



Georg Philipp
TELEMANN

Fantasias for
Viola da Gamba

Robert Smith

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Fantasias for Viola da Gamba, TWV 40:26-37

Robert Smith *viola da gamba*

About Robert Smith:

'Robert Smith is an outstanding interpreter, casting eloquent and long-breathed contrapuntal lines. The airy acoustic captures the resonance of his instrument in a recording that delights and surprises'

BBC Music Magazine

'His tone is sonorous and his readings are technically assured'
The Strad

Fantasia No. 1 in C minor, TWV 40:26

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Adagio – Allegro –
Adagio – Allegro | [3:27] |
| 2. Allegro | [2:16] |

Fantasia No. 2 in D major, TWV 40:27

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|---------------------|--------|
| 3. Vivace & Andante | [7:15] |
| 4. Presto | [1:22] |

Fantasia No. 3 in E minor, TWV 40:28

- | | |
|-----------|--------|
| 5. Largo | [2:38] |
| 6. Presto | [1:44] |
| 7. Vivace | [1:20] |

Fantasia No. 4 in F major, TWV 40:29

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 8. Vivace | [4:01] |
| 9. Grave | [0:46] |
| 10. Allegro | [1:35] |

Fantasia No. 5 in B flat major, TWV 40:30

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|-------------|--------|
| 11. Allegro | [2:31] |
| 12. Largo | [0:58] |
| 13. Allegro | [1:27] |

Fantasia No. 6 in G major, TWV 40:31

- | | |
|----------------|--------|
| 14. Scherzando | [2:06] |
| 15. Dolce | [2:48] |
| 16. Spirituoso | [1:12] |

Fantasia No. 7 in G minor, TWV 40:32

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 17. Andante | [4:35] |
| 18. Vivace | [1:24] |
| 19. Allegro | [1:43] |

Fantasia No. 8 in A major, TWV 40:33

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 20. Allegro | [1:56] |
| 21. Grave | [1:54] |
| 22. Vivace | [1:45] |

Fantasia No. 9 in C major, TWV 40:34

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 23. Presto | [2:10] |
| 24. Grave | [3:06] |
| 25. Allegro | [1:52] |

Fantasia No. 10 in E major, TWV 40:35

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 26. Dolce – Allegro –
Dolce – Allegro | [2:47] |
| 27. Siciliana | [2:38] |
| 28. Scherzando | [2:01] |

Fantasia No. 11 in D minor, TWV 40:36

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 29. Allegro | [2:05] |
| 30. Grave | [2:05] |
| 31. Allegro | [2:04] |

Fantasia No. 12 in E flat major, TWV 40:37

- | | |
|-------------|--------|
| 32. Andante | [2:56] |
| 33. Allegro | [2:09] |
| 34. Vivace | [2:18] |

Total playing time [79:15]



Georg Philipp Telemann
by Georg Lichtensteger

Georg Philipp Telemann: Fantasias for Viola da Gamba, TWV 40:26-37

Amongst his many hundreds of compositions in many different styles and settings, Telemann wrote sets of fantasias for four solo instruments – harpsichord, flute, violin and viola da gamba. The thirty-six fantasias for harpsichord, and twelve for flute were published in 1732-33. In 1735 Telemann published twelve fantasias each for violin and viola da gamba. Typically for the commercial strategy of his own 'Telemann Publishing', the fantasias for viola da gamba were published two at a time on a fortnightly basis allowing for a 'collect them all' action.

The fantasias for flute and violin especially have remained popular to this day – the varied and short movements provide compact musical messages that delight and refresh performers and listeners alike. However, the fantasias for viola da gamba were lost until as recently as 2015 when they were rediscovered in the collection of Ledenburg Manor held at the Lower Saxony State Archive in Osnabrück. Until that point all that remained were tantalising newspaper announcements from the time advertising the forthcoming release of the fantasias.

I personally felt it sad, and perhaps even unfair, for viol players that 'our' set of fantasias was lost. Anyone who had played or heard the sonata for solo viola da gamba from *Der Getreue Music-Meister* in D major, TWV 40:1, got a sense of the way in which Telemann could write originally and idiomatically for the instrument. The sonata, published in 1729, is in five movements and features beautiful melodies, athletic allegros, self-accompanied recitativo and chromatic counterpoint. Knowing the pleasure of performing this sonata most certainly leaves one hungry for more!

And then in 2015 something happened that viol players dreamed about but perhaps never expected would happen: a complete copy of the twelve fantasias was discovered. The manuscript was released to the public in 2016 allowing us to seek answers to important questions. Is it good music? Is it idiomatic for the instrument? Is it written for professionals or amateurs? Is it more in a harmonic or melodic style? How does Telemann let the viola da gamba be both accompanist and soloist at the same time? And by opening up the manuscript and playing through, the questions began to be answered.

There is something magical about learning a newly discovered score. It is a direct and

pure link to the past, between the performer and Telemann. There are no conscious or unconscious memories to cloud our interpretation, no favourite recordings, no performance traditions, no influences from a masterclass with a great professor. This clean slate is something that very seldom occurs and is worth cherishing. Compare this to interpreting the cello suites by J.S. Bach – with eighty years of recordings and a cellist’s musical education full of lessons and masterclasses it can be hard to find one’s own voice and personal relationship with these ubiquitous works.

Telemann’s twelve fantasias are in as many different keys and mostly contain three movements. The last, binary, movement of each Fantasia tends to be the most light-hearted and dance like, acting as a *digestif* to the weightier material that comes before. Reading through the score for the first time I became yet more convinced with each fantasy that the music was indeed very good and incredibly varied. The opening notes of **Fantasia No. 1 in C minor** set a serious tone giving way to a densely woven chromatic counterpoint, ingeniously inverted in the second half of the movement. The **Fantasia No. 2 in D major** by contrast is an explosion of joy,

the large leaps of the opening ‘Vivace’ creating space and transparency. The ‘Largo’ of **Fantasia No. 3 in E minor** is filled with yearning by the figure of the rising sixth. And so each fantasy progresses, each time surprising us with new characters, new structures and new compositional devices such as the fugal and canonic writing in Fantasias Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 – the ‘Presto’ of **Fantasy No. 9** is notable for its long theme and chromaticism.

The style of writing for the instrument is most definitely forward looking with melodic writing, or *jeu d’melodie* gaining the upper hand over *jeu d’harmonie*, or chordal playing. Harmonic progressions are more often implied through skipping melodies rather than use of chords outright. This is a move away from the dense sequential chords found in earlier Germanic viola da gamba music and the fantasias nestle stylistically between Johannes Schenck’s Opus 9 of 1710 and Carl Friedrich Abel’s solo pieces from later on in the century.

As with many new discoveries, the suggestion has already arisen that these fantasias may not in fact be the work of Telemann, but rather a contemporary or one of his students (see German early music magazine, *Concerto*, No. 268). This theory however, based on personal feelings rather

Fantasia No. 2 in D major, TWV 40:27



than substantiated evidence, has not gained much traction neither in the musicological world nor indeed with me. Judging from my own experience, the means by which the motifs in these fantasias fit together and the work that one must do to successfully bring out all the rhetorical devices contained within is extraordinarily similar to that required by other compositions of Telemann. It is perhaps this way of working, rather specific to Telemann, that convinces me most that these works are indeed genuine.

The fantasias would have been approachable by good amateurs of the time – they were after all the intended target of Telemann’s own publication. It would be wrong however to think that this music is easy for professionals. Dealing with rapid changes of register and contrapuntal writing whilst keeping the character of the music are just some of the challenges on offer.

Perhaps Telemann’s talent lies partly in his ability to write music for the amateur market that never ceases to challenge great virtuosos.

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Robert Smith

Robert Smith is an English Baroque cellist and viola da gambist. In 2012 he won the Bach-Abel Viola da Gamba Competition in Köthen, taking the First Prize, Audience Prize and Special Prize. His performance of a heavy-metal transcription was especially noted. Robert's ensemble, Fantasticus, has received wide critical acclaim for its recent recordings of *stylus fantasticus* and French Baroque music. In 2013 his playing was described by *The Strad* as, 'Intensely expressive, highly dramatic.' In 2014 Robert released his first solo recording of music for viola da gamba, 'Tickle the Minikin' (Resonus RES10132). The recording received many enthusiastic reviews and was *BBC Music Magazine's* 'Instrumental Choice' in August 2014.

In 2017 Robert released 'The Excellency of Hand' (Resonus RES10186), a recording of virtuoso English viol duos with his former teacher, Paolo Pandolfo.

Robert studied Viola de Gamba with Mieneke van der Velden (Amsterdam) and Paolo Pandolfo (Basel). He also studied baroque cello with Wouter Möller, Jaap ter Linden and Viola da Hoog. He was principal cellist for the European Union Baroque

Orchestra in 2005/6. Robert plays with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and the ensemble Fantasticus, amongst many others. Robert lives in Amsterdam.

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