giessen. At the Academy there he continued his work and also his legal studies. In 1698 he had permission from the Court to go to Paris in order to perfect himself there on the viol da gamba, which he had already begun to study in early life. He remained there three years and had instruction at the same time from the two famous masters, Marais and Forqueray. As privately they were at enmity with each other he was compelled to give his name to one as Hesse and to the other as Sachs. Both were delighted with his skill and progress, and severally boasted of the excellent pupil whom he had taught. At last they challenged each other to put to the test, in a concert arranged for that object, the proficiency of their pupil. But what was their astonishment on Herr Hesse's appearance to find he was the pupil of both! He did his two masters, each in his own manner, special credit, but immediately after the occurrence left Paris.

After his return to the Darmstadt Court, in the year 1702, Hesse was named Secretary of the War Department and Foreign Office. In the following year he married.

In the year 1705 Hesse travelled through Holland and England, and two years later he betook himself to Italy, in order

to increase his knowledge in the art of composition. Everywhere his gamba playing excited the greatest admiration. On his return journey from Italy he visited Vienna and was heard at Court, together with Hebenstreit, famous in his time as the inventor of a dulcimer-like instrument, called Pantaleon. The Emperor was so charmed with his playing that he presented him with a gold chain and his portrait. In the year 1713 he lost his wife. About the same period the vacant post of Kapellmeister at the Darmstadt Court was given to him *ad interim*. He then married his second wife, the famous singer, Johanna Eliz. Doeblbrecht (Döbriht), and in 1715 he was promoted to the post of War Commissary and eleven years later to the dignity of Minister of War. "In 1719," says Gerber, "Hesse made another musical tour with his wife to Dresden, to the famous festivals held in honour of the Elector's marriage and where several operas by Lotti and Heinichen were represented. They both gained extraordinary honour and abundant appreciation. From this time he devoted himself quietly to the Court until his eighty-sixth year, and died May 16, 1762, after he had participated in every kind of good fortune. Besides the airs which he arranged for the church during the time that he filled the Kapellmeister's vacancy, he left behind him many Sonatas and Suites for the Viola da gamba, which fully bring out all the possibilities of this instrument."

Hesse had twenty children, only eight of whom, however, survived him. His eldest son, Louis Christian, became, under his father's tuition, a clever gambist, and entered as such into the

service of the Prince of Prussia in 1768.

Besides his son, Hesse formed the excellent gamba player, Joh. Christ. Hextel, born 1699, in the Swabian town of Oettingen. His father, who was Kapellmeister to the Prince of Oettingen, and then worked in the same capacity at the Ducal Court of Merseburg, wished that the boy should study, and entered him, in 1716, at the University of Halle. Here he occupied himself by preference with music, and when he returned home he gained his father's permission to devote himself exclusively to the art. The Duke of Merseburg announced his willingness to grant him the means of pursuing his studies either in Paris, under Marais and Forqueray, or at Darmstadt, under Hesse's direction. The young Hextel himself decided for Hesse, who took him as a pupil under exceptional conditions. After two years' study he left Darmstadt, performed at concerts at the Courts of Eisenach, Merseburg, Weissenfels, Zerbst, and Köthen, and accepted a post in the Eisenach Kapelle. During the years 1723-27 he was travelling in Germany and Holland; played in 1732 before Frederick the Great at Ruppin, while he was still Crown Prince; and then undertook the post of Concert Director at Eisenach. When, after the death of its prince (1742), the Eisenach band was dissolved, through the recommendation of Franz Benda he was appointed Concert Director at the Court of Strelitz. He filled this place until 1753, and died a year after. Of his numberless compositions only six sonatas for violin "solo e continuo," 1727, were published at

Amsterdam.

As noteworthy German gambists belonging to the first half of the eighteenth century must be mentioned—

Emmerling, Hard, and Bellerman. The former of these, born at Eisleben, was in the year 1730 Chamber Musician and Viola da Gambist to the Margrave Louis of Brandenburg, and also, as Gerber says, instrumental composer.

Joh. Daniel Hard, born May 8, 1696, in Frankfurt on the Main, remained at the outset of his musical career for five years in the service of King Stanislaus during his residence at Zweibrücken, and then was Chamber Musician to the Bishop of Würzburg and the Duke of Franken, Joh. Phil. Franz von Schönborn. After four years he gave up this service and took a post as Chamber Musician at the Wurtemberg Court. Later on he again became Concertmeister and finally Capellmeister to the Duke Carl Eugene. He still filled this office at Stuttgard in 1757. Further accounts of him are wanting.

Constantine Bellerman, “Imperial Crowned Poet” (poet laureate), as Gerber calls him, studied as amateur gamba player. He was born in 1696 at Erfurt, there studied law, and also pursued music theoretically and practically, playing the lute, gamba, violin, and flute. He was called to Münden as Cantor, and then, in 1741, as Rector of the School there.

Of his many unpublished compositions, there are amongst them Church pieces, Cantatas, an Opera, Suites for the lute, Concertos for the Oboe d’Amour and the Flute, Clavier

Concertos with violin, and Overtures; here only six Sonatas for Flute, Gamba, and Clavier will be noticed. The year of his death is unknown.

Amongst the German gambists of the first half of the eighteenth century a lady held a prominent position, Dorothea v. Ried, one of the five daughters of the Austrian musician, Fortunatus Ried. Johann Frauenlob says of them, according to Gerber, in his *Essay on Learned Women*: "That although two of them were still very young—one was scarcely eight years old—their father had brought them on so well in music that with their two brothers they had given at Vienna, Prague, Leipsic, Wittenberg, and other places such evident proofs of their talent as to have excited universal admiration, for people thought they heard heavenly rather than earthly music."

Here also must be mentioned a royal personage—namely, the Elector Maximilian Joseph, born March 28, 1728; died December 30, 1777. He played the violin and the cello, but was especially an excellent gambist. Burney, who heard him in 1772, says that he needed not to be a great prince in order to discover that his skill, his rendering of adagio, and his accuracy in time were perfect. Maximilian also composed. His teacher for composition was Bernasconi.

Finally, Carl Friedrich Abel must also be mentioned as a gambist of the first rank. He was born at Köthen, 1725, where his father held the appointment of gamba player in the Hofkapelle. "The young Abel," says Gerber, "seems to have had instruction,

as Thomas's scholar, at Leipsic, from the great Seb. Bach; then came in 1748 to the Hofkapelle at Dresden, where, during the more flourishing period of Hasse's life, and for nearly ten years, he found time enough to form his taste.³⁶ His small salary and a split with the director Hasse caused him to leave that Court, according to Burney, in 1758, with three thalers in his purse. In order to increase this capital, he went on foot to Leipsic, laden with the MS. of six symphonies, where, through the generosity of the publisher of these symphonies, he became six ducats richer. He now went from one German court to another, and, by repeated good receptions and applause, he regained not a little confidence. Finally he turned to London, in 1759, where he found a great patron in the lately deceased Duke of York, who supported him until the formation of the Queen's Band, to which he was appointed in the capacity of chamber musician, receiving an annual payment of £300.

"This salary was considerably increased by the music dealers giving him a stipulated sum of £150 for six symphonies. His duty at the Queen's Concerts was generally to play the tenor on his gamba, and now and then, in the absence of Bach,³⁷ to accompany on the piano. For some years he lived in Paris during the summer, where he found in the house of a *fermier-général*

³⁶ According to Fürstenau, Abel was engaged as violoncellist at Dresden. See his "History of Music and of the Theatre at the Elector of Saxony's Court," Vol. II., p. 240.

³⁷ Sebastian Bach's youngest son, Joh. Christian, was born in 1735, in Leipsic, and died in London in 1782, whither he had gone in 1759 as Band Conductor.

not only a friendly reception, but also what he liked better than all, the best of wine. On his first appearance in London, his discretion, his taste, and his pathetic manner of expression in the rendering of his adagios so captivated the young virtuosi that they very soon followed his school, with less expenditure of notes and with more successful result. His taste and knowledge especially made him the umpire on all contested points, so that he was looked upon in all difficult cases as an infallible oracle. With his dexterity on the gamba he also possessed the talent, like many other older virtuosi, of exciting the astonishment and admiration of his hearers by free fantasias and learned modulations. And although he had considerably less power on the harpsichord, yet he knew how to modulate in arpeggio with consummate skill and in endless changes.”

“Abel remained in London until 1782, in which year the desire of once more seeing his brother and his country induced him to return to Germany. It was on this journey that he displayed, both at Berlin and Ludwigslust, the greatness of his talent, his wonderful power of expression, the richness of his tones, and his stirring execution on the gamba. The present king, then Crown Prince of Prussia, before whom he performed in Berlin, presented him with a costly casket and 100 louis d’or. A few years later he stayed some time in Paris on account of the disordered condition of his finances. But he returned again to London and died there on June 22, 1787, after a three days’ lethargy, without the least suffering. Shortly before his death he played

a recently finished solo which astonished his warmest admirers. His cadences especially were excellent.”

It is remarkable that, amongst Abel’s numberless published works, which consist partly of concertos and orchestral pieces and partly of chamber music, there are no compositions for the gamba. This must be explained by the fact that the zenith of gamba-playing had been reached, and the art was on its decline, at the beginning of the second half of the eighteenth century. It went out of fashion, and with it also gamba music, and in its place only violoncello compositions were in request. In many ways this change was as much lamented as was the case at the banishment of the lute to cabinets of curiosities or the lumber room.

After Abel there were no German gambists of conspicuous importance to mention. From the middle of the last century the gamba was more and more neglected, in consequence of the violoncello being brought forward, and the younger geniuses devoted themselves by preference to this instrument, which approached more nearly to the violin, then at the summit of all instrumental music.

Amongst stringed instruments, which had shared the same fate as the gamba, belong the Viola bastarda and the Viola di Bordone (English, Barytone). The first instrument was in shape somewhat thicker than the gamba and was provided with six or seven strings.³⁸ In order to increase the resonance, as many

³⁸ According to Pohl, the number of these metal strings was raised to twenty-seven. (S. C. F. Pohl: “Haydn,” I., 250.) Information regarding the barytone and barytone

steel strings were introduced under the fingerboard and bridge, which were tuned to the same pitch as those above, like the Viola d'amore. Another variety of the gamba was the barytone, which was cultivated in the last century.

In Leopold Mozart's violin tutor is found the following description of it: "This instrument has from six to seven strings like the gamba. The neck is very broad and the back part hollow and open, down which nine or ten brass or steel strings are run beneath, which are touched and pinched by the thumb; so that, at the same time as the principal part is played with the bow on the upper cat-gut strings, the thumb by striking the strings stretched under the neck of the instrument can play the bass; and therefore the music must be arranged specially for it. Moreover, it is a most agreeable instrument." From this description it is evident that the barytone was a bass instrument resembling the Viola d'amore. The barytone in its time was much liked in Austria. Several Austrian composers, as Cybler, Weigl, and Pichl, and at their head Joseph Haydn, composed for this instrument. The latter was incited to it by his benefactor, the Prince Esterhazy, who looked with particular favour on the barytone. Haydn wrote no less than 175 pieces for it.³⁹ The tuning of the strings on the fingerboard of the barytone was on the same principle as that of the gamba.

The Viennese, Anton Lidl, who was born about 1740, was

compositions are to be found there.

³⁹ Pohl: "Haydn," I., 257.

much esteemed as a most distinguished barytone virtuoso. Gerber says of him, "that he rendered still more perfect his instrument, which had been invented about the year 1700. It is in shape like the Viola da gamba, except that it has brass strings at the back, which are played at the same time with the thumb. These lower strings he increased to twenty-seven and the semitones were played with them." He must have been an extraordinary artist on this instrument. The author of the *Almanack* of 1782 says: "His performance united the most charming sweetness to German vigour, the most surprising syncopations with the most harmonious melody." According to Burney, Lidl was no longer living in 1789. Up to 1783 he had published, in Amsterdam and Paris, Duets, Quartets, and Quintets—altogether seven works. His compositions for the gamba were not published.

The barytone disappeared with the gamba, in the course of the second half of the last century, from musical practice.

The same change took place in Italy about the same time or somewhat earlier, when a lively interest in the violoncello was aroused there by Franciscello, of whom we shall speak farther on. It appears, indeed, that in the land of the arts, as the quotations already given from Maugars' papers inform us, no predilection had prevailed for the higher study of the gamba, either for the reason that among stringed instruments the cultivation of the violin—which from the seventeenth century had decidedly usurped the first place in the study of music—was chiefly

pursued, or that the Italian composers did not specially concern themselves with the gamba. As a matter of fact, so far as can be perceived, with the exception of Tartini, no noteworthy Italian composer considered it worth his while to bring it into the field of creative activity. Besides Ferabosco, of whom mention has already been made, there are amongst famous Italian bass violin players and gambists to be named: Alessandro Romano with the cognomen “della Viola,” and Teobaldi Gatti. Romano was born about 1530 at Rome, and in 1560 was a singer in the Papal (Sixtine) Chapel. He later became a monk of the monastery of Mount Olivet, under the name of Giulio Cesare. But he did not find his sojourn there agreeable, for he was at strife and contention with one or other of the monks of his order through incompatibility of temper. His compositions, published between the years 1572-1579, consist of “Canzone alla Napolitana” for five voices and a book of Motets in five parts.

Teobaldi Gatti, born at Florence about 1650, not only distinguished himself as a gamba player, but also made himself known in his time as an operatic composer. In the latter respect he was influenced by Lully, whose first opera-overtures so impressed him that he resolved to go to Paris in order to do homage to his illustrious countryman. Lully, who was flattered, showed his gratitude for this attention by making Gatti a member of the Parisian Opera orchestra, which post he filled for nearly fifty years uninterruptedly.⁴⁰ He died in 1727, in Paris. There

⁴⁰ Gerber mentions him as a violoncellist, which must be a mistake, since in the

were published in 1696 twelve “Airs Italiens” by him, two of which are duets.

As skilful Italian gambists are conspicuous also Marco Fraticelli and Carlo Ambrosio Lunati,⁴¹ of Milan, with the cognomen “Il gobbo della Regina.” The latter came to England during the reign of James II. Nothing further is known concerning either of these instrumentalists. It is worthy of remark in this place that the famous Italian singer, Lenora Baroni, born about 1610, was, according to Maugars’ testimony, a clever theorbo and gamba player. As such she was in the habit of accompanying herself in singing.

It has already been pointed out that the viola da gamba, which for nearly three hundred years (for the “Basso di viola,” or Gerle’s “great violin,” was, in fact, a gamba, although as yet of a somewhat primitive form) had played an important part both as an orchestral and solo instrument, was replaced by the violoncello in the course of the eighteenth century. Subsequently when the violin as a leading instrument in melody usurped the place of the cornet (Zinken), and the discant viola (French *par dessus de viole*), it became necessary to provide an equivalent for the bass part of string quartets, as the tone of the gamba in *ensemble* playing proved too weak and thin in proportion to the violin.

Mattheson says of it, in his “Neu eröffneten Orchestre,” which

Parisian Opera orchestra, up to 1727, as far as is known, only gambists were employed. He may, however, have played both instruments.

⁴¹ See “The History of the Violin,” by W. Sandys and Simon Andrew Forster. London, 1864.

appeared in 1713: "The plaintive Viola da gamba (Fr., Basse de Viole, properly so called) is a beautiful delicate instrument, and he who wishes to signalise himself on it must not keep his hands long in his pockets.... Its chief use in concerts is only for the strengthening of the basses, and some indeed pretend to execute a 'Thorough Bass' on it, of which, up to now, I have never seen a good attempt."

In opposition to this last somewhat sarcastic remark of Mattheson is what Gerber states a hundred years later (Vol. I., p. 6, of his "New" Musicians' Lexicon) concerning the gamba. He there says: "It is remarkable in the history of music that his (Abel's) instrument was buried with him in the year 1787 in total oblivion: the indispensable gamba, without which for a hundred years neither church nor chamber music could be arranged, which in all public and private concerts had the exclusive right to be heard before all other instruments from the beginning to the end, and which therefore, like caskets, must not only be exquisitely finished in every size, large and small, but was also ordered, bought, and paid for adorned with the most costly artistic carving—ivory, tortoiseshell, gold, and silver—then available. In the course of time there will be no vestige left in the whole of Europe of this instrument, once so universal and admired; henceforth it will have to be sought for amongst the old woodcuts in Prätorius, or specimens of it, stringless and worm-eaten, in a royal music chamber. Another sad proof how greatly Apollo is overruled by the goddess Fashion. The taste of our

forefathers for these soft, modest, humming viola tones is also remarkable; they were a quiet, contented, peace-loving people! In the present time the instruments for our musicians cannot be chosen sufficiently high and shrill.”⁴² It is plain that although Gerber himself played the cello, this instrument was also known to him, and he had not only remarked the disproportion between the tone of the violins and those of the gambas in the orchestra with regard to strength, but also the circumstance that, by the creative faculty of Haydn and Mozart in the region of higher instrumental music, the gamba had become wholly superfluous. The superior qualities of the violoncello to the gamba as a solo instrument had escaped him, although the conspicuous success of cello players in the second half of the last century could not have remained unknown to him. It seems, therefore, as if Gerber had a special predilection for the gamba—a taste which only a few of his contemporaries shared with him.

Gerber’s⁴³ confident assertion that the French priest, Tardieu, of Tarascon, had invented the violoncello “in the year 1708,” is simply to be relegated to the region of fable, for the instrument had already existed long before in Italy.⁴⁴

⁴² What would Gerber have said had he lived to see the present demand for instruments required to make up an orchestra?

⁴³ Gerber’s “Old Musical Lexicon,” p. 617, and Note, p. 86.

⁴⁴ In the preface to the violoncello tutor already mentioned, by Corrette, the untenable assertion is made that the violoncello was discovered by Bonocin (Buononcini), “présentement Maître de Chapelle du Roi de Portugal.” A Bononcini, with the Christian name of Domenico, actually lived in 1737 at the Lisbon Court.

Fétis remarks (p. 47) in his article “Antoine Stradivari” (Paris, 1856): The violoncello had already been mentioned by Prätorius in his “Syntagma Mus.” (1614-1620), which is a mistake, for the work referred to contains neither the name nor the illustration of this instrument.⁴⁵ But the violoncello must already have been in use about this time in Italy, for (according to Rob. Eitner)⁴⁶ it is mentioned in a publication of the year 1641, and then in a work of Freschi’s, which appeared in 1660 as “Violoncino.” In Arresti’s Sonatas in two and three parts, of the year 1665, it is called “Violoncello.” It was of great importance for the Italian instrument makers to produce a bass instrument of the violin type which had already been in use from the middle of the sixteenth century, and this certainly happened towards the end of that period. This is proved by the Brescian Gaspard da Salò⁴⁷ (1550-1612). Whether Andreas Amati, the founder of the

At that period, according to Fétis, he must have been eighty-five years old. He must therefore have been born in 1652. He could not have invented the violoncello (if one could call it an invention), as it evidently existed before his birth. It is not even certain that Domenico Bononcini was a cellist. Possibly Corrette confounded him with Giov. Battista Bononcini mentioned later.

⁴⁵ Another inaccuracy in Fétis’s “Stradivari,” p. 46, is that the name of violino “had already appeared in Lanfranco’s work ‘Scintille’ of 1533.” This announcement has caused some confusion. Before Lanfranco’s work was accessible to me, I also in *bonâ fide* had made the same assertion in my “History of Instrumental Music of the Sixteenth Century” (p. 73), and I now correct it. The word “Violino” is not mentioned by Lanfranco, but in every case only the termination “Violone,” which is bass viol.

⁴⁶ See monthly *Magazine for the History of Music*, Year XVI., No. 3.

⁴⁷ The well-known violin maker, Aug. Riechers, in Berlin, possesses a violoncello by Gaspard da Salò (small size).

famous Cremona school (born 1520, died 1580), constructed similar instruments appears doubtful. Apparently the gamba as well as the violin served as guides for the proportions in the construction of the violoncello. From the violin were borrowed the outlines of the soundbox, the arched back, which the more ancient gambas, whose backs were flat, did not have; also the F holes and the fingerboard without frets. From the gamba were taken the large proportions of the violoncello. It was at first constructed like the gamba, in smaller and larger dimensions, until Stradivarius established a standard size. Whether the most famous German violin maker, Jacob Stainer (born 1621, died 1683), made violoncellos is much doubted by experts. It is, however, certain that he made gambas, which were often converted into violoncellos.

According to Eitner's previously mentioned assertion, it appears that the last-named instrument was at first called "Violoncino," and a little while after "Violoncello." The Italian affixes "ino" and "ello" have a diminutive meaning, and therefore both names have an identical signification. As violino is the diminutive of viola, violoncino and violoncello are the diminutives of "violone." The tenor of our day, which also at that time sprang from the alto or tenor viola, after the pattern of the violin, received the name of Viola da braccio, which means "arm viola." Besides the Viola da braccio there was also a "Viola da Spalla," which was not placed beneath the chin, but rested on the left shoulder. Concerning this bass instrument

Mattheson remarks: "The Viola da spalla, or shoulder-violin, has a particularly grand effect in accompaniment from its penetrating and pure tone. A bass can never be more distinctly and clearly brought out than by this instrument. It is fastened by a ribbon to the chest and thrown over the right shoulder, but has nothing which can stop or prevent in the smallest degree its resonance."

To return to the violoncello. It offered the player two very important advantages over the gamba. First, the finger technique was wholly unlimited because the fingerboard had no frets, which, in regard to runs and cadences, as well as change of positions, opposed a substantial hindrance to the gamba player. Then the player on the violoncello could obtain more tone than on the gamba, by drawing the bow more forcibly over a single string. The upper edge of the bridge of the gamba, over which the strings passed, was so flatly cut for harmonised or part-playing that it was necessary to avoid a strong tone, lest the neighbouring strings should be thereby sympathetically affected. But the bridge of the cello, on the contrary, was of a more convex form, whereby playing in parts was indeed precluded. As is known, on the cello as on the violin, only double stops and chords are possible, and the last only broken up. In this manner the violoncello was used formerly at the performances of operas and oratorios as solo accompaniment of recitatives, for which of course it was requisite that the player should have a thorough knowledge of music theoretically, as he had to execute at sight figured basses.

Corrette gives already in his violoncello tutor (1741)

instructions for accompanying recitative. These directions are, however, by no means exhaustive; such are first found in the cello tutor compiled for the Paris Conservatoire by De Baillot, Levasseur, Catel, and Baudiot, which appeared in print in 1804. Therein it is said:

“In order to accompany well a recitative, a complete knowledge of harmony and of the violoncello is necessary; one must be intimate with figured basses, and know how to execute them readily. He who can do this has reached the summit of art; for it presupposes a great deal of necessary information, and still more the power of judging how to turn it to account.

“If the bass player is not certain of the resolutions of discords, if he is unable positively to indicate to the singer when he is to make a complete or a broken cadence, if in his concords he does not know how to avoid forbidden fifths and octaves—he is in danger of confusing the singer, and in any case he will produce a most disagreeable effect.

“As in good compositions, a recitative always follows a well-defined progression and adapts itself to the character of the part, to the situation portrayed, and to the voice of the singer: in the accompaniment—1. The strength of the tone must be regulated according to the effect to be produced, for the accompaniment must sustain and embellish the singing and not spoil and drown it. 2. The chord must not be repeated, except when the harmony changes. 3. The accompaniment must be quite simple, without flourishes or runs. Good accompanying always has in view the

best rendering of the subject, and when the player allows himself to fill up certain gaps with a short interlude, this must only consist of the notes of the chord. 4. The chord must be played without Arpeggio, ordinarily in the following manner”—⁴⁸



Baudiot in his violoncello tutor, which appeared later than the above, makes the following remark concerning the accompaniment of recitative: “It sometimes happens that the actors linger on the scene without reciting (speaking), be it that they have forgotten the text of what they have to recite, or that for some other reason they are silent. At times their appearance on the boards is delayed. In such cases, the accompanist (*i.e.*, the cellist) can perform short preludes and embellishments at his pleasure. But he must be modest about it, and employ his ornaments at the right moment, and always with taste.”⁴⁹

To the art of violoncello making the same applies as to the violin. The productions of the Italian makers surpass those of all

⁴⁸ The French call this kind of recitative accompaniment “le recitatif italien.”

⁴⁹ Accompanying the recitative with the cello was customary far into our century. I heard it in Italy at the representation of the old operas up to the year 1873. I am unable to say if the practice is continued. It has been abolished in Germany for the last ten years.

other nations. Amongst them, those manufactured by Nicholas Amati, Stradivari, and Gius. Guarneri del Gesù are most to be preferred and justly so.⁵⁰

Stradivari and Amati made their cellos of two different sizes; the larger one was formerly called “il Basso,” while the smaller was distinguished as the Violoncello proper. The latter is the more preferable as being more manageable; in these days it is used as a valuable model.

As to the violoncello bow, which had the following form in the first half of the eighteenth century,⁵¹ its progress went hand in hand with that of the violin bow. The improvements which were successively made on the latter were effected on the former. The greatest perfection reached by the bow was the work of a Frenchman, François Tourte. To this day he has never been excelled in this department. (See Appendix [A](#).)



The fabrication, however, of good violin and cello bows has latterly become very general; and especially in Markneukirchen

⁵⁰ The widespread opinion that Gius. Guarneri of the Gesù did not make violoncellos is unfounded. Aug. Riecher informs me that Major H—r, in Berlin, is in possession of a cello which is undoubtedly genuine. Yet it seems as if this member of the Guarneri family had only made a limited number.

⁵¹ The above sketch is taken from Corrette’s Violoncello Tutor, which was published in 1741.

the manufacture of bows as well as instruments has received a great impulse.⁵²

⁵² In my paper “The Violin and its Masters,” second edition (Breitkopf and Härtel), I have given a more detailed account of it as well as of the productions of the Italian, German, and French masters, which it is unnecessary to repeat here. See also the fabrication of musical instruments in Saxon Voigtland, by Fürstenau and Berthold, 1876.

The Art of Violoncello Playing In the Eighteenth Century

Violoncello

In the seventeenth century the violoncello still occupied a very subordinate and modest position; during the period mentioned, with very few exceptions, it was employed only as a bass instrument in the orchestra. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, there was already a great change; for Mattheson says in his “*Neu eröffneten Orchestre*,” which appeared in 1713:—

“The prominent Violoncello, the Bass Viol, and the Viola da Spalla are small bass fiddles (viols) similar to the larger ones, with five or six strings, on which can be played all kinds of quick things, variations and movements much more easily than on the larger machines” (Mattheson means the contra-basso).⁵³

⁵³ Mattheson expresses himself about this in his original manner as follows: “The growling Violone (French, *Basse de Violon*; German, *Grosse Bass Geige*) is quite twice the size of the former, sometimes even more, consequently the strings, in thickness and length, are in proportion. They are of sixteen-feet tone, and most useful on the stage as a solid foundation for polyphonous pieces, such as choruses and similar things, as well as for airs and recitatives; its deep humming tone penetrates farther than the clavier and other bass instruments. It must, however, be heavy work if one has to practise this

It is, therefore, quite conceivable that some time was necessary, before the players, who were unaccustomed to the undivided fingerboard of the cello, were sufficiently confident of a finger technique differing so completely from that of the gamba. They were at first limited to the lower part of the fingerboard, as was the case primarily with the violin.⁵⁴ The position of the thumb, by means of which the higher and highest positions on the fingerboard could alone be fixed and maintained with certainty, could hardly have been known before the beginning of the eighteenth century. The violoncello at this time, as appears from Mattheson's account just mentioned, had sometimes a set of five or even six strings like the gamba. On the five-stringed instruments the tuning was:—



The Abbé Tardieu already referred to, who played the violoncello, according to Gerber, had the same tuning on his instrument. About the third decade of the last century, those who used five-stringed instruments gave up the highest string—(the D). From that time the four-stringed instrument with the tuning C, G, D, A came very generally into use. The latter was

monster for three or four hours unceasingly.”

⁵⁴ Concerning this, I refer to my work “The Violin and its Masters,” second edition, 1883. (Breitkopf and Härtel, Leipsic.)

not altogether a novelty. Prätorius mentions it in his “Syntagma Mus.” as the “Bass Viol de Braccio.”⁵⁵

In Germany the use of the violoncello as an orchestral instrument ensued later than in Italy, though much sooner than in France. For although it had been introduced into the Parisian Opera in 1727, by the cellist Batistin, to be mentioned later on, it had been already in use since 1680 in the Vienna Hofkapelle. The Saxon Hofkapelle at Dresden next followed by the installation of four violoncellists. Their names are Daniel Hennig, Agostino Antonio de Rossi, Jean Baptiste José du Houbondel, and Jean Prach de Tilloy.⁵⁶ As two of these players have French names, it is to be assumed that the violoncello had already found representatives in France at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The example set by Vienna and Dresden was soon imitated also by other German Courts. The band of Duke Charles Ulrich of Holstein-Gottorp affords a case in point. As this prince, the future son-in-law of Peter the Great, found himself obliged, in 1720, to reside at the Russian Imperial Court, his private musicians followed him thither, amongst whom there was a

⁵⁵ Michael Corrette in the preface to his Violoncello Tutor refers to a stringed instrument in general use before the introduction of the violoncello into France with the tuning B, F, C, G, which he calls Basse de Violon. The instrument must be identical with the one described by Mattheson as Basse de Violon.

⁵⁶ Fürstenau: “On the History of Music and the Theatre at the Court of the Princes of Saxony.”

cellist.⁵⁷

As the gamba enjoyed a great amount of favour⁵⁸ in Germany, the introduction of the violoncello was not effected without difficulty, to which indeed the gambists, who thought their pretended rights were thereby infringed, not a little contributed. For in a paper which appeared in 1757 in the French language, "Observations sur la Musique," &c., it is said: "La seule basse de viole a déclaré la guerre au violoncelle qui a remporté la victoire et elle a été si complète que l'on craint maintenant que la fameuse viole, l'incomparable sicilienne ne soit vendue à quelque inventaire à un prix médiocre et que quelque luthier profane ne s'avise d'en faire une enseigne."⁵⁹

It was not quite so bad as the last words of the announcement lead one to suppose. Even if the violoncello caused the gamba to be quite superfluous in the orchestra, the latter was cultivated as a solo instrument for some time longer, and many of the good old gambas were in course of time metamorphosed into violoncellos, and made available for further use; while the more insignificant specimens were destroyed, if they were not required for completing instrumental collections and so preserved from destruction.

⁵⁷ Hiller, *Weekly News* of May 21, 1770.

⁵⁸ Mattheson says, in his "Neu eröffneten Orchestre," that this instrument (Basse de Viole) was singularly prized and cultivated.

⁵⁹ H. Leblanc published a "Défense de la Basse de Viole contre les entreprises du Violon et les prétentions du Violoncel." Amsterdam, 1740.—(*Tr.*)

The art of violoncello playing in the first stages of its development was, as regards the method of treatment, not so much favoured as violin playing. To the latter a definite direction for imitation was early given, as soon indeed as the end of the seventeenth century, by the Roman school founded by Arcangelo Corelli, which was soon followed by the foundation of the Paduan and Piedmontese schools. Violoncello playing lacked such classical parent schools. When a few prominent artists of this instrument had brought it into greater consideration, centres were formed by distinguished masters for the study of the cello, which supplied the want of proper schools, about which we shall have more to say farther on.

It is easy to understand how it followed that the violoncello was first valued in the land of its birth—that is, in Italy, not only as an orchestral instrument but also for solo playing. How this important branch of art was there developed we shall see in the next section.

I.—ITALY

Italy has the claim of priority in violoncello as well as violin playing. It was the birthplace of the violin and of the cello, and from thence emanated the artistic executive development of both instruments. The first famous Italian cellist of whom we have any notice is—

Domenico Gabrieli, with the surname of Menghino del Violoncello, born about 1640 at Bologna, died in 1690. This artist found a sphere of work in the church of San Petronio in his native town. Then he entered the service of Cardinal Pamfili in Rome. Gabrieli was also a composer of some repute. Fétis mentions eight of his operas which were written partly for Bologna and partly for Venice. His other works consist of a “Cantata a voce sola,” in a collection of Motets, entitled “Vexillum pacis,” for alto solo and instrumental accompaniments, as well as “Baletti, gighe, correnti, e sarabande a due violini e violoncello, con basso continuo” (Op. 1). These three works, of which the last is a reprint, appeared successively in 1691, 1695, and 1703, consequently after Gabrieli’s death. He appears to have composed nothing specially for the cello.

More remarkable as a cellist must have been Attilio Ariosti, the Dominican monk, born at Bologna in 1660. Gerber at least says of him that he was one of the most excellent violoncellists of his time. But he was also a distinguished performer on the

Viola d'amore. He occupied himself chiefly, however, with opera compositions, for which the Pope granted him a dispensation from the rule of his order, as without it, being a Dominican, he was forbidden to meddle with anything connected with the theatre. In 1698 Ariosti was sent for to Berlin as Kapellmeister to the Elector of Brandenburg. Thence he went in 1716 to London, where, in the proximity of Handel, he could make no way, and therefore at last returned to his fatherland. He chose Bologna as his place of residence. Like Gabrieli, he appears to have produced no independent⁶⁰ violoncello compositions.

His fellow-country man, Giovanni Battista Bononcini (Buononcini),⁶¹ famous as an able cellist, also devoted his talent by preference to the operatic stage. He was the eldest son of the choirmaster, Giov. Maria Bononcini, at the church S. Giovanni, in Monte, at Modena, and was born in 1672, or, according to Fétis, in 1667 or 1668. At first instructed in music by his father, and then perfected by Colonna at Bologna, he betook himself, at twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, to Vienna, where he found a post as cellist in the Imperial Kapelle. Here he turned to opera, which at that time was a favourite means of entertainment for the seeing and listening public, and promised more reputation and gain than all other kinds of composition.

⁶⁰ Some pieces composed for the viola d'amore by Ariosti, consisting of Cantabile, Vivace, Adagio, and Minuet, have been arranged by Alfred Piatti for the violoncello, and brought out lately in London.

⁶¹ Concerning the diverse vicissitudes of Bononcini's and Ariosti's lives, which can find no particular mention here, see "Musical Lexicons," extant.

Fétis mentions twenty operas by Bononcini, but he doubtless wrote more. Even in his eightieth year he was occupied for the theatre in Venice. Besides, he wrote an Oratorio, "Joshua," several orchestral pieces, masses, chamber duets, "Trattenimenti da Camera," &c., some of which were composed before his entrance into the Vienna Hofkapelle. He also wrote "Sinfonie" for violin and violoncello as well as cello solos. Of the latter there appeared at J. Simpson's (London) a sonata for two violoncellos in a collection of sonatas by Pasqualini, San Martino, Caporale, Spourni, and Porta. As Caporale was born in 1750 and Porta in 1758, the publication of this collection must have taken place late in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Bononcini sonata contained in it does not give a very favourable impression of this composer's talent. The development is dry and in places very formal, even here and there somewhat incorrect. To the two figured parts are given accompanying basses, partly simple and partly contrapuntal. The interest which attaches to this composition, consisting of an *Allegro*, with introductory *Andante*, a movement marked "*Grazioso*," and a "*Minuet*," after which the "*Grazioso*" is to be repeated, rests chiefly on the light which it throws upon the technical condition of cello playing at the beginning of the eighteenth century (for doubtless the composition belongs to that period). In reference to this is to be remarked: the principal part is confined chiefly to the middle tones; the lower ones are only occasionally touched, and the compass of the higher notes reaches to the one-lined A; the

thumb position does not come into use. Figure is little developed, and only modest attempts are made at playing double stoppings and chords; the notation is in tenor and bass clefs.

It is reported that during Bononcini's residence in Paris, between 1735-1748, he composed a Motet with cello obbligato accompaniment, for the royal band there, which last he himself played at the performance of his work in the presence of the king.

Alessandro Scarlatti,⁶² the founder of the Neapolitan opera school, had given an example of this use of the violoncello about twenty-five years before in one of his cantatas. Geminiani, Corelli's pupil, related that this cello part was performed during Scarlatti's presence in Rome, and with his assistance on the clavier, by the famous violoncellist, Franciscello (Francischello); his playing was so beautiful that Scarlatti described it as heavenly.

This event must have occurred in the year 1713, when Scarlatti was in Rome the last time. Consequently, Franciscello's birth must be placed with all probability in the year 1692. He would have been twenty-one years of age when he played with the Neapolitan master.

Gerber says that Franciscello went from Rome to Naples in 1725. That he was actually there in the year mentioned is affirmed by Quantz, who himself heard him play. Through Franciscello's extraordinary performances the violoncello was

⁶² Born in 1649, at Trapani, in Sicily; died on October 24, 1725, at Naples. In Grove's Dictionary, 1659 is given as the date of his birth—other authorities as above.—(*Tr.*)

soon so generally accepted in Italy, that the gamba had, in 1730, almost entirely disappeared from the Italian orchestras.

In the year 1730, Franciscello was summoned to Vienna as Imperial chamber musician, a proof that his name had already penetrated beyond his country. Franz Benda, afterwards celebrated as a violinist, and founder of the Berlin violin school, heard him in the Austrian capital. Franciscello's manner of playing so impressed him that he took him from that time as his model.

Franciscello remained, it appears, ten years in Vienna. If a notice in the "Musical Almanack for Germany, of the year 1782," is to be credited, he had already been a member of the Imperial Court and Chamber Music Society in 1766, which is by no means beyond the bounds of possibility, though not very probable. We hold then to the assumption that he was born in 1692 so that, in 1766, he would be already seventy-four years old. It is not known where Franciscello closed his life. Tradition only says that at an advanced age he resided in Genoa, to which the supposition was attached that that city had been his birthplace. It is stated that the elder Duport, the cello virtuoso, who was born in 1741, went from Paris to visit him there.

During his long period of work at Vienna, Franciscello doubtless instructed pupils in cello playing; who they were is however, as little known as the question if or what he composed for his instrument. On both points we are no better off than concerning his somewhat older compatriot

Cervetto, called Jacopo Bassevi, who was born in 1682. Until his forty-sixth year he remained in his fatherland. Then, like so many other Italian musicians of this time, he was seized with a desire to travel, and betook himself to London. There he trafficked at first in instruments which he had brought with him from Italy; this, however, was so little remunerative that he very soon gave it up, and joined the orchestra of Drury Lane Theatre. According to Burney's judgment, Cervetto was, for his time, a very clever violoncellist, who knew how to manipulate the fingerboard with much dexterity; but his tone must have been rough and harsh. Of his eccentricity the following anecdote is an illustration: Once when the famous Garrick was representing a drunkard and sank down senseless upon a seat, Cervetto broke upon the sudden stillness with an unseemly loud and long-drawn yawn. Garrick immediately got up, severely censuring such behaviour, upon which Cervetto pacifying him answered: "I beg your pardon, I always yawn when I am very pleased." A few years later Cervetto became Director of Drury Lane Theatre, and thus he laid the foundation of his fortune.

Cervetto must have had a very strong constitution, for he lived to the unusual age of 101 years. His death took place on January 14, 1783. He left a fortune of £20,000 sterling, which he bequeathed to his son James, who was also a cellist; but soon after inheriting from his father he retired into private life. He, also, reached a respectable age, for as he came into the world (in London) in 1747, and died February 5, 1837, he was ninety

years old. In 1783 he was performing at the Court concerts of the Queen, as well as taking part in the musical *réunions* in the house of Lord Abington as one of the best reputed cellists in London. Of cello compositions he published: 1. Twelve "Solos for a Violoncello, with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord"; this work, dedicated to the Elector Palatine of Bavaria and Jülich-Eleve-Berg, appeared at the author's own expense, without date. 2. "Six Solos for a Violoncello, with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord, Opera Terza." London. 3. "Twelve Sonatinas for a Violoncello and a Bass, Op. 4^{ta}." London. Fétis adds, besides, "Six solos pour la flûte" and "Six trios pour deux violons, et violoncelle," which must have been in existence not long before the end of the last century. We shall have occasion to refer again farther on to Cervetto's violoncello compositions.

Taking up again the chronological thread, after Cervetto the elder, the cellist Batistin, whose real name was Joh. Baptist Struck, must be mentioned. He was of German origin and was born in Florence in the second half of the seventeenth century, from thence he went to Paris at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He there entered the band of the Duke of Orleans and the opera orchestra, in which he, conjointly with the brothers Abbé (properly Philippe Pierre and Pierre de Saint-Sévin), played the cello parts. He must have performed well, since Louis XIV., in order to retain him in the French capital, gave him a liberal allowance and, in addition, a sum of 500 francs for certain theatrical compositions to be supplied by him. Besides

this he wrote a long list of ballets and operas specially for Court festivities. There appeared in print, by him, during the years 1706 and 1714, in Paris, four books of "Cantatas" and a collection of airs. He does not appear to have composed for the violoncello. He died on December 9, 1755, at the scene of his work. Among the masters of the Neapolitan school, Leonardo Leo, at that time the famous opera composer, distinguished himself as a violoncellist, who was born, 1694, at S. Vito degli Schiavi, in the province of Lecco, and died at Naples in 1746. He also composed six cello concertos with quartet accompaniments, which belong to the years 1737 and 1738. The MSS. of these are in the Library of the Royal Conservatoire at Naples. It is supposed that these are the oldest of existing cello concertos.

Another Italian cellist of that time was Domenico della Bella, of whom nothing further is known than that, in 1704, he published, in Venice, Twelve Sonatas "a due violini e violoncello."

The information is equally meagre regarding the cellist Parasisi, of whom Gerber says he was an extraordinary artist on his instrument and was with the Italian Opera orchestra at Breslau in 1727.

Concerning the Italian violoncellists Jacchini, Amadio, Vandini, Abaco, dall'Oglio, and Lanzetti, born in the second half of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, we know very little.

Jacchini, whose Christian name was Giuseppe, noted by

Gerber as one of the first cellists of his time, was appointed to the church of S. Petronio in Bologna at the beginning of the eighteenth century. That he had distinguished himself as an artist is proved by his nomination as a member of the Bologna Philharmonic Society, a distinction which is only conferred on men of great musical reputation. Of his compositions there is a work entitled "Concerti per Camera a 3 e 4 stromenti, con violoncello obligato (Op. 4). Bologna, 1701," to be mentioned.

Pippo Amadio, who flourished about the year 1720, was, according to Gerber's account, a violoncellist, "whose art surpassed all, that up to his time had been produced on his instrument."

Antonio Vandini, first violoncellist at the church of S. Antonio, Padua, seems to have been no less remarkable. The Italians called his manner of playing and his expression "parlare"—he understood how to make his instrument speak. He was on terms of such close friendship with Tartini, who as is known was engaged at the same church at Padua as solo violinist, that he accompanied him in 1723 to Prague, and remained with him for three years in the service of Count Kinski. Vandini was still living in Padua in 1770. The year of his death is unknown.

Abaco, born at Verona, according to information contained in the second year of the "Leipsic Musical Paper" (p. 345), was a prominent violoncellist, who lived in the first half of the eighteenth century. Gerber possessed a cello solo of his composition, of which he says that it appeared to have been

written in the year 1748.

Giuseppe dall'Oglio, the younger brother of the famous violin player, Domenico dall'Oglio, was born about 1700 at Padua,⁶³ and went to St. Petersburg in 1735. There he remained in the Russian imperial service twenty-nine years, after which he returned to his native land. On his journey thither he stopped at Warsaw, on which occasion King August of Poland nominated him his agent for the Venetian Republic.

Salvatore Lanzetti, born at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Naples, was pupil of the Conservatorio there, Santa Maria di Loreto, and was during the greater part of his life in the service of the King of Sardinia. He died in Turin in 1780. In the year 1736 two volumes of violoncello sonatas appeared by him, and later also a book of instruction, the title of which Fétis gives as: "Principes du doigter pour le Violoncelle dans tous les tons." It is somewhat differently named by Gerber: "Principes ou l'applicatur de Violoncel par tous les tons." Lanzetti must have carried out with great skill the staccato touch both up and down the instrument.

We are somewhat better informed regarding the violoncellist Caporale. Neither the place of his home nor the year of his birth nor that of his death are, indeed, known to us, but of his life and work in England we possess some information. In 1735 he came to London and worked under Handel, who wrote for him a cello

⁶³ Gerber gives Venice as his birthplace; but in the *Weekly News* of the year 1770, Padua is mentioned, which is probably correct.

solo in the third act of his opera “Deidamia” composed in 1739.

His musical education could not have been very thorough, but he must have had certain qualifications which induced Handel to connect himself with him. Simpson’s Collection (see p. [49](#)), published in London, contains a Cello Sonata by Caporale, which does not speak much for his talent in composition. It consists of *Adagio*, *Allegro*, and a *Theme* with three variations after the manner of studies. As a player Caporale was remarkable for his tone, but as regards finish he could not rival either the elder Cervetto or Pasqualini.

This last-named artist, by whom a sonata, scarcely rising above the level of Caporale, was contained in the volume already mentioned as appearing at Simpson’s, was performing in London, in 1745, as a concertist of great repute. Further information regarding him does not exist.

Greater consideration must be yielded to Carlo Ferrari, brother of the violinist Domenico Ferrari, so often referred to in the previous century. On account of an injured foot he was called “the lame.” Born at Piacenza about 1730 he betook himself to Paris in 1758 and appeared with great success in the “Concert Spirituel.” In 1765 he accepted an engagement offered to him by the Count of Parma.⁶⁴ He remained in this position until his death, which took place in 1789. It is reported of Ferrari that he was the first Italian cellist who made use of the thumb position.

⁶⁴ In Jahn’s biography of Mozart is found the notice that Ferrari had been appointed to the Court of the Archbishop of Salzburg; at what period is not mentioned.

If this be true, France must have been beforehand in the difficult matter of the art of fingering; for the thumb position was already known in Paris, as we have seen, before 1740, consequently at a time when Ferrari was only ten or twelve years old. But if it be acknowledged that violoncello playing was cultivated much earlier in Italy than in France, and had already advanced beyond the elemental stage before it had found representatives among the French, we must be inclined to concede to the Italians the discovery of the thumb position, and indeed to the predecessors of Ferrari. It is highly probable that Franciscello and Batistin already availed themselves of its assistance for the use of the upper parts of the fingerboard. The trick must have been brought into France by the last-named artist who, as we know, settled in Paris at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The proof that the thumb position was known in Paris before 1740 is established by the violoncello method of Michel Corrette in the year 1741, and which, as far as one can see, was the first work of instruction for the instrument in question. Considering the scarcity at that time of cello compositions this instruction book is the more important, as from it is to be determined with certainty the average standard to which violoncello playing had attained towards the middle of the previous century. This circumstance seems to justify our entering somewhat more fully into Corrette's school.

The title is: "Méthode, théoretique et pratique, pour apprendre en peu de temps, le violoncelle ... dans sa perfection composée

par Michel Corrette. XXIV^e Ouvrage à Paris, chez l'auteur, M^r Boivin et le S^r le Clerc; à Lyon chez M. de Bretonne. Avec Privilège du Roy. MDCCXL1.”⁶⁵

After some introductory paragraphs regarding the use of the F and C clef, in notation for violoncello music, concerning the value of notes and pauses, the formation of sharps, flats, and naturals, as well as regarding the usual marks, the various measures and syncopes, Corrette treats:

1. Of the manner of holding the violoncello;
2. Of the holding and action of the bow;
3. Of its use in the up and down strokes;
4. Of the tuning of the violoncello;
5. Of the division of the fingerboard into diatonic as well as chromatic tones;
6. Of the fingering in the lower (first) and following positions;
7. Of the way and manner of returning from the higher positions to the first;
8. Of trills and appoggiaturas;
9. Of the various kinds of bow action;
10. Of double-stops and arpeggios;
11. And also of the thumb position.

He also gives instruction for those who wish to go from the gamba to the violoncello, and then in conclusion gives hints for the accompaniment of singing and for instrumental solos.

It is evident that the directions of Corrette have chiefly a mere historical importance, as the technique of the violoncello,

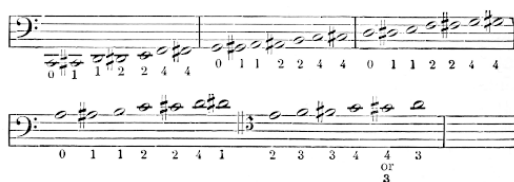
⁶⁵ Fétis says in his “Biographie universelle des Musiciens” (Vol. II., 365): “The first edition of Corrette’s music tutor appeared in 1761.” On the title page, however, is plainly printed MDCCXL1. Fétis has inadvertently put the number L before the X instead of after.

after the appearance of his method, underwent substantial changes. His explanation concerning the finger positions of that period and the thumb position which in the higher parts of the fingerboard takes the place of a moveable nut, concerning the manipulation of the bow, and the considerations to be observed in exchanging the gamba for the violoncello have a special interest for us.

With regard to the first of these four points, we remark that the finger position adopted by Corrette for the diatonic scale on all the strings was, in the first two positions, 1, 2, and 4; in the "third position," 1, 2, 3, 4; and in the "fourth," 1, 2, and 3; after the latter position the fourth finger was as a rule no longer needed, for which Corrette adduces as a reason that it is too short to be made use of in the higher positions of the fingerboard; in case however it should be necessary to use it, the use of the left arm would be impeded. In exceptional cases, says Corrette in another part of his school, the fourth finger could be used in the "fourth position," without altering the thumb position, for the B flat and B on the A string, for the E flat on the D string, for the A flat on the G string, and for the D flat on the C string. The finger positions were then, in the first half and about the middle of the last century, somewhat different in the diatonic scale of the violoncello than they were later on. It is especially to be remarked that the E and the B were touched with the second finger upon the two lower strings, though the notes marked were far more convenient for the third finger, which very shortly took the place

of the second.

As to the exclusion of the fourth finger, when playing with the thumb position, no proof is needed to show the reason was that it gave an awkward manner of holding the left hand. The finger positions for the chromatic scale still more widely differed from the fingering employed later, as the following scale shows—



It very nearly happened, that as early as the seventeenth century when a stringed instrument was so much desired as a standard one for the violoncello, that the violin mode of fingering was adopted for the former, which according to the foregoing remarks really was the case, with the exception of the use of the third finger. It had however been overlooked that the cello, on account of its much larger dimensions, demanded an entirely different method of fingering. The regulation of this important point, which offered peculiar difficulties, occupied cellists up to the beginning of our century. In some measure the fingering which Corrette teaches for descending intervals of a second from the higher to the lower tones is unavoidable. He gives the two following examples—



He gave the preference to the second example.

The almost total exclusion of the fourth finger caused a very great restriction in playing with the thumb position. But when Corrette wrote his work this limitation would hardly have been felt, as the higher parts of the fingerboard were little, and, only in exceptional cases, used by cello players and composers. Corrette mentions, as the highest tone, the one-lined B. Caporale and Pasqualini do not go beyond this note in their sonatas, already mentioned, excepting in one instance, when Caporale casually uses the two-lined C. It appears that, with many cellists, in place of the thumb the first finger was made use of in the higher positions as a support, for Corrette remarks concerning his method: "If the first finger is used instead of the thumb the fourth finger must necessarily be made use of; it is, however, on account of its shortness, really useless in the upper 'positions.'" To beginners Corrette recommended the attempt then in vogue—but a little later combated by Leopold Mozart in his violin

school⁶⁶—to introduce marks on the fingerboard indicating the intervals in order to learn to play clearly in tune. For gamba players who, following the spirit of the time, gave up their instrument and turned to the violoncello, which was rapidly coming into use, this means of assistance had a certain value, accustomed as they were to the frets of the gamba fingerboard, for the finger positions of both instruments differ considerably from one another, as appears from the comparison given below by Corrette.

Scale on the gamba.

7. String.	6. String.	5. String.	4. String.	3. String.
0 2 3	0 2 3	0 2 4 0	2 0 1 3	
C String.		G String.	D String.	

Scale on the Cello.

2. String.	1. String.
0 1 2	0 1 2 4

A. String. Thumb-position.

A. String.	Thumb-position.
0 2 3	0 2 3 5 7

0 1 2 4 1 2 3 3

Scale on the gamba.

7. String. 6. String. 5. String. 4. String. 3. String. 2. String.
1. String.

Scale on the Cello.

⁶⁶ The first edition of this appeared under the title: "Versuch einer Gründlichen Violschule."

C String. G String. D String. A String. Thumb-position.

The figures placed under the gamba scale relate to the frets which are to be attended to by the player, while those of the cello scale are the finger positions to be used.

The lower C, which the string itself forms on the cello, had on the gamba to be touched at the third fret; the succeeding D on the gamba was the open string, while on the cello it was to be touched with the first finger, and so on.

The four highest tones, *e*, *f*, *g*, *a*, fell in the gamba on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 7th frets, whereas, according to Corrette's account, those in the cello required the use of the thumb position. It is plain that the gamba players who took up the violoncello had to adopt an entirely different system of fingering.

To a certain extent the handling of the bow presented difficulties to those who exchanged the gamba for the violoncello. The former instrument, on account of the flatness of the bridge, did not allow of an energetic use of the bow. From the violoncello, on the contrary, a powerful tone must be brought out, which had to be learnt by gamba players. Besides, they had also to accustom themselves to other strokes of the bow for the cello. What was played by the latter instrument with a down stroke, was played by an upward one on the gamba, and the reverse.

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