

VIOLA DA GAMBA The Division Violist (Volume 2)

Thomas Balthazar, Charles Coleman, Hugh Facy, John Jenkins,
Polewheele, Christopher Simpson, Maurice Webster

Roberto Gini Division Viol

Guido Andreolli, Virginal | Dario Landi, Theorbo | Marco Angilella, Division Viol

01. Christopher Simpson Prelude n.1 (*)	01:03
02. Christopher Simpson Divisions in d n.27 (<i>Tregian's Ground</i>)	06:33
03. Henry Butler Division in C n.6	10:22
04. John Jenkins Divisions in A n.1	10:04
05. Charles Coleman Divisions in g n.15	03:41
06. Maurice Webster Divisions in C n.13	06:05
07. Polewheele (<i>Paule Wheeler, Pole Wheele</i>) Divisions in a n.5	06:45
08. Hugh Facy Divisions in d n.8	06:24
09. Polewheele Divisions in c n.9	08:35
10. Thomas Balthazar Divisions in G n.14	10:21

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

Total Time: 69:59



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) 4th, 5th, 6th February 2022

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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 set in a 4 parts score. The Ground is realized according to the most logical voice leading rather than the precise disposition of the chords, partendo dal *Descant*. This produces the feeling of an Aria over which the viol can give free reign to all of its fantasy and virtuosity: "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. 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.





From left: Marco Angilella, Roberto Gini, Dario Landi, Guido Andreolli
Alessandro Guatti, photographer

ROBERTO GINI
Guido Andreolli
Dario Landi
Marco Angilella

Division Viol
Virginal
Theorbo
Division Viol

DIVISIONS AND PARTITE

*Laws, Sympson, Polewheel, Jenkins, all
'Mong the best masters musical,
Stand ravish'd while they hear her play,
And with high admiration say,
What curious strains! What rare divisions!
(John Batchiler)*

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 Kuhnel: *Sonate & 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 years. 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 library of the Estense of Modena. 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 was 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 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^{ty} gracious promise, having left service at Brusells (being come with all his family) to serve your Ma^{ty} as musician for the Chappell & Chamber of your Ma^{ty}*. 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 plaid alone before his Ma^{ty}, and did quit the said service [...] out of his love and duty to serve his Ma^{ty} in England*. [...] A likely scenario is that in coming to England Bridges purchased the newly published 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**⁴ and by **Norcombe**⁵, 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. Susi Jeans suggests that **Hugh Facy** had Catholic sympathies so his set of divisions sits well among the others in Drexel 3551 and adds weight to her argument. One of **Maurice Webster**'s only two surviving sets of divisions is in Drexel 3551, although at one time there were many more. He, of course, is thought to have been born in Germany and played there until 1622-3, when he came to England, so a continental provenance for these pieces is also likely. Peter Holman's examination of **Baltzar**'s music led him to suggest too that the set of divisions in Drexel 3551 might have been made for one of his English colleagues: *Late seventeenth-century English sources contain a number of other examples of violin music transposed down an octave for bass viol. Baltzar's set of divisions in G-major may also be an arrangement of a violin work, though its original form is less easily reconstructed. [...] Perhaps the piece is Baltzar's own revision for bass viol of a set of divisions originally for violin, made for one of his violplaying colleagues at the Restoration Court such as John Jenkins or Dietrich Stoeffken; certainly, both sets demand a virtuoso, be he a bass-viol player or a violinist*. Of particular interest are the two other sets of divisions ascribed to **'Mr Polewheele'** which are unique to this manuscript and complete his known output.

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

The Ground on which Balthazar composed his Divisions can be found in the appendix of the *Basse-continués de the Premier Livre de Pièces a une et a deux Violes* by Marin Marais (1689). Here the Ground is called the *Sujet* and the Divisions *Diversitez*. What makes Marais's piece particularly interesting is the close kinship, even stylistic, of the two versions, a kinship that would suggest Marais's knowledge of Balthazar's Divisions as well as his desire to testify to the connection that united the French violistic school to the English composers, at whom the virtuosi on this side of the Channel had studied and trained, starting with André Maugars, who was a student of Alfonso Ferrabosco, remembered precisely for the art of improvising *Diversitez* of which he was an absolute master.

CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON: the Tregian's Ground

More than for his biography, albeit a very interesting one, Francis Tregian *The Younger* (1574-1619) is known for having written the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book during his years of imprisonment in London, which lasted from 1609 until his death, the impressive collection of almost 300 pieces by various composers for keyboard instrument. Inside, LX number is a 'Treg[ian's] Grownde' by William Byrd. The same Ground, attributable precisely to Francis Tregian, is in Drexel 3551 with Christopher Simpson's Divisions, the only but important presence in the manuscript of the author of 'The Division Viol', the treatise in which he recalls *"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 [...]"*. While there is no title that traces the Ground used by Simpson back to its author in the MS, Byrd's version, moreover copied by Tregian himself in the FVB, allows us to identify it as *Tregian's Ground*. The Ground's interest is twofold: Simpson's further composition adds to those printed in the treatise on the one hand; Peculiarities of the ternary rhythm in *Sesquialtera Minore* on the other hand, element that differentiates it from all other Grounds, which use the ternary tactus as a variant within Divisions on a binary tactus. While Byrd's *Tregian's Ground* is in A, Simpson's is in D, a tone appropriate - because of the instrument's extension possibilities - to the viola da gamba.

APPENDIX

The Ground's tablatures of both Volume 1 and Volume 2 were made by Roberto Gini and Guido Andreolli following the rules of Christopher Simpson and inspired, in taste, by Virginal Music of Elizabethan and Jacobean period.

I stand to this houre amaz'd that God should give so greate perfection to so young a person. There were at that time as excellent in that profession as any were thought in Europ: Paule Wheeler, Mr. Mell and others, 'til this prodigie appeared & then they vanish'd.

(John Evelyn in his diary: entry for 4 March 1656)

1. Paraphrasing from the expression coined by Alessandro Guarini, arti sorelle, which refers to music and poetry/Harpsichord, organ, or harp, where the instrumentalist executes the vocal score, reduced on two pentagrams
2. Harpsichord, organ, or harp, where the instrumentalist executes the vocal score, reduced on two pentagrams
3. Tratado de Glosas, Roma 1553
4. Mus., E.244
5. The pieces by Henry Butler that complete the Drexel 3551 manuscript are performed by Roberto Gini on the CD 'Henry Butler The Division Violist' EICetera KTC 1906.
6. The Daniel Norcome pieces included in Ms Drexel 3551 are performed by Roberto Gini on the Aulicus CD 'VIOLA DA GAMBÀ The Division Violist (Volume 1)' ALC 0101
7. The pieces for solo viola by Dietrich Stoeffken (Theodore Steffkins) that complement MS Drexel 3551 are performed by Roberto Gini on the Aulicus CD 'VIOLA DA GAMBÀ Le Jeu d'Harmonie' ALC 0047