

VIOLA DA GAMBA The Division Violist (Volume 1) - Daniel Norcome

Roberto Gini - Guido Andreolli - Dario Landi - Marco Angilella

01. Prelude No. 2 in D Minor	<i>Christopher Simpson</i>	00:24
02. Divisions No. 7 in D (Folia)	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	07:24
03. Prelude No. 5 in F major	<i>Christopher Simpson</i>	01:03
04. Divisions No. 25 in A	<i>Unknown</i>	07:56
05. Divisions No. 17 in B	<i>Unknown</i>	03:20
06. Divisions No. 19 in A	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	03:31
07. Divisions No. 4 in A	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	04:07
08. Divisions No. 16 in E	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	10:25
09. Prelude No. 6	<i>Christopher Simpson</i>	00:30
10. Divisions No. 18 in A	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	04:36
11. Prelude No. 4	<i>Christopher Simpson</i>	00:20
12. Divisions No. 28 in F-C	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	03:33
13. Divisions No. 3 in A	<i>Unknown</i>	07:02
14. Prelude No. 3	<i>Christopher Simpson</i>	00:47
15. Divisions No. 11 in F	<i>Daniel Norcome</i>	04:29
16. Divisions No. 24 in A (Pavan)	<i>Unknown</i>	08:22
17. Divisions No. 26 in D	<i>Unknown</i>	04:05

NOTE: The numbering of the Divisions refers to the position in Manuscript 'Drexel 3551' (US-NYp) (*) The numbering of the Preludes refers to the numbering in Christopher Simpson 'The Division Viol' (1659)

Total Time: 71:58

Roberto Gini Viola da gamba | Instrument copy of Henry Jaye, 1624 (Federico Löwenberger, Genoa 2009)

Recording made at the auditorium of the 'Antonia Pozzi' music school in Corsico (Mi)

15th, 16th, 17th July 2021 | Sound technician **Silvano Landonio** | Recording consultant **Aimone Gronchi**

and **Maria Notarianni** | Post-production and editing **Roberto Gini** | Photographs **Alessandro Guatti**

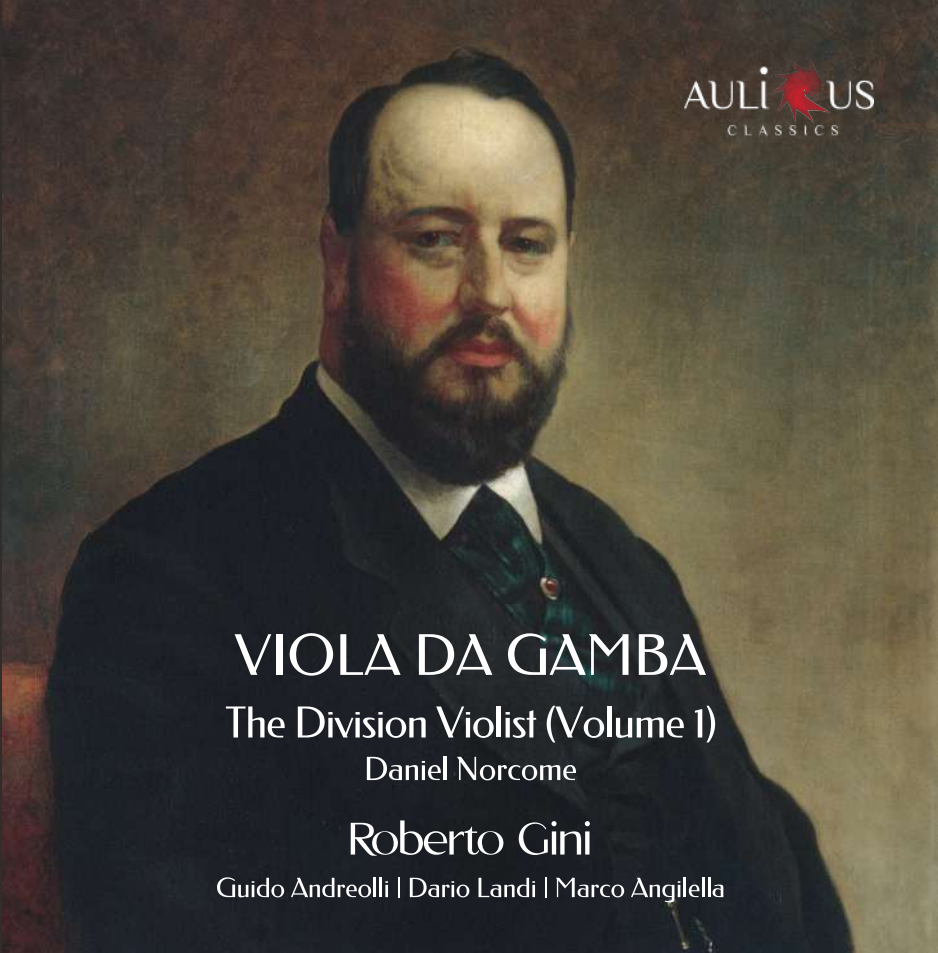
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VIOLA DA GAMBA

The Division Violist (Volume 1)

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THE DIVISION-VIOL - The Italian Viola Bastarda and the Division-viol can be named "sister viols". The Viola Bastarda is a middle size viol falling between the tenor viol and the bass viol, which allows for a greater extension thanks to different tunings, that unlike the typical viol contain intervals of a fifth. Its repertoire originates from polyphonic compositions in tablature as conceived for 'perfect instruments' on which one can exceed the normal range allowing for more virtuosic movement and space for one's own fantasies which recall all of the different themes of the original composition, Madrigale, Chançon or Motteto. The literature for the Division-viol also comes from prior music in which there were improvised parts and fantasies, but instead of making use of vocal compositions, it exploits a "virtual" polyphony based on a Ground, or in other words the bass line of an Aria. This practice, "the art of playing ex-tempore upon a ground", had already been explored and put into use by Diego Ortiz in the Tenores Italianos, which is nothing more than a collection of the most popular arias of the time arranged in a 4-part score. The Ground is realized according to the most logical voice leading rather than the precise disposition of the chords, starting with the Descant, i.e. the highest, melodic voice on the bass line, and filling the central voices to form a polyphonic composition. This produces the feeling of an Aria over which the viol can give free reign to all of its fantasy and virtuosity touching the different voices:" "In Playing to a Ground, we exercise this whole Compass of the Viol; acting therein, sometimes the part of a Bass; sometimes a Treble, or some other Part. From hence proceed Two Kinds of Division. viz. a Breaking of the Ground, and a Descanting upon it: Out of which two, is generated a Third Sort of Division: to wit, a Mixture of Those, one with the other; which Third, or last sort, is expressed in a two fold Manner; that is, either in single, or in double Notes". This process is laid out clearly by Christopher Simpson (The Division Viol: 2nd edition, 1667, Pag. 28 § 2), the most complete treatise dedicated to this genre. A Ground will either take from famous Arias (Norcome's Divisions in d n.7, Track 2, is the Ground of Folia) or Bass lines conceived of as Arias. These new Grounds were often very much exploited; for example, the Divisions in D n. 26, Track 17, is a Ground which is also found in Simpson's "The Division-viol" (n.6). Just like the viola bastarda, the Division-viol is reduced in size, compared with the regular bass viol (Consort bass). However the Division-viol doesn't exceed the range in the lower registers in the way it does in the higher registers, even though it remains faithful to the traditional tuning (d', a, e, c, G, D) with the optional drop of the sixth string to C. In the higher registers the Division-viol exceeds the Italian viol, reaching as far as the high c", fingered on the first string, tuned to d'; while the viola bastarda might often have the first string tuned a fourth or a fifth higher (g' or a'). In any case, by observing the viol's repertoire between the 1500s and the 1600s, the relationship becomes clear between the English Division-viol and its Italian "elder sister", of which the tuning remains the same in England, in a musical genre that differs from that of the Lyra-viol.





DIVISIONS AND PARTITE - The English term of Division derives from the Italian verb "dividere". The Latin correspondent to this word is "partire", an expression widely diffused in the Italian language between the XVI and XVII centuries, in order to indicate division or separation. In its origin then the English term derives from Italy: so if the Latin and Italian word "partire" is to stand for "dividere", the musical term in English Division ("Division upon etc.") corresponds precisely to the Italian Partita ("Partita sopra etc."). The musical genre to which the two terms refer is substantially identical; the most natural translation into English from the Italian Partita then, is Division. We can find the term Partita once more in a musical setting in the German literature of the viol (August Kühnel: Sonate ô Partite, Kassel 1698), as well as in harpsichord music (Pachelbel, Zipoli and many others), as the captivating genre of the Aria with Partite remained in vogue for many decades. It is also interesting to point out that in the same years in which the Division-viol was improvising on a Ground, likewise the cello was improvising over a variety of bass lines. A testimony to this are the "Partite sopra diverse Sonate per Violone" by Giovanni Battista Vitali, archived in the Biblioteca Estense of Modena (Mus. E.244). Even in this case the term Partita confirms the precise correspondence to the English Divisions.

THE DREXEL COLLECTION - The Drexel Collection is a collection of over 6,000 volumes of books about music and musical scores owned by the Music Division of The New York Public Library. Donated by Joseph W. Drexel, a banker in the midst of a very profitable career as a partner in the firm Drexel, Morgan & Co., in 1888 to the Lenox Library (which later became The New York Public Library). It contains many rare books and includes a number of significant 17th-century English music manuscripts. The musical library of Joseph W. Drexel had its origins in the library of Henry F. Albrecht (1822-1875). In 1858, Albrecht sold his library to Joseph W. Drexel and moved to Philadelphia. In 1869, Drexel published (with Albrecht's assistance) a catalog of the published works in his collection which at the time contained 2,245 volumes. An active philanthropist and a board member of several institutions after his retirement in 1877, Drexel made known his intention that his library be donated to the Lenox Library upon his death. He died during the Great Blizzard of 1888.

(Source: from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drexel_Collection)

US-NYp, Drexel 3551 - US-NYp, Drexel 3551 is an 84-page manuscript of divisions for bass viol bound at the end of a copy of Christopher Simpson's "The Division-violist" of 1659. It is in one hand throughout and includes some of the most technically formidable pieces of the kind. A closer look at the remaining contents of 3551 leads to propose that the book probably belonged to Paul Francis Bridges, who was appointed as bass violist in the Private Musick of Charles II from Midsummer 1660, "he most humbly begging the performance of your Ma^{tie} gracious promise, haveing left service at Brusells (being come with all his family) to serve your Ma^{tie} as musician for the Chappell & Chamber of your Ma^{tie}". The supporting letter by the Earl of Worcester and others noted that "he [Bridges] hath often times brought in Camarades to make Musick for our Sovereigne the King [of Spain], and many times himself hath plaied alone before his Ma^{ty}, and did quit the said service [...] out of his love and duty to serve his Maiesty in England'. [...]". A likely scenario is that in coming to England Bridges purchased the newlypublished Division-Violist of his fellow Catholic Christopher Simpson and began filling the manuscript extension (it is of course possible, but less likely, that the whole was begun in Brussels). A few pieces are by his English colleagues Jenkins, Baltzar and Coleman, but many more are likely to have been part of his repertory in Brussels, particularly by Butler and by Norcome, whom he himself appears to have replaced. This latter manuscript was acquired by Philip Falle, quite likely during one of his embassies to the Netherlands. Its contents too could well have come from a centre like Brussels. Maybe Philip Falle acquired it from a (former?) courtier at a time when the glories of the Brussels court had faded.

(Source: from Ashbee, Andrew: The mystery of Polewheel and his Ground VdGS Vol.5)

DANIEL NORCOME (aka Daniell Norcome, 1576 – 1647?) - There are different declinations of this English virtuoso's name: Norcome, Nercome, Nercom, Nercum, Nurcombe, Nurcome, Northcombe. However, in the various manuscript sources, including Drexel 3551, the Norcome spelling is the most recurring and for this reason we will adopt it here. Of Daniel Norcome's life, according with The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians we know that "In 1602 he was in the service of the Archduke Albert in Brussels, and was still there in 1647". This allows us to place his established activity roughly in that time span. If both Nathalie Dolmetch and Ernst Meyer (English Chamber Music, 1946) fix Norcome's birth in 1576, the date of his death is less clear: The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography places it in 1653, Ernst Meyer in 1647. Apart from the uncertain biography however, we are left with the concrete testimonies of contemporaries, the most illustrious of whom, Christopher Simpson (1602/1606-1669), cites Daniel Norcome and Henry Butler, praising them as his predecessors and masters, as the highest examples of Division-viol virtuosity: "I would have you peruse the Divisions which other men have made upon Grounds; as those of Mr. Henry Butler, Mr. Daniel Norcome, and divers other excellent men of this our Nation, who (hitherto) have had the preheminece for this particular Instrument observing, and Noting in their Divisions, what you find best worthy to be imitated." (The Division-Viol, 2nd ed. 1665, pag.57 §14). Of the Norcome's compositions, as for most of his contemporaries, there are no publications in print, but there are numerous manuscript sources, testifying to his fame as well as the volcanic and sophisticated imagination that made him famous in his time and in the following decades. His name is the most recurrent in Drexel 3551 (there are 7 Divisions upon a Ground of which Norcome is declared to be the author), which would support Andrew Ashbee's thesis that the music contained therein could refer to English virtuosi who emigrated to the court of Brussels in the first half of the 17th century due to the civil war.

Roberto Gini